

A Man of God

The Life of
His Holiness
Khalifatul Masih IV

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Introduction

The Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam has no doubt of its mission. It is to unite all religions into Islam and to convert the whole world.

Its spiritual head is the fourth successor of Ahmad, who proclaimed that he was The Promised Messiah, the prophet forecast in all the great religions of the world. After him would come his successors, his caliphs, who in three hundred years would complete his work and unite all mankind in Islam.

Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism, Sikhism, Hinduism and all the other religions of the world would be united in Islam.

This would be done without compulsion for coercion was not allowable in Islam.

It was not necessary. It would be a holy war of words, a jehad in which the truth of Islam would overcome.

On the day that Ahmad proclaimed his prophethood fewer than 50 people came forward to recognise him. But the next day more came. And more came the next day. And every year from then on more people came.

By 1989, the centenary year of his announcement, more than 10 million people throughout the world had declared their acceptance of the truth of Ahmad's special relationship with God — and

the special relationship with God of all his successors.

His followers are known as Ahmadis. They include a Nobel prizewinner, a former president of the General Assembly of the United Nations, a director of the World Bank, government ministers in many countries, many generals and many millionaires. But, most important of all, millions upon millions of ordinary people.

The Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam has become the most potent force in Islam — it has established mosques, missions or outposts in 120 countries and translated most of the Quran into 117 languages. It has established schools and hospitals throughout the world and sent in experts to help with agricultural and industrial projects.

In the next 20 years it plans to have 5,000 mission-aries working in Russia, China and South America.

The Ahmadiyya Movement has been persecuted. Many other Muslims have said that they are not Muslims because there can be no other prophet after Muhammad. The Ahmadis say this is not true. Muhammad was the last law-bearing prophet but the door of revelation can never be closed because that is the link between man and God. The essential qualification for prophethood is an abundance of divine revelation and a great knowledge of the unknown.

Their most prominent persecutors have vanished, some ignominiously, some mysteriously.

This is the biography of His Holiness Khalifatul Masih IV, the fourth successor of The Promised

Messiah. He is the grandson of The Promised
Messiah. His name is Mirza Tahir Ahmad.

CHAPTER ONE

The Love of God and the Wrath of God

One of the strongest beliefs in all religions is that God will reward those who bring comfort to their fellow human beings and punish those who bring misery. It is certainly so in Islam.

The festival of Eid-ul-Fitr comes at the end of the month of fasting of Ramadhan. It is a day of great celebration, of family reunions and present-giving. The Friday before Eid-ul-Fitr, in the first year of his election, the Fourth Khalifa preached a sermon in the mosque of Aqsa in the town of Rabwah in Pakistan.

Forty years previously the town did not exist. The sandy soil gave sustenance and shelter only to snakes and lizards during the day. At night the jackals howled.

Today there was grass and trees, wide streets and well-cared-for houses. The town housed forty mosques and forty-five thousand people for it was the head-quarters of the Ahmadiyya Movement.

They had sought shelter and isolation in the desert, but they had not sought solitude. In Rabwah, in their own town, they could prepare themselves better for the advance of Islam and the Ahmadiyya Movement. From here they would go forth to convert the world.

The mosque of Aqsa can accommodate fifteen thousand people, but there was still not enough room for all who wished to hear the sermon of the Fourth Khalifa. Loudspeakers relayed his sermon to the thousands who waited outside the mosque. His sermon was tape-recorded.

In the next 24 hours audio tapes would go out to missionaries all over the world who would play them to the faithful and, if necessary, translate the sermon into other languages so that people, no matter the language they spoke, could listen to the words of the head of the Ahmadiyya Movement.

It would go out all over Pakistan and India. It would be heard in every country in West and East Africa. It was therefore not only to the people in front of him to whom he spoke, but also to people who knew real poverty or who had poverty living close by.

The voice of the Khalifa is normally musical and well-controlled. He is an experienced public speaker, mixing in jokes with his exhortations, sometimes interpolating scraps of his own poetry, both humorous and serious, to make a point. He has the ability to make everyone of his listeners feel that he is talking directly to them.

He is not always able, however, to distance himself from the picture he is painting with words. He sees what he is describing. He feels the emotions that he talks about.

It is then that his voice can sometimes break and falter. Those who have been near him on those occasions say that his eyes fill with tears and sometimes run down his cheeks.

“It is true that sometimes I cannot hide my feelings no matter how I try, but I have seen so much trouble in my life that it is difficult for me. I do not mean trouble for me, but trouble for other people. I have seen people who have been so unhappy, so lost in their desolation that even to recall their faces now can make me unhappy. And yet around these unhappy people can be people who do not even see them. For them they do not exist.

“How can people be like that?”

There were people in the Aqsa mosque who expected his sermon to be just pleasantly exacting in its demands. After all the festivities of Eid-ul-Fitr were approaching. Instead the Khalifa announced that his demands were enormous.

It was not their charity he wanted, nor their money, no matter how much they had. Money could not buy what he wanted, he said. He wanted their happiness.

He wanted them to share it.

How can you be happy if you walk to your family celebrations and walk past houses where you know there are people who are old and lonely? Or so poor that they cannot buy enough food for their children even on a holiday?

How can you give presents to your children when you know that not far away are children who do not have enough blankets to keep them warm?

If you want to enjoy this holiday then seek out these people now and help them. They are there in every country in the world. You will find that it is impossible to give away too much happiness. The

more you give the more you have.

“It was a fascinating experience that holiday,” the Khalifa recalls. “There seemed to be people everywhere in the streets. I had thousands of letters from people who told me they had never enjoyed the holiday so much. There were many letters from poor people who told me how kind their neighbours had been.

“But there were also many letters from people who told me how much happiness they had had just by helping other people. They had wanted to help in the past, but they were afraid to offer. Now they had made friends of people they had been walking past for years.”

It is the love of God that makes people act like that said the Khalifa.

* * *

At 5 a.m. on August 17th, 1988, the Khalifa left the mosque. He had completed the prayer of Fajr. He had then returned to his apartment in the office block beside the mosque to change his clothes. He had been dressed in white – loose cotton trousers, a close-fitting jacket that buttoned up to the neck and a pugree, a turban in the style of the Punjab with something like a quiff at the back. There was nothing exceptional in his clothes except perhaps the gold centrepiece that covered his hair. Of course it was not real gold.

When he emerged from the door that leads to his apartment he was wearing a track suit, trainer shoes and a dun-coloured chitrali cap. It is made of

pure wool and is both light to wear and warm. It comes from the North West Frontier of India.

To the front of the mosque are two sentry-type boxes for the security staff so that they can watch the gates to the front of the mosque throughout the night. As it was now light the man in the farthest away box could leave his post and he took a seat in the third car that had drawn up in front of the mosque. The Khalifa sat in the car in the middle.

Major Mahmood Ahmad, a former major in Pakistan's elite Special Service Group, the equivalent of Britain's SAS, sat in the front car. He was in charge of the security of the Khalifa.

When they arrived at the park Major Ahmad walked beside the Khalifa. In front the advance security men had spread out in a broad arrow-shape with two men following behind the Khalifa. It meant that he was in the centre of his security staff. Major Ahmad, whose eyes always seemed to be on the move, carried a thick walking stick, not to aid his walking but as a useful defensive weapon if the Khalifa were attacked. It is as well to be careful for an attempted assassination of the Second Khalifa had nearly succeeded.

No one speaks at first on the morning walk – it is thinking time, says the Khalifa. The walk takes place summer and winter immediately after the Fajr prayer. So sometimes the weather is fresh and cheerful like today and there are other people in the park, joggers and people exercising their dogs. In the winter it is often cold, wet and miserable and they are the only people to be seen.

The Khalifa walks five miles a day. He walks

briskly. He does not talk. It is now almost the only exercise he takes.

When they reached the lake one of his security staff handed him a bag of stale bread and immediately a conglomeration of birds swooped to get it – seagulls, sparrows and crows. Swans and other waterfowl glided in imperiously or urgently to secure their share.

On the way back from the lake the pace of the Khalifa slackened and those of his followers who had asked his permission to accompany him in his walk now came near him. They talked, but the Khalifa was strangely uncommunicative they said later.

That morning a former imam of the mosque had told him of the dream he had had – that General Zia-ul-Haq, president of Pakistan, was immovable in his persecution of the Ahmadiyya Movement.

“Then God will punish him,” said the Khalifa. “I know that something is going to happen very shortly.” The date and the time of that conversation was noted.

It was four weeks since the Khalifa had issued the mubahala. And five days ago he had announced that the fate of Zia and his fellow persecutors was now sealed.

Muhammad, the Holy Prophet of Islam, had issued a mubahala 1,400 years previously. Argument and logic had failed to convince the men in front of him and he told them that he did not believe that they held these false views in innocence.

Let God decide, he told them. God will curse those among us who are liars.

“Let God decide,” the Khalifa had declared when he issued the mubahala to General Zia and the people who were helping him. If what you are doing is just then God will support you. But if your persecution is unjust, and it is not done in innocence, then God will surely punish you.

When he returned to the mosque the Khalifa made his breakfast and ate it by himself. Everyone else in his apartment at the London Mosque was still asleep. Then he spent an hour studying the Quran. He was at his desk an hour before his secretaries arrived.

The news came through around four o'clock that afternoon. The plane carrying General Zia and nine of his generals had crashed. No one knew why. There were no survivors.

“ZIA BLOWN OUT OF THE SKY” said the head-lines in the newspapers the next day. All that they could find of him to bury were his teeth.

It is the Wrath of God said the Khalifa.

CHAPTER TWO

A Man Called Ahmad

The work of a prophet is seldom finished in his lifetime. It is carried on by his successor, chosen in his lifetime by the prophet, or, after his death, by election from among his followers. After Jesus had come Peter. After Muhammad had come Abu Bakr.

The Arabic word for successor is ‘khalifa’ and this has been anglicised as ‘caliph’ and is often used incorrectly as denoting an Eastern ruler without any religious significance. For Muslims, however, the word has only one meaning – a successor to a prophet.

Muhammad had declared that though he would have successors who would carry on his work, at a later stage, when Islam was under threat, he would also be followed by The Promised Messiah. The advent of The Promised Messiah was forecast in all the great religions of the world and his tasks were the revival of Islam, the conversion of the world and unification of all religions in Islam.

In the year 1889 CE, in the small, dusty Indian town of Ludhiana in the north-west of the Punjab, a man called Ahmad accepted the pledge of the first of his followers, a former physician to a maharajah.

“I repent today at the hands of Ahmad of all my sins,” the physician vowed.

At that time Ahmad made no claims. He was regarded merely as a great teacher and scholar, a

defender of Islam, who could help lead people along the path of righteousness. A year later, however, Ahmad announced that God had revealed his true task – he was The Promised Messiah.

His mission from God was, as prophesied, to convert the world to Islam. God had told him that success would attend his mission. He had said, “I will carry thy message to the ends of the earth”.

It was an astonishing statement for at that time his followers barely numbered fifty. Some 20 years later, in May, 1908, when he died at the age of 75, the followers of Ahmad had increased to 300,000. This was but a beginning, he told his followers. After him would come a “great manifestation”.

They did not doubt that this meant that after him would come a succession of khalifas who would bring his work to its great conclusion by uniting the world under Islam. These successors would come from among his followers. God had told him, he said: “My true followers shall excel every other person. There shall always rise among them till Judgement Day, personages who will be the chosen ones of God in every way”.

And of the success to come there was no doubt, said Ahmad. God had revealed to him that “The Community shall be a lighthouse so high as to illuminate the four corners of the world. The members thereof shall serve as models of Islamic blessings.”

God had told him of His reasons for the founding of the Community, said Ahmad. These were:

“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 and purify them.”

God had promised, Ahmad declared, that the Community would “multiply exceedingly”. “Thousands of truthful people shall join his ranks . He shall himself look after them and make the Community grow, so much so that its members and progress shall amaze the world.”

By March, 1989, a hundred years after the first follower had taken the covenant of allegiance, the progress of the Community of Ahmad had indeed amazed the world. The man who was now their khalifa was Tahir, a grandson of The Promised Messiah.

“What shall I call you now,” asked Amina Begum, the wife of one of his oldest friends, when they met after his election and she leaned forward to kiss the ring of silver which was a symbol of his khalifat.

She had known him as a student in London when he cooked meals for her husband and herself on a gas ring in the single room he occupied in a modest area of London. Then she had called him Tahiri, the friendly, familial version of Tahir.

To her question Tahir answered, “Call me what you will,” he said. “We are very old friends.”

“I want to call you Tahiri,” she replied, “but the word will not pass my lips.”

No one now calls him Tahiri for he is now a

chosen servant of God on earth. It is to the Khalifa that Ahmadis turn to when trouble and adversity strike – when death is near, when there is a dangerous illness, when they need advice and guidance. God listens with special attention to the prayers of the Khalifa, they say. They recount the many occasions that, when all seemed lost, the Khalifa prayed to God and his prayers were answered.

It is the Khalifa who will bring about the complete brotherhood of man under Islam. It is the Khalifa who will unite all religions in Islam.

It is also the Khalifa who explains and interprets the laws laid down for the good of the world and revealed by God to Muhammad in the Holy Quran. As Khalifa he is worthy of total love and devotion.

It would not therefore be correct to address him as Tahiri.

CHAPTER THREE

A New Era in Qadian

The Second Khalifa, the son of The Promised Messiah, married Maryam Siddiqua in 1922. She was then seventeen and he was thirty-three. She was his third wife. Tahir was born at Qadian on December 18th, 1928.

It was a day of rejoicing and holiday for the first ever train was due to arrive in Qadian from Amritsar, 35 miles away, on the newly completed railtrack. Many of the elders of the village had gone to Amritsar so that they could board the train and take part in that historic first journey.

As a result the railway station had been crowded since early on by people wanting to secure a good position to view the arrival of the train. There were those who had travelled already on India's extensive railways and they took good care to air their worldly superiority and to say to the neighbours who had never been out of Qadian that the locomotive breathed out steam and smoke, but there was no need to be frightened.

Everyone, except perhaps the yakka drivers whose horse-drawn carts would be no longer widely required, agreed that it was a good thing and that today ushered in a new era for Qadian and, of course, for the Ahmadiyya Movement. More and more people could now come to Qadian and the Movement could train more and more missionaries.

Among the children playing around the station was Mirza Muzzafar Ahmad, later to become Finance Minister of Pakistan and then a director of the World Bank.

“We children were overflowing with excitement about the arrival of the train,” he recalls. “It was a day of jubilation.” But he also recalls the “happy talk” of his elders about the new baby son of the Second Khalifa. It was a blessing they said for though Maryam already had two daughters, Amatul Hakim and Amatul Basit, her only previous male child had died in infancy. And Maryam dearly wanted a son.

Tahir was a lusty, well-made child with dark-brown eyes and wiry, black hair. His nose was aquiline. His mother took every precaution to ensure his good health and strength and after he had been weaned his nurse took him every day to a nearby farm where milk from the teat of a buffalo was squirted directly into his mouth. In this way not only was it warm and comforting and good for growing children, but it ensured there was no contamination of the milk from any outside source.

Tahir had few childhood illnesses and older members of the Ahmadiyya Community remember his laughter and his pranks. He was a happy child, ready to play football with companions of his age, ready to challenge any of them to a “dare” whether it was walking on a wall or jumping a giant puddle when the rainy season came, ready to be more mischievous than most of them both in school and out, ready to play up a teacher if he thought he could get away with it.

And ready, he was to admit later, to laugh at things which perhaps should not be laughed at – the plight of a companion who failed to make the jump over the puddle and landed in the mud, the misfortune of a shopkeeper whose goods, perhaps, had tumbled down.

“I had perhaps a sense of humour that adults find a little wearing in young people,” he says. “I was too ready to laugh at anything.”

His sense of humour was carried into the home. His father, the Second Khalifa, was a man of gravity, conscious of the task that he had to carry out, the meagreness of the resources at his command and, perhaps as a result, very much a puritan in his regard to enjoyment and leisure.

“He appeared to be very remote in early childhood, we held him in awe,” Tahir recalls. “Although he loved us, and sometimes played with us, but still there was a separation, a distance of station because he was the Head of the Ahmadiyya Community. We never took advantage of the fact that he was our father and there always remained a distance of stations between us.

“As children it was very seldom that we took the liberty of responding in a relaxed way to a playful attitude on his part. Occasionally we did and personally I did more than the other children and sometimes made him laugh and that was my personal distinction.”

But woe betide Tahir if his mother became suspicious that, with his jokes, he was being even remotely disrespectful in some way of his father. “She would scold me very severely indeed, she

almost could not control her anger at these times,” he remembers.

“She was not a woman who had been well-educated in the sense it is now used. She read the newspapers, she read books occasionally, but she was not given to study or the pursuit of literature. She was a simple lady at heart. Her religion essentially was love. She loved the Holy Founder of Islam, the Holy Quran and the Founder of the Ahmadiyya Community.”

If she suspected that Tahir was not paying sufficient attention to the study of the Quran or of Islamic teachings then she could become very angry and scold him severely.

It was only after he became khalifa that the reason for her anger became apparent.

Her position, even as the wife of the Khalifa, was exceptional. When Mubarak, the infant son of Ahmad, The Promised Messiah, was seriously ill and thought to be dying, there was a strong belief that if he were married then God might allow him to live. As a result he was married in a religious ceremony to Maryam, the infant daughter of Dr Syed Abdus Sattar Shah, whose name showed that he was a direct descendant of The Holy Prophet.

But Mubarak died. Ahmad was to say later that he hoped she would one day marry into the family, so mingling the blood of The Holy Prophet and himself his follower, The Promised Messiah. When Maryam was seventeen the Second Khalifa decided that he should follow his father’s wishes and bring her into the family as his wife. She was very conscious of the fact that she was a descendant of

The Holy Prophet and that she had been the intended bride of Ahmad's special son.

"She was deeply religious and her one passionate wish was that Tahir should grow up and shine as a star in the galaxy of Islam and Ahmadiyyat," says Mr M. M. Ahmad.

However, the fact that Tahir was her only son did not mean that he was over-protected or spoiled. "I was never spoiled, neither by my father nor by my mother. Rather I felt unheeded," he says.

Another sister, Amatul Jameel, had been born. The four wives of the Khalifa all had their own apartments and each family retained its own identity with the Khalifa reserving a special day of the week for each family. He normally lived on the second floor with his wives' apartments on the first floor.

For his 21 children he insisted on absolute parity – if one girl had a new dress then all his daughters had a new dress. It was the same with his sons. As a result all the children of the Khalifa grew up with a strong brotherly and sisterly affection for each other and shared their lives. They regarded each of the Khalifa's wives as another mother.

Which is not to say that the wives of the Khalifa also always regarded each other with total affection. The Second Khalifa was to marry seven times though, of course, he never had more than four wives at a time as permitted under Islamic law. He had married so often, he said, in order to secure the continuance of the family of The Promised Messiah. His sons, observing the responsibility of having four wives at a time, only took one wife.

Sometimes among his letters the Khalifa would find a letter from his wife Maryam. 'Pray for me' she would ask, just as any other member of the Community might do, for though he was her husband it was his prayers as Khalifa that she sought. The prayers of the Khalifa always received special attention from God.

Maryam was a favourite person to visit for all the children and Mr M. M. Ahmad, a first cousin of Tahir's, says, "She was most popular. Indeed she was our favourite aunt and, as we clustered around her, she would feed us with choice cookies, dry fruit or fresh fruit according to the season and, of course, happy conversation."

As a small boy Tahir wandered round Qadian with friends of his own age. Not all of them were Muslims. Indeed the family next door were Hindus and they and Tahir constructed a precarious walkway of planks between their houses so that they could visit each other without always going through the front door.

There were many "characters" in Qadian and, as in all small towns and villages, the small boys knew them all. There was the woman who always wore striped pyjamas, both night and day. Above all, there was Zahoor Hussain, the first Ahmadi missionary to Soviet Russia.

He had been beaten and tortured during the two years he spent in Russian jails and bore the scars on his back. Sometimes Tahir and his companions would ask the old man to bare his back and they would stare in silence at the old wounds and wonder if they could ever have

the courage to bear such punishment.

As a son of the Khalifa Tahir occupied a privileged position, but it was a position that Tahir would sometimes have offered with pleasure to any of his schoolmates. Certainly he and his 12 half brothers were treated with respect, but on the other hand he was expected to be a model of decorum and to shine at his lessons. His humorous, sometimes mischievous, attitude to life did not go easily with being a model of decorum and he certainly did not shine at his lessons. He brought up the rear.

“My mother said that she wanted me to be a doctor, a physician. I did not want to be a doctor, but out of respect I tried to study and achieve that objective, but, right from the start, I was the poorest possible student. My education was not a formative factor in my life – I don’t think it played any real role whatsoever.

“What happened was that instead of going through my books and memorising the right parts in order to get good marks I just skimmed through them. I understood what was said, I got the message and got the platform so that I could move on. But I was never a good student.

“For instance, my scientific studies were a total failure as far as obtaining good marks is concerned. But they opened new avenues for me and I would study other books on those subjects and enjoy myself by enlarging my knowledge, but it was not the knowledge that would help you as far as getting diplomas and degrees. I was just in love with knowing more and more.

“When it came to exams there was a system

where if you failed by, say, five marks you could have five marks added 'with favour'. But it was noted on the pass list. Usually I was among those who were passed 'with favour'. When fewer 'favour marks' were given I failed. I remember with my first English examination I received only three marks out of 150. I was not a good student and I was very sorry that I was failing my mother. It upset her greatly."

His cousin M. M. Ahmad commented, "His mother wanted to see him at the top of everything. Her sights were very high. She was very devoted to the cause of the Community – that was very strong in her, it used to come out on almost every occasion."

Early on, when he was about seven, her hopes had certainly rubbed off on Tahir. One of his sisters, Amatul Qayum, remembers that when they asked him what he was going to be when he grew up he would reply, "I am going to be a shepherd of people. I will look after them".

Despite that reply, which has a feeling of being implanted by adult desires, there was never, however, the slightest suggestion that he was a goody-goody child. Amatul Qayum recalls that one of his very old aunts preferred to pray by herself. One day Tahir hid under a bed in the room where she normally went. When she was about to start praying he made a low, moaning noise and threw a little ball of rolled-up paper.

His aunt, disturbed by these noises and movements, decided to move to another room. By the time she arrived Tahir was already in that room –

he had slipped out of a second door and along a corridor and into the second room. The same low moans and pieces of paper again disturbed the aged aunt.

She went to a third room. He could not get into the room before her so he crawled along a ventilator shaft and started moaning. The aunt came back to the family's main living room and complained to Tahir's sisters that there were some unhappy spirits about — everywhere she went she heard these low moans. She could not say her prayers properly.

The sisters, by this time aware of what Tahir was doing, said the joke had gone on long enough.

But he was to repeat it occasionally.

“I was very curious as a boy and daring other boys to do things. So I was always climbing walls and jumping into rooms and doing all kinds of silly things. When the fruit was ripe on mango and jaman trees one of us would climb the trees and shake them. But at the same time there was usually someone throwing sticks and stones to try knock down some fruit so when you rushed forward to pick up the fruit you were very liable to be hit by a stone or a stick. I certainly was.”

There was also often a scramble when they received their pocket money. At first they received only one anna a week. “It was so little that we used to pool our money. We would buy roasted peanuts, or rape seeds with sugar which was very crunchy. We would share out some of it so that everybody had some. Then one boy would throw the rest up in the air and everyone would rush to gather up as

much as they could. It was a lot of fun.”

His legs bore witness to his boyhood escapades said the Khalifa.

“From my knees to my feet they are covered with scars. We tried not to let our parents know about these injuries. We went straight to the family doctor and had him treat them and hoped that no one would notice that we had bumps on our head or were limping.

“The worst injury I had was when a well was being dug near our house. I watched the workmen grasp the rope then swing themselves into the well and clamber down with their feet against the wall. I was fascinated by how they did it and when they left and there was no one about I jumped for the rope and tried to do what they did.

“But my legs were too short — they could not reach the sides of the well and so I could not control my descent. I kept on slipping faster and faster and the rope literally skinned my palms. I had no skin left on my palms. It was very, very painful.

“I did not want anyone to know what I had done and I wanted to get out as quickly as possible. I knew I was in trouble if I went missing and they found me down the well. I could not climb out as they had done, using the rope to help them walk up the sides of the well, but fortunately they had also dug some footholds into the side of the well. So, using the rope as a kind of rail, I managed to climb out. It was very difficult.

“Fortunately no one was around when I reached the top so I was able to get out without being

spotted. I went straight to the family doctor and showed him my hands.

“He was shocked. He wanted to bandage them but I manage to persuade him that ointment would be sufficient. It was very difficult to hide the injury from my mother but I managed it. No one ever knew that I had tried to climb down into the well.

“My mother was not one for pampering children even when we were ill. She thought it would destroy our character. I used to suffer from malaria. It was quite common at that time, so much so that I regarded it as normal. Every child in Qadian would get it three or four times.

“So I never used to go to anyone and say that I felt ill and ask them to take me to a doctor. So quite often I was found unconscious and was carried home. That was the attitude inculcated in us in those days — we should not unnecessarily inconvenience people by asking for their help.”

Tahir was to suffer a few falls when riding but he was a good horseman. “The first and only lesson I received was from a former soldier in a cavalry regiment. ‘Press your knees so tightly against the horse’s body so that a tiny coin will remain in between them no matter what happens’ he was told.

“Though it was difficult it became second nature — I was pivoted to the horse through my knees. I don’t remember when I started riding — it was just something one always did. Once I was riding a very good horse which was unused to traffic and I made the mistake of taking her on a road. When a bus came she panicked, reared and fell but fortunately I

did not go under the bus. I still bear the scar of that fall.”

As a family they were all keen on sports with hockey, soccer, cricket and tennis being the main sports. There were also various games peculiar to that region of India. One was kabbadi, a kind of open wrestling game in which two teams tried to touch each other without being caught. There was also a kind of rural baseball.

Despite his lack of scholastic achievement his teachers all had pleasant memories of him. His father once arranged special tuition for Tahir and his brother Anwar during the holidays because they were falling behind their classmates in the Ahmadi school. They had the right, as a family of noble origin, to attend one of the schools of great distinction which the British had set up to educate the sons of the landed gentry and thus the future rulers of India, but the Second Khalifa was totally against such class distinction.

“The school in Qadian admitted everyone — one did not have to be an Ahmadi,” said Tahir. “It is a principle we have carried through in all the schools we have founded in Africa and other continents.”

Tahir and Anwar went with their tutor to the town of Dalhousie in the hills to escape the scorching summer temperatures of Qadian. His teacher was to recall the fun they had walking through the bazaar to buy their food.

The Khalifa had allowed them just enough to buy their food so careful shopping was necessary. Once they had bought all they needed for the day and there was a few pence over. Tahir asked the teacher

what they should buy with them. The teacher suggested that he should buy the flute that he had seen him looking at on several occasions. Though it cost only a few coppers up until then they had not been able to spare any money to buy it.

Tahir did and so for a few days playing the flute occupied his leisure time.

It was not all work and the teacher was to recall the jokes they enjoyed and the entertainments they arranged for the evening. One of them was a reconstruction of a poem that the Second Khalifa had written about his sons.

Of the thirteenth and last brother, whose nickname was Phiqi, Tahir wrote, "After one complete dozen what was the need for the appearance of Phiqi?"

There was occasional sibling rivalry. Tahir and Anwar had prevailed upon their teacher to ask the Second Khalifa for permission to take them on an outing for a few days to a nearby lake. It was to be a secret but somehow the news of the expedition leaked out and the other brothers of their age group went to the Khalifa and also obtained permission to go on the outing.

Tahir and Anwar were indignant that their special treat had become an outing for all the brothers. They complained so bitterly that, exasperated, the Khalifa told them, "Everyone except you two will go to the lake."

Finally, however, their teacher suggested that they apologise for not wanting to share, which they did. The outing was a success.

Tahir and Anwar had not at first welcomed the

idea of studying all through the summer and because of the heat had usually slept for several hours when the sun was hottest. When the Khalifa heard of what they were doing he upbraided their teacher. "I asked you to tutor my sons not nurture bad habits in them."

When the tutor suggested they should all rest from one o'clock to four so that they could work later at night when it was cooler, the Second Khalifa rejected the idea immediately. Though what the tutor had proposed was quite usual at that time of year the Khalifa declared that one hour of rest was quite sufficient.

So an entire programme was mapped out for the two brothers which allowed for just one hour's rest and the Khalifa ordered that it be strictly adhered to.

That particular teacher was to recall with pleasure the way Tahir recited verses from the Quran. "I noted even at that time that he recited with rapt attention and with obvious pleasure in a way which impressed people around him."

His tutor, even at that age, had a feeling that Tahir's prayers would be listened to most attentively by God. He made an agreement with Tahir that each would always remember the other in their prayers.

CHAPTER FOUR

A Spirit of Sacrifice

In 1937, when he was nine years old, and in 1944, when he was 16, events were to occur in the Ahmadiyya Movement which were to affect Tahir's family life

In 1934 an antiAhmadiyya organisation organised a rally near Qadian. The organisers prophesied the extinction of the Movement, there was vituperative argument in the newspapers and threats of physical violence. Happily, though there was a lot of noise, nothing came of the threats. But the anger stirred up by false statements about what the Movement represented, underlined for the Second Khalifa the need to present the beliefs of the Ahmadiyya Movement even more clearly and succinctly.

To carry out this increased proselytisation would need more voluntary effort by every Ahmadi, both in time and money. The Second Khalifa therefore announced what was to be called the "New Scheme". The scheme was to operate for three years and in it the Khalifa made 19 demands of his followers.

Zafrulla Khan, a companion of The Promised Messiah, and later Foreign Minister of Pakistan, a president of the General Assembly of the United Nations and president of the International Court of Justice, was to say of these demands, "They were

aimed mainly at rousing the spirit of sacrifice in the Community, stimulating their moral and spiritual qualities and broadening the base of the Movement by carrying its message far and wide.

“For instance, he urged the adoption of a simple, and in some respects, even an austere mode of life in the matter of food, dress, housing, furnishings, etc. He forbade attendance at cinemas, theatres, circuses and places of amusement generally.

“He urged the cultivation of the habit of manual labour. He made an appeal for a certain number of dedicated workers. He urged the unemployed to occupy themselves in some kind of work or to work honorarily, or in return for a meagre stipend, for the Movement. He urged everyone to occupy themselves most of the time with earnest supplications to God seeking His help and guidance and the bounty of steadfastness.”

Describing the New Scheme in a Friday sermon the Second Khalifa said, “We shall carry out all the obligations which God and the Holy Prophet, peace be upon him, have imposed on us, and yet the purpose of our scheme will be achieved. The Captain of the Ark of Ahmadiyyat will steer this holy Ark between fearful rocks and will bring it safe to port.”

The effect on the Community was electrifying said Zafrulla Khan. He was to describe it in these words:

“Large numbers of volunteers were trained to work in various capacities in different branches . . . the literature needed for the exposition of the purposes, teachings and beliefs of the Movement

was prepared and printed . . . in short everything in the Movement was charged with new life and a new spirit.”

The scheme at first had been voluntary, but in 1937 the Second Khalifa preached another sermon in which he announced the New Scheme was to become compulsory. It was to be used as the spearhead to spread Islam to the rest of the world. God was willing them to advance he declared. As always his guidance and inspiration came from the Quran, Muhammad, the Holy Prophet of Islam, and the Promised Messiah.

Again the effect was electrifying. Thousands of Ahmadis wrote to the Khalifa offering their services in this mission for God. Among them was Tahir, then aged nine. He was old enough to understand much of what his father had said and also to be moved by the feelings of his fellow Ahmadis.

He recalled, “I was only a child when it happened, but the impact and impression that the Second Khalifa created was so immense that even the children of my age could never forget that experience. I was present at that sermon and we were all enchanted. I have a very vivid memory of that time. Everybody was talking about the sermon and was very excited about it. Everybody wanted to offer his life and his work for Islam.

“I remember that my mother called my sisters and me and told us that we should subscribe to the New Scheme from our pocket money. We agreed to pay five or ten rupees. Now that was actually impossible for me because my pocket money did not amount to five rupees a year. I had one anna a

week. I think today that amounts to 1/640 of a pound. On special days we sometimes had a gift of a rupee. But, of course, that was taken into consideration as well when our pocket money was calculated.

“So what my mother did was increase our pocket money so that we had the ability to pay the five or ten rupees that had been promised. I think this was one of the greatest favours my mother did for us — she gave us the pleasure of participating in giving. Because of this early experience we became deeply involved in this spirit of sacrifice so that, as we grew older and had the ability to make sacrifices, we did so with great joy.”

So great was the response to the Second Khalifa’s sermon that it was not until some 18 months later that the Khalifa’s office acknowledged Tahir’s letter. The Khalifa had noted his desire to dedicate his life to God, it said, and in due course the Khalifa would be in touch with him. In the meantime he was asked to fill in and return the enclosed form.

“I remember the change that the sermon wrought. As far as I was concerned, and I think everyone else, it helped us acquire a very special attitude to life, to be liberal minded, to be tough and not to be ashamed of any kind of work.

“We planted trees but our voluntary labour was not always so pleasant. We also cleaned out filthy sewage drains. During the days of the annual gathering we cleaned up and carried away all kinds of rubbish.

“Every child of my father’s was involved in everything that he asked anyone in the Community

to do. There was no question of rank or special relationship. If someone missed doing what he had been told to do then our leaders would beat us or slap us on the face. I also got those beatings occasionally.

“Sometimes if we were carrying earth or something like that and you got out of line and started laughing then suddenly you would get a nasty slap on the back of your head. Anyone might do it – not only the supervisor. There was no distinction between the boys who were working, all were treated exactly the same.”

Later in life, talking about his father’s attitude to music and the cinema, Tahir was to say, “He believed it gave people a licentious attitude to life – they would become more permissive and then become enamoured by artificial charms. Even very poor people, who could never attain that standard, could be deeply influenced by it. From then on they would never be happy. They would always be wanting to achieve that level of luxury.”

Of the ban on visits to the cinema Tahir said merely, “I was at an age when I would have loved to go, but it was forbidden so we did not go.”

But he added, “We had gone originally – I remember seeing Charlie Chaplin in a film along with my father. So it was not a religious decision – my father’s attitude was dictated by the exigencies of the time and the country rather than by a religious motivation.

“Islam is a very resilient religion. It gives you light in principle and wants you to act with your own wisdom. He got very jittery about these new

trends. He felt the Movement could lose the young generation to these trends and become less serious-minded in performing its religious duties.

“So that was one of the reasons, in my view, which compelled him to appeal to the Community to give up these pursuits.”

The second reason was the need for economy. He explained his decision in several sermons – they were a poor community, they had a colossal task to achieve therefore pleasure should be restricted so that the money saved could be used in the service of Islam.

In the Khalifa’s own household there was strict economy – he insisted that he should only ever be served with one dish at a meal. That was quite sufficient. Three or four courses at a meal was not only unnecessary but a sinful extravagance.

At that time film music had become very popular on the radio but many Ahmadis considered it an impiety to listen to it. “My father was very much against it, but he would shut his ears against occasional listening by children, he would tolerate it as only human. For instance, I know many a time he would pass by my room when I was listening to music and he would not interfere. He would not probe into it. But if I, or anyone else, gave ourselves over to music or anything else then he would have immediately put his foot down.”

Though the religious influence in the house was naturally strong and puritanical it was never intolerant. Nor did the influence come in any form of dogma, but rather on the human values created by religion, the influence on personal character and

these values as demonstrated in living persons.

“As such I was impressed from childhood in some ways by my mother, in some others by my aunts and in some others by my father and they left lasting, indeed indelible, impressions on my heart and went a long way to make me what I am today. When he was faced with critical decisions of some kind my father used to ask all his children to pray for him. ‘I need your prayers,’ he would tell them.”

* * *

One of the major prophecies of The Promised Messiah, announced in February, 1886, was that after him would come The Promised Reformer. He would help complete some of the work started by The Promised Messiah by reforming some institutions and practices so that the conversion of the world to Islam could move forward more quickly.

In 1937 the Second Khalifa wrote “I consider that The Promised Reformer must be one of the sons of The Promised Messiah and not someone who will appear in a later age. So far as I have reflected on these prophecies 90 per cent of them are in accord with the achievements of the period of my khalifat . . . I do not deem it necessary to make such a claim . . . I do consider, however, that God Almighty has fulfilled the purpose of these prophecies to a large degree through me.”

On several occasions in the years that followed, having regard to his achievements, his followers were to urge The Second Khalifa to make this claim. But he did not do so until January, 1944,

when he announced that God had revealed to him that he was The Promised Reformer. One of the main reasons was the success of the missionary work to convert the world to Islam as a result of the New Scheme.

“God Almighty has revealed the reality to me and I can affirm without the least hesitation that the prophecy of God Almighty has been fulfilled and that He has laid a foundation through the New Scheme,” said the Second Khalifa.

God had told him, he said, that he was a true reflection of The Promised Messiah and thus indeed The Promised Reformer who would reform the mistakes and misunderstandings of other religions, especially those of Christianity. As a result countries throughout the world would understand the truth of Islam “and will thus enter into the Kingdom of God, and the Kingdom of God will arrive on earth as it is in Heaven”.

God would help him by providing sincere companions, he told his followers in his opening speech at the first meeting of the advisory council, the shoorā, that year. “So you must create an extraordinary change in yourselves and should prepare yourselves quickly to make great sacrifices,” he said.

In order to announce the fulfilment of the prophecies of The Promised Messiah the Second Khalifa announced that he would hold meetings in five of the cities and towns associated with The Promised Messiah. It was an occasion for the display of the fear of God and righteousness and not for worldly celebration, he said, and so only

those people who are given to supplication, seeking forgiveness for their sins, who praise and remember God constantly, should attend.

“Boys and raw youths and those who are unable to exercise full control over their tempers and those who soon begin to be restless when they have to sit in silence, should not go to the meeting,” he said.

This prohibition was taken so much to heart by Ahmadis going to the first meeting that a bitter opponent of the Ahmadiyya Movement felt himself forced to write, “It appeared as if a host of the Companions of the Holy Prophet was proceeding to the conquest of Mecca”.

Among them was Tahir who was to stand by the side of The Second Khalifa at all of the meetings save that at Ludhiana. It was an honour that was unusual.

Tahir was to recall the feelings of the Community in these words:

“Everyone was jubilant and joyful. Everybody was stirred — there was a great mood of celebration. I knew I was just a drop in the ocean and I felt that way. I do remember however, that my mother was very happy. She used to pray to God that He would show some sign to the Khalifa. She was very happy that, in her lifetime, God had revealed to the Khalifa that the claim of his followers was not misplaced — that he was indeed the Promised Reformer.”

The first two meetings at which the Khalifa told of the revelation he had had from God passed off peacefully, though both were attended by thousands of people of other faiths. But by the time

of the third meeting in Delhi in April, 1944, Muslim clerics had mobilised the opposition.

Some 10,000 Ahmadis had gathered in open marquees in a vast open space often used for meetings — it was as big as 40 football pitches. But a much larger crowd completely encircled them. Armed with sticks and stones they chanted for the death of the Khalifa.

“My father did not lose his presence of mind or his concentration,” Tahir recalled. “He continued speaking without paying too much attention to what was happening outside. Only once did he say to those who were acting as marshals ‘Go out and see that they are not allowed to come too close and disturb the audience’.

“But then they committed the error of throwing stones at where the ladies sat. My father was extremely sensitive to the honour of ladies. He would never suffer any discourtesy to them, no matter the consequences. So immediately he told the audience, who were sitting in perfect discipline, to hit back at the attackers with whatever they had.

“The Ahmadis were immediately transformed into something quite different. I remember, along with others, that I immediately rushed out. This sudden burst of people, so highly charged with emotion, completely turned the tables on the attackers.

“We were vastly outnumbered but our attackers turned and fled, falling over each other in their anxiety to get away from us. The entire field was emptied in a very short time.”

Tahir had also rushed out but before he could

reach the foremost attackers he was overpowered from behind and dragged back to the marquee.

“If I had been alone I could have freed myself. It was a boy called Syyed Iqbal Razza, some three or four years older than me but very hefty and strong. I could still manage him for I was good at kabbadi, quite a rough wrestling game, but some other people came up and grabbed me from behind and practically dragged me back. Then they set a watch on me and would not let me go. I was told to help with the injured which was some consolation. Some of them had been quite badly hurt.”

Was it because he was the the son of the Khalifa and his father’s followers did not want him injured?

“I don’t know,” replied Tahir, “but they particularly picked on me. I could almost never forgive Syyed. I was so angry that for many years whenever I saw him I practically boiled with rage.”

His prowess at kabbadi was not exaggerated. “We were divided into two sides and we challenged each other individually. I was particularly good at catching an opponent with a method I had copied from a very good player. It was a sort of ‘flying scissors kick’ and you jump at your opponent’s legs. I used to practise on all sorts of people when I was a small child, other children, relatives who were visiting. I could bring down the strongest man. It was very embarrassing for my mother and I often received a thrashing for what I had done.

“I was much in demand as a player as a result and once, when we were playing at an annual gathering, I broke the leg of an opponent.

“I was shocked. I saw the bone sticking out and I

ran away. I did not want to go out for a few days because of the shame of what I had done and what people would think of a boy who broke other people's legs.

“Then my grandmother said that she wanted to see me. I thought she would be extremely angry and tried to avoid meeting her. But she sent for me. She told me I did not need to feel ashamed, I had not committed a crime. But she advised me not to play kabbadi again in case I broke somebody else's leg.

“I kept my promise until one day some boys pleaded with me to join their team — they were playing a very strong team and they needed help they said. So I joined them and the very first man to whom I applied the flying scissors kick I also broke his leg.

“I was in absolute agony at what I had done. That was a lesson from God that if you promise something like that then you must keep your promise.”

CHAPTER FIVE

No Monopoly in Goodness

In 1944, when Tahir was sixteen and about to take his matriculation exam, his mother died. She had been ill for some time and in hospital in Lahore for more than three months. The Khalifa had stayed with her almost continuously and so had her daughters. Tahir, because of his examinations, had stayed behind in Qadian and only been able to visit her at weekends.

Zafrulla Khan, was a close friend of the family. He was to say later that her death plunged Tahir into grief. From then on laughter and sadness were certainly reflected in his poetry.

His cousin, M. M. Ahmad, recalled, "The recollection which stands out most vividly in my memory is on the occasion of the demise of his mother at the prime of her life, when she was in her 40s. This was a great shock to the entire family, as indeed to the entire Community among whom she was unusually loved and respected.

"At one of the prayers in the Mubarak Mosque I can still see him as a young boy standing in a room leading to the mosque used for the overflow of worshippers. He was in deep grief and devout prayer and supplication to the Almighty.

"I have never been able to forget that poignant scene and, some 46 years later, it stands today as vivid and fresh in my memory as if it had happened

only yesterday. There must have been something so impressionable, so sincere, so devout that the memory of that grief has never left me at any time.”

Though his studies still plodded on without distinction Tahir had become an omnivorous reader. He read not only classical Urdu writers but translations in Urdu of Shakespeare, Charles Dickens, Conan Doyle and other English writers. He found Jerome K. Jerome’s *Three Men in a Boat* uproariously funny.

There was an understanding of European cultural values in his home he says. “It was not at all alien to us for, in some ways, my father was very advanced. For the education of his daughters he was very liberal. He employed first a German governess and then an English governess to teach my sisters. They stayed in our house.

“So from childhood I knew both German and English ways. I knew how they looked at things. And, of course, from reading so many English books I was familiar with English life and English humour.”

Tahir had now started writing poetry. At first he had kept his poems to himself – there are not many young poets who like to expose their thoughts to the scrutiny of parents and brothers and sisters. But then it became known in the family and he was asked to read one.

“It was extremely sad and depressing,” Tahir recalls, “but I was still surprised when I saw that some members of the family were crying.

“After that they used to say to me ‘Come on, recite some of your poems’. Some were very joyous

and happy, sometimes they were humorous, other were very sad. I never seemed to write anything in between.”

His two maternal aunts were to take over his mother’s role and Tahir was to have an immense affection for them. His father supervised his upbringing rather strictly. “In some ways he was very strict. In other ways he was lax. He was interesting – a combination of strictness and laxness.

“My father understood human weakness so he did not want our faults brought to his attention. So he would give you time and opportunity and try to get you to understand. If weaknesses surfaced then he would admonish us without naming the person, saying these things are wrong and they should be avoided.

“But if someone was caught doing something he would come down with a heavy hand. His principles were very firm. In financial affairs he would not tolerate the slightest lapse. As Khalifa he had to train a community for a system of financial sacrifice which was entirely optional. That is why he could never be lenient to those who behaved in a lax way or took liberties.

“With his family he was especially strict. I remember one time that I had written to someone in Calcutta to get something sent to me. He became suspicious and asked, ‘Did you ask for that? Have you paid? Did he offer it as a gift?’

“I replied that he had offered it as a gift, but I had refused. I had partly paid for it and was still paying for it. He became quite angry and told me that gifts came voluntarily, they were not asked for. If you

asked for anything then it must be paid for immediately. Otherwise you were imposing a financial sacrifice on the person you had asked to help you.”

Occasionally the Khalifa would refer to The Promised Messiah if he wanted to underline a certain point. He referred always to him as the Founder of the Community, never as their grandfather.

Once, for instance, he found Tahir leaving the house without a hat. In the West baring the head is a sign of respect in front of people of authority. In the East keeping your head covered is a sign of respect.

The Khalifa therefore called Tahir back to the house. “Look here,” he said. “The Founder of the Community would not like you to go out in to the street like that. So please always wear your hat in future.”

He was also insistent on Islamic customs and practices such as putting the right shoe on first and stepping into the mosque with the right foot.

The need to respect other religions was paramount in his tuition of his children. They were told they must not attempt to monopolise piety, good works and moral values for Islam alone to the exclusion of all other religions. And it was not a sign of a good Muslim to shun your neighbour because he was a Hindu or a Sikh.

The Khalifa naturally knew of the “bridge” that Tahir, his brothers and the Hindu children next door had built to connect their houses. He gave it his approval.

So, though on occasions members of the fundamentalist Hindu Arya Samaj sect would arrive in Qadian to hold a conference and boast that they would destroy the Ahmadiyya Community and everyone in it, this religious excess did not disturb the friendship of the Khalifa's children and their Hindu neighbours.

“We were told not to oppose other religious beliefs by polemics, but with differences of opinion genuinely held. We were never permitted to transfer this difference of opinion to antagonism in the conduct of our daily lives.”

Of the logical truth of Islam Tahir had no doubt, but he was now to go through a period of doubt about the very existence of God.

“I was sure that theoretically God could exist. But did He still exist?”

CHAPTER SIX

Does God Exist?

It is a recognised work of piety in Islam to be able to recite the whole of the Holy Quran from memory. Many start out on the task, but few finish for the Quran consists of 114 chapters and 6,666 verses. It is thus a daunting task. Most Muslims now consider that the mere memorising of the Quran is not sufficient. What is important is the understanding of the Word of God.

Tahir was set to memorising the Quran, but from early on it became apparent that that was a task that would never be completed. Much more interesting for Tahir was the meaning of the words of the Quran. He questioned his teachers, he questioned his brothers, he questioned the Khalifa. He took to studying the Quran intently. It was a discipline that he retained all his life.

Every day he studied a portion of the Quran. He studied also the teachings of Muhammad as contained in the recorded sayings or traditions of The Holy Prophet. He naturally also prayed five times a day and, in the seclusion of his room, he also prayed privately as is ordained in Islam. Prayer was an essential part of the lives of all the Khalifa's children.

Once, when returning with the family to Qadian, the Khalifa discovered that the car's petrol gauge registered zero. They had forgotten to fill the tank.

By this time they were half way back and there were no petrol pumps until they reached Qadian. "Pray that we reach Qadian," he said. "If we do I will give whoever succeeds two gallons of petrol and the use of the car."

It might have been said as a semi-serious joke for his brothers and sisters did nothing. But the car reached Qadian and Tahir burst out, "I've prayed. I've prayed ever since you asked."

The Khalifa kept to his word and Tahir had the use of the car and two gallons of petrol to go out on a picnic.

By the time he was 14 years of age, however, doubts had begun to creep in. By then, though he was interested in scientific studies, he still languished at the bottom of most of his classes, including science. He had, however, started conducting scientific experiments on his own which had nothing to do with the school curriculum.

He had also discovered his father's library. In it were books discussing Darwin's Theory of Evolution, various textbooks of biology and the works of Freud. "I was not old enough to fully understand these books, but they had a general influence, a sort of vague, misty influence on my thinking. I began wondering: Did God exist?"

He fell asleep on many nights with a book in his hand. It was perhaps this constant reading which was responsible for the severe migraine that he now began to suffer from.

He had no doubts about the truth of Islam as compared to other religions. "I was fully convinced that it was logical. As far as the doctrine of the

Ahmadiyya Community is concerned I was never in doubt, never once. I was never in doubt that it was the correct version of Islam. Never in my life have I entertained any doubt regarding this.”

But what disturbed him, he recalls, was the realisation that Islam was built upon the foundation of the belief in God. If there was no foundation then religion was merely an academic discussion and mental exercise – nothing more. Comparative values can only be comparative values.

“That was the first question which I confronted at this stage in my life and the realisation that I was actually questioning the existence of God shook me. In a way I think I was terrified.

“I wanted to be sure. And I could not be sure just by reading books. I wanted a direct method.”

He started by investigating the possibilities of existence of God on a logical basis. “I think that I am logical by nature – it is built in me – so I studied the question of the sheer possibility of the existence of God. As I studied I began to realise that in the different stages of consciousness there are gaps – just as there are gaps between the consciousness of a lower species and the consciousness of man.

“To put it very simply man is conscious of the existence of, say, an ant, but the ant is not conscious of the existence of man. So if there are distances between ant and man there would obviously be a very much greater distance between man and God. So I resolved my first question by humility.”

Tahir having now realised his limitations turned to direct prayer. “It was the most intense period of

my life and I suffered. To believe in something and to base your entire philosophy of life on that something which is so evasive as far as its palpable existence is concerned – that challenge put me into turmoil. I suffered very deeply.”

“I was sure that theoretically God could exist. But did He still exist? And if He does exist, will He show Himself to me?”

Sometimes he went to the mosque and prayed for hours by himself. Sometimes in his room he prayed all through the night.

“I would pray to God: ‘If you exist, then I am in search of you. Let me know that you are there otherwise I may drift astray and may not be held responsible. May be I am responsible, I would pray, but I think that I should not be held responsible.’”

Then, one afternoon, he went through an experience which resolved for him for ever the question of the existence of God. The experience, he says, cannot be looked upon objectively as a potent proof of the existence of God, but he has no doubt that it was God’s answer.

“I was in a state of semi-consciousness – halfway between a dream and reality. I saw the entire earth squeezed into a ball. There was no creation of any sort visible – no life, no cities, nothing – just the earth. Then I saw each particle of the world tremble and burst out into a slogan :OUR GOD! Each particle was proclaiming the reason for its existence.

“The whole world was flooded with a strange light and every atom of the earth began to swell and

contract in rhythm. I found myself repeating the words 'OUR GOD'."

As he returned to full consciousness he could still see it happening. After that he never had any further doubts.

In May, 1990 a cosmic physicist gave a description of his idea of how the world began that bore a strange resemblance to Tahir's experience.

He does not believe that everyone will have a similar mystical experience to prove the existence of God. "God reveals Himself to everyone in accordance with their capacity to experience Him. God is universal and it is the threshold of a person's limitations which determines how that person experiences God."

Much later, when he was Khalifa, he was to comment, "Apart from the normal prayers the Holy Quran advises believers to remember God day and night and to remember Him with their daily experiences, their suffering or unhappiness. It was that area which was most productive for me because I learned to pray during the times of happiness and my emotional consciousness of change.

"It was my father who was instrumental in putting me on to that path. Although he was Head of the Community and he was the one to whom people went with requests for prayers, at times of difficulty he would ask his children to pray, to pray for help for him or to pray for help for the Community."

Tahir was to experience further proof of the existence of God by the fact that God now answered his prayers.

“Even as a child I used to pray and see my prayers being answered. I considered the possibility of it being a psychological phenomenon, but after the proof of the existence of God had been shown to me, the incidence of my prayers being answered became so much more prominent that it was impossible not to notice. Accidental circumstances were not playing a part in this fulfilment. This supportive evidence continued to grow stronger throughout my life and finally I experienced direct revelations from God.”

CHAPTER SEVEN

A Place Called Rabwah

On August 15th, 1945 King George VI, Emperor of India, drove in state to the Palace of Westminster to open the new session of the Houses of Parliament. The socialist Labour Party had been swept into power with a massive majority and had formed a new government.

The Speech from the Throne which he delivered to the assembled members of the House of Lords and the House of Commons was a statement on behalf of the new government for the King is constitutionally above politics and without opinion. The policy of the Labour Party was that all the people of the Empire should organise themselves into independent nations.

“In accordance with the promises already made to my Indian peoples, my Government will do their utmost to promote, in conjunction with the leaders of the Indian opinion, the early realisation of full self-government in India,” said the King.

“That pledge found fulfilment on 15 August, 1947: a tragic fulfilment,” Zafrulla Khan wrote later.

Earl Mountbatten, the last Viceroy of India, was to strive to keep the sub-continent as one political entity, but history was against him. The two main cultures of the sub-continent, Muslim and Hindu, had been parallel to each other for eight centuries.

Naturally they had not failed to act and react upon each, but there had been no large scale mixing and certainly no fusion producing an amalgam. One reason, it was said, was that each derived from religion and between the two religions there was no meeting point.

The result was that the Muslims and Hindus constituted two nations rather than two communities, said observers. The Muslim minority believed that in a united India they would not only always be a numerical minority but also an oppressed minority.

The partition of India began. People who had lived for years as neighbours without illwill suddenly hated each other. No one was safe.

Everywhere people began to arm themselves. Tahir was a member of the Ahmadiyya youth movement, Khuddamul-Ahmadiyya, and they were formed into companies and battalions for the defence of Qadian. Seventy thousand Muslims flooded in from outlying villages. All around them were hostile Sikhs and Hindus.

“We had known how to shoot from childhood and we were used to working in an organisation and taking orders so we were able to organise ourselves immediately,” Tahir recalled. “There were no ranks, but we were told ‘This person is your superior’.

“In a little while a number of regular soldiers were sent to our area and each was given the command of a certain district. He appointed various officers and we were told to obey the orders of a certain person. It was always someone we knew.

“The others were unknown to us. It was a well-

guarded system so that if somebody was captured and questioned he would not know who was in command in the area and how the other commands were organised.

“There were no ranks. We just knew who we had been told to obey.”

Tahir’s prowess in sports and shooting made it natural that he was appointed as the officer in charge of one of these irregular units. He was told that it was his task to organise the defence of the centre of Qadian against any attack.

“It was a very important appointment, but it did not please me. I suspected – and I still do believe – that it was designed to keep me out of trouble. Not trouble in the sense of personal danger, but rather that I was young and might seek a clash instead of avoiding it. So they put other people – older people – in the perimeter areas where there was more likely to be trouble and kept me in the centre

“It didn’t please me at all. I was therefore never involved in any action.”

But he was involved in some alarms and military excursions. They concerned the guns of the Muslims which he had gathered together in Qadian.

“They were all licensed individually so that was a bit of a deviation from the strict rule of law. But it meant that when there was danger of an attack weapons could suddenly be produced and just as quickly hidden away again. Very few people knew where they were kept.

“So that was one of my tasks. Once, when a large consignment of extra guns arrived, a hole was dug

in the floor of my house and the arms deposited and the ground filled in and levelled again. I was told not to touch it and to forget all about it until I was given orders. The room was locked and the men departed.

“When I had first thought of a hiding place I asked all the men with me to suggest a place where these guns could be concealed without being detected. They proposed all sorts of places and when they were finished I said, ‘Well, let’s look now for a place that’s not been mentioned’.

“The place that had not been mentioned was the chimney!

“So I ordered that a small fire should be lit and kept on night and day. But first of all we opened up the chimney and placed racks in it so that the weapons could be placed there quite easily.

“Some time later it looked as though it were going to rain so I had sent a volunteer up on the roof to close up the chimney openings in case the rain should damage the rifles. While he was on the roof I noticed a Sikh woman watching him and that disturbed me. So as soon as possible I had all the guns taken down. I took them to the house of my future mother-in-law. Because I had to be back at my post as quickly as possible I left them on a bed quite openly.

“The next morning I was out early and discovered there were Indian army soldiers everywhere. They were two very tough units – the Marhatis and the Dogras – and unfortunately they contained many soldiers who were anti-Muslim. Soon it was announced that they were going to

search all the houses for guns. Ours was naturally one of the first houses they started to search.

“I had three immediate worries – there were the guns under the floor, there were the rifle racks in the chimneys – and I was scared that in the rush we might perhaps have left something there – while in my bedroom I had a large number of cartridges which I was changing from small to larger slugs.

“The soldiers went straight to the room where the guns had been buried and started digging. But the guns had gone!

“Later on I was told that the guns had been required very quickly elsewhere so they had come and dug them up when I was away with the other guns.

“It was a Hindu neighbour who had heard the sound of digging when they were first buried and had alerted the army. After that the soldiers went straight to the chimney. The Sikh woman had told them we were doing something to the chimney. They let a soldier down from the top, but there was nothing there – only one box of .25 cartridges. As we had licences we were entitled to have them though I admit it was a very strange place to keep them.

“Then they went into my room where the cartridges were in boxes in my bureau. One soldier picked up a box and shook it.

“Walnuts,” he said. “Just walnuts.” He shut the drawer.

“This was the only real crisis I personally faced in Qadian and the town, though surrounded by Sikh marauders, was never attacked.”

Tahir, however, was to write of the feelings of himself and his companions at that time in a letter to an aunt. Not only were they ready to die, but they had no fear about death he said. They did not feel pity for themselves because they did not feel they were making a sacrifice. They did not feel any pain even at the thought of never seeing their dearest ones ever again.

Every three weeks or so, he added, some of them were withdrawn and sent to Pakistan and those who had been ordered to leave would cry all night at the thought of leaving.

“I expressed my views very plainly and openly, so much so that my aunt took a copy of the letter and gave it to the editor of the Ahmadi daily newspaper, the Alfazal Daily, because she thought people would be interested in what a boy of 17 or 18 was thinking at that time.

“But he refused to publish it. It was too outspoken. Many years later, when I had forgotten all about it, she produced it from a box and let me read it again. I was surprised at how I had written it.”

The letter was to have unforeseen consequences for Tahir. The Second Khalifa read the letter and became very worried.

“He knew me very well. He thought I would go out of my way to get killed, almost by intention. So about a month later I was on the list of those ordered to leave Qadian for Lahore. I remember for two or three days I suffered enormously.

“I thought my superiors had noticed some weakness in me and I was being punished for that, or rather moved away because I was not capable of

doing what they needed me to do. It was a very painful experience for me.”

The organisation of the Ahmadi youth into a well-trained militia was to save the lives of many Muslims. And so was the foresight of the Second Khalifa. The Muslims of many Punjab villages were massacred. Convoys were attacked, looted and anyone who fell into their hands was butchered mercilessly, but for thirty miles around Qadian the Ahmadi patrols kept the terrorists away from the villages under their protection.

And they did not starve. Qadian, normally a town of some 20,000 people, now housed over 80,000 refugees. “Instead of ordering enough wheat for just one annual conference my father had ordered enough for two or three conferences. He knew that there would be an influx of refugees and food would be scarce.

“As a result lorry loads of wheat were soon going out of Qadian to major towns like Amritsar instead of the reverse. The Muslim papers wrote about this help from the Ahmadiyya Movement very truthfully. It was not the big towns that were helping their fellow Muslims, they said, but the people whom they had called ‘infidels’ in the past.

“So there were days when we slept very little. We worked day and night loading lorries and then going on guard duty.”

* * *

In August, 1947, however, the Community faced an unexpected crisis – the entire area had fallen inside

the territory allocated to India. After much heart-searching the Khalifa ordered the evacuation. Qadian, the place where Ahmad had been born, lived and was buried was naturally a holy town for all Ahmadis, but their future lay in Pakistan, the country they had helped create.

One day, however, the Khalifa promised, the Community would return to Qadian.

On August 31st the mosques, the schools, the office building and private homes were locked and shuttered and an immense convoy of trucks protected by army units rumbled out of Qadian. On board was every thing they could take. The convoy, menaced constantly by Sikhs, took them to Lahore and the new state of Pakistan.

Three hundred and thirteen Ahmadis stayed behind to look after the property of the Community until they could return again. It was the same number of followers who had been with Muhammad, The Holy Prophet, at the battle of Badr.

In Pakistan the members of the Community dispersed to start a new life. Their skills and education were in keen demand in their new homeland.

The Khalifa had prophesied that they would have to leave Qadian. His revelation was published in the Movement's newspaper Al Fazal in December, 1941. But he was equally certain that they would return. In the meantime they would establish a new city – it was set in a green and pleasant area with many trees and sparkling fountains. The land was studded with hillocks.

The 1,034 acres on the west bank of the river Chenab that the Community purchased from the Government did not correspond to the revelation of the Second Khalifa. There were no trees. There was no water. The soil was salty. Its only inhabitants appeared to be snakes and scorpions, wolves and jackals. One Ahmadi writer has described its original condition as “a howling wilderness”.

The valley lay some six miles from the town of Chiniot on the road from Lahore to Sargodha and was some three miles long and a mile wide. To the north it was hemmed in by a mountain of black stone.

There were certain advantages, however. The river Chenab flowed through the valley and the railway line from Lahore to Sargodha, which bisected the land they had bought, gave the promise of easy communications at some future date.

But most important of all was the fact that here they could be left alone.

“We have preferred this wilderness to cities to make people aware of their duties, to organise them and to provide them with education and moral training,” said the Khalifa.

This valley, some 600 ft above sea level and some 20 odd feet above the nearby plains, would be their place of refuge just as the Quran describes how God had given Mary and Jesus refuge.

“And We made the son of Mary and his mother a Sign and gave them shelter on an elevated land of green valleys and springs of running water.” (23:51)

In Arabic the word for such an elevated piece of land is Rabwah. That therefore should be the

name of their new town, the Khalifa decided

Earlier, when he had first seen the valley, he had stated, "The place of refuge which I saw in my dreams resembles this in many respects. It is studded with hillocks, for instance. But it is desolate while the place I saw was lush green. Perhaps this place will become so through our efforts."

The plans for the new town were approved and the first Ahmadis arrived on site on September 19th, 1948. They were to erect the tents which would provide temporary accommodation for the volunteers who would build the new town. Among them was Tahir.

The first buildings were built with home-made mud bricks and doors and windows bought from demolition sites.

Undistinguished little mud brick buildings soon began to fill the 3,000 residential plots specified in the town plan.

Life was not easy. Each family was allocated two bedsteads, one lamp and one bucket for household use. The supply of water was minimal. Geologists had said there was water underneath the land, but it could not be found. It was not until seven months later, in April, 1949, that the first successful well was sunk.

To keep up the spirits of the Community a loudspeaker system had been set up so that messages could be broadcast and heard by everyone working in Rabwah. One night the Khalifa was in his house when the loudspeaker crackled and came alive and he heard the voice of a young man reciting a dramatic poem.

Their hard work was being rewarded said the young man. Success was within their grasp. It urged every Ahmadi on to even greater efforts.

The Khalifa came out of his house to listen better and stood at the fence surrounding the garden.

“That’s the kind of poem we need at a time like this,” he said. “I wonder who it is.”

His wife stared at him. “Don’t you recognise his voice,” she said. “It’s Tahir.”

The Khalifa made noise in his throat and went inside without saying anything further. To the casual onlooker it might have seemed that he was almost annoyed that he had accidentally praised Tahir.

In a way it was true. He knew the secret to which Tahir’s mother had sworn a friend to absolute secrecy.

Tahir himself was in no doubt about the great love his father had for all his children, himself included.

“But he always tried to keep his emotions under control,” he said.

CHAPTER EIGHT

A London Interlude

By 1954 the sanctuary of green valleys and springs of running water that the Second Khalifa had seen in the revelation had started to become true. Rabwah was now a town of forty-five thousand inhabitants which grew to more than 250,000 during the annual gathering in December. Wide-paved streets lined with trees had replaced the rutted tracks, the little buildings of mud bricks were changing to prosperous two-storey buildings of brick. In the centre of the town, gleaming in white brilliance, stood the elegant mosque of Mubarak. It could hold five thousand worshippers.

It was here, on an afternoon in March, 1954, when the Second Khalifa was leading the afternoon service, that a young man advanced from the front line and drove a long, sharp knife into his neck. His attacker was instantly secured and, with help, the Khalifa was able to walk back to his quarters. A wad of cotton cloth staunched the bleeding.

The wound inflicted by his attempted murderer – he was sentenced to a long term of imprisonment – was deep and grievous. Though the wound itself was to heal rapidly it was to have a serious effect on his nervous system. He was 65 years of age, his health had never been robust and now he found himself unable to work for long periods. Some two

years later it was decided to seek the advice of specialists in London.

Tahir was one of the family members who were chosen to go with him. The Second Khalifa had dedicated all his sons to the Movement and Tahir, leaving university without a degree, had therefore started work on the lowest rung of the youth movement. He soon proved not only to be a good administrator, but an exceptionally hard worker.

One of his friends recalls, "Tahir was a frequent and welcome visitor to our home for he travelled extensively on the Movement's business. He showed inexhaustible energy and devotion to his work. He travelled light and often came driving his own car with the driver sitting in the back seat.

"It often happened that he would arrive late at night when the family was asleep and leave at the crack of dawn before anyone had the chance to meet him."

The Second Khalifa decided that Tahir should go on ahead to London and wait for him there while he took the opportunity to visit members of the Community in Switzerland, Germany and other countries on the way.

In London the verdict of the specialists was discouraging – the tip of the knife had broken and was embedded in his jugular vein, but it was too dangerous to try to remove it. He must therefore take more rest and, hopefully in time, his health would improve. But he would never be able to work the long hours that he had done in the past.

The Khalifa decided to return to his post in Rabwah. He left Tahir, now aged 26, behind in

London though the original intention had been that he would accompany his father back to Pakistan. He had made new plans for him.

“My educational background was so poor,” Tahir was to recall, “that it was impossible for the University of London to admit me in the normal way. But fortunately my father knew Sir Ralph Turner, who was the director of the School of Oriental and African Studies. He waived the admission conditions and just admitted me. So that is how I became a student of the University of London.

“But unfortunately my habits did not change. Instead of learning what I was supposed to learn I started meeting people, going places, visiting towns, hitch-hiking all over Britain, socialising, playing squash, everything except the prescribed course. I lived as a truant and I was accepted as such.

“I don’t know whether it would be right to say that I was popular, but it seemed everyone on my course knew me and I knew everybody. It was a tremendously happy time. I made many, many friends. It was a very, very pleasant time.”

After he had listened to the BBC world news on his bedside radio, Tahir would usually turn to the light dance music coming from Radio Luxembourg. “I found it very relaxing,” he recalls.

He also bought a car. The allowance his father made him was sufficient to pay for his single room in Maida Vale and his food, provided he cooked mostly for himself, and some leisure activities. But it did not stretch to luxuries of any kind. After hitchhiking down to the Royal Air Force college at

Cranwell to meet some friends he heard that a student had a car to sell. It was a Morris, just 10 horsepower, and already 23 years old. It cost Tahir £42.

It was not a bargain, he said later. It was only worth about £15.

“It was a very interesting car,” he recalled. “I wasn’t a mechanic in any kind of way, but I gradually learnt to be a mechanic with the help of that car. With two companions, Mahmud Nasir, who was training to be a missionary, and Afzal Bari, I went all over Europe in that car. We sometimes had to push it a very long way!”

His fellow students knew him as a good companion. “His eyes always seemed to be friendly and he was able to laugh at all sorts of things. It seemed to me he was a kind person,” says one.

“He was good fun to be with, not fun in the sense that he was always cracking boring jokes, but fun in the sense that it was good to be in his company,” says another.

Mr Aftab Ahmad Khan, later to be Pakistan’s ambassador in a number of countries, but then a young diplomat at the Pakistan High Commission, remembers that Tahir came to lunch one Sunday. Their daughter was then one and a half and after lunch Tahir told them, “Leave me here. I’ll do the baby-sitting. You and your wife go out for a long walk for it isn’t often that you are both able to have some free time together.”

They did.

There was another side to his character that only a few of his fellow students knew.

He continued to write poetry in Urdu in his single bed-sitting room in Maida Vale. At that time personal tape recorders were a revolutionary technological development, even though they were as heavy and big as an office typewriter and had to be plugged into an electricity supply. Anwar Ahmad Kahlon was taking one home to Pakistan and suggested to Tahir that he record some of his poems which he would play to the Second Khalifa when he returned to Rabwah.

It so happened that Zafrulla Khan visited his nephew Anwar before he left for Pakistan and Anwar showed off his tape recorder, playing back the poems Tahir had recorded.

Zafrulla Khan listened intently to the poems, many of them sad, then commented, “They show the scars left by the death of his mother”.

Many years later, when told of Zafrulla Khan’s comments, Tahir commented, “You know when I started writing poetry it was always very full of pathos, it was an expression of suffering. I could not write poetry on ordinary things. It had to be emotionally charged or humorous – there was no middle way.

“So that could have been related to the trauma which Zafrulla Khan mentioned.

“But it was not entirely that. I could privately suffer for the sufferings of others around me. Instead of saying how I felt I would give expression to that sorrow in poetry.

“When my father heard these poems I was told that all he said was that he wished young people would ‘look up’. By that he meant that I should

'look up' in the sense of looking forward to redressing these wrongs and I should have expressed myself in that form.

"My father was very cautious about praising us in any way or letting us know he liked something. Occasionally he made a remark of appreciation. Otherwise he kept quiet. He wanted us to develop independently, without any support from him.

"He always tried to make us aware that we were ordinary people and that we had no special advantages in being his sons."

* * *

Tahir had learned English both at school and university and though he could read English his spoken English was poor. At London University he took a course in English phonetics.

"First I had to demolish entirely the way I was speaking – it was totally wrong. The people who had taught me English did not really know English. They knew how to construct sentences grammatically, but grammatically correct sentences may be absolutely wrong as far as spoken English is concerned.

"Once you are used to an incorrect pronunciation you never notice, even if you listen to the BBC, that you are mispronouncing words. So that was my dilemma. I had to forget what I had been taught in English and start again. So I told all my friends, 'Please do not be polite. Correct me if I say something wrong.' Sometimes this was a very bitter experience. I could not get a sentence out without

someone interrupting and saying, ‘You don’t say it that way’.

“But gradually I got used to it and learned how to express myself better. I was always fascinated by the way certain factors could influence people as well as phonetics. So I studied this with a lot of interest. And it was successful because I passed the phonetics course with honours.”

He continued, “But I failed my other course, however. I must admit that I did not study for it as I should have. But perhaps I studied in other ways. I met a lot of people in all kinds of situations. I think I had somehow given myself a different kind of preparation for the job I was to have.

“Before I had lived only in India and Pakistan. Now I had lived in Europe and at the School of Oriental Studies I had met people from all over the world – from Africa, from Germany and Poland, from all parts of Europe really. And from America and Canada and South America. I believe that was important, that God had decided that was what I should do even though I did not know it at the time. He had decided that I should meet all these people and that I should go out and travel in Europe.

“I think that was His design. The Ahmaddiyya Movement, though we naturally did not know it, was going to face tremendous challenges and we were going to move our headquarters temporarily to London. So it was important that I spoke and understood English for that was the language in which I would be able to reach the majority of the people when our persecution began.

“And my exile in Britain has allowed me to help

carry out what God had said to The Promised Messiah – that He would carry his message to the far corners of the earth.”

CHAPTER NINE

Work and Pleasure

Tahir's return to Rabwah in 1957, even without a diploma except in English, was a great comfort to his father whose health had now entered into a steady decline. It was also to provide an example of his independence of thought. An Ahmadi who met him in Karachi counselled him, "Don't wear a suit. They will think you too Europeanised. Wear your achkan and shalwar."

The achkan is a coat jacket which buttons to the neck and the shalwar are loose cotton trousers. They are normal Muslim clothes.

Tahir answered, "Why should I wear something merely to impress people." As a result he changed into his best suit. "I didn't do it to impress people that I had been to Europe, but because I didn't want to be false."

After a short holiday, which gave Tahir opportunity to renew friendships and understand new procedures, the Khalifa told him of the post he was to take up. He was to join the Waqf-e-Jadid which looked after the needs of Ahmadis living in rural communities in Pakistan. In addition he was shortly afterwards elected head of the youth movement.

His new post in the Waqf-e-Jadid put Tahir in direct contact with the small farmers and villagers and shopkeepers who were one of the great strengths of the Community. "I had to look after

these communities, to find out how well they were maintaining their standard of faith and dedication.

“I had to look after their secular knowledge as well and see how they could be helped in any way that was possible – perhaps with experts in agriculture who could show them improved methods, or engineers and doctors and nurses who could help with water supplies or medical knowledge. And, of course, teachers.

“It is our aim that every boy and girl should be literate – a 100 per cent literacy rate was what we wanted among Ahmadis. As far as possible we want every Ahmadi boy to reach matriculation standard in every country in the world.

“At the moment I think nearly 100 per cent of Ahmadi women in Rabwah are literate and some 70 per cent of the men so our belief is that roughly 80 per cent of Ahmadis are literate in Pakistan. The literacy rate in Pakistan used to be 27 per cent.

“In my new post I travelled constantly in Pakistan and Bangladesh – it was East Pakistan at that time – and really got to know people. As a boy I was of course a member of the Ahmadiyya Youth Movement, the Khuddam-ul-Ahmadiyya, and started on the lowest rung. Working at that level gave me a good training for I served under various people.

“I worked under officers who were unkind and dictatorial, who demanded submission but did not know kindness. So that made me understand the situation of people working under you and, of course, in the Movement there is total submission. I gave my superiors total submission and this gave

me a wealth of experience about how people should work.”

He was soon to notice that as well as looking at people when they were facing him it was worthwhile looking at them when they were facing away from him and talking to other people.

“So I went much further than just working with the people with whom I was in immediate contact. I wanted to know what their image was with their subordinates because I might otherwise be getting a totally false impression of what was happening.”

He was also to encourage every Ahmadi to write to him if he had any praise or was dissatisfied in any way. “Especially if he was dissatisfied. There was only one condition – if it was a complaint then the person who was complained about must be sent a copy of the letter.”

The system worked extremely well. In addition Tahir started receiving comments and suggestions about how things could be made better, ideas that might never have occurred to the people who were doing the organising.

“As regards the complaints after a while I began to have the knack of judging who was in the right and who was in the wrong. I would always ask for explanations and if the superior officer was in the wrong I would tell him so without hesitation.”

His leadership combined both kindness and strictness. Most people responded to kindness, but there were a few, he discovered, who he had to reprimand.

“So strictness was necessary. If you asked for something to be done they had to know that you

did want it done immediately and not when they thought they would like to do it.”

He summed up his method of leadership with the following words, “It is a question of trying to impart your whole personality to the people you work with. There is no other way I know – it can’t be taught by just words. You must treat people in the way you want them to treat others.”

There had never been any suspicion, despite his poor record at passing examinations, that Tahir was a worker. He had just put his intelligence to work on a vast range of subjects and had not been concerned about passing examinations. Now he put both his intelligence and his industry to work.

He was at his office at 8 a.m., an hour and a half before anyone else and he left long after everyone else had left, often at 10 p.m. Even on Fridays, which was a holiday for everyone, he was at the office until noon, went to the Aqsa mosque where the Khalifa would preach to around 15,000 people and then he returned to the office.

“I never felt tired. I found work exhilarating,” he said.

He also read almost every letter that came into the office. They usually fell into various categories and so his staff could answer them almost without reference to him. But as they were addressed to him Tahir liked to be able to inspect the different files each day.

“I could not read them all but I could sample them. In that way I kept myself up to date both in what was being said and done in every area where I had responsibility. Sometimes I would discover that

not enough was being done. Most often I discovered how hard and well people were working, what long hours they worked with true dedication.”

It was a system that he had perfected by the time he was elected khalifa.

If he was suddenly without work Tahir almost found himself at a loss. “I always felt tired. It was such a sordid experience, a feeling of blankness. How could you fill it. I was deeply bored.

“So of course I pursued other pleasures. I went cycling. I played badminton. I went horse riding and swimming. I went for very long walks.”

He played squash. His first lesson had been from the world champion Hashim Khan and in London he had played for his college, the School of Oriental and African Studies.

He undertook a private tour of the United States and stayed in Washington, with Mr M. M. Ahmad who was now working for the World Bank. Mr Ahmad recalls, “The qualities I remember were his curiosity and thirst for knowledge, his study of people and the close contact he made immediately with Ahmadis scattered all over the country. He showed unbelievable energy, stamina and bold initiative.

“He travelled in a rented car, driving from coast to coast with minimum stoppages – a whirlwind tour but gathering more than others do in periods of prolonged stay.”

One of Tahir’s other sports was hunting. The killing of an animal is authorised in Islam if you are going to use it for food. Hunting or shooting for pleasure is not.

“I do not like the rearing of birds and animals so that people can come and shoot them. To my mind that is just slaughter and I never take part in that. It is quite different if the animal is in the wild and you use your skills to kill or catch it.”

Cooking had always been one of his great pleasures and some of the pigeons, partridges and other birds – with occasionally a small deer – that he shot ended up in the barbecues he organised for the boys of the youth association who had come to Rabwah from abroad.

Other guests went to his home. On one occasion he entertained some officials from India who did not know him very well. Anwar Ahmad, who had often sampled his culinary skills when Tahir was in London, was also a guest. As one course succeeded the other the guests began to praise his cook.

“This is truly excellent,” said one. “I wish we had a cook like this. He has gone to tremendous trouble for us. You must thank him from us.”

“You don’t think that he would like to move to India?” one of the other guests said jokingly.

“I think he is quite happy here,” replied Tahir, “but I will tell him of your offer.”

His face was quite straight, but Anwar Ahmad caught what could only be described as a wink.

He knew that the cook was Tahir himself!

He was to say that the most important thing for him in cooking was the balance of chilli and salt. “The food should not be very fatty – the less fatty the better for me. And it should not be too dry. Or if it is dry it should be very dry, for instance, overdone chicken tikka, not half-done.

“But the balance of chilli and salt is the most important thing and the ability to cover the smell of certain foods by the way you cook them. When I cook meat or fish I like to subdue the smell because I do not like certain food smells as much as other people.”

There are some foods he does not like. “I used to be very fond of oranges. Later, perhaps because I had eaten too many of them, I developed an allergy for them and now I cannot tolerate them. It is the same with foods like cauliflower. I used to like occra very much, but unfortunately they don’t agree with me.”

And alcohol?

“It would be false to say that I dislike alcohol so much that I dislike even the smell. That would be posing and Islam teaches the truth. When I was doing experiments in my laboratory that fruity smell of alcohol never offended me and, of course, the colours were so beautiful – different colours, shades and hues.”

He had married in 1957 the year he returned from London. His bride was Asifa Begum. He had written from London to his father to say that he was thinking of Asifa, whom he had known from childhood, and he would be glad if he would approach Asifa’s family to know her feelings. They were the same as his.

After their marriage they occupied one of the eleven houses the Khalifa had built for his sons. They consisted of three bedrooms, a living-room and a kitchen with a small enclosed yard. Tahir also had a farm. ‘Farm’ is perhaps a grandiose word to

describe the 25 acres of near scrubland, but here Tahir could keep horses – which he trained himself – and buffalos to provide milk.

Cycling the three miles to the farm at 6 a.m. became a daily routine – and a daily pleasure. “I loved going out before anyone was up and about. Everything was cool and fresh and I had a chance to look at my animals, to care for them. It also gave me the opportunity to think by myself. The rest of my day was so organised and so busy that this moment of calmness became a great pleasure for me.”

His marriage brought him the pleasures and privileges of fatherhood. His first daughter, Shaukat, was born in August, 1960. Three other daughters followed – Faiza born in October, 1961, Mona born in September, 1971, and Tooba born in April, 1974.

His children brought him great pleasure. “We used to play at catching each other and compete to see who could climb a certain tree. We played at hide and seek. I felt exactly their age when I played with them – it was my pleasure and relaxation.”

On the farm he constructed a small swimming pool and taught them to swim. He bought a trampoline. When his eldest daughter was old enough she used to cycle with him to the farm to collect the milk.

He delighted in telling them bedtime stories, often out of the Bible. And in the family album there is a picture, taken by a friend who was waiting, of Shaukat clapping her hands in excitement as a story reached its climax while Faiza

sits on his knee wrapped in a quilt.

When they were ill it was often Tahir who nursed them through the night.

CHAPTER TEN

Politics and Persecution

It is one of the ironies of histories that the Ahmadiyya Movement is so persecuted in Pakistan, the country it was instrumental in founding. It is equally ironic that the religious scholars or ulama, who had so violently opposed the creation of Pakistan, should be their persecutors. Opposition to the Ahmadiyya Movement has usually been religious, but often it has been politically inspired in order to divert the attention of the population from real problems or to achieve a political victory by unsavoury means.

So it was with the Ahmadiyya Movement. With other Muslims there are fundamental disagreements about the Movement's central tenets of belief, but these have often been exacerbated for political reasons – some internal, some international. Few people would deny, however, that Ahmadis are good neighbours and good citizens and, if it were not for these beliefs, that they conduct themselves as good Muslims.

But it is convenient for politicians to have a scapegoat. The denunciation of the Ahmadiyya Movement for purely political motives has left the perpetrators with an ugly heritage.

Tahir, whose work had taken him all over West and East Pakistan and thus into contact with politicians of all parties, gradually began to act as a

kind of liaison officer with the various political parties.

“We had a campaign of meeting politicians and understanding their policies. It was not meddling with politics. What we were concerned with was the survival of Pakistan and the survival of the Community. We could not isolate ourselves and divorce ourselves from what was happening in the country.”

Some received him politely though they were opposed to the belief in the prophethood of Ahmad. Others were completely secular and opposed to all religions. Some he grew to know quite well, each respecting the sincerity of the other person. Others, who were nominally neutral as far as the Movement was concerned, he found untrustworthy and two-faced.

To one he said, “Sir, I have met many political leaders, but you are the weakest of them all, totally without power.”

“If he could have slapped my face he would have done so. He became very angry. But he also became very curious. I had uttered these words deliberately. I knew I must create an earthquake in him or he would not be interested in me. So I told him my concept of leadership, a person who leads his people away from catastrophes, not one who is at the front of a huge crowd and is pushed along by events. I told him that he was riding a fury and that when the crowd had achieved what they wanted they would turn against him and he would become an object of hatred.

“He had granted me half an hour, but in the end I

stayed with him for three and a half hours. So you see our objective is not to gain power, but to help politicians to understand things better for the welfare of the country and the people – which is a role assigned to every citizen, not just us.

“Unfortunately, as regards that particular politician, my prediction proved to be correct and in the end he was swallowed up by the very fury he had tried to ride.”

The Promised Messiah had always kept out of politics and had indicated that those who followed him should also keep out of direct involvement in politics. But moral guidance, Tahir was to say later, was the Khalifa’s responsibility. Religion can never be totally disassociated from politics. It is the duty of all religions to keep reminding politicians of their moral obligations to mankind.

“We must advise them, but we must not meddle,” he said.

Tahir was to repeat constantly then, and also in later years, that though the Ahmadiyya Movement supported an Islamic state and though Islam was an all-comprising religion, it did not mean that an Islamic state should be governed by a theocracy.

“The ultimate essence of Islamic teachings is a system of government which does not make any differentiation between one religion and another. Nor does it give preferential treatment to the followers of one religion as against the other.”

* * *

During the second half of the 19th century Muslim

leadership and faith in India was in disarray. In the first half, by conquest, Sikhs had taken over many territories previously ruled by Muslims. Then British military power, fuelled by the Industrial Revolution in Britain, took over and the Indian Empire was born.

In an analysis of Muslim political activity an ambassador of Pakistan was to write that in the last half of the 19th century Muslims in India “had fallen into an abyss of spiritual decadence and political disarray from which there seemed no hope of escape”.

One of the principal functions of The Promised Messiah, according to a prophecy of Muhammad, was to revive the faith of Islam and the publication of the first book of Ahmad was to win high praise from Muslims throughout India.

“In my opinion, this book (Braheen-e-Ahmadiyya) at this time and in view of the present conditions, is unique. No such book has so far been written in the annals of Islam,” wrote Maulvi Muhammad Hussain, a distinguished Islamic scholar who was later to become one of The Promised Messiah’s most bitter enemies.

Muslims had at first supported the All-India Congress Party, which sought the independence of India as one nation, but in 1905 they began to have doubts about their future in a state where Hindus would have a majority of four to one. The British had established a strong central government with a single army and unified services, even though there were many nominally independent states with their own rulers scattered throughout the sub-continent.

At the heart of all Britain's policies for India was the geo-political concept of a united India. That did not mean, however, that administrative efficiency should be abandoned and in 1905, Lord Curzon, Viceroy of India, announced that Bengal, grown cumbersome, would be split into two with a new province of East Bengal and Assam. The Muslim peasantry of Eastern Bengal believed it to be a good idea, but the Hindus of Bengal were violently opposed to the change. It was the first clear sign, it has been said, that the political and economic interests of Hindus and Muslims could be diametrically opposed.

A year later, in 1906, one result was the formation in Dacca of the All India Muslim League. The concept of a united India had started to fray at the edges.

In 1911, under Hindu pressure, the Viceroy yielded and the division of Bengal in two administrative units was annulled. The Viceroy's decision disillusioned many Muslims. The Two Nation plan for India began to take shape.

* * *

The Ahmadiyya Movement was at the forefront of these Muslim activities. In 1928, after studying the constitutional plan devised by a committee of the All India Congress Party, the Second Khalifa highlighted the dangers this plan could mean for Muslims in a book entitled "Muslim Rights And The Nehru Plan".

A little earlier, a distinguished Muslim, Maulana

Muhammad Ali Jauhar, paid tribute to the work of the Ahmaddiyya Movement in fighting for an independent Muslim state in India with these words, "It will be ungrateful if we do not mention (the Second Khalifa) and his well-disciplined Community who have devoted all their efforts, irrespective of doctrinal differences, towards the welfare of the Muslims. These gentlemen are, on the one hand, taking an active interest in the politics of Muslims and, on the other, energetically engaged in promoting the unity, organisation, trade and preaching among Muslims.

"The time is not far away when the attitude of this organised sect of Islam will provide guidance for the Muslim nation in general and for those persons in particular who are idly sitting under the domes of Bismillah and making boastful and empty claims of service to Islam."

The Second Khalifa and the Ahmadiyya Movement were also to play an important role in securing fundamental social and political rights for Muslims in Kashmir who were ruled autocratically by a Hindu maharajah.

The Movement's pre-eminent role in the creation of Pakistan, however, was to secure the return of Muhammad Ali Jinnah to India to fight for an independent Islamic state. Dismayed by the lack of unity among Muslims, Mr Jinnah, after the Third Round Table Conference in 1932, decided to settle in London and pursue a legal career. The Second Khalifa, convinced that Mr Jinnah was the only man who had the political experience and ability to lead the Muslims, told Mr A. R. Dard, the Ahmadi

missionary in London, that he must try to persuade Mr Jinnah to return to India.

Mr Dard eventually succeeded and a garden party was held at the London Mosque to celebrate his departure where Mr Jinnah announced to the 200 distinguished guests that it was Mr Dard who had persuaded him to return to India.

“The eloquent persuasion of the Imam left me no escape,” he said.

The rest is history for Mr Jinnah returned to India and resumed his struggle for the political rights of India’s Muslims. On March 23rd, 1940, the All India Muslim League, under the presidency of Mr Jinnah, adopted a resolution on the future constitutional structure of India.

The crucial paragraph ran as follows, “Resolved that it is the considered view of this Session of the All India Muslim League that no constitutional plan would be workable in this country, or acceptable to the Muslims unless it is designed on the following basic principles, viz., that geographically contiguous units are demarcated into regions which should be so constituted, with such territorial readjustments as may be necessary, that the areas in which the Muslims are numerically in a majority, should be grouped to constitute Independent States in which the constituent units shall be autonomous and sovereign.”

Pakistan was created in 1947 under Muhammad Ali Jinnah’s leadership.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

The Struggle for Pakistan

The support of the Ahmadiyya Movement for an Islamic state was closely monitored by the Viceroy's government. In 1934 there was wide-scale rioting in the Punjab and other parts of India with the houses of Ahmadis looted and burned. Until then there had been sporadic harassment of individual Ahmadis, never of the Community as a whole. It was led by the Ahrar Movement, an anti-Ahmadiyya organisation.

The Governor of the Punjab, a Mr Emerson, was to lay the blame at the feet of the Ahmadiyya Movement. Their belief that Jesus did not die on the Cross, he reported to the India Office, made them not only a potential danger to Christianity, but also to the Empire – they could be the cause of further inter-communal rioting. They should therefore not only be watched most seriously but plans laid to see if the Movement could be discredited.

He gave orders that the sermons of the Second Khalifa should be taken down in shorthand to see if, in any way, he could be found to be preaching sedition and so put on trial and jailed. The arrival of a police stenographer on a motorbike to take down the Friday sermon became a regular event in Qadian. Mr Emerson later told Zafrulla Khan, a member of the Viceroy's Council and, of course a prominent Ahmadi, that the Second Khalifa was

“like an eel – you grab hold of him yet somehow he slips through your fingers.

“When I studied the reports of his sermons I would think that I had him,” he said. “But a few sentences further on he had wriggled out of my grasp.”

The political philosophy of the Movement as a whole was that laid down by The Promised Messiah – if the government guaranteed religious and political liberty and allowed its citizens to prosper peacefully then it was a good government and should be supported. But that did not in any way prevent individual Ahmadi pressing for further political liberties.

“The Community as such is a non-political organisation, but every Ahmadi in every country has his political rights and the stronger they are in the exercise of these rights the more they personally can achieve something,” Tahir was to say.

The enthusiasm of the Ahmadiyya Movement for an independent Islamic state and the semi-official opposition of the Governor of the Punjab to the Community is in contradiction to widely-circulated statements of political opponents of the Ahmadi that the Community was an invention and stratagem of the Viceroy’s government – by dividing the Muslims they could rule them more easily.

Despite the newspaper reports in British national newspapers of Mr Jinnah at the tea party at the London Mosque to celebrate his departure for India and written documentation this accusation is still brought out. It is true but unfortunate that if you

say something often enough some people will believe you.

The tragic and horrible consequences of religious fanaticism during Partition in 1947 are well-recorded. The Ahmadiyya Movement raised their own militia to safeguard their lives and property and, when partition came, moved en masse to Pakistan.

In 1953 for political reasons there was rioting against the Community in the Punjab, but for very nearly the next 20 years the Community suffered only occasional harassment. Pakistan had many internal problems and there were two frontier wars with India over Kashmir where the majority Muslim population had been forcibly annexed to India.

In the first years of the creation of Pakistan's national identity Ahmadis played a prominent part. Several rose to the rank of general in the Army. The country's first Foreign Minister was Zafrulla Khan. The Finance Minister was M. M. Ahmad. Some became ambassadors. Other Ahmadis were successful businessmen.

It has been said that they became too successful. Every Ahmadi donates, as a matter of belief, one-sixteenth of his income to the Community. Those who vow to donate one-tenth of their income and also promise that they will make a will leaving one-tenth of their estate to the Movement on their death are known as the testators or will-makers. But with special appeals in many years it is not unusual for will-makers to give up to one-third of their income to the Movement.

The money is used, among other things, to found schools and provide bursaries for gifted children. In Pakistan, a country with limited resources, it gave Ahmadi children a magnificent start in life.

It was the success of General Akhtar Malik, an Ahmadi, in winning control of large parts of Kashmir during the 1965 frontier war with India, which introduced Tahir to Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. Their lives were and careers were to be inextricably mixed until Bhutto died on the gallows under the dictatorship of General Zia.

CHAPTER TWELVE

Bhutto and the Communists

Zulfiqhar Ali Bhutto, Foreign Minister of Pakistan, became a national hero because of his spirited defence of Pakistan in the assembly of the United Nations. Pakistan would never desert the Muslims of Kashmir, he said, and no matter how long it took one day they would rejoin the mother country.

“It was a great piece of oratory and he became a popular hero overnight,” Tahir recalls. “My brother Nasir, who was not then khalifa, but because of my father’s ill-health after the attempted assassination, was deputising for him in many affairs, asked me to go to Islamabad and meet Bhutto. He wanted me to tell him how impressed we were by his speeches, to say that we supported his views and to offer any help that we could as citizens of Pakistan.

“When Bhutto learned why I had come he immediately told me to come out of the drawing-room as it was not safe to talk there. He took me to another room which had just a table and a few chairs. We talked and we became very friendly.”

That was their first meeting and they were not to meet again for some years until Bhutto sent him a message asking him to call upon him. Bhutto had been imprisoned under martial law but elections were now to be held and he had been released in order to take part. Tahir told his brother Nasir,

who had recently been elected as the Third Khalifa, who gave him permission to meet Bhutto. They met at Bhutto's house.

Bhutto was very friendly, Tahir recalls, and started discussing his campaign and his need of money to support it. He talked also of the speech he was to give on television the next day and, when Tahir asked if he could see it, Bhutto called in Dr Mubashir who had prepared the plan of campaign. He left them together and went off to a conference.

"I liked Dr Mubashir. I found him upright, honest and noble-minded. Hypocrisy was alien to his nature." But Tahir did not agree with his plan of campaign.

All the fine phrases about scientific socialism would be beyond most people he said. The philosophy of equality given by Muhammad was more important. They should use Islamic terminology he suggested. He also thought that the extreme left of the party were trying to hijack Bhutto. They were trying to exploit his personal popularity and transform it into popularity for the communists.

"When Mr Bhutto returned he listened to me with attention. His interest changed from the money he had hoped to get from us – which I told him was impossible as we were a religious organisation – to interest in my advice."

Tahir was to give Bhutto even more crucial advice. Many of the people involved with the Pakistan Peoples Party at that time were, in his opinion, stray fortune hunters. But that was not so with the extreme left. They were organised and dedicated. "They had ensured that over 70 per cent

of the candidates on the final list for election to the National Assembly were communists or fellow travellers. If they had been elected then the communists would have taken over Pakistan.

“I told Mr Bhutto of my information and said that if he wanted a communist takeover then he should go ahead. If not, then he should re-examine the list and proceed with great caution.

“What followed showed that Bhutto had no intention of being captured by the left or right. He wanted to maintain, and so command, a delicate balance between the two.”

Bhutto called a meeting of senior members of the party and then issued a hurried press release stating that the list was not final. A committee of senior members of the party was set up to review the list of candidates and submit recommendations.

As a result a considerable number of candidates were de-selected. Those who appeared on the final list won a massive victory. Bhutto was elected prime minister.

Of this period of his life an amir was to say, “The young Mirza Tahir Ahmad showed deep insight into the problems which the country faced and his remarkable capacity, energy and determination came into play in achieving the task to which he had set himself. He showed remarkable qualities of leadership, inexhaustible energy and stamina.”

After the election Tahir went to see Bhutto. “I have come to say farewell, Sir” said Tahir.

Bhutto was astonished. “Why farewell?” he asked.

Tahir replied that from now on Bhutto would be

surrounded by sycophants who would give him nothing but sweet words of praise. “I can only offer you the bitter pills of realities and you may not like these.”

To this Bhutto replied that he knew Tahir was a man of truth and he would not take offence at what he said.

Tahir was to continue to meet Bhutto while he was president and later prime minister. Mostly they discussed the situation in Pakistan and the fact that the PPP had not lived up to its promises as far as the electorate was concerned. He also met him to complain about the unfair treatment of the Ahmadiyya Community by the government – their land and schools had been taken over.

Gradually Tahir realised that Bhutto was surrounded by anti-Ahmadiyya influences both inside and outside the PPP and that it would be naive of him to expect Bhutto to jeopardise his political reputation by protecting the rights of Ahmadis.

Their friendship began to cool, but all through this period Bhutto remained courteous and polite and tolerant of criticism. As promised he never took offence at what Tahir had to say.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

A Khalifa for the Muslim World?

Bhutto had asked Tahir to visit him once a month, but gradually the meetings became infrequent.

When Bhutto summoned Mr M. M. Ahmad back from Washington for some Budget consultations he complained to him that Tahir no longer came to see him and that when he went to Rabwah he should persuade Tahir to resume his visits. Bhutto also contacted the Khalifa direct who asked Tahir to resume his visits.

It so happened therefore that Mr Ahmad was with Tahir when he again saw Bhutto. It was at the prime minister's official residence and afternoon tea had been laid out on the spacious lawn.

"The Prime Minister got up from an easy chair and embraced him warmly, saying, 'This is the man who no longer cares to meet me'" Mr Ahmad recalled.

Tahir was to remember this period of their relation-ship very vividly.

"In 1973 Bhutto organised a major conference in Pakistan of all the Islamic nations. He was a man who had the ambition and stature to be a world leader – Pakistan was too small a stage for him. He tried for a time to become the leader of the Third World – the former colonies of Britain, France and

other countries. But that place was already occupied by Nehru and his daughter, Mrs Indira Ghandi. So he decided to become the leading political figure of the world of Islam, mainly with the help of Saudi Arabia. In exchange Saudi Arabia would become the religious leader of the Islamic world. The king of Saudi Arabia would become the Khalifa of the Muslim world.

“Earlier the Pope had issued a call to all Muslims to unite together and join forces with Christianity against communism and that call had been directed particularly at King Faisal. Up until then the Saudis were of little political consequence. They had vast wealth and enjoyed the unique privilege of being the custodians of the House of God at Mecca and other holy shrines and historic places connected with the dearest memory of the beloved Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him.

“Yet this immense potential had not been fully exploited and transformed into political influence. It would have suited the West very well to have King Faisal as the spiritual leader of Islam. If Muslims heard a call from the minarets of Mecca they would respond to it as a call from God. Little would they realise that it was only the loudspeakers which were installed in Mecca. The microphones were being operated from somewhere in the West.

“But, of course, the institution of khalifat of the Ahmadiyya Community stood in their way. You cannot have two khalifas. So we had to be extinguished. We had to be declared non-Muslims.

“Most people in Indonesia are Shafis whereas the Saudis are Wahhabis and they don’t get on. And

Maliki Muslims in Africa and Hanafite Muslims in Turkey are also hostile to the Wahhabi sect. So the ulama would not accept Saudi money if it came as an outright bribe on the lines of 'Here is the money – accept our influence'. But if it came as aid for religious madrassahs and mosques and there just happened to be an anti-Ahmadiyya campaign attached, then the ulama would accept it. In that way Wahhabi influence would be increased throughout the Muslim world without most people knowing what was happening.”

That was the plan as Tahir worked it out – King Faisal as the new Khalifa of the Muslim world and Bhutto as its political brain.

Tahir put his conclusions to Aziz Ahmad, the Foreign Minister of Pakistan, and added that he had information that an anti-Ahmadiyya campaign was to be launched at the Islamic conference. Aziz told him it was unthinkable, no such plan existed and religious propaganda of any kind was to be banned at the conference. It was to be a conference of Islamic nations, but it was not a religious conference. No religious organisation was to be allowed to present any pamphlets or documentation of any kind to the representatives. It was difficult enough, he said, to get political enemies like Syria and Jordan to sit down together without introducing religious differences.

When Tahir met Bhutto he told him of his fears. Bhutto reassured him – there was to be no propaganda against the Community. But Tahir had already got hold of some of the pamphlets which had been prepared by the Jamaat Islami and other

organisations opposed to the Ahmadiyya Movement. These pamphlets had been specially prepared for distribution to the delegates.

Tahir's suspicions were totally confirmed when the conference began. Bhutto had asked the army to provide a number of officers as ADCs to the various heads of state and representatives who were attending the conference. No Ahmadi could be appointed he specified.

Despite the secrecy things did leak out. The prime minister of an African country handed over the entire package to an Ahmadi acquaintance. He passed it to Tahir.

The documents were a diatribe against the Ahmadiyya Movement, some of which Tahir had already seen, others of which he had only heard. Most of them had been prepared with the sole intention of discrediting the Ahmadiyya Movement and maligning its Khalifa.

Idi Amin, the half-mad dictator of Uganda, did propose that Faisal of Saudi Arabia should be appointed as Khalifa of the Muslim world, but his proposal – so carefully prepared by his Saudi backers – fell on stony ground. There were too many political differences between many of the countries for there to be an agreement about anything so far reaching.

Moreover, politicians as they were, they were too astute to get involved. It was one thing to use a religious difference for a political advantage, but something quite different to appoint someone, for wholly political reasons, to a religious office that came from God. It was God who appointed a

prophet and the prophet's followers who, guided by God, elected his successor, a khalifa, to carry on his work.

* * *

Bhutto's campaign to achieve international acclaim thus failed. Not long afterwards he came out in open opposition to the Ahmadiyya Movement. The result was proposed legislation which declared that Ahmadis were not Muslims.

The Third Khalifa led a five-man delegation to the National Assembly which discussed the proposed legislation in private. Tahir was the youngest member of the delegation – “a compliment to his knowledge, sagacity and familiarity with the history and traditions of the Community” said an amir later.

The Khalifa had originally appointed Tahir to be the spokesman for the Ahmadiyya Movement during the proceedings in the National Assembly. The Khalifa told Bhutto that he had appointed a representative because he personally would not be able to come. But he did not mention Tahir's name.

“I think perhaps he thought I might be better prepared for the debate that would ensue than the established scholars of the Community. They were much more deeply educated than I was and enjoyed a considerable advantage over me in religious studies. But perhaps they were less able to confront in debate people who they did not know. I, on the other hand, knew most of them — some quite intimately.

“Another reason perhaps was that he liked the way I argued. He considered me quite persuasive. He had also read various articles that I had written and liked the way I had dealt with the issues. However, whatever his reasons were he kept them to himself. He told me to be mentally prepared for the task.”

But Bhutto replied that the Khalifa must appear at the National Assembly. No one else would be acceptable.

“Now this was Bhutto’s mistake,” Tahir said later. “I think he suspected that I would be sent and that I would be able to handle the Attorney General and mullahs better than the Head of the Community.”

“And there he was so wrong. I assure you that it was impossible for me to present the case so beautifully, so calmly, without excitement and so convincingly as it was by my predecessor.

“He was given very special qualities at that time by God to do it so beautifully. If you read the proceedings you will understand very clearly what I am saying.”

Tahir was to be responsible, however, for writing three of the most important chapters in the evidence the Khalifa presented to the Assembly.

The first was a written presentation which dealt with some basic questions regarding Ahmadis being Muslims or not, the instructions of Muhammad as to who was entitled to call themselves Muslims and the differences between various sects of Islam, some of which were far more fierce and fundamental than the Assembly’s differences

with the Ahmadiyya Movement.

Next came a chapter concerning the logic of the proposed law and its inherent dangers and whether any institution in the world, an assembly, a judiciary or any other kind of organisation, was competent to interfere in the religion in the way proposed and to be able to declare that somebody's faith was other than which he professed.

Tahir wrote this chapter by himself though he naturally called upon the help of other scholars. In the same way he was also to write the final chapter on The Finality Of The Prophet. And he was to take an important part in the preparation of the other chapters in which many scholars participated and pooled their knowledge, wisdom and experience.

The hearings in the Assembly were in private – the press and the public were excluded and no reports were published. Each day, when they were finished, Tahir became the liaison between the Khalifa and the experts he had brought with him.

“Because I was his brother I could walk in and out quite freely and sometimes I was up most of the night, taking instructions from him and reporting back to him. I was deeply involved in preparing material for him along with the other members of his support group. We discussed how it should be presented so that there should be no misunderstanding and so that everything was presented as clearly as possible.

“We would suggest new arguments made on the comments made by members of the National Assembly. He would not accept everything we put forward, but generally he did.

“For instance, it was suggested that a certain argument would come up. I knew where certain books were that I had read and suggested that they be collected. Others more scholarly than myself suggested other books. So that is how we collected the material, divided it among ourselves, had a rapid scanning, noted down the points of importance and then presented them to the Khalifa.

“I remember one very important role I played. I felt that the question of the Shia sect’s edicts against all non-Shia Muslims would come up along with our claims that they had anathematised all non-Shia sects in far stronger and uncompromising terms. We would certainly be challenged and would be asked to produce the original Shia texts to support our contention.

“These books were not in our central library and I felt it was a very important point. I had a great feeling that someone would get up and say, ‘Show me the original – we don’t trust your references’.

“However, happily I remembered that there had lived in Mardan, in the North West Frontier Province, a great expert on Shiaism, Qazi Muhammad Yousaf, who had a very valuable collection of books about Shiaism. I wondered if this personal library had been preserved by his children – they were all devout Ahmadis. So I despatched a few young men in a jeep and asked them to collect the entire library and be back before the morning.

“They did so and the next day, sure enough, a mullah became very excited and stood up and said, ‘I don’t believe this. Show me the original evidence.’

“We were able to do so. He was very discomfited.”

The debate lasted 14 days and some very strange things were to happen during that period said Tahir. After the day’s hearings were over the Third Khalifa and Tahir would discuss what had happened.

“Sometimes I would suggest that some particular point should have been mentioned – I was not under the same pressure as he was – and he would agree and say, ‘Yes, but how do we bring it in now?’

“Now the strange thing was that, without exception, the next day when we went to the Assembly the Attorney General would get up and say to the Khalifa, ‘I realise that the debate on this particular point was closed yesterday, but it has been suggested that the following question be put to you.’

“And it was always exactly the question that we wanted discussed!

“Because I had been involved in discussing that point with my brother I felt the greatest pleasure and satisfaction that God had accepted my desire and made me help him.”

Looking back on the debate Tahir was to comment that it was surprising how vacant and empty and lacking in substance the debate had been from the point of view of his adversaries.

“They did not rebut a single argument contained in the written presentation. The most important issue, according to them, was the verse relating to Khatamun Nabiyeen, the finality of the prophethood of Muhammad. But no Muslim has ever

disputed the finality of Muhammad as the last law-bearing prophet. That is unthinkable. But in the 1,400 years since the death of The Holy Prophet many, many Muslim scholars have declared their belief that a follower prophet of Muhammad could appear among the faithful.

“It is our belief that he did appear in the person of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad who became The Promised Messiah.

“For our opponents in the National Assembly everything, apart from Khatamun Nabiyeen, should have been a side issue. Yet no single argument was advanced by them in favour of their own particular view of the Finality of the Holy Prophet. They merely said, ‘Because you believe in this you are non-Muslims’ and ‘Because you believe in that you are non-Muslims’.

“But the beliefs they attributed to us, and I say this without reservation, are not our beliefs at all.”

[It is an attitude of mind to which a professor in comparative religions in the United States was to call attention during a university lecture: ‘It is important then, in order to appreciate the integrity of Ahmadiyyat, to understand what Ahmad was not claiming. His enemies, however, were usually not willing to be so discriminating.’]

Tahir was to continue: “The entire Ahmadiyyat which was created and concocted by them was unreal. It was a phantom created with malice from Ahmadiyya writings which were distorted and misconstrued so that wrong conclusions could be drawn from them.

“We said, ‘We reject these views. These are not

the doctrines of the Ahmadiyya Community.’ So the decisions they took were not about the beliefs of the Ahmadiyya Movement. Not a single Ahmadiyya doctrine was touched or repudiated or demolished.

“On the contrary they went on building up their phantom of Ahmadiyyat, which was a concoction of their own, and then started condemning it. It was as though they had moulded a figure in wax – as in some voodoo or black magic rite – and then stuck pins in it in the belief that Ahmadiyyat would be mortally wounded.

“But the figure they had moulded was not Ahmadiyyat, it was a figment of their imagination, it bore no resemblance to Ahmadiyyat so it did not hurt us because it was not us.”

He added, “Many people are confused about the role of The Promised Messiah in the shaping of the Ahmadiyya Movement. The only model that shapes our lives is the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). For instance, whenever we did something as children we were always admonished with reference to the Holy Prophet of Islam, never, never with reference to The Promised Messiah.

“He is not a rival in any way. But the anti-Ahmadiyya mullahs can never understand this. They think we believe in another prophet and that he has started sharing the honour, the position and the authority of the Founder of Islam. It is not so at all.

“What The Promised Messiah did for us and how we presented him to the people was that he re-acted

the life of the Holy Prophet of Islam in all sincerity, to follow his footsteps.

“So he was not a model to be followed, but he is a model showing how the Holy Founder can be followed even now after 1,400 years.

“So his life is always presented as a person who lived in conformity with his beliefs in the Holy Quran and his beliefs in the perfect model of The Holy Prophet.

“So if The Promised Messiah could do it, why not others? Whatever he achieved was because of this — his absolute and total belief in The Holy Prophet.”

But the arguments of the Third Khalifa went unheeded. In 1974 Pakistan’s National Assembly declared that the Ahmadis were not Muslims.

From that year Ahmadis could no longer perform the pilgrimage to Mecca, various senior army and air force officers who were Ahmadis were retired while younger officers who were Ahmadis found their promotion blocked. The same selective victimisation took place in all the government services and agencies. Ambassadors who were Ahmadis knew they would never get a more important ambassadorial appointment. University lecturers would never become professors. Hospital doctors would never become heads of departments.

In more junior positions telephone and computer engineers, newly qualified from technical colleges, found that classmates who had inferior qualifications to theirs were appointed in preference to them. This delighted the Ahmadiyyat’s opponents, but it could hardly be said to be a good way of

choosing the best people.

Denied equal opportunities in their homeland Ahmadis began to look to other countries. Emigration to Great Britain, Germany, Canada, the United States and other countries began. As is usual it was the young, the healthy, the educated – the most important asset of any country – who were prepared to undertake the risks of emigrating. Pakistan's loss was other countries' gain.

The Ahmadiyya Movement was to complain that the Assembly had met in private and so the people of Pakistan did not know on what evidence the act had been introduced. They demanded that the Assembly publish the transcript of the evidence and the debates which had followed.

Bhutto's government refused. And kept on refusing even though the demand for publication of the debates grew stronger and stronger.

“Why don't we publish the debates?” a senior government minister was asked after he had addressed a private meeting of lawyers.

The government minister looked at him wryly and then said, “Do you want the whole of Pakistan converted to the Ahmadiyyat?”

The schools, colleges and lands of the Ahmadiyya Movement, amounting to some 20,000 acres, was also taken over shortly afterwards though the land of Christian missions and other religious organisations was not affected. When representations were made that the Ahmadiyya Movement was a religious and charitable organisation and that the law should apply equally Bhutto replied that he would ensure that mistakes were put

right. But nothing ever happened.

Later, when seeking the support of the Community, Bhutto, on one occasion, invited the Third Khalifa to his official residence. He wanted the backing of the Community despite the punitive legislation he had introduced against them. He had not wanted to introduce the legislation, it had been forced on him, he explained. And he had ensured that the legislation was quite limited, it only concerned their situation as regards the constitution and being Muslims. It did not concern itself in any way with their right to practise their religion.

We were compelled to introduce this legislation, he told the Third Khalifa. We just had to keep the fundamentalists quiet. He repeated this several times in different ways. We may be bad but we are better than other political parties.

He was being urged, he said, to take even stronger action against the Community, but he was not going to do so.

Finally tea was brought in and Bhutto poured the Third Khalifa a cup.

The Third Khalifa refused.

“You are the Head of the government of the country of which I am a citizen, “ he said. “You called upon me to come to you and I, as a citizen, responded to that call. But to accept hospitality in your home when you have done so much against our Community is quite different. So please excuse me. I cannot take this cup of tea.”

Bhutto, an intensely proud man, seemed almost frozen as he stood with cup of tea in his hand. Then slowly he put it down.

As the persecution of the Community intensified there were murmurings about the part played by Tahir. He recalled, "I do know that many people were critical of me at that time. They said, If you had not helped Bhutto, if you had not coaxed us into thinking that he was the best person to vote for, then things would have been very different.'

"I have never regretted the part I played in serving our country at that time – not even now – for I know the alternative would have been much worse. But I suffered very much because of the persecution that was being raised against us. I prayed to God to vindicate me. I prayed also that those who persecuted us be punished. I spent many sleepless nights.

"One night I woke up jumping from my bed. I was in the grip of a power which cannot be described, though it was an experience very similar to the revelation I had from God when I was a boy. I found that I was saying 'Adhaa Wa Aamr, Adhaa Wa Aamr' ('more destructive, more bitter') so strongly and powerfully that it was not in my control. I repeated it again and again.

"I have read about revelations of this type, when you start saying things and you have no control of the words, which you don't even fully understand, but you are totally helpless in the hands of some power which compels you to go on repeating the words.

"I found that I was shaking as I repeated the words. Then I gained full consciousness and became aware of the words I was saying and why. I was generally aware of the meaning but not of the

context so I got up, put the light on and searched in the Holy Quran for the verse where these words appeared.

“From then I became totally resigned to the will of God in whatever way He might unfold it.”

Bhutto’s government became increasingly unstable, but he fought desperately to hold on to power and, with political expediency, created and disbanded alliances whenever a better opportunity seemed to arise. In July, 1977, he was overthrown in a coup d’etat by General Zia-ul-Haq who he had appointed commander-in-chief of the army.

Two years later General Zia, despite international protests, put Bhutto on trial for the murder of the father of one of his political opponents. The court sentenced him to death. There was an international outcry against the penalty which was believed to be an act of political exigency rather than a just and impartial legal verdict. No one believed that General Zia would carry out the sentence no matter how much he wanted Bhutto out of the way.

One morning, two years later, when it was still dark outside, Tahir suddenly awoke. “I had an intense feeling that something had happened. I lay awake from then on until it was my usual time to get up and pray. I never normally listen to the radio in the morning, but that morning I did. The first thing that I heard was that Bhutto had been hanged.”

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Guided by God

Zafrulla Khan was the last member of the Electoral College to arrive at the mosque of Mubarak in the centre of Rabwah just beside the official residence of the Khalifa. There are some 10 acres of clear space surrounding the mosque but on June 10th, 1982, it seemed as if almost the entire population of Rabwah, some 45,000 people, had deserted their homes and converged on the mosque.

They had come to witness, as far as was possible, the election of the Fourth Khalifa.

They were joined by more than 15,000 other Ahmadis who had arrived not only from Pakistan, India, Great Britain, the U.S.A. and Canada, but also from Germany, France, Holland, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Gambia, Malaysia – indeed from most of the countries where the Movement had followers. The richly-decorated robes of West and East Africa mingled with the conservatively-clothed Ahmadis from Germany and Great Britain and the white tunics and loose cotton trousers of people from India and Pakistan.

Everyone, no matter where they came from and how they were dressed, complained of the heat. The temperature had soared to an astonishing 115 degrees F and people, crowded together in an almost solid mass, were collapsing everywhere, overcome by the heat. They were pulled into the

shade. From the houses that were nearby came a constant stream of people bringing as much water as they could to those who were waiting.

Most had been standing there since midnight when the news of the death of the Third Khalifa was telephoned from Islamabad to Rabwah.

Zafrulla Khan, then in his ninetieth year, found the heat appalling. He had been in London, waiting in the mosque for news, when the telephone call from Rabwah was received. He had been travelling ever since. He had caught a plane direct to Islamabad, another plane to Lahore where a car was waiting to take him to Rabwah.

He had eaten little on the journey and in the guest house he was hurriedly brought some soup and bread. Just then Tahir arrived and, as he also had not eaten, they shared the frugal meal. Tahir left for the mosque and Zafrulla Khan followed more slowly, escorted by officials who cleared a passage through the crowd. They had kept the main door of the mosque open for him and when he was inside the door was shut and three officials mounted guard so that no one else could enter. The election of the fourth Khalifa of the Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam was about to begin.

Zafrulla Khan, the last man in, occupied a chair among the shoes at the back of the mosque. The chair was out of respect for his age. The only other chair was occupied by Mirza Mubarak Ahmad, president of the Foreign Missions Department, the Tehriki Jadid, who was the senior official of the Movement. He would preside over the meeting.

He, too, had been in Europe – in Frankfurt,

Germany – when the Third Khalifa had a second heart attack and died. Now the 148 members of the Electoral College who had reached Rabwah were to elect a new khalifa.

The khalifat was not hereditary. It could be anyone within the Ahmadiyya Movement though it was most likely to be one of the 148 people present. Their work, lives and conduct had qualified them as members of the College. There were the amirs of the various districts and towns throughout the world, former amirs, officials of certain ranks in the various organisations, missionaries who had worked for at least a year in any country of the world and, of course, any surviving Companions of The Promised Messiah.

Each of them had taken an oath that was designed to ensure that the only Muslims who could vote were those who totally and unreservedly recognised the prophethood of Ahmad as The Promised Messiah and the khalifat that had descended from him.

The words were: “I swear by the Omnipresent and Ever-Existing God that I have faith in the Ahmadiyya Khalifat. I swear that I shall not vote for anyone on whom there has been a judgement and declaration that he is no longer a member of the Ahmadiyya Movement nor shall I vote for anyone on whom there has been a judgement and declaration that he is connected with opponents of the Ahmadiyyat and the Ahmadiyya Khalifat.”

Each member of the college was given a certificate of membership which had to be regularly renewed. It was this certificate that the guards at

the door had demanded from every person who wished to enter the mosque.

The rules for the election of a new khalifa had been set out in December, 1956, after the attempted assassination of the Second Khalifa underlined the importance of being able to elect a new khalifa within 24 hours of the death of the previous khalifa. It did not matter how few members of the College had assembled within that time – the election of the new khalifa could take place. Without a leader the Movement could be in danger.

If there was no urgency – as was now the case – the election could be delayed for up to three days. Within that period it was believed that every qualified elector could reach Rabwah.

* * *

The divine need for successors to complete his work had been detailed by The Promised Messiah when he announced that he had received a revelation that death could touch him at any moment. God had assured him, however, that he would not die until many of the prophecies he had made had been fulfilled. He would only die when the fruits of his labours had begun to appear.

That time was not yet at hand, but God had told him that he should now prepare for death and that among his tasks was the preparation of the way for his successors to carry on his work.

“The Lord shall bless this Movement with the fullest success and prosperity, some of it at my own hand, and some after I am gone.”

But that would not be immediately apparent. It would seem that his death was untimely said The Promised Messiah. It was God's way of doing things he wrote in a document which became known as The Will.

Moses had died on his way to the Holy Land and his followers were so overcome by being left leaderless at that moment that they had remained weeping in the desert for forty days. The same had been true of Jesus when his followers dispersed after his supposed death and Peter, his most faithful follower, denounced him.

When Muhammad had died even some of his followers had abandoned Islam. But then God made a second manifestation that showed His power and Abu Bakr stood up firmly to proclaim the truth of the promise that God had given them in the Quran that He would firmly established The Faith He had chosen for them and would change a state of fear into a state of peace and security. So it was with Ahmad.

"I appeared from God as a manifestation," said The Promised Messiah. "I am a personified power of God and after me shall come other persons who will be manifestations of a second power.

"You should therefore all come together in prayer to wait for the second manifestation. And all communities of the righteous people among my followers in every land should remain in prayer together so that the second manifestation of power should descend from the Heavens and show you how powerful is your God.

"Let those in the Community who possess pure

and righteous souls accept the covenant after me in my name. It is the will and desire of God that those living in different settlements in various lands, in Europe or Asia, all those who possess a righteous nature, He should draw them all to the doctrine of unity, and gather all his creatures into one single religion.

“This is the aim of God for the fulfilment of which I have been sent. So therefore it is incumbent upon you that you strive for this aim, but always with gentleness, high morals and prayer.”

The Promised Messiah was later to amplify how his successors should be chosen.

“The selection of these men shall be based on unanimity of opinion among my followers. So, on whomsoever forty believers shall agree, he shall be entitled to accept the covenant in my name.

“Such a one should make himself into an example for others to follow. God has informed me that for my followers He will send a man from my own progeny on whom He will bestow a great distinction on the basis of Revelation from Him and nearness to Him and through him the truth shall prosper, many people accepting it.”

The Promised Messiah added that they would have to be patient and wait until such a man appeared at his appointed time. Until that time arrived he might appear a very ordinary man, perhaps even until then a man who was most unsuitable.

Be not hasty in your judgement he said. Remember that he who is destined to become the best among men was at one time nothing more than

a seed in his mother's womb.

He was to add yet again the message of peace that permeated all his writings and his life.

“Avoid malice and deal with human beings in sympathy and love. Try all paths of righteousness for indeed you have no idea from which path you will be accepted.”

* * *

In 1982 the 148 members of the Electoral College who had reached Rabwah had gathered in groups inside the mosque of Mubarak – the Companions of The Promised Messiah here, members of the Sadr Anjuman, the main organisation of the Movement next to them and members of the Foreign Missions there. But all the groups intermingled at the edges.

Many names had been mentioned as that of the next khalifa. But now, explained Mirza Mubarak Ahmad, there was to be no discussion, no eulogies of any candidate or debate about reasons for voting for one candidate or the other. They were there to elect a new khalifa and God would guide them in the election. There was therefore no point in useless discussion. All that was needed was the proposal of the name of the person who they believed should be the next khalifa.

As he explained these points there was a constant hum of excitement. Zafrulla Khan was to describe vividly the intense excitement that pervaded the mosque during the election. He was also to describe equally vividly, but with less enjoyment, the overpowering heat that they suffered even inside the

cool of the mosque. Leanly built at any time but now also shrivelled and frail with the advance of years, Zafrulla Khan wore only a vest, shirt and baggy shalwar trousers, but nevertheless he was soon dripping with perspiration. His clothes, he recalled, were soaked – almost as though they had been dunked in a bucket of water.

Voting was to be done by raising a hand and certain members were detailed to count the hands and act as tellers. Mirza Mubarak Ahmad then asked for the first name.

Immediately a group of some fifty people shouted out a name.

Then Mirza Mubarak Ahmad asked for another name.

Again there was a sudden shout from a group of electors.

He asked for another name.

Again a name was shouted out.

He asked for another name.

This time there was silence. The choice of the new khalifa would be from these three names.

Mirza Mubarak Ahmad then said they would vote on the first name. The hands were raised. The tellers counted and went forward to give the results to Mirza Mubarak Ahmad.

He stood up and motioned for complete silence and the hum of noise died away. There was no need for any further voting, he said. Mirza Tahir Ahmad was now the Fourth Khalifa. Out of 148 electors 130 had voted for him.

There was a great frisson of excitement and noise, but it quietened as Tahir stood erect and took

the oath that would forever transform his life. For some 10 million people all over the world he was now no longer as other men.

He was A Man of God, a man to whose prayers God listened with special attention and affection, a man who could not only show the way to salvation but light the path. He could not only comfort the sick and the dying, but, if God so willed it, he could also cure the sick and the dying.

He was a man whom God would guide from now on in every decision he made. He might make a wrong decision, but God would ensure that the initial wrong decision became the right decision in the end.

When he later tried to recall his emotions at the time of the election, the Khalifa said, "We were all so conscious of the importance of the occasion that I do not think anyone paid any attention to who was proposing whose name. I certainly did not. When my name was mentioned it was at the beginning. I can't describe my feelings of deep concern and embarrassment. I was so embarrassed that I ceased thinking.

"I had thought of only one person who I thought should be the Khalifa. This was my elder brother, Mirza Mubarak Ahmad. He was much older than me and had worked in far more important positions than I had done and was far more respected. His name stood out to me as the man who should be the next khalifa.

"Then suddenly I was the khalifa."

The new khalifa took the oath in Urdu and read it in a firm voice.

“I swear by the Omnipresent and Ever-Living God that I have certainty of faith in the Khalifat-i-Ahmadiyya and I consider all those who are against the Ahmadiyya Khalifat to have strayed on to a wrong path. I shall do all in my power to ensure the continuation of the Ahmadiyya Khalifat until doomsday itself and I shall strive with all my will to bring the message of Islam to the far corners of the earth.

“I will look after, for it will be my duty, the rights of all people, no matter their station or condition in life, be they rich or poor and humble, man or woman. With all my heart and with all my strength and with the help of the Movement I shall seek to bring the blessings and knowledge of the Holy Quran and the Traditions of the Holy Prophet to all people throughout the world.”

The Khalifa now announced that bai’at, the covenant of allegiance, would now be taken.

“For that purpose I wish that my hand should be covered by the hands of a distinguished Companion of The Promised Messiah,” he said and he motioned to where Zafrulla Khan was sitting in his chair at the back of the mosque among the shoes.

Zafrulla Khan did not hear the Khalifa’s words but suddenly a way was cleared for him and he found himself propelled almost too hurriedly to the front of the mosque. Hands helped hold him upright. He said later that in the crush someone stood on his left foot and it felt almost entirely numb.

The Khalifa took the old man’s hand gently and then held it very firmly. Other people put their

hands over their hands. And those whose hands were touching the hands of the Khalifa held the hand of another and each of them held the hand of another person until all 148 members of the College formed a human chain so that all took the covenant together.

The voice of Zafrulla Khan was low and trembling as, overcome by emotion, he repeated the oath that he had first given to The Promised Messiah, then to his first successor, Nur-ud-Din, his second successor, Bashir-ud-Din, his third successor, Nasir, and now to his fourth successor, Tahir.

“To have known and lived in the time of The Promised Messiah and then to have lived long enough to know these four great men who were elected his successors, has been a wonderful gift from God,” he said later. “God has been very good to me.”

Bai’at means literally “sold” and so taking bai’at meant they were placing their lives and faith and future at the disposal of the Khalifa. From now on what he wished his followers to do was for them to be a command.

The words spoken in unison by Zafrulla Khan and all the members of the Electoral College were:

“I bear witness that Allah alone is to be worshipped. He is One having no partner and I bear witness that Muhammad is the Servant and Messenger of Allah.

“I hereby pledge my initiation at the hand of Hazrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad and enter the Ahmadiyya Movement and seek forgiveness of

Allah from all my past sins and will do my utmost to guard myself against all kinds of sins in the future.

“I will not associate anyone with Allah. I will not entertain ill-will. I will not indulge in malicious gossip. I will not cause suffering to anyone. I will give precedence to my Faith over all worldly objects. I will constantly endeavour to abide by all the Commands of Islam.

“I will try my utmost to read, listen to, recite and narrate the Holy Quran, Sayings of the Holy Prophet (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and the books of the Promised Messiah (peace be upon him). I will obey you in everything good that you will tell me. I will always have firm faith in the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) as Khatamun Nabiyyeen – the Seal of the Prophets – and will believe in all the claims of the Promised Messiah (on him be peace).

“I beg for pardon from Allah, my Lord, from all my sins and turn to him

“O my Lord, My Allah, I wronged my soul and I confess all my sins. Forgive my sins for there is no one except Thee to forgive. Amen.”

Outside the crowds had realised that the decision had been taken. Even in the mosque they could hear the noise of the people outside.

The three doors of the mosque were now flung open and, despite the efforts of the guards, the crowd outside moved like a human sea into the mosque, almost overwhelming those inside. The name of the Khalifa was known and shouted.

Then shouted again and again until the noise

grew deafening. Everyone wanted to take the oath of covenant with the new Khalifa and men unwound their turbans so that more and more people could be linked to their spiritual leader and spiritual guardian, the man God had chosen for them.

Again and again the Khalifa gave people the oath of the covenant. He had been wearing an ordinary astrakhan hat of lambskin – known popularly as a Jinnah hat because of its association with Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan – but now suddenly a roar went up.

One of his followers was approaching carrying the white starched pugree with the gold centre that had become the traditional headwear of the khalifas. The Khalifa put it on among much excitement and continued taking the oaths of covenant.

After two hours the Khalifa announced that everyone should now disperse. The funeral prayers for the Third Khalifa would be held at five o'clock so everyone should now leave the mosque and go to the graveyard of the faithful, the Heavenly Graveyard, and form into lines.

He himself returned to his home. There he was to take the oath of covenant of his wife, his daughters and other near relatives. But first he took the covenant of his great aunt Amatul Hafeez Begum, the last surviving daughter of The Promised Messiah. Before he did so she took the silver ring which had become the sign of the khalifat, and slid it on the third finger of his right hand.

On the emerald of the ring The Promised

Messiah had had inscribed the revelation God had given him: Is God not all-sufficient for His servant?

* * *

The Third Khalifa, Mirza Nasir Ahmad, had died just before midnight on June 8th, 1982, in his house in Islamabad where he had been taken after a heart attack. He was seventy-three. Specialists had been in constant attention and, on their recommendation, two further heart specialists were summoned from London for consultation. It seemed at first that he might recover, but on the morning of the day of his death his condition deteriorated.

His immediate family, his wife, his three sons and two daughters had stayed in Islamabad since his first heart attack. Now they gathered at his bedside. Tahir, who was in Islamabad as the official representative of the Movement, was also at his bedside. At 11.45 p.m. the Third Khalifa suffered another heart attack and died.

The news was immediately telephoned to Rabwah and from there telephone calls went out all over the world summoning to Rabwah the members of the Electoral College so that they could elect a new Khalifa who would then lead the burial prayers for the Third Khalifa.

The body of the Third Khalifa left Islamabad at 4 a.m. and was in Rabwah, 225 miles away, just before 10 o'clock in the morning. A queue of mourners, estimated to be five miles long, started outside the house of the Khalifa and wound its way in such series and seemingly never-ending lines

that it was difficult to find the end.

Half an hour after the coffin had arrived in Rabwah the mourners began to file past. A great sadness was within all of them and indeed within all who had ever known the Third Khalifa. He was intelligent, hard-working, zealous for the poor and under-privileged, but his greatest asset had been his sincerity. He radiated goodwill. Even among those who were violently opposed to his beliefs there were many who considered him as a man whom God had specially blessed.

The long file of mourners outside the house had ceased when the election of the Khalifa began. Now thousands upon thousands of people were gathered in the streets of Rabwah where the cortege of the Third Khalifa would pass. Even more thousands were gathered on the hill overlooking the graveyard.

Inside the mosque there had been confusion, excitement and joy, but now everything was quiet and the people stood in almost total silence. More and more people continued to arrive at the place of burial and over the loudspeakers came the announcement that there was still some room on the north side of the hill.

Outside the house of the Third Khalifa people had surged forward for the honour of helping to carry the coffin of the Third Khalifa to the graveyard. Long poles had been slid at right angles under the coffin so that as many people as possible could claim a place among the coffin bearers. As the cortege proceeded through the town the bearers yielded up their place so that others could have a similar honour.

As the cortege passed, again and again were repeated the words from the Holy Quran: "To Allah we belong and to Him we shall return".

When the cortege reached the place of burial it halted. All was silent. Over the loudspeakers came the announcement that only those whose names were given were to move when the first funeral prayers were finished. There was only room for a limited number of people at the graveside. Only after the final silent prayers were completed should anyone move.

It was estimated that some fifty thousand people took part in the funeral service. On the Third Khalifa's plain white marble tombstone were carved his name and the date of his birth and his death.

The vast crowd fell silent when the Khalifa raised his hands for the final silent prayer.

Then the people dispersed quietly to their homes.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

A Prophecy Come True

The morning after the installation of the Fourth Khalifa his security guards conducted a leisurely stroll round the house. They had been with him ever since the doors of the mosque were opened and his election announced. Most were young men, students and workers in all kinds of jobs, who had scrambled for the privilege of guarding the Khalifa and his residence on that first night. They had been instructed in their duties by the senior men who formed the Khalifa's normal security guard.

No trouble had been expected and no trouble had occurred so they walked and talked without worry in the cool of the early morning. They talked quietly for the house was silent. It was 6 a.m. Understandably everyone was still asleep after the joys and sadness and emotional stresses of the previous day.

Then the Khalifa came out of the front door and went to where he kept his bicycle. He was going to the Foreign Missions office he told his astonished guards. He did not want a car. He needed the exercise. And he suggested that they pick up a bicycle and follow him.

They did. But that evening his head of security remonstrated with him. It was not a question of exercise. If his guards were occupied with pedalling they could not pay attention to his safety. He was

reminded, as diplomatically as possible, that his safety and health was now the concern of every Ahmadi.

Reluctantly the Khalifa agreed. The responsibilities and duties of his position were already pressing in.

The most immediate change was in the way everyone addressed him. His children, as was normal, had always used the more respectful plural when they talked to him. In English the use of the singular “thou” is now archaic. In Urdu, as in French and many other languages, the singular is still used among relatives and friends.

But now everyone, even his brothers and sisters, used the Urdu plural. Their warm, family love was still there, but it was overlaid with something else. It was a different relationship.

It took him some time to adjust to the situation. “I always felt awkward – as if they were addressing my position. And when people addressed me with words and expressions of great honour and dignity I felt very uneasy and had the impression that they were not talking to me but someone else. I almost wanted to look round to see who it was.

“That feeling of duality was with me for a very long time. Gradually I became merged into that single person who was both myself and the khalifa.”

If one were to ask the members of the Electoral College why they had voted for him they would shake their head in amazement at the naivety of the question and the questioner. There was no need to enumerate his qualities. They had not voted for him. God had chosen him. He knew the tasks that

the Fourth Khalifa would have to accomplish and so He had guided the electors in their choice. There was no need for further consideration.

But one elector did sum up his reasons. These were: His deep knowledge of the Holy Quran and Islamic teachings, his affection, love, compassion and close contact with the members of the Movement, his unique accomplishments at difficult periods in the Community's history and his remarkable leadership.

Did the Khalifa himself have any regrets about being chosen?

"Regrets are only possible when you have a choice. When there is no choice you cannot regret anything. You can wish, of course, but in my case that is irrelevant. There was no question of my designing to achieve this position or any effort to rise to this status."

When he was pressed further about that question and if he sometimes wished that he had not been chosen he answered, "No, not even that. I enjoy a situation of unavoidable suffering for the sake of a noble cause. So I never even have these pangs. I have a great consciousness that it is a very difficult challenge."

On only one occasion was there an attempt made by an Ahmadi to get the person who had been Tahir to influence the person who was now the Khalifa.

"It came in a letter," the Khalifa recalled, "and he mentioned that he had voted for me. It made me very angry indeed. I said to him that I was not at all interested in having that information.

"How you voted at that time has no bearing on

what is happening. But what has a bearing on the situation is that I do not think you are being truthful because you have written to me. I think you have distorted some-thing and that has deeply shaken my concept of you.”

The Khalifa continued, “Personal feelings do not enter into such an election. If people have voted for you they have not done you a personal favour. They have voted for you because they have been loyal to the cause and they have no way out. They have to support the name of the person they consider to be the most God-fearing among the people. They have no options. That is our attitude and that is why it is irrelevant who voted for you and who did not.”

His election did not come as a surprise to two of his followers. They had known for the last fifty years that he would finally be chosen as the khalifa!

One was Anwar Kahlon who had always remembered the day he was born because that was the day the first train arrived in Qadian. Though he was 10 years older they had become close friends when the Khalifa was a student in London. He had become a successful businessman and, before his retirement, rose to become Amir of Britain.

He had always addressed the Khalifa, even as a child, in the respectful plural. As the grandson of The Promised Messiah Tahir had accepted it without paying attention. Some people did. Some people did not.

As a child Mr Kahlon’s mother had told him that he must be respectful to all members of the family of The Promised Messiah, but he should be especially respectful to Tahir. When he asked the

reason his mother said that she would not tell him, but that he should do as she asked.

He had promised and because of that promise, given fifty years ago and despite the fact that he was ten years older, he had always addressed Tahir in the plural.

When he and his wife Amina Begum became close friends of Tahir in London, his wife would address Tahir in the singular and call him Tahiri but he continued to use the respectful plural.

When the Khalifa was asked if he had noticed this he replied, "Yes, he always does, but I do not know why."

Apart from it being the wish of his mother neither did Mr Kahlon. But after Tahir's election as Khalifa Mr Kahlon's father said to him, "Now I will tell you why your mother asked you always to be most respectful to Tahir."

His mother, he explained, had been a close friend of Tahir's mother and one afternoon, when Tahir was about three years old, she had been visiting her. Suddenly Tahir's mother had left the room and returned with the turban of her husband, the Second Khalifa. She wound it round Tahir's head.

"One day he will be the khalifa," she said. And then, astonished at her own temerity, she swore Anwar's mother to secrecy. She did not say why she believed this would happen and the subject was never mentioned again.

That meeting took place in the afternoon. Tahir's mother had been told of the revelation that morning. The Second Khalifa had sat in deep thought for some time and had finally told her that God had

revealed that one day Tahir would become the khalifa.

Like any mother Maryam had the highest hopes for her only son. And there was her special position as a descendant of The Holy Prophet and the intended bride of The Promised Messiah's special son Mubarak. There were, of course, 11 other sons of the Second Khalifa, but now it seemed that her most fervent wish might come true. That was the reason why she had always wanted Tahir to excel both in his schoolwork and his knowledge and practice of Islam.

Maryam controlled her emotions until the Khalifa had left that morning, but then began to shake and sob. It was in this state that a young girl later known as Kalthum Begum found her. She regarded Tahir's mother almost as her own and used to visit her regularly. She could see that she was not crying in sadness but because of some great emotional experience.

At first Tahir's mother refused to say what was upsetting her, but then she swore the young girl to secrecy. The secret could never be revealed until it actually happened. Tahir's mother had then told her of the revelation of the Khalifa.

Kalthum Begum kept her promise. Though she was to marry an Ahmadi missionary and often to meet Tahir for the next 50 years, her lips remained sealed. She treated him no differently from his brothers and he suspected nothing. Only after he was chosen as the Fourth Khalifa did she meet him in private and tell him of the revelation which the Second Khalifa had made known to his mother.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

Family Life

At the time of his election his eldest daughter Shaukat Jehan was twenty-two. When she talked about family life and how his election had affected the family, the point that kept constantly recurring was that they saw less of him and how they missed him. He was now away from home much more often, he spent less time at meals and he did not go out with them as often. Otherwise, though he was now the Khalifa, family life had not changed.

Had he been a strict father?

“Oh no!” she declared. “He was great fun. He was always doing things.” And she recounted with pleasure how, when she was 15, she and her father had driven in an open Land Rover over very dusty and rutted roads and how they had bounced up and down and shouted with pleasure as each bump came and how, when they reached where they were going, they had been caked with dust with circles round their eyes and mouth.

She talked also of the fun they had had in their swimming pool and how she had accompanied her father when he cycled out to his farm to collect the milk. She talked also of the games of tennis they had played, how he had taught them archery and how to use the trampoline and how they often used to gather guava fruit from the tree in their garden, cut it up and sit eating it, all the family together, in

the soft darkness of the night.

These were very happy memories of childhood she said.

She remembered also the tricks they played on each other. One day when they were small he returned from his office and told them, "Today I am going to show you some magic. What kind of sweets would you like to have and where do you want to find them?"

Shaukat Jehan said she would like a certain bright yellow sweet and she wanted to find them in a particular cupboard. Her sister Faiza said she wanted a sweet made with cream and sugar and she wanted them to be on the third shelf in a cupboard in the dining room.

Tahir waved his hands and said, "Right, it's done. You can now go and find them."

They ran off. To their astonishment the sweets were where they had asked.

They thought it really was magic and told their friends their father could make magic. Some years later, when they remembered the incident, they asked him how he had done it.

It was simple he explained. He had known what kind of sweets they liked. He also knew the places where they kept their most precious things. So it was in these places he had put the sweets. He had gently encouraged them to ask for the sweets to be put where he had already placed them.

He relished the fact that they sought to play tricks on him. His daughter Faiza after she had finished all but one of some sweets she had been given, wrapped up some small stones in the

brightly-coloured sweetpapers and placed the box on his desk. She put a big question mark on the top of the box.

All her friends were told of the joke she was playing on her father and waited with anticipation. A little later she found the box back in her place. With it was a note saying, 'I've had my sweet so now you have yours.'

The single sweet was missing!

"All my friends were delighted at how he had tricked me," Faiza recalls.

On long motorcar journeys Tahir would stop them being bored by starting to recite a poem, finally getting everyone to join in. When his youngest daughter Tooba learned by heart the words of his poem about the building of Rabwah and recited, half-sang it to him, he was delighted.

On holidays he involved everyone in pleasurable activities. Once they went on holiday with another family whose idea of a holiday was sleeping late and lazing around.

It did not suit Tahir. He enjoyed doing things. So he organised walks and excursions and picnics and barbecues and tennis and other games. Soon the members of the other family joined them.

The whirlwind holiday that they had in Canada and the United States remains in his eldest daughters' memories, even though they were quite young. It was full of incidents. In a restaurant in Canada Faiza remembers being asked if she wanted steak and chips.

She did not hear the waiter very well and turned to her father in desperation. "A snake? I don't want to eat snake!"

Tahir burst into laughter. The subject of eating snake became a family joke.

On the first night of that holiday they slept in the car they had hired after a disastrous attempt to put up the tent they had bought.

“Unfortunately my father hadn’t bought everything that was needed to erect the tent so we couldn’t get it to stay up. It was raining, everyone was tired so we just huddled up together. It wasn’t very comfortable. It meant we were the first people to get up the next morning.

“My father did a lot of the cooking on that holiday but we helped. As a result he would often discover that we had left various things behind at the last campsite. That would be hundreds of miles away. But he never got upset.

“And he encouraged us all to cook. I remember cooking at home and no one would eat what I had cooked except my father. He said it was delicious.”

Tahir’s sense of fun extended to elderly relatives whom other members of the family were inclined to treat with great respect. But respect did not mean that you had to be dull. Even though you were old you could still enjoy a joke.

His daughter Shaukat Jehan remembers him arriving home one afternoon with two long and bushy artificial beards – one was black and one was white. He also had sticks of grease paint.

He dressed up his wife and their annah in the beards, made up their faces with the greasepaint, draped white sheets round them and put long sticks in their hands. Then he sent them off to knock at the doors of various relatives. He and Shaukat

Jehan kept out of sight but stayed near enough to listen.

The first home they went to was that of an elderly sister of the Third Khalifa. She opened her door and then shut it quickly with a bang when she saw two weird men, old and bent, mumbling at her in some strange tongue.

Delighted at the mini-panic they had produced the two old men went on to another house. Tahir and Shaukat Jehan followed. This time their reception was perhaps even more abrupt for, gaining courage from the result of their first visit, they improved upon their mumbles and gesticulations.

And so it went on. Finally Tahir stood up and, with Shaukat Jehan, took the two old men went back to the doors where they had been repulsed.

His relatives did see the joke after a little while.

His daughter Faiza remembers how her father taught her to swim by gently throwing into the swimming pool from his shoulders while standing in the water. "At first I was scared and used to scream and then I got used to it and soon I was swimming because I really wasn't as scared as I made out because I knew he wouldn't let anything happen to me."

Once, however, she was nearly drowned in a swimming accident with her father. She was swimming in a river with her sisters and Tahir was in a rowing-boat keeping an eye on them. Instead of keeping to the stern of the boat as he had instructed she somehow got under the bows and, as Tahir rowed forward, it hit her on the head. She was knocked semi-unconscious and forced under the boat.

Tahir felt the bump and thought it was a log or some other floating debris, but then he noticed that Faiza was missing. Then he saw her floating in the river.

Faiza remembers even now the anxiety in her father's face and eyes as he hauled her into the boat.

"Of course, he jokes about it now, says I was pretending to be a fish by swimming under the boat."

His election as khalifa was to produce a subtle change in the relationship of all his daughters with him.

"I used to tell my friends that my father was my best friend," said one daughter. Well, of course, he still is, but now I have to share him with millions of other people so it is different."

But his daughters still say they can talk to him though their attitude is less free. It was not that they had more respect for him now, they said, because they had respected him before. But now he was the Khalifa. And so the respect they had for the Khalifa was there as well as the respect they had for their father.

"Before his election I had perhaps been freer with my father than my mother," said Shaukat Jehan. "Now perhaps I am not as free in discussion with him as before and I am perhaps more free in discussion with my mother."

But the pleasure of being in his company had never diminished for any of them. Shaukat Jehan was to sum up their feelings with the words, "He is very caring and kind. In his presence there is a complete sense of security and protection."

Though the time they had together at mealtimes was now reduced the family happiness was not affected. There was still animated conversation round the table. “When I think of my father I think of his brilliance and his sense of humour. He makes us laugh,” said one daughter. “He likes jokes.”

But another daughter added, “But even when he is joking he never says a false thing. He never says a thing that is not true, even as a joke. Whenever he says something you know he is always speaking the truth – so you can have complete confidence in him.

Tahir had always eaten sparingly. “He always wanted to keep fit so that he could play sports so he never ate very much even when it was a dish he particularly liked,” said one daughter.

Sometimes, however, the pressures he was under were revealed. On a few occasions he ate very little of food he liked and hardly spoke at all.

“We were able to recognise these occasions after a while,” said a daughter. “Usually we would learn later that there was some trouble threatening, but not actually happening. At times like that he did not find even the tastiest dish appetising. He just lost his appetite. He would say that he was not hungry and push his plate away.

“Sometimes he would look at the food almost in disgust and say, ‘Well, I don’t think that’s up to much. I don’t want to eat anything like that.’ But it would be something that he normally enjoyed.”

But when the crisis broke he started eating again, and eating more than he normally would. When he was questioned about this he said, “It sometimes even happens when I am about to leave on a tour – I

just don't want to eat anything. I suppose I am thinking about the things that have to be done. But once I have set off I start eating again. I don't think the food on airlines is particularly good, but when I get aboard I start eating as though it were magnificent. Of course, that only lasts for the first couple of hours."

One thing never changed, however – his meticulousness as regards prayer. Each morning he roused his daughters in time for morning prayers then went about his own business. He never returned to see that they had got out of bed. He had done his duty.

"I remember feeling very sleepy," one daughter recalls, "and I dozed off and went back to sleep again. My father never said anything, but I felt guilty inside. I felt I had let him down. I thought he was very disappointed because he knew I had missed my prayers, but he never said anything. I made sure it did not happen again as far as I could."

When a group of girls wrote to him, asking for his prayers for the examination they were going to sit, his youngest daughters also wrote. The next day their father told them how pleased he was that they had asked for his prayers. He would certainly pray for their success and the success of their classmates.

* * *

Now that he was Khalifa his daily cycle trips were at an end though he sometimes organised a weekend visit to the farm with his daughters.

"I like cycling very much, it's very relaxing because you can't think of anything very serious or

you are likely to cycle into a pothole and that brings you back to what you are doing.”

He now walked for an hour in the extensive gardens of his official residence and then returned to make his own breakfast, usually tea and pratha, a kind of dough mixed with ghee and fried. He was particular about the tea he drank. He wanted one cup and he wanted it strong.

On his travels he was sometimes offered tea made from a teabag. “Awful stuff. It tastes of cardboard. I prefer just to put some tea in a cup rather than drink that.”

On his European tours he developed a liking for coffee, but it was never instant. He used two different kinds of beans – from Kenya and South America – which he ground and then percolated himself to make just one cup.

The time spent on meals, never much except on special days or with official guests, was now drastically reduced – it became 10 or 15 minutes for lunch and perhaps half an hour for dinner.

“When I sit with my children and family that is a very relaxing time. We just talk about very ordinary things, about family life, who is doing what and what they thought of certain things.

“The most relaxing time for me is when, a few minutes before going to sleep, I think, quietly, without any pressure, without having to make any decisions, you just turn things over gently in your mind and your mind wanders over many things.

“But then I find meeting children very relaxing. It is so pleasant to talk to them, to listen to them, to take pleasure in their innocence and love. And, of

course, I love flowers. I am fascinated by flowers. I love having flowers around.”

Though he had always been a very open person he now found that there was intense interest about his life and his personal thoughts. “I can understand why, but unless someone asks me a very deep piercing question where I have to reveal some aspect of my life in order to answer the question I try not to discuss my personal affairs or my personal feelings.

“Sometimes, of course, I must do so in order to agitate the minds of people. And these issues can be emotional. So I am caught in a position which I cannot avoid.

“But there are areas where I find life difficult. I cannot give compliments where they are not due. And, of course, in Islam one is told very positively not to divulge one’s weaknesses. The Holy Prophet spoke very harshly of those who, out of apparent modesty or piety, spoke of their own deficiencies. He said this is not goodness. This is a cursed attitude.

“When God covers you with His mercy He has put a veil in front of your inner and private life. He has not exposed your weaknesses. If you expose your innermost thoughts you are not behaving in a pious way.”

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

The Light in the Morning

The Khalifa's capacity for work had always astonished those who had anything to do with him. Now that he was the khalifa they were even more astonished. In the hour before dawn he crossed from the Khalifa's residence to the adjoining Mubarak mosque for the morning prayer. In some months of the year that meant 5.30 a.m. Afterwards he walked in the garden and then breakfasted. He was in his office immediately afterwards when he and the night watchman were the only people in the building.

A thousand people worked full-time in the headquarters of the Movement, a hundred of them being his personal secretariat. They would arrive around 9.30 a.m. and begin to open, classify and number the letters that arrived for him every day from all over the world. The smallest number that arrived was around three hundred. Usually it was around a thousand letters.

First there were the official reports of amirs and missionaries and of committees and other organisations. They reported on what was happening in their area, adding in background detail about political events, the economic situation, the problems facing the Movement so that the Khalifa could evaluate the reasons why they had made certain decisions or reached certain conclusions.

But every day there were hundreds of personal letters from people seeking his help either in prayer, by advice or by the dispensing of a homoeopathic medicine. His secretaries prepared summaries which were attached to each letter so that he could either act on the summary or, if necessary, read the entire letters and decide on a fuller or different course of action.

He was soon to sanction a major investment in computerising their records in order to speed up administration and a further investment in an audio tape dubbing unit so that recordings of his Friday sermon could be sent to every Ahmadiyya mission within 24 hours. He himself did not use a tape recorder or even dictate letters to a secretary.

Instead he noted cryptically how the letter should be answered. It was a long process, a physically-exhausting process, but it was the way that he had come to work and how he got to know of people whose careers and families he could recall, to their astonishment, years later.

To one man, a physician, he was to say fifteen years later that they had met on such and such a street when he was with his brother. The physician was to emerge and ask people wonderingly how the Khalifa, who might meet sixty people a day, could even have remembered his name and face far less where they had met. Their encounter fifteen years ago, he said, had been brief and not very important.

His staff shook their heads. They did not know how he did it. Of course, they gave him briefings whenever possible, but it was his immediate personal recall of a person's face and then the

circumstances in which they had met and details about his family that was astonishing.

When he was asked about this the Khalifa pondered a moment and then admitted that he did not know. He had not consciously worked at any kind of method for remembering faces and names – he just did it.

In most Muslim families the Quran is read after the morning prayer, but the Khalifa said that he now usually reads it after the Tahajjud prayer at around 3 a.m.

“It is a very peaceful time, no disturbances, no noise, perfect silence. So that is the time I normally read the Holy Quran. I read it with deep concentration.

“Normally I devote half an hour or an hour to regular study, but when I am pondering over a question I find I have to study other chapters and relevant verses. And if I have some free time during the day then I will read the Quran regarding some subject I am investigating and so enlarge my knowledge in the light of the Holy Quran.”

The subjects he chooses for his Friday sermons are usually suggested by his reading. “Sometimes there are verses which are so appropriate to the thought vaguely forming in my mind that suddenly what I should say dawns upon me immediately. Suddenly everything is clear.

“So that is why in most of my sermons I give reference to those verses and people have some times asked how I came to choose such an appropriate verse. Well the fact is that it is the other way round. The verse chose me as an instrument to

express the truth that it contains.

“Sometimes events force me to speak on a certain subject – something momentous has happened in the world, there has been bad news or good news. Otherwise I have a general plan of things I want to say in the future. I want to tell Ahmadis what I like and what I dislike and how I expect an Ahmadi to behave in certain situations. Sometimes, but not very often, I receive a letter and the contents suggest a subject. It is then and there I will ponder on it and study the Holy Quran.”

Each day he ploughed through mountains of work, refreshing himself only with his periods of private prayer before he walked over to the mosque for the other daily prayers. When his staff had gone the Khalifa worked on until just before his evening meal was ready. Then he filled a holdall with the letters that he had not managed to read and annotate and took it with him to his home.

When his evening meal was finished he went to his study where he had left the holdall and started work again. After the evening prayer he sometimes watched a television news programme before going to bed. He is reluctant to discuss how many hours sleep he has a night.

Once, in London, when he was questioned by some Ahmadi girls as to how early he rose to start work, a young boy piped up, “I can tell you. He gets up at three in the morning because that is the time the light goes on in his house. I have seen it when I was with my uncle on guard duty.”

The Khalifa replied, said the man who told this story, “I see that I will have to talk to your uncle if

you are going to give away my secrets.”

It is now usually understood that he sleeps only for three hours a night. He has two half-hour naps during the day – one in the afternoon, the other between 6.30 and 7. “I have an alarm system inside me which wakes me up when I want to get up.”

The contents of the holdall were thus always back on his secretaries’ desk when they arrived in the morning. The same routine went on day after day, except on Friday, when he finished preparing his sermon.

It continued even when he was visiting missions in other countries. One of his guards said that when they were in Scandinavia the Khalifa had worked constantly in the car while they were travelling. Once they had missed a ferry and it looked as if they would not be able to find anything to eat nor a place to sleep. The Khalifa had told them to do what they could and carried on working unperturbed until they found an hotel which could accommodate them.

Nor is he overly particular about eating in restaurants which are suitable to his status. Once, on a tour of Britain, he was in the city of Aberdeen. His entourage were debating which restaurant they should go to when they noticed he had disappeared. Two doors along was an ordinary fish and chip shop and they found the Khalifa inside. “I’ve ordered fish and chips for everyone,” he told them.

His humility to his followers, his lack of self-importance, became legendary. At the age of a hundred, Muhammad Hussain, the sole surviving Companion of The Promised Messiah came to an

annual gathering in Britain at the special request of the Khalifa. The old man was collected at London airport, driven to the London Mosque then helped very carefully into the waiting-room outside the Khalifa's office.

Mr A. M. Rashed, the Imam, picked up the telephone intercom and told the Khalifa that Muhammad Hussain had arrived. The Khalifa merely said 'Thank you'.

"I was a bit surprised," said Mr Rashed, "because I had expected him to tell me to bring in Mr Hussain immediately. But even as I was putting the phone down the Khalifa's door opened and the Khalifa strode across to the old man.

"It is for me to come to you, Sir. Not for you to come to me,' he said."

A few weeks after he became Khalifa he also abandoned the stick that had become the Khalifa's staff of office. "I can't be bothered carrying a stick around with me all the time," he said.

The Khalifa's reading speed is very, very fast. "I don't know what speed it is because I have never had it measured, but because I have read so much I now read very quickly."

Even so he was soon to find that he could not keep up with books he wanted to read and the information that he felt he should have. His solution was to hand the books and magazines to people whose opinion he would have finally sought and ask them to read them for him and to 'flag' the pages where they thought there was something that would be of especial interest to him.

Did he sometimes think that he worked too hard?

He replied, "I think, with the grace of Allah, that I have the capacity to work hard because I am trained to work hard.

* * *

Whenever a new religious leader is elected there is some change in policy. Advisers, of all shades of opinion, see the opportunity to emphasise a point of view which they believed was somehow neglected under the previous leadership.

Sometimes, the man they have elected turns out not to have the views they thought he had. Sometimes they discover that their new leader is very much his own man and he presents a new face and a new vision, disturbing perhaps but solid underneath. They can then congratulate themselves on having chosen such a man.

Is such a man there by good fortune and so profits from the accident of fate?

Or is it that he takes circumstances by the forelock and makes the circumstances conform to his will?

Is he there by accident . . . or by the design of God?

The Khalifat of the Second Khalifa had been puritanical. Some of the new Khalifa's advisers, who had grown up under that regime, suggested that it was now time to return to that stricter and perhaps more simple life. There was too much freedom now in the Movement, they suggested, people were spending too much time and money on pleasure. Television, and films were some of the

areas, they said, where Ahmadis of all age groups, not just young people, were being led astray.

Zafrulla Khan, a great puritan, had openly expressed his displeasure when he went to Tahir's house once for dinner before he was the Khalifa and discovered he had a television set.

"What do I see?" he cried. "Have you also given up yourself to these vain pursuits?"

The Khalifa recalled his reply as follows, "I have not given myself up to them, but I do not hold the same views as you. My attitude is very different. I don't believe that television is all bad even if there are some programmes which should be discouraged.

"But if one says 'No' absolutely and encourage other Ahmadis to be equally strict what would happen?"

"Would we not be fighting against the natural tendencies of youth? If I stop my children seeing television in their home then perhaps they will go to a neighbour's house. They would then be giving themselves a licence to act hypocritically, to hide things from me and enjoy things secretly. That is a very dangerous path because it can lead to many other things.

"I would prefer that they watch television in my house so that I can guide them if necessary and I can be available to them when they want me. So I sit with them and watch these dramas and pictures – some are things I admit that I would not normally want to watch.

"I comment on them. After a time they have understood my attitude and the hollowness of

certain things. So they have become disinterested and do not in any way rebel against what might be considered any puritanical aspect of my beliefs.”

The Khalifa said that Zafrulla Khan had then understood the way he was educating his family.

Did he therefore reject the beliefs of the second Khalifa?

He answered, “As Head of the Community one must endeavour to improve the quality of life of Ahmadis both spiritually, morally and in other areas. At a particular period of time, and in certain contexts, a policy of strictness can create or achieve those objectives. Later on, when other things have changed, you have to change the policy in order to achieve the same objectives.

“So I do not disagree with my father or reject his approach to achieve those higher goals. Only I have found that if I strictly followed him in form I would fail to achieve those noble objectives and do damage to the Community. So the difference is only in methodology not in direction or in the principle.”

He was to return later to the question of permissive-ness in the name of individual liberty and whether sin might only be in the eye of the beholder.

“The middle of the road approach may be very dull, but in the final analysis it is the only approach which creates equilibrium in societies and saves them from blunders.

“I think that individual liberty has gone too far in the sense that if evil, as we understand evil, is pursued freely nobody raises his voice against it.

Therefore it is essential that those who are against this evil, which is disguised as individual liberty, must exercise their right of freedom to speak against these tendencies.

“People should be encouraged to speak out against this corruption of freedom – to speak out with wisdom, with knowledge, with persuasion, with logic – so that people can see what they are doing to themselves.

“It is essential that along with liberty the voice of caution and the voice of wisdom must continue to warn people as to the ultimate consequences. These are already apparent – the destruction of family life and moral values, from the spread of Aids to the abandonment of old people in homes with only an occasional visit from their children.

“People are walking out on civilisation, turning their back on the values we have learned in thousands of years of progress – and they are doing it in the name of liberty and emancipation. The happiness which we want to get out of life is misunderstood to be limitless.

“But it is not limitless because the moment you consider it to be so then you encroach upon other people’s rights of happiness and other peoples’ rights. So there must be a training for contentment and the knowledge that pleasure is not limitless. This question of limit is readily understood in the possession of property, but it is not fully understood when it comes to love and hatred.”

Many Ahmadis have a sticker on their cars which proclaims “Love for all and hatred for none”, a slogan which had been initiated by the Third

Khalifa. The Khalifa said that every Ahmadi would naturally agree with the starting point of that belief – to begin with there could be no other attitude than that of love and no hatred.

“But later on,” said the Khalifa, “if people persist in evil behaviour, then it is impossible to love them for one cannot in the end separate evil from the evil-doer. One must always continue to pray, however, that God will change the evil-doer and part from his evil ways.

“But if the evil-doer continues in his evil ways then God would punish him.”

In his conduct and his sermons, in his reactions and the way he treated people it therefore soon became evident that the Fourth Khalifa would take account of the way the world had changed. He would not be a hostage to the past nor, as a passive spectator, would he be a mere hostage to fortune.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

A Missionary Movement

The Ahmadiyya Movement In Islam is, above all, a missionary movement. Its purpose is to convert the world to Islam. To achieve its aim a complex yet simple organisation has emerged which gathers funds and spends them on the religious, moral and social well-being of its followers and the propagation of its beliefs.

It is simple in the sense that it is under the control of one man – the Khalifa. It is complex in the sense that it has many tasks. As a result, specific groups, committees and associations have been set up to deal with them. Over the years these have developed into an efficient and dedicated organisation. Adversity has given it resilience.

The Khalifa is its supreme head. He is in no sense some kind of Islamic prime minister. The faith of the Ahmadiyya Movement is based on the belief of continuing prophethood. God, in his wisdom, sent Moses, Jesus and other prophets. Then he sent Muhammad. He was the final law-bearing prophet. No one can supersede him. He is the one and only Holy Prophet of Islam. But that does not mean, it is claimed, that there will never be further prophets. These prophets will not carry any laws from God, but will have certain tasks given to them by God for the salvation of mankind.

Ahmad was the follower and devotee of Muham-

mad. He was also a prophet, he claimed. He said many times that he was not a law-bearing prophet – no one could be – but he emphasised that, as a prophet, he had a special position. He was The Promised Messiah, foretold in the Holy Bible and the Holy Quran, who was commissioned by God to spread His divine light. After his death, said The Promised Messiah, among his followers would be found his khalifas, his successors, and their sacred task would be to spread the message of Islam. In doing so their trust must be wholly and solely in God, ‘Tavakkul’ as it is known in Arabic.

In the Holy Quran God commanded Muhammad to seek the advice of sagacious and prudent followers. This command of God is also binding on the khalifas of the Ahmadiyya Movement it is said. This use of counsellors does not lessen the authority of the khalifas in any way. All members of the Ahmadiyya Movement, no matter their seniority or station in life, are commanded to obey the Khalifa absolutely and in every respect.

Where possible members of the Community will also seek guidance by the Khalifa in areas which are entirely personal such as where a family will live and work or what a young man or woman will study at university.

These decisions could be of importance to the Community and thus, when a doctor in the North of England told the Khalifa that he was thinking of returning to Pakistan, the Khalifa told him that it would be better if he stayed in Britain. The Ahmadiyya Movement had need of him. He advised him to stay and seek converts. He should

regard himself as a missionary.

“I was delighted that the Khalifa put such trust in me,” the doctor said later. “I told my family of his advice and cancelled our tickets. Then I set about doing what he had asked me to do.” In due course the town of Hartlepool had the first community in Britain with more British-born converts than anywhere else in Britain.

In the United States a young Ahmadi was due to finish high school with very high grades. He could virtually choose his course at university and he felt inclined to become a lawyer. It so happened that the Khalifa was in the U.S. at that time and the young man asked his advice.

The Khalifa advised him to become a doctor. The Community had a greater need of doctors who could become missionaries than they had of lawyers. Lawyers were not in great demand in Africa, South America, China or Russia. But doctors were always wanted.

Was he not surprised or even annoyed that the Khalifa should give him this advice? Was it not, after all, a very personal decision?

“Not at all,” the young man replied. “I was delighted that the Khalifa could spare the time to help me with such a decision. He knew what was best for me and how I could help the Community most.”

This obedience to the instructions and desires of the Khalifa is given voluntarily. There is no compulsion. It is not an obedience which arises from fear. It springs from love. It illustrates the complete faith of Ahmadis not only in their mission

but in the holiness of their Khalifa and that he has been chosen by God to lead them and that every decision he takes, great or small, will be guided by God and it will be taken for their good and the good of mankind.

The sole exception to this absolute authority and immediate obedience could be if a khalifa gave a command that was contrary to the teachings of the Holy Quran or the sayings of the Holy Prophet. But that has never yet arisen nor is likely to arise because the khalifas are bound to base all their teachings on these holy books of Islam.

This total obedience to the decisions of their khalifas has been instrumental in the growth of the Community. In the 1930s there were no rich and very few even moderately wealthy members. Its strength lay in rural areas and among small shopkeepers and traders. That began to change in the next 10 to 15 years as the Movement's policy of self-denial, self-improvement and mutual help bore fruit.

Every Ahmadi should be able to read the word of God as contained in the Holy Quran, the Promised Messiah had declared. So a 100 per cent literacy was desirable. It benefited Ahmadis not only in their religious life but also their ability to improve their livelihood. Literacy is the key to self improvement no matter where you work. As a result, Ahmadis everywhere began to move up the worldly ladder of success.

This improvement in their financial status had important results as regards the missionary work of the Movement. Every Ahmadi is committed to the

missionary work and, without exception, must give a certain proportion of his income to the Movement. The more money that Ahmadiis therefore earned in their day-to-day life the more money was donated to the Movement. Under the leadership of the Khalifa their missionary work started to gather renewed vigour.

The minimum – and absolutely mandatory – financial contribution every Ahmadi makes to the Movement is a payment of one-sixteenth of his or her monthly income. There are no exceptions. No matter how poor or how rich you are, if you are in employment then your initial contribution is one-sixteenth of your income. So your initial subscription may be very little or very substantial. The amount of this subscription had been laid down by The Promised Messiah who had, says the handbook of the Ahmadiyya Association, “laid great stress on financial sacrifices”.

The second obligatory contribution is made annually – one-tenth of the income received during any one month in the previous year. This contribution pays for the food, accommodation and other expenses of the annual gathering because, apart from the cost of getting there, everything is free for members and guests.

The Promised Messiah had also laid down that those who contributed between one-tenth and one-third of their monthly income, and also made a will leaving the same percentage to the Movement for missionary work, should rank high in the Movement. During their lifetime they would have the honorific title of ‘Willmaker’ and, on their death,

they would be buried in a special area known as the 'Heavenly Graveyard'.

There are other areas of voluntary contribution. For missionary work outside Pakistan members are invited to make a donation of at least one fifth of one month's salary once a year. The handbook says, "It is voluntary . . . but at the same time it is essential for every Ahmadi to contribute."

There are different suggested rates. For those who give more than \$300 U.S. in the U.S.A. and Canada, or £200 sterling in the U.K., Europe and the Middle East, or £100 or the equivalent in other countries, there is the title 'Giver of the First Line'. For those contributing \$150 U.S., £100 sterling or £50 in the same categories there is the title 'Giver of the Second Line'.

Members who had money earning interest in a bank account and which they had not touched for 12 months or longer should impose a wealth tax or 'Zakaat' on themselves. This should not be less than 2½ per cent of the money they had in the bank. In addition, of course, any interest paid on that money was not theirs to keep for charging interest on money was forbidden. The interest paid on this money should be handed over to the Movement for use in missionary, medical and educational activities.

Finally, in addition to these general funds, there were various special funds, the Centenary Fund, the Fund For Establishing Missions, the Reserve Fund, the Building Fund, the Fund for Africa and others. The children of original contributors to various funds, especially the New Scheme, were invited to

continue their parents' contributions after their deaths in order "to keep alive forever the memory of the sacrifices offered by these pioneers".

In all, it has been calculated, that an Ahmadi in good standing would contribute about one-fifth of his income to the Movement.

Under the missionary zeal of the Fourth Khalifa membership was soon to reach and then pass 10 million. The Movement's income increased dramatically, but it was still not enough. The greatest number of these new members came from the poorest countries in Africa and Asia. At first these new missions had to be supported financially and so, the bigger the membership of the Ahmadiyya Community became, the greater became the demands on the more affluent.

Missionaries, though paid a meagre salary, were forbidden to practise any trade or profession for personal gain – their energies had to be devoted to their work. Those missionaries who were doctors, engineers or had other special skills used them to further their missionary activities. The Ahmadis who worked alongside them did so without financial reward.

The Fourth Khalifa, in order to carry on the mission to convert the world to Islam, was therefore soon to ask not only the richest members of the Community but also the richest countries in the Community, to undertake special tasks. These tasks usually demanded time, personal effort and even further personal financial sacrifice.

* * *

The years that he had spent working at the very bottom of the pyramid which is the Ahmadiyya Movement – from cleaning up litter and carrying away rubbish at the annual gathering to working as a junior clerk – meant that the Khalifa knew in detail the workings of the various departments inside the Movement. Moreover, he had also grown up inside the Movement. Almost as the Second Khalifa had founded the various organisations and sections so had the Fourth Khalifa, as a child, a boy, young man and finally working member of the Movement, passed through them.

The youth movement caters for boys between the ages of seven and fourteen. Wherever there are three or four boys in that age group a youth section must be organised and everywhere there is a youth section every Ahmadi boy must become a member.

The fundamental aim of the youth movement, it states quite clearly, is to guide and develop the boys' growth into manhood "in the light of Ahmadiyyat the true Islam". So as well as sports of all kinds, fund-raising for charities or for old and poor people – according to the needs of the country in which they live – constant attention is paid to the study of the Holy Quran, the teachings of Islam and the need for a healthy, punctual and holy attitude in the carrying out of their religious duties. There are annual examinations to test their religious knowledge.

When he is fifteen the Ahmadi boy automatically passes into the young men's organisation which caters for men aged between fifteen and forty. Members are known as 'khuddam', which means a

servant, and their job is literally to serve the Community.

Again, wherever there are three or four men of that age group there must be a young men's organisation. In an organisation serving a major community there might be some 19 office-bearers, ranging from the normal secretary and treasurer to the secretary for education and the secretary for the "dignity of labour". Every Ahmadi should be helped to learn to read and write, says the rules of the organisation. In the same way every Ahmadi must learn the dignity of labour "for working with your hands does not in any way make you inferior. On the contrary it is an honour to serve your own community and your own people."

It was of this young men's organisation the Khalifa had been a member when he helped guard Qadian during the troubles of partition. Later he had been elected president of the organisation for Rabwah and later again he had been elected president of the international organisation. He helped redraft its constitution. It is this organisation which is obviously the most dynamic because it possesses members in full physical and mental ability.

When he passed the age of 40 Tahir moved into the older men's organisation of which he also became president. Though less physical work is demanded of the members they are expected to devote some time every week to the affairs of the Community.

The women's organisations, which had been founded in 1922 when in most Muslim countries

little thought was given to the education of women, followed roughly the same pattern as those of the men. There was considerable emphasis on religious training and there were sections which looked after education. Again a hundred per cent literacy was sought for it was mothers, in most cases, who would be helping to teach their children to read.

The day a child finished his or her first reading of the Quran – usually starting from the age of six or seven – was a day of pride and celebration both for the parents and the Community. Dressed in their best clothes, the children usually finished the last page under the guidance of the imam. For everyone at the mosque that day there was cake and sweetmeats prepared by the proud parents.

Additionally, however, and quite unusually for a Muslim women's organisation, there were also sections for physical culture and social services, missionary activities and finance. Ahmadi women, though they did not take part in any sports along with men, were encouraged to swim, take up archery, publish their own magazines, look after their own finances and take part in the annual shoora or "parliament" which usually assembles after the annual gathering to discuss suggestions put forward by associations from all over the world.

This "voice" given to Ahmadi women in the shoora came about in 1922 and so was only a few years after women in Britain and most European countries had been given the vote and was an astonishing innovation for a Muslim community. At first the women did not themselves speak at this

annual “parliament” but were represented by a man who put forward the consensus of views on various subjects that the women’s organisations had given him.

This separation was done away with shortly after the accession of the Fourth Khalifa and the voice of women was heard and listened to in this “parliament”. In carrying through this innovation the Khalifa, to some extent, was following the example of his mother who had been president of the national women’s for many years until her death. She had been responsible for many improvements which had taken place in the running of the organisation.

These were the social and community organisations for the members of the Ahmadiyya Movement on which the Khalifa was to build.

“Give me 100,000 converts by 1989 to start the second century of the Ahmadiyyat,” he urged his followers.

Though the pace of conversion had quickened, though mosques were being reestablished in countries from which Islam had disappeared and mosques founded in lands where few Muslims had ever been before and the Quran was being translated for the first time into languages where no translations had previously been available, it was still time to hurry. The Ahmadiyya Movement had another two centuries to complete the conversion of the world to Islam – that would come about in some three hundred years The Promised Messiah had prophesied.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

The Islamic Shoora

The secretariat of the Movement is as well organised as the social and community organisations. The main organisation is the international association. Under it are the associations for individual countries and under each of them are the associations for provinces and districts and, in turn, under each of them are the associations for cities, towns and rural areas. Each association controls and manages the social and community organisations in its area.

Each community organisation is represented on its local association, each local association on its national association and each national association on the inter-national association. In proportion to its membership a national association has the right to nominate a member to the annual "parliament" or shoora which meets for two, three or four days after the annual gathering under the chairmanship of the Khalifa.

National shooras meet under the chairmanship of the amir of their country.

The shoora is a unique representative body, neither totally democratic nor totally authoritarian. It is unique in Islam yet it traces its origins back to the shooras held by the Holy Prophet of Islam on various occasions during his lifetime.

Western-style democracies have usually failed to

take root in the newly-independent countries of Africa and Asia and, as a result, many political leaders have cast envious eyes on the swift, harmonious and effective workings of the shooras of the Ahmadiyya Movement. Some have discussed with the Fourth Khalifa the possibility of having some kind of shoorā in a political setting.

The president of one small West African country has complained publicly that the colonial power – in that case Great Britain – left before they were ready for parliamentary democracy and what they needed was a shoorā of some kind.

The reasons he gave were that ‘one man, one vote’ does not work if the vast majority of the electorate is completely illiterate, are still living under tribal rule and what a tribal leader decides is what his followers do. Corruption becomes endemic, each tribe starts fighting for a bigger share of the national revenue and, if a political leader has not managed to impose his own dictatorship, then generals, air marshals and even army sergeants think they could do better.

Even members of parliament in functioning Western democracies, deadened by the need to score points off the opposition no matter the subject, by the boring repetition of the same facts in different words by members of their own parties and cynical beyond belief as they troop in and out of voting lobbies, have observed that the Shoorā of the Ahmadiyya Movement works.

When the first shoorā of the Ahmadiyya Movement was held in April, 1922, the Second Khalifa declared, “There is no doubt that today this

advisory council, our shoora, holds very little importance in the eyes of the outside world, but a time will come when the most important parliament of the world will not be considered superior to this meeting . . . a time will come when kings will feel greatly honoured to be invited to attend this meeting.”

The shoora is not a debating chamber – it is a body for tendering agreed advice after discussion. The only difficulty is that to work effectively a shoora needs to be under the guidance of a leader whose beneficial authority is recognised by all. But as even the authority of a benevolent dictator is never fully recognised the Ahmadiyya Movement is therefore perhaps in a totally unique position.

The members of the international shoora usually meet after the annual gathering, but special shooras can be called at any time by the Khalifa. Shortly after Tahir was chosen as Khalifa he decided that women would physically take part in the shoora. They need no longer express their views through a man. A section of the meeting place was therefore curtained off where they could sit in purdah. With closed circuit television and their own microphones they started to take a vocal part in the shoora.

The subjects to be decided at an international shoora come from the resolutions agreed as recommendations by national shooras. All concern policy and not administrative matters. To discuss each resolution a committee is formed by members who volunteer their services because of their interest in the subject or who are nominated by the amir of their country.

By the time the committees have been formed nearly all the members of the shoorā are members of a committee. The various committees then retire to discuss their particular resolutions during a stipulated time. No one can be a member of two committees.

Along with the printed list of resolutions which are to be discussed are instructions to members as to how they should behave. They are reminded that they have come to the shoorā with the sole aim of rendering true and sincere service to the Community and they should therefore behave most sincerely and truly. They must give their opinions as a result of practical experience which must be free of partisan or vested interest. Facts are more important than personal sentiment.

Finally they are reminded that no one must stand up to express the same view over and over again and thus waste the time of those who are attending the shoorā.

The committees have an agreed time to discuss and take a decision on the resolution before them. When the time set aside for committee meetings is finished the full shoorā meets again and the chairman of each committee reports on his committee's decisions.

Other shoorā members can comment on the conclusions reached by the committees. However, committee members who were outvoted during the committee stage cannot speak in the full shoorā unless they have previously asked their committee chairman for permission to do so.

Comments in the full shoorā do not normally

occupy more than five or six minutes. If a poll is asked for this is done by a show of hands. When the views of the shoorā have thus been obtained the Khalifa, after deliberation and perhaps some questioning, announces his decision.

He may accept their advice completely, he may accept some of it and vary other portions, he may appoint a subcommittee to investigate the matter more closely and report back as soon as possible. If, however, he believes that the resolution is not in the true interests of the Movement or that it contravenes or compromises some tenet of Islam then he will explain his reasons and reject the suggestion completely.

His decision is not open to question in any way whatsoever.

An Islamic scholar was to comment: “A khalifat is not democratic. In a democracy a leader is elected for a certain number of years by the votes of men and women. In theory he or she follows in broad outline the policy on which he was elected.

“A khalifat is also not a dictatorship. A dictator can do as he wishes – absolute power rests in his hands. He can change the laws if he so wishes. But he rules only while he controls the sources of his power. As he grows old and his power wanes he is likely to be ousted. On his death there is often a renewed attempt at democracy.

“In a khalifat the khalifa commands absolute respect and absolute obedience. He is bound by law to seek the advice of his advisers, but when he takes a decision, even if it is not the one expected by his advisers, there is no thought of not obeying him or

even of not carrying out his decisions wholeheartedly. God has guided the khalifa in his decisions and he must therefore be obeyed. Age does not reduce his authority. He cannot be deposed or even resign to let a younger man take his place. He remains khalifa until his death.

“Despite this absolute obedience to his authority he cannot, however, change the law – that is laid down by the commands of the Islamic Shariah and Islamic law cannot be changed.”

When there was a debate in an African country about whether their one-party system should continue or they should return to the Western multi-party system, the Khalifa was consulted by a senior cabinet minister.

“I warned him against the multiparty system,” said the Khalifa. “The result is always the same negative stance against the government. It is not values which are kept in view, just the principle of opposition. I asked him what would be the residual effect on the people’s thinking when the whole country was trained in negative criticism.

“In a multiparty system you are also trained that your party must benefit from a debate whether you use the right argument or the wrong argument, whether you hurt the nation’s interest or not. All that is important in such a debate is that your party must return to power. It must be heard to be acting, but in many cases it is just a facade.

“So I told this cabinet minister that in the Islamic concept of consultative bodies there is no loyalty to any party – only loyalty to principles and the subject itself. That is why in our shoora if someone

has expressed an opinion about something the next speaker does not get up and say the same thing in different words. He will merely say that what he wanted to say has already been said, add any further points very briefly and step down.

“So there is no repetition and no criticism against the administration. Everyone thinks in constructive terms, collectively helping the administration reach the right conclusions.

“I do not see any reason why a similar system cannot operate in a secular organisation – it will be the rule of someone best suited according to collective opinion. He or she will be that person, without party support, who emerges as more sensible, more sincere, more devoted to the national interest. With such a system you always go for the righteousness and the correct attitude and the desire to promote goodness. You never side with anyone because of friendship or party.

“In the no-party system you can pick the best talent from anywhere. The guiding principle in our shoorā is summed up by the Islamic phrase ‘do not take sides with people but take sides with the truth and help truth emerge victorious’.”

It will take time to introduce such a healthy system said the Khalifa, because at the moment society, as a whole, is not healthy. So you have to begin at both ends – introduce the system gradually which will create the attitude that is necessary to run such a system.

“So when all is lost you have only two options – either to be lost yourself or, with wisdom, to attempt to change things systematically. This can

only be done in Islam because the Islamic system is a no-party system. You don't struggle for a victory for your own party for your own generation or even for the next few generations. You strive for a goal which may be achieved in several hundred years.

“We are long distance runners, there is no impatience, no surrender. Ultimately this is bound to be achieved. It is very important to understand that to achieve that goal is not important as compared to genuine effort to achieve that goal. However distant that goal may be, one generation or a hundred generations away, if you die on the path of that effort then you die successful and victorious.

“You will have a sense of satisfaction and nobility which the rest of the world cannot even imagine. So although one generation may pass and then another and then another the victory of the values of Ahmadiyyat will finally triumph. I and my companions know that we are getting closer, but we are not foolish enough to believe that this generation will be transformed. It is a long distance objective, but we must carry on. It will happen gradually, Inshaallah.”

* * *

There are 10 principal department heads reporting directly to the Khalifa. An official of the Movement has defined them briefly as: “First there is the person who ensures the Khalifa's commands are carried out. Then there are the heads of departments looking after the spiritual training of

members, the provision of religious classes and teachers where there are no missionaries, the provision of basic education, the publication of books, magazines and newspapers and the duties of the people who work for the Movement – perhaps that might be called the personnel department.

“In addition there are the heads of the departments who look after the way funds are raised, how the money is spent, the property owned by the Movement, the education of missionaries, the organisation of the annual gathering.

“There are also our courts where our judges resolve any disputes about money or other matters between Ahmadis or where there is an offence under Islamic law but not under the laws of the country in which they reside. Our matrimonial courts give judgement where there is a dispute between husband and wife. They try to resolve these matters but sometimes there irreconcilable differences and the couple want a divorce. The judge will listen to husband and wife and then decide if a divorce is possible. The couple can then take action in a civil court to dissolve the marriage.

“Anyone can, of course, appeal against a decision and it will be heard by three judges or, in a further appeal, by five judges. It can finally go before the Khalifa with the consent of the five judges.

“No fees are charged in any way in connection with these cases.”

The official describing the working of the secretariat of the Ahmaddiyya Movement summed up with these words:

“The truth of the matter is that all these

departments have been started only to give help to the Khalifa. They work only under his guidance. These departments obey the commands of the Khalifa who can, whenever he wishes, change the rules, regulations and conditions. This is because the Khalifa is directed by God the Almighty through divine guidance. By obeying the Khalifa, Ahmadis obey God and so the Movement obeys. These rules and regulations are, in a sense, the body of the Khalifa.”

CHAPTER TWENTY

Zia Seizes Power

In July, 1977, Mr Bhutto's Pakistan Peoples Party, which had been returned to power with a truly astonishing majority, reached an agreement with the nine opposition parties. The PPP would relinquish a number of seats in the National Assembly and so end the complaints that the elections had been rigged. The agreement was to be announced in a joint statement which was now being prepared.

At 6 a.m. one morning General Zia-ul-Haq, Commander-in-Chief of the Pakistan Army, arrested Mr Bhutto and his ministers and all the leaders of the nine opposition parties. General Zia and the generals commanding the five regions of Pakistan announced the imposition of martial law. New elections would be held within 90 days.

People were at first willing to hope that he was telling the truth – that he intended to sweep away corruption and, as quickly as possible, return the country to parliamentary democracy.

Soldiers, in the norm, live their lives by simple rules – they obey orders, they protect the country, they do not seek to make fortunes because of the power that is in their hands. It is small wonder that they despise the twistings and turnings of unscrupulous politicians and believe they could do better.

Absolute power is said to corrupt absolutely and the dictum proved true with Zia. The 90 days

passed and there were no elections. There were more promises. One by one the generals who had helped Zia fell away. Zia had deceived them, they said.

Condemned by world opinion for his overthrow of a democratic government – even if it were inefficient and corrupt – Zia struggled to find legitimacy for his illegal government. He found it by imposing on Pakistan supposedly fundamental Islamic laws.

With these laws he obtained the backing of the ulama and so at first presented to the world the appearance of being supported by the religious leaders of the majority of the nation. Public floggings and other barbaric medieval punishments were introduced.

They satisfied the fundamentalists and silenced with fear the rest of the population. Zia had become a dictator. He had been corrupted absolutely.

To divert the attention of the population from their real grievances a well-known stratagem of dictators is to pick a religious or ethnic minority and fan the embers of intolerance into flames.

So it was with Zia. Persecution mounted against the Ahmadiyya Community, their shops were pilaged and set on fire and mobs rioted outside their mosques. Some were broken into and broken up. The discrimination practised by Bhutto against Ahmadis in every government service was stepped up. Ahmadis, innocent of any offence against public and private morality save their religious beliefs, were beaten up by mobs and individual thugs.

Other Ahmadiis were murdered. The police, in some instances, appeared to do little to prevent or investigate these crimes.

A parallel of similar religious persecution in recent history and the enormous price the world had to pay for remaining silent readily presents itself.

The Khalifa urged restraint on his followers. Do not respond to these provocations. Defend yourselves, but do not attack your persecutors either physically or verbally. He reminded them that The Promised Messiah had foretold that they would be persecuted and abused. But he had also foretold that the Ahmadiyya Movement would triumph in the end.

But though he urged forbearance on his followers he did not use the same restraint himself. He condemned Zia's persecution. He denounced in sermon after sermon the injustices that Zia was inflicting not only on the Ahmadiyya Community but on all the people of Pakistan. He was inflicting wounds on the entire country. He was stirring up rivalries, creating enmity, dividing families, destroying commerce, depriving the country of good citizens and desecrating and befouling the word 'peace' which was the name of Islam.

God would punish him if he continued in his evil ways, said the Khalifa. God's wrath would be terrible.

One poem he wrote created a furore in Zia's entourage and was reprinted again and again for distribution in the Community. Ahmadi children learned it by heart. One Ahmadi was to say, "There

are moments in history when a speech, a poem or a song seems to inspire a people. They appear to be defeated, all around them is chaos and despair, yet suddenly this speech or poem will rally a nation. Suddenly there is hope.

“Winston Churchill’s speech, when Britain appeared to be defeated, when he promised ‘blood, sweat and tears’ but also promised final victory, was such a speech. It put new heart into Britain.

“The poem by the Khalifa was similar. It put new heart into us. It gave vent to our pain and anguish. It recognised our despair, but it gave us hope. It promised us final victory – and the downfall of Zia’s tyranny.”

It is difficult to translate a poem. It needs a poet to do so and even then the flavour is lost. It becomes a new poem rather than a translation.

In his poem the Khalifa urged his followers to be patient. The dark storms of persecution that were raging would collide with the prayers they were offering and then the storms would disappear, almost as though they had never been. The darkness and peril of their persecution would pass away and tranquillity would light the dawning day.

Continue to pray humbly, the Khalifa urged. Prayer had destroyed Nimrod the tyrant, the prayers of Moses had humbled the great Pharaohs. The sword of prayer was more powerful than any worldly weapon. Even if destruction appeared to be entering in at the door, do not give up hope. Pray harder. God would curse and overturn the tyrant.

Zia was a well-read soldier. He became almost beside himself when it was reported that he

was being compared to Nimrod.

The elders of the Community asked the Khalifa to be less plain-spoken. Zia was known for the unrelenting, cold fierceness of his anger against those who opposed him. Moderate your language they said for the sake of the Community. They needed him. They would be nothing without the Khalifa.

The Khalifa refused. It was his duty to oppose Zia, he declared. God would help them. God would never forsake them.

* * *

In March, 1984, a telephone call was received at the headquarters of the Ahmadiyya Movement in Rabwah. It was from the United States embassy. A member of a U.S. mission would be passing near Rabwah shortly and would welcome the opportunity to meet the Khalifa.

It seemed to the Khalifa that there was not much reason for a meeting, but he gave his agreement and the American and some officials of the United States Embassy in Islamabad turned up shortly afterwards. When he heard where they had been it seemed to the Khalifa that they had not been passing nearby, but had come specially to meet him. And as the discussion progressed it seemed to the Khalifa that they were in possession of some knowledge that might affect the future of the Community.

They talked for an hour and a half. "What put me on my guard was his insistent interest in what

would be my reaction if the Government did this or did that.

“So I said, ‘What do you mean by this and that?’

“He replied, ‘Well, you know that everybody is crying for your head. And the Government can succumb to the pressure and take certain measures. In such a case what will be the reaction of the Ahmadiyya Movement?’

“I replied that we were a peaceful community. We will behave in the best traditions according to our past experience. Anyway, it was very obvious that he knew something and was trying to gauge my reactions before reporting to Washington. So I decided to go to Islamabad and try to find out what was happening.”

The Khalifa had many friends there among the diplomatic community, some dating from when he represented the Third Khalifa, others since he had been elected khalifa.

He would stay for two weeks he decided. He talked to many people. “I had contacts with the British, French, Canadian, Chinese and many other embassies.”

All were delighted to see him. Some he met at their offices. Others he met privately for they did not want to jeopardise their relations with the government of Zia. Something was definitely going to happen he gathered. But no one seemed to know exactly what.

Opponents of the Movement were being transported into Islamabad from the North West Province by buses and lorries. Crowds had started

to gather outside the house where the Khalifa was staying.

“Then I received a message from General Zia via an officer of the Intelligence Bureau. What it said was that the ulama were making a lot of noise but I should not worry. Once he had dealt with a certain politician he would put the ulama in their place. So there was no need to worry.

“This was a very strange message – it was the only message I ever received from Zia – though he was to send an emissary to me later. It seemed to say that I could stay in Islamabad and there was no danger.

“At the same time as I received the message from Zia I received another message from an officer of the Intelligence Bureau. He gave me his personal advice to leave Islamabad immediately.

“Now the two messages were contradictory, but it was obvious that he knew what was planned and that he was a gentleman and that he did not want to be involved in trickery.”

The Khalifa was to receive a further personal call from a friend in police intelligence. The gist of the message was:

Leave Islamabad immediately.

Yet another person who seemed to know a little more than anyone else was an official of the French embassy. The Khalifa met him at his home. French is still the language of diplomacy and the French are masters of the art of saying something diplomatically even when they are talking English – for the Khalifa did not speak French.

The conversation seemed almost non-consequen-

tial. "How long are you staying?" asked the French counsellor.

"Two weeks," answered the Khalifa.

"I think the weather is not all that pleasant here at this time of the year," the French counsellor observed. "I have no doubt that you will be wanting to leave as soon as possible."

The visit lasted only fifteen minutes and then the Khalifa returned to the house where he was staying. Within the hour he left for Rabwah.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

The Infamous Ordinance

On Thursday, April 26th, 1984, the Gazette of Pakistan recorded the introduction of Ordinance Twenty made under martial law by the President of Pakistan, General Zia-ul-Haq. It was designed, it said, to amend the law to prohibit the Quadiani group, Lahori group and Ahmadis from indulging in anti-Islamic activities.

It began: "Whereas it is expedient to amend the law to prohibit the Quadiani group, Lahori group and Ahmadis from indulging in anti-Islamic activities: and whereas the President is satisfied that the circumstances exist which render it necessary to take immediate action: now therefore, in pursuance of the Proclamation of the fifth day of July, 1977, and in exercise of all powers enabling in that behalf, the President is pleased to make and promulgate the the following Ordinance."

The title of the ordinance was to be 'The Anti-Islamic Activities of the Quadiani Group, Lahori Group and Ahmadis (Prohibition and and Punishment) Ordinance, 1984'. It would come into force at once and it would override any orders or decisions of courts.

The following new sections were added to the Pakistan penal code under section 298B:

"Misuse of epithets, descriptions and titles, etc reserved for certain holy personages and places.

“1 Any person of the Qadiani group or the Lahori group (who call themselves ‘Ahmadis’ or by any other name) who by words, either spoken or written, or by visible representation,

“(a) refers to, or addresses, any person, other than a Caliph or companion of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon his name), as ‘Ameer-ul-Mumineen’, ‘Khalifa-tul-Mumineen’, ‘Khalifa-tul-Muslimeen,’ ‘Sahaabi’ or Razi Allah Anho;”*

“(b) refers to, or addresses, any person, other than a wife of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), as ‘Ummul-Mumineen’;

“(c) refers to, or addresses, any person, other than a member of the family of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) as Ahle-bait; or

“(d) refers to, or names, or calls, his place of worship as ‘Masjid’;

“shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to three years, and shall also be liable to a fine.

“2 Any person of the Qadiani group or Lahori group (who call themselves ‘Ahmadis’ or by any other name) who by words, either spoken or written, or by visible representation, refers to the mode or form of call to prayers followed by his faith as ‘Azan’ or writes ‘Azan’ as used by the Muslims, shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to three years, and shall also be liable to a fine.”

The final section of the ordinance said: “Any person of the Qadiani group or the Lahori group (who, call themselves ‘Ahmadis’ or by any other

* See Glossary of Arabic and Urdu Words.

name) who, directly or indirectly, poses himself as a Muslim, or calls, or refers to, his faith as Islam, or preaches or propagates his faith, by words, either spoken or written, or by visible representations, or in any manner whatsoever outrages the religious feelings of Muslims, shall be punished with imprisonment of either description which may extend to three years and shall also be liable to a fine.”

World reaction to the ordinance was one of incredulity. Among Pakistan lawyers, teachers, diplomats and businessmen there was sadness – sadness that their country was sinking into total religious intolerance, sadness that their country’s name was becoming synonymous with infamous regimes that oppressed its citizens because of their colour or religion.

There were military and commercial considerations as well. Pakistan was regarded by the U.S. and other Western countries as a bulwark against communism. How could their governments sanction the delivery of arms in the name of freedom while minority groups in Pakistan were being persecuted?

The sheer illogicality of the law depressed the lawyers and judges of Pakistan. They had tried, in the main, to hold on to notions of justice and liberty.

How, they asked, could a state abrogate to itself the ability to define what was, and what was not, Islam?

How could a particular number of Islamic divines, even though they were in the majority,

consider that they, and they alone, could interpret the word of God as revealed in the Quran?

How could a state justify its suppression of the right of any group of people to proclaim its name and its beliefs, provided no anti-social or criminal offence had been committed?

And, and most important of all, how could any judge or jury decide that someone was posing as a believer in any religion if all that he did was pray and observe the tenets of that religion?

The Sunni, Shafie, Hanafite, Wahhabi and Ahmadi imams all give the azan or call to prayer. How was it that only the Ahmadi imam was posing as a Muslim?

Certainly there was a fundamental difference between the Ahmadiyya Movement and all the other sects of Islam. But there are seventy-three sects in Islam and at various times their divines have issued decrees or fatwas declaring that such and such a sect was heretical.

How could the state decide who was posing as a Muslim and who was not?

It pre-supposes a kind of thought-control of Orwellian dimensions with thought-police able to see into people's minds and decide which of those offering the daily prayers of the Salat are true Muslims and which are only posing as Muslims!

Indeed it put the judges who decided in such a case as committing shirk, considering themselves equal to God.

An American journalist, admitted to Zia's presence for what was supposed to be an eulogistic

interview, taxed him with violating Pakistan's constitution and the United Nations' Declaration on Human Rights.

Zia shrugged his shoulders in indifference. "So what," he said.

* * *

In Rabwah the Khalifa had summoned his most senior counsellors to a meeting. Recalling the meeting the Khalifa said, "I was never in any way scared of General Zia. I had criticised him very openly in my sermons. I had told him, 'Mend your ways and your attitude. Cease this persecution or you will face the Wrath of God.'

"But with this ordinance it was a different kind of situation. It was not my safety that was at stake, but my ability to speak out. With this law Zia could silence me as the effective head of the Community. I could remain in Pakistan and speak out and then be put into prison. When I came out I could speak out again and be put away for another three years.

"In the Ahmadiyyat you cannot choose another head while the first is living, even if he is imprisoned and completely out of touch. So that would mean a headless community.

"The Khalifa is guided by God in his decisions so he cannot delegate his decisions to a committee. Some decisions have to be taken by the Khalifa and that decision is final. If he were not able to take any decisions that could be a very dangerous situation."

The advice of his counsellors was unanimous – he should leave Pakistan immediately.

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

Zia's Mistake

The Khalifa accepted the advice of his amirs and other counsellors that he should leave Pakistan but on one condition – at the time he left no warrant should be out for his arrest and no official notice should have been served on him requiring him to appear before any commission regarding any alleged crime.

If any such warrant were issued then he would not leave the country, he said. The price that the Community would have to pay for his safety would be too high.

“My departure in those circumstances would allow people to malign the khalifat, perhaps not directly, but certainly by rumour. It would be said that I was guilty of some crime and that was why I had run away. That was my fear and I was not prepared to allow that to happen.”

Reluctantly the amirs accepted his decision. The preparations for his escape were put into the hands of a retired senior army officer. He decided that the Khalifa should leave Pakistan by KLM, the Dutch airline with which he normally travelled. A messenger was sent to Karachi to book the seats rather than reserving them by telephone for they knew their telephone lines were tapped and all conversations were recorded.

There were two KLM flights to Europe that week

from Karachi, one that left very early in the morning on Monday, April 30th, the other on Wednesday, May 2nd. The Khalifa had proposed that he take the flight on the Wednesday because it would give him more time to prepare his departure, but when the messenger came back he reported that the KLM manager wanted him to take the flight on the Monday morning.

There were plenty of seats available on the Wednesday flight but none on the Monday. However, the KLM manager said that he would make sure that at least six seats were available on the Monday flight. He did not give his reasons, but his advice was accepted. It was not until later that he explained that the Wednesday flight touched down in a Gulf state whereas the Monday flight went straight to Amsterdam.

If the Pakistan government put out an alert naming the Khalifa as a wanted criminal it could be that he would be arrested and detained in the Gulf state.

* * *

At that time the headquarters of the Community at Rabwah was under the surveillance of five different security agencies of General Zia. They covered all roads in and out of Rabwah.

It was not very difficult to spot them. One group, from the army, were dressed as beggars. But they were probably the only group of beggars in history who all wore stout army boots!

The Khalifa insisted that there should be no lies

or duplicity about his departure. He would not be disguised nor use a false passport. However, if Zia's intelligence agencies made the wrong deductions then that was their affair.

Early in the morning, therefore, shortly after the first prayers, the Khalifa's car was seen leaving Rabwah. A man dressed in the white topcoat or achkan and wearing the winged white pugree or Punjabi turban, with the gold centrepiece that was the normal dress of the Khalifa, was sitting in the back seat.

The Khalifa's car had its normal escort – one car in front and two cars behind. His personal security staff, well-known to the intelligence agents and completely visible to them, sat inside these cars.

It was presumed by the Ahmadis in the streets that the Khalifa was on the way to Islamabad, some 200 miles away. It was also the presumption of four of the five intelligence agencies who were watching Rabwah.

They reported that the Khalifa was en route for Islamabad and, as was normal, his convoy was being shadowed. Some time later the cars following the convoy reported that the Khalifa was not going straight to Islamabad via Pindi. He appeared to be going to Jehlam where his cousin, Mirza Minir Ahmad, owned a chipboard factory.

Jehlam was some 70 miles east of Islamabad and it was presumed that he would stay the night at his cousin's – as he had done occasionally in the past – and continue his journey to Islamabad the next day.

If he had continued straight to Pindi or Islamabad

the Government would have sent an official to meet him.

But it was not the Khalifa who sat in the back of the Mercedes, but his third oldest brother, Mirza Munawwar Ahmad.

Three hours earlier, at 2 a.m., when it was completely dark, two other cars had left Rabwah. They took a minor road that led to the little town of Lalian and then on to Jhang and finally to the main highway to Karachi, which was 750 miles away. In the first car were other members of the Khalifa's security staff. In the second car was the Khalifa.

The retired army officer had insisted that only those who had an absolute need to know should be told of the Khalifa's final decision to leave and that the number of those who knew the details of his departure should be even more restricted.

Even those who had been consulted about his departure and most members of his family therefore did not know of his decision to leave.

It was not a question of trust, the retired officer insisted, just normal security. If people did not know then they could not let anything slip out accidentally.

God had already told two people, the Khalifa was to say later.

Shortly after the decision of how and when he would leave – which was in two days' time – a letter was delivered from an elderly Ahmadi called Usman Chou. Mr Chou had had a dream that he did not understand, but which he believed contained some kind of message for the Khalifa.

He wrote that in his dream he had seen that the

Khalifa's car was about to leave for Islamabad. He had approached in order to pay his respects, but when he looked in the side window he saw that the car was empty.

"I was shocked and cried out, 'The Khalifa is leaving and his car is leaving, but he is not in the car.'

"Then a voice told me that the Khalifa had left by another route and that he had gone abroad. So I accompanied the car and instead of going directly to Islamabad we went to Jehlam where it stayed for one night."

That was the dream recounted in the letter of Usman Chou. It contained the secret plan which had just been decided on some hours earlier!

"I knew then," the Khalifa said later, "that the plan would succeed. God had approved it. I was therefore absolutely without fear of its success."

The second person who received a message regarding his departure, though neither he nor she appreciated it at the time, said the Khalifa, was his second daughter Faiza. She was then 23. No one in the family knew of his imminent departure but the day before he left Faiza related with puzzlement the dream she had had the night before.

She had seen two cars on a lonely road and though they were not the Khalifa's usual cars she had known that the Khalifa was there and he was leaving on a journey. The two cars slowed down as they approached a place where it appeared that the road was being repaired. However, there was no work being done and indeed no workmen could be

seen, just mounds of gravel which forced the cars to slow down.

As they did so she suddenly saw some beggars approaching. She did not like their looks and became extremely panicky. Suddenly she saw a hand lean out from the car in front and scatter some one rupee notes. Most of the beggars ran for them and the cars moved forward again, past the piles of gravel, and then on to the main road to Karachi.

What actually happened, the Khalifa said, was that between Lalian and Jhang there were some areas where flood water had washed away most of the road. They were being repaired, but very slowly. The army intelligence group had taken advantage of this natural road block and installed their surveillance group, dressed as beggars, at that point.

The two cars occupied by the Khalifa and his security group had slowed down and out had rushed the so-called beggars, some dressed as dervishes and wearing only a gown. But all looked extremely healthy and they all wore army boots!

The beggars were moving towards the second car and almost certain discovery of the Khalifa, who was sitting in the seat beside the driver, when one of his security staff in the first car opened his window and threw out a handful of one rupee notes. The beggars ran to pick them up and the Khalifa's car moved forward, skirted the piles of gravel then gathered speed and was on its way again.

Some of the beggars had not bothered to scramble for the largesse dropped in the road, but had gazed intently at the occupants of the cars.

Later that day the army intelligence unit reported that the Khalifa was thought to have been in a car that was seen heading towards Jhang and so could be on the way to Karachi. But the report was ignored for the other four intelligence agencies had reported as a fact that the Khalifa and his security staff were on the way to Islamabad and had stopped at his cousin's home in Jehlam for the night.

The KLM flight to Amsterdam left at 2 a.m. and the Khalifa's 750 mile journey to the airport was accomplished without difficulty, but not without worry for his security staff.

En route they had stopped at a drivers' pull-in where they could buy some tea and food. His driver stopped the car at the very edge of the pull-in and said he would bring the tea and food to the Khalifa because he was too easily recognisable.

The Khalifa was having none of that. He knew the man who ran the cafe very well. He had often stopped there before he was elected Khalifa. He therefore got out of the car and exchanged memories with the cafe owner while drinking his tea. Then they got on their way again.

At the airport he was shown to a private room and one hour before the scheduled take-off time he went through passport control. He then waited for the call to board the aircraft.

It did not come.

Instead there was an announcement that there would be a delay in departure. In his private room the Khalifa sat waiting. The minutes dragged slowly by.

The KLM manager had assured him that the plane would take off on time. Now he arrived to say that the delay was the responsibility of the airport authorities. They had not given permission for the plane to take off.

The Khalifa sat waiting. His wife and his security men tried to conceal their anxiety. His two youngest daughters, too young to understand what was going on, fell asleep.

The minutes dragged slowly by.

An hour after the scheduled departure time their flight was announced. The Khalifa, his wife and two daughters, Chaudhry Hameed Nasrullah Khan, the Amir of Lahore, and the retired army officer settled down for the eight hour direct flight to Amsterdam.

There was no doubt that the delay had been due to the Khalifa's presence, but it was not until months later that it was learned how near the Khalifa had been to arrest.

The passport officers had in front of them a letter issued directly from General Zia. It had gone to all air and seaports and frontier posts. It stated that "Mirza Nasir Ahmad who calls himself the Khalifa of the Ahmadiyya Movement" was not to be allowed to leave Pakistan.

It was little wonder there had been the delay. General Zia had dealt most often with the Third Khalifa and so it was his name, Mirza Nasir Ahmad, that he had written by mistake on the banning order, not that of the Fourth Khalifa!

HE HAD BANNED THE THIRD KHALIFA,

WHO HAD BEEN DEAD FOR TWO YEARS,
FROM LEAVING THE COUNTRY!

The Fourth Khalifa's passport stated quite clearly that his name was 'Mirza Tahir Ahmad' and that he was Head of the Ahmadiyya Community.

During the hour they had waited Passport Control had tried to get someone in Islamabad to sort out the confusion, but at two o'clock in the morning no one could be reached who could solve the problem. It must be an out-of-date order it was suggested. Anyway, there was official information that the Khalifa was on his way to Islamabad.

Finally permission was given for the plane to take off.

* * *

At 3 a.m. the telephone rang in the apartment of the Imam of the London Mosque, Ataul Mujeeb Rashed.

Mr Rashed picked it up.

"Get ready," said the voice on the telephone.

"I am ready. But what for?" Mr Rashed asked. He had recognised the voice on the telephone as that of Masud Ahmad, the Director of Foreign Missions in Rabwah.

Mr Ahmad told him that the Khalifa had left Pakistan four hours ago. They had wanted to be sure the plane was approaching Europe before telephoning London.

Mr Rashed recalls that he was overcome with emotion. His wife asked him what was wrong, but before he replied he knelt down to thank God

for the Khalifa's deliverance. He then set about organising his reception. The senior officials of the Movement in London were telephoned and an emergency meeting arranged for 4.30 a.m. at the Mosque.

Meanwhile his wife had started clearing the apartment for the arrival of the Khalifa. Into bed sheets went all their clothes and possessions which were knotted and made into bundles. The same thing happened in his office.

Members of the Movement were telephoned in Holland and told of the Khalifa's imminent arrival. Then came the news that he had landed and of the connecting flight he was catching to London.

He reached the London Mosque just before 12.30 where some 300 Ahmadis, alerted by word of mouth, had already gathered to meet him. His clothes were crumpled, his eyes red-rimmed and his face showing signs of fatigue. But he went straight to the mosque to lead the Zuhr prayer. His voice was hoarse, he explained later. In Rabwah in the mosque he had been obliged to speak very loudly because the use of loudspeakers was forbidden.

Meanwhile in Rabwah the brother-in-law of Mr Kahlon was puzzling over a telex which had been sent as soon as the Khalifa's plane had landed at Amsterdam. It said, "Valuable package sent to Amsterdam has arrived safely. Will arrive London shortly."

His brother-in-law could not understand the message. After asking round the office he telephoned his wife. "I don't know what your brother's talking about. He has sent me a telex saying that a

valuable package has arrived. But no one knows anything about it. Have you sent him anything?"

His wife began saying "No", then paused and said there were rumours that the Khalifa had left Pakistan. He should take the telex to the amir, she suggested.

It was the news that the few people who had been in the secret had been waiting for. And soon the news had spread through Rabwah and then to every Ahmadi in Pakistan.

The news that the Khalifa had left Pakistan sent Zia wild with rage. The senior officials of the immigration department in Karachi were suspended. Enquiries were launched in all directions. There must have been collusion Zia raged. The people responsible would pay dearly.

The senior police officer in the Jhang district and a friend were sitting in his office on the morning of his escape when a direct call came in from Islamabad and he was told to speak to the President of Pakistan. Zia's voice was quite clear to the visitor.

Where was Mirza Tahir Ahmad? Zia demanded. He must be produced immediately.

The visitor said later that the police officer was visibly trembling as he answered, "Sir, I have no idea."

Zia exploded. "What do you mean you have no idea? You are responsible. He is in your district. Why has he left for somewhere without your knowing it? I hold you responsible. He must be produced immediately."

The senior police officer replied as soothingly

as possible that he would launch an immediate enquiry to discover the Khalifa's whereabouts.

Zia's answer was a tirade of threats and abuse that went on for several minutes.

In London the head of security at the Pakistan embassy telephoned a former ambassador and asked if he knew where the Head of the Community was.

The former ambassador parried his question with another. "Why are you asking me this?" he said.

The embassy security head said that he had received a report from Pakistan that the Khalifa had left Pakistan secretly for Switzerland but his contacts in Switzerland had said there was no trace of him.

The former ambassador then replied that the Khalifa had left Pakistan as an ordinary passenger on a normal flight and was now in London.

The news of his escape made front-page news all over the world. In Pakistan and India Muslims were to hear the details of his escape and his plans for the future in his own words for the BBC World Service in both English and Urdu broadcast a twelve minute interview with him.

Zia had hoped to silence the Ahmaddiyya Movement. Instead he had presented it with its greatest opportunity. London was the crossroads of the world. From London the Khalifa had the opportunity to lead the Ahmadiyya Movement in its mission to convert the world to Islam.

"God's ways are wonderful," said the Khalifa later.

It is believed that the Khalifa escaped arrest by

some 12 hours. Before news of his escape became known the Governor of the Punjab telephoned and left a message saying that the Khalifa had to report immediately to his office in Lahore. If he had done so he would have been arrested.

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

A New Opportunity

The arrival of the Khalifa in London was to place an extraordinary burden on the London Mosque. Previously it had been the headquarters for Britain and, as the number of Ahmadis increased, there was a constant search for more office space. Suddenly the Mosque had also become the office of the Khalifa.

In some ways London was an improvement on Rabwah. London, as well as being the crossroads of the world as regards air travel, was a world centre of communication. The Khalifa could telephone directly to almost every country in the world without going via an operator. Facsimile transmission provided easy and almost instantaneous transfer of documents.

The office of the Imam of the London Mosque is practical rather than beautiful. It measures 10 ft by 10 ft. This allows a large desk, three rows of chairs in front of it and various bookcases. There is no view – the light comes from long, narrow windows. They permit adequate light, but, in the opinion of some visitors, reflect the inadequate vision of post-war architects.

The Khalifa, cut off from the air and sunshine of Rabwah, asked that as far as possible, there should be flowers and plants in his office. In due course there were also a number of personal treasures –

photographs from overseas tours and, most important of all, a scrap of paper bearing the handwriting of The Promised Messiah sent to him by an Ahmadi.

In a box at the foot of his desk, just out of sight of visitors, is a box containing candy bars. They were for the children of Ahmadis who come for a personal interview.

“They have been told so emphatically to be on their best behaviour that they are rather overawed when they come in. And yet they are one of the great delights of my office. I love speaking with children. I love their innocence. Talking with them is a great relaxation.”

The first priority, now that the Khalifa was safely installed, was to provide somewhere to work for the people who were joining his staff. Temporary office accommodation, of the kind seen on building sites, arrived – it did not need planning permission because it was mobile. Inside the meeting hall minuscule offices were built around the sides in a kind of gallery while a canvas marquee provided a place where everybody could have a hot lunch.

All the staff were volunteers and worked in their spare time. Teachers came after school. Shift workers came early or late depending on their hours of work. And now the Movement’s emphasis on education for both boys and girls proved invaluable. There were more women immediately available to help the Khalifa than men.

In London the members of the woman’s organisation – the Lajna Imaillah – took on the task of providing the Khalifa’s secretariat. Most had

secretarial, computer or other office qualifications. Where they could only spare an hour or two during the day while their children were in school they would come to the Mosque, collect letters, reports and other data and work on them at home in the evening. Many worked constantly until 1 a.m., returning the next day for another batch of correspondence.

A computer system covering the Ahmadiyya Movement worldwide was set up and completely staffed by women. It allowed the Movement to organise itself more efficiently. It classified names and addresses, specifying the person's religion, education, background knowledge and the type of literature they could be interested in.

In Rabwah there had been accommodation of all kinds available for visitors for up to 250,000 people would attend the annual gathering in December. In London it fell to the members of the women's organisation to provide accommodation and food in their own homes for most of the visitors to the Khalifa.

It was now, too, that the Khalifa's own system of working came into its own. Up to 1,000 letters a day had arrived for him in Rabwah. Now they arrived in London. As before his secretariat classified and numbered them. Many were naturally requests for the Khalifa to pray for them for some special reason. Though there was, to some extent, a standard answer, the Khalifa personally signed each letter. And if there were any special circumstances these were brought to his attention.

But every day he also always personally went through the files.

“During my tours I meet many people and later they write to me. Usually I can put a face to the name on the letter when they recall the meeting. There are often small references to some incident in these letters. Obviously my staff cannot understand these references so that is why I always have a quick glance over everything. I have trained my eye not to miss these points.”

Other letters went to the heads of various departments so that they could attach a recommendation or briefing to the letter before it was handed to the Khalifa for a decision.

From Ahmadis all over the world also came letters asking that he write to them personally even if it were only one sentence. They wanted to treasure a piece of his handwriting. These too he replied to.

The most difficult of all – and the most time-consuming – were the pleas for personal help.

“Some of these letters are so emotionally charged that I cannot possibly dictate an answer. I am overcome by them. I have to sit in a room by myself where no one can see me and write the reply by hand. It is a very personal request they have made to me and I must therefore reply to it personally.”

He was to attempt for the first time to use a tape recorder to speed up his work, but it was soon abandoned.

“A microphone is such a dead thing that I found it impossible to relate to it. I did not feel I was giving an answer to a real person. I now use it only

occasionally when I am travelling by car and I cannot write. Then I use it to give instructions about how a certain matter should be dealt with. I never dictate the actual letter.”

His reading speed, he believed, had become even faster. It was now “very, very fast” in normal circumstances. Rather than reading sentences or paragraphs his eyes took in a page as a picture rather than words. When his eye caught something crucial he slowed down.

“It has to be like that if you cover a lot of material,” he said.

He also developed the ability to do three things at the same time. “What happens is that I take all the mail for signature up to my room and there I employ my time not only in two ways but three ways. Many Ahmadis send me cassettes as well as letters. In them they have recorded their thoughts or perhaps a poem. So if a person has taken this trouble I naturally want to listen to it. So while I am reading and signing the letters – which takes about three hours – I also play the cassettes. If there is an important programme on television which I want to watch then I also turn that on.

“When something catches my attention on the television that I need to listen to carefully then I switch off the cassette. But I never stop signing the letters. I do that continuously. I glance at them and I seem to take in the whole page at one time. Then I sign them. So that is how I save time and employ it to the best use.”

Ahmadis from all over the world also send him books.

“These are not just books on religion, but books which they have found of interest and which they think would be of interest to me. Sometimes they are books about world affairs, politics or a local situation. As in Rabwah I have built up a number of readers who are experts in various areas and whose judgement I trust. These people read the books for me and mark what they think are the most important parts. In that way I get through a lot of books every week and accumulate an immense amount of knowledge about various countries.

“Where I have a personal knowledge of a situation I like to test the knowledge of the author. If his assessment of a situation or a person coincides with my personal knowledge of what happened then I feel I am usually able to trust his judgement and version of other events.”

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

Two British Politicians Quarrel

With his office working efficiently the Khalifa now turned his attention to Europe and Africa.

He had deliberately kept a low profile since his arrival in Britain. Now it was time to start his missionary tours again. He would go first to Holland, in February, 1985, he declared. By then he would have been in Britain 10 months for he had arrived on the first day of May in 1984.

His amirs and counsellors advised caution – he was still in Britain on a visitor's visa. If he left Britain at the moment then he might not be re-admitted. There was still no reply from the Home Office about the visa he had applied for.

In August, 1984, three months after his arrival from Pakistan, the Khalifa had asked for permission to stay in the United Kingdom as a "minister of religion". His request was backed by David Mellor, the Member of Parliament for Putney, the constituency in which the London Mosque was situated. Mellor was a man of influence in the Conservative Party and shortly to become a cabinet minister.

The Khalifa, said Mr Mellor, "was a man of great integrity and dignity . . . a man of eminence."

But, as yet, there had been merely confirmation of the receipt of the Khalifa's request. Nothing else.

Behind closed doors, however, there was considerable activity.

The decision to apply for permission to stay in Britain for 12 months as “a minister of religion” had been a carefully-considered decision. Had he applied for permission to stay as a refugee it would have put the British government in a difficult position. It would certainly have been possible to prove that he was being persecuted because of his religious beliefs, but General Zia and his government would have raised an outcry. One result could have been intensified persecution of Ahmadis in Pakistan. The Khalifa had therefore long ago decided privately that he would never apply for refugee status.

By applying for permission to stay in Britain under section 31 of the British immigration laws he avoided all controversy. In Pakistan the fundamentalists were claiming that he was responsible for the murder of a man called Aslam Qureshi and were publicly petitioning Zia to ask for the Khalifa’s deportation to Pakistan on that charge.

No body had been found but that had not stopped the fundamentalists from claiming – indeed proclaiming – that the Khalifa had murdered him.

The British Home Office, which looks after immigration, asked the Foreign and Commonwealth Office for their opinion and telegrams went back and forward between London and Britain’s embassy in Islamabad, Pakistan. Britain’s ambassador replied that he saw no reason why the Khalifa should not be allowed to stay in Britain. But he pointed out that if the Khalifa started to talk about

the persecution of Ahmadis in Pakistan then there could be pressure from Zia to silence him or to return him to Pakistan.

By January, 1985, there was still no answer from the Home Office. The Khalifa announced that, visa or no visa, he was leaving for Holland the following month.

Happily, however, a few days later his visa arrived!

When he arrived in Amsterdam the Khalifa was naturally questioned by journalists about the situation in Pakistan. He described it as "critical".

The reaction of Zia was immediate. The British Embassy was contacted at Islamabad. Relations between Pakistan and Britain could be damaged by the Khalifa's conduct, the Ambassador was told. If the Khalifa had unrestricted permission to travel abroad from Britain whenever he wished then he could criticise Zia's government in any country where he happened to be. That would be an unhappy situation for Pakistan because the Khalifa was a most persuasive man.

It was the reaction the Ambassador had prophesied.

Zia's complaints were relayed to the Foreign Secretary, Sir Geoffrey Howe. He took action. It was not immediate action, that was not a quality for which he was noted. Even so, if he did act on mature consideration, his actions did not add lustre to his name.

In April, 1985, Sir Geoffrey wrote to the Home Secretary, Leon Brittan, that the decision to grant the Khalifa permission to stay in Britain for 12

months as a “minister of religion” was causing him concern. He pointed out that the application for such a visa had to be made before arriving in Britain and not afterwards, as had happened in the case of the Khalifa.

His personal belief, he declared, almost like an apocryphal John Bull Englishman, was that rule 31 was appropriate for an Episcopalian minister from the United States coming over for a temporary exchange, for instance, with the rector of one of the parishes in his constituency. But Rule 31 was not available for the leader of a Muslim sect from the Indian sub-continent.

He was concerned, he added, that special permission had been given to the Khalifa, especially considering the potential embarrassment his continued residence in Britain could bring. He could well become “the energiser of a group of potential dissidents” he said. They could become an increasing embarrassment to Britain’s relationship with Pakistan, an otherwise friendly country.

In so many words he asked the Home Secretary to warn the Khalifa that his residence permit was for 12 months only. He also asked the Home Secretary to consider vary carefully any request from the Khalifa for a renewal.

The Home Office was embarrassed by the Foreign Secretary’s entry into an affair which was so absolutely Home Office business. It was “a bit late in the day” to start complaining, said the Home Secretary’s advisers, when the decision to grant the 12 month visa had been taken only after consultation with the Foreign Office and the British

Embassy in Islamabad. That had been done immediately the application was made in August, 1984. Some 10 months of inactivity had followed in order to assess what Zia or the Khalifa might do.

But then the decision had been taken.

Sir Geoffrey's intervention was obviously the result of representations made by Zia to the British Ambassador after hearing of the Khalifa's statement in Holland. Certainly, said the Home Office advisers, the Khalifa, as Head of the Ahmadiyya Movement, was no ordinary 'minister of religion' – he was the person who would normally nominate the people to be sent to countries all over the world as heads of Ahmadiyya Muslim missions. But there was no reason why he should not nominate himself to the London Mosque.

The Home Office advisers added that if the present permit of residence had not been granted the Khalifa would have had the right of appeal. He could have applied for asylum. That had to be avoided because, having regard to the present political situation in Pakistan, it was most likely that asylum would have been granted. Granting asylum was tantamount to criticising Zia's government and would probably have had two adverse affects – it would have brought further persecution of Ahmadis in Pakistan and damaged Britain's relations with Pakistan.

The Home Secretary's advisers pointed out that even if the Khalifa did criticise Zia's treatment of Ahmadis then the Pakistan government was hardly likely to be astonished. Moreover, there was

absolutely no evidence that the Ahmadiyya Movement was plotting the overthrow of the Pakistan government or organising, planning or advocating violence in any way.

Having considered his advisers' opinions Mr Brittan, politely but most firmly, told Sir Geoffrey that Britain was not going to abdicate from its honourable policy of offering asylum to those who were persecuted because of their political or religious beliefs even if the word "asylum" was never used.

He was, he told Sir Geoffrey, "a little surprised to learn of your concern over the presence of Tahir Ahmad in this country" having regard to the Home Office's consultations with the Foreign Office in August and September, 1984. The Foreign Office had raised no objections at that time.

There was no doubt, he continued, that there was "overt religious discrimination" in Pakistan. It would therefore come as no surprise to the Pakistan government that the leader of the Ahmadiyya Movement was critical of its actions.

"We cannot prevent Mr Ahmad criticising the Pakistan government provided he keeps within the law," he declared. There was no suggestion in any way that he was a political activist who advocated the overthrow of the Pakistan government.

Mr Brittan had not obviously not appreciated Sir Geoffrey's blimpish suggestion that, with Rule 31, Parliament had been legislating exclusively for Episcopalian clergymen from the United States coming for a pleasant exchange visit to Sir Geoffrey's leafy constituency.

Ministers of religion, missionaries and members of religious orders' were terms which were intended to encompass all religious functionaries of all faiths, said Mr Brittan with some acerbity.

It was not uncommon, he continued, for the Home Office to waive the necessity for an application to be made before arrival in Britain if it were obvious that entry clearance would be given if the application had come from abroad.

He added, "It would be unduly bureaucratic to insist on his travelling abroad simply to make an application."

He then took off his gloves and the ministerial politeness had almost vanished. Rule 31, he said, was designed to prevent the entry of bogus ministers of religion – and the way he phrased his sentences almost hinted that, on occasions, their number might even include self-styled Episcopalian ministers from the United States.

Rule 31, he continued, was not designed "to limit the number of genuine [ministers], many of whom I would expect to come from the Indian sub-continent and some of these would belong to the Ahmadi faith.

"Whilst Mr Ahmad is by no means an ordinary Imam or missionary, he is clearly a 'minister of religion' and, given the world-wide nature of the Ahmadiyya Community . . . it would be difficult to argue that there is not work of a religious nature for him to do in this country."

Mr Brittan was no less pungent in his response to Sir Geoffrey's suggestion that the Khalifa should be told that if he did not keep quiet then he would not

be allowed to stay in Britain.

“We have given him no reason to assume that he might eventually be allowed to settle here, though he is, of course, entitled to apply for an extension of his stay here when it expires next March. Should he remain here for four years as a minister of religion, i.e. until 1989, it would then be open to him under the Immigration Rules to apply for settlement.”

Then, with icy politeness, he added, “Such an application would normally be granted.”

Islamic fundamentalists in both Britain and Pakistan were to continue to press for the Khalifa’s deportation to Pakistan. In Britain a strange organisation called the Muslim Parents Association, asked for him to be deported, complaining that he was “engaged in spreading racial harmony”.

It was a charge to which the Khalifa would readily have pleaded guilty.

In due course the Khalifa did apply for a visa giving him the right to permanent residence in the United Kingdom and it was, Sir Geoffrey notwithstanding, granted.

The Khalifa could now travel to any country he wished and re-enter Britain without difficulty. He could criticise General Zia and his persecution of the Ahmadiyya Community as strongly as he wished so long as he remained within the law. He could not preach armed rebellion against General Zia, but he could point out that God would punish his transgressions.

He was to take that action.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

The Message of Allah

In the course of one of his sermons the Khalifa used a phrase which was spotted by one of his staff who had it reprinted and distributed. It is now pinned up on the notice boards of missions and mosques all over the world.

“Every evening, “ said the Khalifa, “before going to bed, make it a point of duty to do some self-reckoning. Try to assess the amount of effort that you personally have made that day in conveying the message of Allah”.

It was advice that was meant to be carried out quietly and personally. It was advice that he himself has always tried to follow.

Sometimes, however, his followers made public calculations about how much had been achieved since he had become khalifa. On one occasion it was a cabinet minister of Sierra Leone who highlighted the Movement’s achievements. At a conference in Britain he pointed out that his was a very small country with only some four million inhabitants. But they came from 17 ethnic groups.

And though they were a very small country they had many problems and many of the problems came from the institutions run by religious organisations.

These did not include those run by the Ahmadiyya Movement he added. There was always

great competition to get into the schools run by the Movement because of their reputation. And being an Ahmadi was not an essential qualification for selection. As a result there were pupils of all religions.

The help that Sierra Leone was receiving from the Movement had no strings attached he said. And he enumerated them:

“There are 90 primary schools, 20 secondary schools, two schools teaching arabic, three hospitals and one newspaper.”

There were also nearly 450 mosques in 169 communities run by the Ahmadiyya Movement, 14 missions and a missionary training centre. There were 12 missionaries who had come from abroad and 12 missionaries with Sierra Leone citizenship.”

What he did not add – though someone later calculated – was that 14 of the primary schools and one of the senior schools had been created since the election of the Fourth Khalifa.

The growth in help from the Ahmadiyya Movement was equally astonishing in other West and East African countries. In Ghana eight primary and 54 nursery schools had been established since 1982. In Liberia six primary schools had been established and in Zaire four primary schools and one senior school.

In Gambia, said a cabinet minister, one out of every four pupils throughout the country was now being educated in a school founded by the Ahmadiyya Movement.

As a result throughout Africa as a whole the Movement was now funding 28 hospitals, 37

secondary schools, 44 junior secondary schools and 204 primary schools.

The first lone Ahmadi missionary had arrived in Ghana in 1921. Less than 60 years later the 1980 census revealed that just under eight per cent of Ghana's 13 million people described themselves as Ahmadi Muslims.

The Attorney-General for Ghana was to describe the help provided by the Ahmadiyya Movement in these words:

“The Ahmadiyya Movement is carrying out a most progressive and fruitful mission. To its credit are 102 primary schools, five secondary schools, one training college and five hospitals. Our boys have been given scholarships to enable them to study in higher institutions and, just lately, your mission has embarked on an impressive agricultural programme.

He paused to give greater emphasis to his words, then continued. “But your greatest contribution to our country is the type of person your mission has produced for us. These people are noted for their integrity, their humility, their high sense of dedication and their self-sacrifice.

“There are many members of the Movement who are occupying very high positions in government, in the civil service, in educational institutes, in business and in many other walks of life. They are among the most respected members of the nation.”

The speech of the Attorney-General of Ghana brought together in just three paragraphs the whole purpose of the missionary movement – to use educational and medical facilities as a means to

introduce the people of Africa to the Ahmadiyya Movement.

As a result there was an equivalent increase in missionary activity. The Movement's missionary training college in Rabwah, Pakistan, had been closed to students from other countries, but this had provided the impetus to establish local missionary training schools in Sierra Leone, the Ivory Coast, Uganda and Tanzania.

The story was the same in other continents. In Germany five new mission houses had been opened since 1982. In the United States 11 new mission houses had been opened, making a total of 18 missions. Throughout the entire world, in countries where there had never before been a mosque, or where they had closed with the retreat of Islam from the West, from Guatemala to Poland, from Spain to Ireland, from Scotland to Sweden, there were now mosques.

In Polynesia there was a roving missionary. In Tuvalu where there had never been any Muslims there were now 500. There was a mission in Australia. "Soon the missionary workers spreading out from Indonesia will link up with the missionary workers coming from the West Coast of America – we will have encircled the world," said one Ahmadi official.

The Khalifa had also asked Ahmadis in the wealthiest countries of the world to take over the responsibility for financing missionary work in the poorest countries of the world or where Islam had not yet reached. He also asked members to finance the translation of the Quran into languages

where they had a special interest.

Thus Dr Abdus Salam, the Nobel prizewinner, who had established an international research centre for third world scientists in Italy, financed the translation of the Quran into Italian. Mr Chaudhri Shahnawaz, a successful entrepreneur with restaurants in many countries, financed the translation into Russian and Mr M. M. Ahmad, formerly of the World Bank, and his family financed the translation into Kurdish. Missions in the more prosperous countries helped neighbours – Ghana, though itself a third world country, financed missionary activity in neighbouring African countries while Canada financed missionary work in six South American countries.

Canadian volunteers staffed these missions on an unpaid basis during long-term holidays.

One Canadian, Muhammad Ilyas, who had made money in oil, offered to finance the entire Canadian project by himself, but he was told by the Khalifa to choose six other countries. One of those he chose was Guatemala. When the building was finished and a missionary in place the Khalifa was invited to attend the opening ceremony.

Unfortunately as yet there had been no conversions and very few people knew about the building of the mosque and the Ahmadiyya Movement.

When the Khalifa arrived, however, suddenly Guatemala started to interest itself in these new arrivals. The Vice-President and various Cabinet ministers attended the ceremony as did newspapers and television. The President asked the Khalifa to a

private audience at the presidential palace. After the meeting he told the Khalifa that he was appointing the head of his own security staff to look after his safety while he was in Guatemala.

At first the attitude of the security chief was formal and correct, though a trifle chilly. But gradually it changed and two days before the Khalifa was to leave Guatemala the security chief asked for a private audience with the Khalifa.

“He told me,” said the Khalifa, “that he wanted permission to join in our prayers. And of course I agreed. Then he told me how deeply influenced he had been by the prayers and the way the Holy Quran had been recited.

“He said, ‘I went to my wife and said, ‘If you want to know what a spiritual experience is then come and watch these Muslims pray.’”

As a result the security chief and his squad formed a discussion group. Before the Khalifa left the security chief told him, “As far as I am concerned I am a Muslim”. At the same time a well-known Guatemalian journalist, who had come to the airport out of curiosity because he had never met a Muslim before, decided that he, too, wanted to become a Muslim and join the Ahmadiyya Movement.

And the night before his departure a senior Cabinet minister asked to meet him. All his colleagues were talking about their meeting with the Khalifa and he wanted to meet him as well. The only time left free on the Khalifa’s diary was an hour before midnight. The Cabinet minister said he would meet him then.

“We had a most interesting meeting,” said the Khalifa. “I told him that I would keep him in my heart, not as a government minister, but as a man. We parted as friends for ever.”

As well as establishing the nucleus of a missionary movement in Guatemala the Khalifa obtained special permission to establish a hospital. Previously hospitals funded by religious organisations were banned because they had always engaged in politics. After a meeting with the Khalifa the Health Minister told him, “It is my own decree that bans this kind of hospital, but I am giving you special permission. Your people can report directly to me.”

The Khalifa’s lack of self-importance and his intuitive summing-up of people’s character were to impress many people. His followers normally addressed him as ‘Huzur’ which means roughly ‘Your Presence’. When other people asked how they should address him he replied, ‘Just as you would anyone else’.

When he was about to visit a country his followers normally ensured that newspapers, television and radio were made aware of his visit. But when he decided to visit the Ivory Coast the Khalifa asked that no publicity be made. The President of the Ivory Coast was a prominent Christian and the Khalifa feared that his visit might embarrass him.

It was therefore from the newspapers and the radio that the President learned that the Khalifa was in his country. He immediately asked that the Khalifa visit him. He also put a number of

limousines and a security section at his disposal.

In Germany the Amir of that country remembers arranging a meal for him in a room where he could eat alone and without interruption after some 12 hours of preaching and answering questions. However, the Khalifa immediately asked him to come and eat with him. The Amir's three small children crowded in as well, watching every mouthful that the Khalifa ate.

"I kept apologising and telling the children not to jog his elbow, but the Khalifa told me not to worry. He said he liked children and having them around him allowed him to relax completely."

The Amir had arranged for two Germans who were interested in taking the oath of allegiance to meet the Khalifa. "I thought one was more sincere than the other, but it was the second person to whom the Khalifa paid attention after a few minutes of conversation. It was this second person who embraced Islam shortly afterwards."

The Movement's help to African countries was to win them not just thanks but also help against the persecution being waged by the then government of Pakistan. A senior government minister of the Gambia, in whose capital the O.A.U. had established the headquarters of their Human Rights Commission, declared:

"We believe in the freedom of the person, especially when it comes to religion. We stand solidly behind the Movement in pursuance of its legitimate rights, as members of the Islamic faith, to carry out religious duties anywhere in the world.

"It is ironical that Muslim leaders will talk with

Christians, they will talk with Buddhists and they will even talk with Jews, but they will not talk with Ahmadis. It is sad that within Islam one sect is so persecuted.

“I can only say that the self-discipline among Ahmadis is something that people of all religions should emulate. The elders of this Movement, but particularly the youth of the Movement, the leaders of tomorrow, show a spirit of responsibility, dedication and commitment that one can only admire. It is totally selfless service in the name of Allah.”

And of the Khalifa himself he commented, “The true reflection of any religion is the reflection of the leadership. Despite the persecution, despite the killings and burnings of houses, he preaches forgiveness, he preaches patience – these are the very foundation stones of Islam. He represents the mind, the spirit, intelligence and, above all, the aspirations of everybody in the world.

The Holy Quran, the Khalifa was to emphasise again and again, was the foundation stone of Islam. It contained the word of God. Without the Quran life was nothing. It contained the laws by which Mankind had to live. It contained revelations of the future.

One of his greatest pleasures, the Khalifa was to confess, was to oversee the reading of the last pages of the Quran when a boy or girl had read it through completely for the first time. When the child had finished the Khalifa would put his hand on the child’s as it rested on the Quran and translate very simply the verse that is said after the final reading.

“O God. Show mercy on me with the blessing of this Quran. Make it my guide and light, my guidance and direction and a source of blessing.

“O My God. Remind me from this book whatever I forget and teach whatever I misunderstand. Feed me from the recitation of this book both night and day. Make it my testimony.

“Make it stand for me so that I do good and avoid evil according to this book. Make this book speak on my behalf just as an advocates stands to plead for mercy for a wrongdoer.

“Make this book my support on the Day of Judgement and a witness for me that I have lived my life according to the dictates of this book.

“ O Lord of the Universe, hear my prayer.”

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

The Efficacy of Prayer

Of the efficacy of prayer the Khalifa has no doubt. His prayers had been answered consistently as a boy. They had been answered as a man and they were answered even more fully as Khalifa. There were special reasons for that, he said. It was not a special favour from God to him as a person or that he was more pious than other people.

“I have analysed it very calmly and at great length and it is my belief that God does it for the sake of the institution of Khalifat. He does it so that the people’s faith can remain strong and unshakable and as an example to mankind. In that way His designs will go forward as he has ordained.

“Secondly, I believe that the acceptance of prayer is very deeply connected with your care and concern for others. If you are only concerned with yourself and your family then you lose something of the power of prayer because that can be a very selfish action. But when you turn to God and beseech in a most earnest manner for His special mercy, that is a different matter.

“So if your concern for others is limited so also is the power of your prayer. But if you have a much wider concern for humanity, if you really share the suffering of others, then this produces a very special quality in your prayers. God hears those prayers much more than others.

“If I get agitated about the sufferings of people in Africa or perhaps the persecution of people in our Community, if I find myself in agony about the sufferings of others, then, at a special time, God will listen to me. I know this. This feeling for others and turning to God for help is a quality that must be promoted in all men and women.”

The Khalifa said that he had been taught to pray as a boy and prayer had always been part of his life. One of the most beautiful and powerful verses in the Holy Quran were the words ‘Ask Me and I will answer thee’.

He had asked his family and members of the Community to pray for him and their prayers had been successful. He derived great strength from them.

Recalling his childhood in Qadian he said that he and his generation had been especially fortunate for The Promised Messiah had left behind him a great number of Companions trained in the worship of God.

“They were immense in their influence because we found them so honest, so dedicated, so simple and sincere, so scholarly yet so humble. They would listen to a child and his opinions as equals and work alongside them in the ‘dignity in labour’ scheme without any feeling that it was beneath them.

“Their influence had a very strong spiritual aspect. It was to them that members of the Community went to for their prayers for these people were living models of communion with God.”

They had received far more revelations from God

than any of the khalifas at that time or since, he added, but walked the streets of Qadian as ordinary people and earned their living in humble occupations.

“They were accessible by all and if you asked them to pray for you perhaps the next day they would tell you, ‘I prayed so humbly, God was so kind to let me know what is going to happen.’

“And it always happened as they said it would.

“We therefore lived in an atmosphere of living experience. We saw the reality of the truth of Ahmadiyyat and were daily witnesses of their communion with God. It is this living truth which I have asked the members to cherish and to guard most faithfully so as to be able to hand it on to the next generation. For the Quran says, and the Bible too, that when God created man, shaped and moulded him, mere life was not enough. He then breathed into him revelation of Himself.”

The benefits of prayer were almost incalculable, said the Khalifa, but principally prayer helped to establish communion with God. And prayer promoted goodness and drove out evil. He quoted the words of The Promised Messiah who poured scorn on those who put pre-determination forward almost as a proposal for not taking further action. Praying or not praying for something was similar to taking or not taking a remedy in case of illness.

Did anyone believe, The Promised Messiah had asked, that God would invest certain medicines with tremendous power yet, at the same time, ignore the prayers of his people? That would indicate a contradiction in that God’s will would

work through medicine but was not capable of working through prayer?

And again he quoted the words of The Promised Messiah about the acceptance of prayer. Though God heard all prayers one had to strive for their acceptance. Humility was not enough. Righteousness, purity, truthfulness, perfect certainty, perfect love and perfect attention were all needed. Man must strive for these qualities in their prayers, he said. And naturally the prayer could not go against God's designs for the welfare of the person concerned, either in this world or the next.

Many people now wrote to him asking him to pray for them said the Khalifa. Many were not members of the Ahmadiyya Community and came from a variety of backgrounds. Some were Christians, some Hindus, some Sikhs.

"They write and ask me to pray for them because they say that they have faith in my prayers," said the Khalifa. "Later on many write to me to say that my prayers have been answered. But often I do not need them to write to me – I know instantly that my prayers in some cases have been accepted."

How does that happen?

"What happens is different in different cases. When you feel your prayer is heard then if you find it realised in such details that coincidence and chance are ruled out then you are assured positively that your feelings are not just wishful thinking – it is something real.

"Similarly I have noticed that sometimes during my prayers, although I am not told by a revelation that this prayer is heard, sometimes a verse of the

Holy Quran comes to my mind and it deals with the problem I have prayed about. So I am convinced that this is a message and I know that the prayer has been answered.

“Now many people write to me about such messages that they think they have received but nothing happens afterwards. But in my case things happen in a chain, in a manner that it is impossible even for a disbeliever to discount those things just as an accident. I will give you one small example. In America, when I was there with my wife and children, I was rather apprehensive about finding my way in certain cities so I started praying very specially and the verse of the Quran came to mind which assured me that I need have no fear about my journey and that I would have no hunger.

“Well, we reached Chicago about an hour and a half after midnight. I think Chicago and its suburbs stretch for some immense distance from end to end, the figure ‘96 miles’ comes to my mind, but it may not be correct. Anyway, it is a huge distance from one end to the other and, for some reason, I didn’t have a map. I told my wife and children to relax and go to sleep. I then took some right hand turns and some left hand turns and drove for quite a distance.

“We stopped at a petrol station and I dialled the number of our mosque. We discovered that we were just a few streets away.

“In Norway much the same thing happened – we stopped a passerby and asked in English if he knew where our host lived. He said, ‘Yes, he lives next door to me.’

In Holland we asked some boys if they knew where the mosque was. They said, 'Ahmadiyya mosque? Why certainly. Follow us.'

"Such things happened repeatedly and in such a special way that it was impossible for me to put these down as mere chance."

Every day, the Khalifa continued, he received telephone calls from all over the world from all kinds of people who asked him to pray for them or for a member of their family, usually someone who is ill. After he had prayed he would always send a short note saying that he had done so.

"Now occasionally," said the Khalifa, "a mistake is made when a letter is written from my notes. I would say, 'I have prayed and I hope God will have it done'. But in error it would come out as 'I have prayed and God will have it done'.

"Now, in all these cases God did have it done. So it was an intentional error. God had intervened. God had heard my prayer and answered immediately. As a result we know of cases where children have recovered, wives are well again. And these are cases where the doctors have given up hope, where people are nearing death.

"But it is not just in moments of despair that I pray and the members of the Ahmadiyya Community pray. We turn to God many times a day. We seek His help and His guidance many times a day, not just in our five daily prayers, but in earnest, sincere private prayers. We seek His help in our daily life to guide us in the right path, we seek His help in all kinds of different ways, from hopes for the future for mankind to the provision of

water when there is a drought.

“Prayers to God every day are as much part of our lives as oxygen is to our bodies. We cannot do without either – and the results are there for all to see.

“In Ghana I remember that a chief accepted the truth of Ahmadiyyat at my hands. He had been a Christian. He very dearly wanted a son but unfortunately his wife had already had two miscarriages He asked me to pray that not only would they have a son but that his wife would live. Everybody, apparently, was predicting that this time his wife would die.

“I prayed very earnestly for this chief and his wife and wrote to him saying that I was sure that God would answer their prayers and mine. Some time later I received a message saying that the prayers had been answered – God had given them a healthy son.”

Always God worked his wonders with natural phenomenon, said the Khalifa. He did not need to use the supernatural to carry out His wishes. He had made nature so He worked through nature.

When he discussed the ways in which prayers were accepted the Khalifa pointed out that The Promised Messiah had said that there were two main ways – one was as a trial, when even the prayers of sinners, were accepted and, secondly, as an exaltation when the supplicant was one of the elect of God and in receipt of divine favours.

Sometimes, said the Khalifa, prayers were answered to show that the recipient was being

helped by God and to confound unbelievers. Thus in India a new convert was bitten by a snake and was taken to hospital where she was given two hours to live. Her relatives said it was a punishment on her for believing in Ahmadiyyat.

But the members of her community started to pray for her and she did not die in two hours. The doctors said there was still no hope. She would almost certainly die that day. They knew from experience that everyone in her condition did die.

But she did not die after 24 hours. Three days later she came out of the coma. Nine days later she returned home.

The doctors said it was the first case of recovery from such a snake bite that they had ever encountered.

“I think” said the Khalifa, “that God worked that miracle because of the prayers of the Community and to confound those who so hated us that they said the snakebite was a punishment from God. In this way He showed that they were acting against His will.”

Yet again in India there were those who laughed when the Ahmadiyya Community at Kharian had failed to find water even after drilling down for 200 feet. The Ahmadiyya community had chosen their spot to drill after long prayers and taking the advice of water engineers. Up until then the advice of water engineers had proved spectacularly unsuccessful on behalf of the government – they had chosen four places to drill and all had been dry or had tapped brackish water.

It seemed as though the drilling by the Ahmadiyya Community would be equally unsuccessful. This was God's punishment, said their opponents.

But at 220 feet they were confounded – the Ahmadiis struck a bounteous supply of clean, pure water. God had come to their rescue because of their prayers, said the Community.

If humility is one of the prerequisites for a prayer to be heard then few would deny, even among his opponents, that the Khalifa is a humble man. He lives simply. He eats sparingly. There are no ostentatious trappings of wealth. His life is devoted to God – and the mission of the Ahmadiyya Movement.

If the ability to feel for others is also a prerequisite for the acceptance of prayers then few would also deny that the Khalifa feels personally the tribulations of the sick, the hungry and the persecuted of the world. For those in despair who appeal for his personal prayers, the Khalifa prays privately.

He says merely that it is better so, the troubles of some people are overwhelming.

When he describes the poverty and misery of the lives of people in parts of Africa he will sometimes be overcome by emotion. The words will stick in his throat and he will stand silent for a few moments to recover his composure while those who have been listening to his discourse have been known to start crying, his words having painted too dramatic a picture for them to be able to contain their feelings.

The people he has been describing may live far from where he is standing, perhaps in countries his

listeners have barely heard of and never visited, but he can bring home to them the need for their prayers, their prayers both in the spiritual sense and in the material sense by sending out doctors, teachers and engineers and funds to overcome this misery at its source.

When he describes the persecution of the Ahmadiyya Community in their homeland of Pakistan, he is often overcome by emotion. His followers have described him as standing in the mosque with tears in his eyes, despite attempts to hide them.

Those who are persecuted anywhere in the world are always in his thoughts, said a follower.

Of the efficacy of prayer to help the poor, the lonely, the sick and the unhappy throughout the world, the Khalifa has no doubts.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

The Appeal to God

The infamous Ordinance Twenty proclaimed by General Zia deprived the Ahmadis of the right to practise their religion, gave a spurious legal authority to religious hatred and jealousy. It fanned religious disagreement into mob violence.

Crowds broke into and desecrated Ahmadi mosques. They chipped and hacked away inscriptions on gravestones which offended them such as "Allah be pleased with him" and "Peace be upon him".

They covered up with paint the word "mosque" wherever they could find it on an Ahmadi building. They even dug up corpses from some graveyards on the grounds that the presence of an Ahmadi disturbed the tranquillity of the Muslims who were buried there!

Official persecution was widespread but sporadic for many policemen and lawyers were ashamed of this persecution of their fellow citizens. In the following four years more than 3,000 Ahmadis were charged with various offences under this regulation, six people were sentenced to 25 years imprisonment and four were sentenced to death.

The United Nations' Commission on Human Rights declared that Ordinance Twenty "violates the right to liberty and security of the persons, the right to freedom from arbitrary arrest or detention,

the right to freedom of thought, expression, conscience and religion, the right of religious minorities to profess and practise their own religion.”

It recalled the words of the International Conference on Human Rights that the “gross denials of human rights arising from discrimination on grounds of religion outrage the conscience of mankind and endanger the foundations of freedom, justice and peace in the world.”

It therefore called upon the Government of Pakistan to repeal Ordinance Twenty and “restore the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all persons in its jurisdiction”.

Other international organisations such as Amnesty International and the International Commission of Jurists expressed their “grave concern” at the injustice of the regulation which violated the fundamental freedoms of conscience and religion. They called for its immediate repeal.

People were sent to prison for giving the Islamic greeting “Peace be upon you” (Assalaam-o-alaikum). Others were jailed for wearing a badge inscribed with the Kalimah, the profession of their faith (There is only one God and Muhammad is his prophet) while schoolboys aged only 12 were hauled into court for writing on an application form that they were Muslims.

In the army, air force and the public services there was massive discrimination. Few Ahmadis were recruited. Those who were already employed could expect only minimal promotion.

The most flagrant example was that of Dr Abdus Salam who was to be awarded the Nobel Prize for

physics in 1979. The son of the head clerk in an education department, his extraordinary intelligence singled him out from his first days at school. Financial help from the Community had helped pay for his secondary schooling and then for his university training.

When he was only 14 he achieved the highest marks ever awarded in the University of the Punjab's entrance examination! At university he again set new records being first for every subject and only seven marks short of the total possible. He went on to the University of Cambridge, England.

He completed his three year mathematics course in two years and used the extra year to study physics. He achieved the almost impossible feat of gaining first class honours in both mathematics and physics!

Until then Salam had thought of himself as a mathematician, but he now decided to take his doctorate in physics. In five months he had completed the work that was to bring him not only his doctorate but also a gold medal for an "outstanding contribution" to physics – though, by university rules, he was not allowed to submit his dissertation for another three years.

In 1951 he returned to Pakistan where he was made a lecturer at the Government College, Lahore.

His job was to teach undergraduates. One of his responsibilities was to look after sport!

He stayed for three years then left to become a lecturer at Cambridge University. Shortly afterwards he was appointed Professor of Theoretical Physics at the University of London. It was there he

conducted the research that won him the Nobel Prize for physics. Honours showered on him from all over the world.

None of them was for his contribution to the world of sport!

* * *

When he returned to Pakistan on private visits Dr Salam was welcomed by General Zia as an outstanding citizen who had raised the prestige of Pakistan throughout the world. He offered Dr Salam the use of official limousines and a police escort to protect him from any attack by Muslim extremists. He also offered him a passport in which he was described as a Muslim and so circumvented the passport regulations Zia himself had introduced.

Dr Salam accepted the passport but declined the offer of the limousine and police protection. He was in no danger he said.

The passports of most countries do not contain any information about the holder's religion, but Zia had introduced new regulations to further harass the Ahmadiyya Community and so assist the defection of those who found the persecution intolerable. It also provided an opportunity to build a definite list of prominent Ahmadis.

The new regulations included a supplementary declaration which had to be completed by everyone who was applying for a passport and who claimed to be a Muslim.

It read:

“I,..... s/o..... aged ... years, adult Muslim, resident ofhereby solemnly declare that:

1 I am a Muslim and believe in the absolute and unqualified finality of the prophethood of Muhammad (peace be upon him) the last of the prophets.

2 I do not recognise any person who claims to be a prophet in any sense of the word or of any description whatsoever after Muhammad (peace be upon him) or recognise such a claimant as a prophet or a religious reformer as a Muslim.

3 I consider Mirza Ghulam Ahmad Qadiani to be an imposter nabi and also consider his followers whether belonging to the Lahori or Qadiani group, to be non-Muslim.

Date..... Signature or thumb impression”

It meant that any Ahmadi who wished to travel abroad had either to renounce his faith or abandon his application for a passport.

There was constant persecution. The use of loudspeakers were forbidden in Ahmadi mosques so the imams had to station speakers at intervals in the ranks of the worshippers so that the sermons could be relayed sentence by sentence to the people at the back of the mosque.

Whenever there was an opportunity of evil to the Community General Zia took it. When there were riots in Karachi he made the blatant innuendo that the Ahmadis were responsible with the remark that the Government was “investigating how far Qadianis are involved”.

The ignorant naturally followed the example of Zia and persecuted their Ahmadi neighbours – in

some villages their cattle were crippled – but Zia was never able to raise the entire population against the Community. There were boycotts of Ahmadi shops, but they usually failed because the Ahmadis had a reputation for fair dealing.

In the professions people were more inclined to look at a man's ability than his religious beliefs.

This applied to General Zia. When he had eye trouble he insisted that Dr Nasim Ahmad, a brigadier in the Army Medical Service and a prominent Ahmadi, should attend him!

And when he needed a prostate operation he insisted that the surgeon be General Mahmoodul Hassan, again a well-known Ahmadi.

“You are the only surgeon I can trust in such a situation,” he is alleged to have said.

Younger Ahmadis were to say jokingly that a little slip of General Hassan's scalpel could have solved a lot of their problems.

In public, however, Zia continued to excoriate the Ahmaddiyya Movement.

To an international conference in London he sent the following message. “In the last few years, in particular, the Government of Pakistan, has taken several stringent administrative and legal measures to prevent the (Ahmadis) from masquerading as Muslims, and from practising various (Islamic rites). We will ... persevere in our efforts to ensure that the cancer of (the Ahmadiyyat) is exterminated.”

In all kinds of different ways Zia stoked the fires of intolerance. The Ahmadis refused to retaliate. Forbidden to use the word ‘mosque’ they used the

word 'house' instead. When their mosques were burned down they met in their homes.

Be patient the Khalifa urged them. Zia was building up a fire that would eventually consume him, he told them.

World opinion was now almost totally against him. In Pakistan he had long exhausted his credibility. They wanted him gone, but they did not know how to get rid of him for worsening U.S. and Russian relations were now keeping him in power. Russia had invaded Afghanistan and it was through Pakistan that Western aid for the mujahidin guerillas fighting them was channelled.

So the persecution of the Ahmadis continued and the people of Pakistan, suffering under a brutal regime, were forced to stay silent.

The Khalifa was to seek guidance from God as to how he could best help his people – to stay silent or to speak out.

“I knew that I must warn Zia of the wrath of God to come if he continued in the persecution of our Community. I spoke out against all the injustices that he was inflicting on innocent people. I told him in my sermons that God was loving and merciful and that if he ceased these persecutions then, despite everything he had done, God could forgive him.”

Zia's persecutions continued, however. The Khalifa's warnings grew stronger and stronger. Night after night, month after month, the Khalifa prayed to God for help for his beleaguered people. Day after day he read the Quran seeking guidance.

Finally it was revealed to him what he should do.

The crowds waiting for him to emerge from the imam's apartment above the offices and hall of the London Mosque and take the fifty steps across to the entrance of the mosque seemed almost to know that something momentous was to occur.

The date was Friday, June 3rd, 1988.

The London Mosque is a relatively small building which measures just 43 by 26 ft. It can accommodate 200 worshippers. It stands in grounds of one acre in Gressenhall Road in the suburb of Southfields. It is an area which has not made up its mind whether it is rich or poor, middle class or working class. It is all of them.

Across the road from the mosque are privately-owned, middle-class houses with carefully-tended gardens. On the same side as the mosque are council tower blocks. Just a few streets away are the tree-lined avenues of Putney and the homes of very rich people. Not far away, in the opposite direction, are down-at-heel houses.

When the mosque was established in 1924 there was ample space for the Ahmadis who then lived in London. Just after the 1939-45 war there was sometimes only five to ten people at Friday prayers.

Today the mosque was crowded. They were packed shoulder to shoulder except for the clear passageway which was lined with the security guards of the Khalifa. The temporary office accommodation and the meeting hall were also full. There were people crowded into the forecourt of the mosque.

At 1.30 p.m. the Khalifa, who has a long, loping

stride, walked quickly into the mosque. He recited first the Surah Fatiha, the opening chapter of the Holy Quran. Then he quoted the 62nd verse from the third chapter of the Quran. It read: “Now whosoever disputes with thee concerning him, after what has come to thee of knowledge, say to him, ‘Come, let us call our sons and your sons, and our women and your women, and our people and your people; then let us pray fervently and invoke the curse of Allah on those who lie.’ ”.

He explained the background of the verse. Muhammad, The Holy Prophet, had met a Christian delegation from Najran, a town in what is now Saudi Arabia, and had entered into a debate on the divinity of Christ and God. The discussion went on and on and the Christian delegation repeated again and again their arguments.

Finally Muhammad stood up and declared that logical arguments had failed so it was useless to continue. God would now show by mubahala who was telling lies. The punishment decided by God could be death.

Mubahala, the prayer challenge or prayer duel, was not for those who held different or even wrong beliefs, he emphasised. The rights of Christians were respected as were those of Jews and the followers of other religions. Mubahala was for those who knew they were speaking untruths yet continued to assert them.

A mubahala always consisted of two parties, one of whom claimed to have come from God and the other who rejected this claim. Each party should be prepared to sacrifice everything.

Zia, the Khalifa explained, had continued to attack the prophethood of The Promised Messiah and perse-cute his followers.

I have tried to warn our persecutors of the error of their ways, the Khalifa continued. He had reminded them of the verse about Moses in the Quran which said God would punish an imposter.

If, however, he is not an imposter but is truthful and you have knowingly persecuted him then God will punish you.

General Zia was responsible for the wilful persecution that was taking place in Pakistan. There were foul cartoons in newspapers of The Promised Messiah and terrible lies about the Movement.

He cited some of the allegations – that Ahmadis were fighting in the Israeli army, that Ahmadis were plotting the downfall of Pakistan, that they were all spies on behalf of India, that the Ahmadiyya Movement had been set up by the British to divide Islam and was now funded by international Christian organisations, that The Promised Messiah was a thief and opium addict, that The Promised Messiah had claimed that he was the Son of God and indeed God himself and, for good measure, that Christ was a drunkard. The list was endless.

His reply to all these allegations, said the Khalifa, was *'The curse of God be on liars'*.

“If you have the courage to accept this challenge then beware of the steps God will take to decide your fate.

He continued, “But I want these people who are

doing these things to mend their ways and not to accept this challenge. We have, however, given this challenge and announced it to the whole world. I advise them to have fear of God and not to accept it. Be as wise as the Christians of Najran who did not accept the challenge of the Holy Prophet. But if they accept it then let them be in no doubt – the will of God will be manifest.”

Though he had said that he would issue the mubahala immediately he decided to delay it for a further week.

The following Friday, June 10th, the crowd in the mosque was even greater. The persecutions had not stopped he said. Every day there was news of further assaults and attacks. In their misery the people of the Ahmadiyyat had turned to the words of The Promised Messiah when he, too, was being persecuted and he had cried out, “All means are lost; the only way is Almighty God”.

He listed more of the lies that were being told about the Ahmadis by Zia and his supporters – that they had stolen Pakistan’s atomic secrets and sold them to Israel, that Russian agents were training Ahmadis as saboteurs in Rabwah and that 70 cases of small arms were stored there, that they planned to murder 500 religious leaders and that they had been responsible for the explosion of the army arsenal at Rawalpindi.

Finally he said, “We are left with no choice but to invite them to mubahala and to take this dispute to the Court of God Almighty, the All-Knowing and All-Powerful, in accordance with the teachings of the Holy Quran.”

He then repeated verse 62 of chapter three.

“Come, let us call our sons and you call your sons and let us call our women and you call your women and let us call our people and you call your people, then let us pray fervently for the triumph of truth and invoke the curse of God on those who tell lies” (Al-Imran:62)

The Khalifa then repeated the mubahala prayer asking that God shower such a multitude of blessings and peace and contentment on those who were in the right that the world would be in no doubt as to who was telling the truth.

The prayer continued, “Whichever of us in Thy sight are liars and fabricators, let Thy Wrath descend upon them within one year. May Thou inflict such disgrace, torment and punishment upon them that all people can witness their debasement and utter destruction.

“Let Thy Wrath descend upon them in diverse ways and let the criminals be punished and exposed in such an exemplary manner that the whole world will bear witness to the fact they they are recipients of Thy Wrath.

“O Almighty God, do this so that Right may be distinguished from Wrong and the difference between Truth and Falsehood become Manifest.”

The Mubahala had been issued.

CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

God's Decision

The Khalifa's sermon was tape-recorded and in the next 24 hours copies were sent to every Ahmadi community in the world. It was translated into local languages and then re-recorded and distributed again. Translations and copies were again distributed.

Even as the mubahala was being issued the Khalifa again appealed to Zia to repent and to cease his persecutions of the Ahmadiyya Movement.

“If you fear God, but feel you cannot admit your faults because of your worldly position, then just withdraw your hands from tyranny and the oppression of the Ahmadis and simply keep quiet. We shall then assume that you have declined to accept the challenge of mubahala and we will pray to God to save you from His wrath.”

But the persecutions continued. Again the Khalifa asked for more time. “I do not want the Head of a country with which we are related to become a target for a manifestation of God's wrath. If that happens, then there follows in its wake other manifestations of divine wrath.”

It was suggested that the mubahala could not operate because Zia had not publicly accepted the challenge and that a mubahala could not be conducted by such modern methods as audio tapes

and printed leaflets, but the Khalifa dismissed these suggestions.

“It is not necessary for such a person to publicly accept the challenge. His persistence in his tyranny and oppression is sufficient to indicate that he has taken up the challenge. Hence only time will tell how haughty he is in his challenge to God.”

God knew what the silence of one party indicated, he said.

The mubahala was not only against Zia but also those who were actively assisting him in the persecution of the Community. When pamphlets containing the mubahala were distributed in the little town of Shahkote in the district of Shaikhupura in Pakistan a goldsmith named Ashiq Hussain, who had always organised the mobs that stoned Ahmadis, organised a giant demonstration.

This time it would not just be stones, he said, it would be a decision of the mubahala for the Ahmadis. With their shops ransacked and burned, their cattle dead and every Ahmadi in the district either dead or in flight it would be easy to see on whose side God was.

Having organised the mob Ashiq Hussain the goldsmith went in to his shop to collect some knives. He turned on the automatic fan he used every day – and fell down dead.

He had been electrocuted!

It was the end of the potential riot. The mob formed to persecute the Ahmadis, turned into a funeral procession for the chief persecutor.

In Great Britain a well-known opponent of the Ahmadiyya Movement took up the challenge. He

was to die in a car crash not long afterwards. When the mourners gathered in his house the floor crashed into the cellar. Many of them were injured.

One Muslim cleric said he would accept the mubahala challenge but during a long speech he did not once use the word. Instead he referred to munazara which means a debate, not a challenge and appeal to God to curse the person who was lying.

Other Muslim clerics proposed bizarre contests like jumping in rivers, into fires, off high buildings. All of them stipulated that the Fourth Khalifa must appear in person at the time they had appointed or they would claim victory. Others issued challenges but did not send them to the Ahmadiyya Movement while still others issued challenges but did not ask God to curse whoever was the liar, but only to curse the Ahmadis.

But still Zia kept silent.

In his sermon on Friday, August 12th, the Khalifa declared that Zia had shown no sign of repentance by word or deed. God would now act he warned.

“You will not be able to escape His punishment,” he declared.

There was now no way back.

Five days later, on the morning of August 17th, Mr B. A. Rafiq, a former imam of the London Mosque, left a written message for the Khalifa. In it he recounted a dream he had had the previous evening. In it he said that he had seen General Zia and told him that the Khalifa wished him no harm. Zia had put out his hand and, finding his chin, had pushed his face roughly away.

He raised a finger at Rafiq then scowled. His finger wagged. "I will teach him a lesson," he said.

It meant, the Khalifa wrote back to Rafiq, that Zia was not going to mend his ways. His enmity was going to increase.

"May God frustrate the designs of the enemy of the Ahmadiyyat," he added.

A few hours later the C-130 Hercules transport plane carrying General Zia-ul-Haq, dictator of Pakistan and persecutor of the Ahmaddiyya Movement, was blown out of the sky.

It was 3.46 pm when the presidential plane left the military air base outside Bahawalpur in the south east of Pakistan. He had flown there secretly that morning at the request of Major-General Mahmood Durani, his former military secretary who was now the commander of the Armoured Corps. Almost the entire army command would be there at the trial of a new U.S. tank, said Durani, and if Zia did not come it could be taken as a slight.

The trial was a fiasco for the tank missed its target, but Zia was still in a jovial mood as he lunched at the officers' mess. After lunch he walked out to the airstrip where the presidential plane, Pak One, was being closely guarded. Zia knelt towards Mecca then embraced the generals who were staying behind and climbed aboard.

A special air-conditioned passenger "capsule" had been rolled into the body of the C-130 and in the front VIP section Zia took a seat along with General Akhtar Abdul Rehman, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the second most powerful

man in Pakistan. Beside them sat the U.S. Ambassador, Arnold L. Raphael, and the head of the US military mission to Pakistan, General Herbert M Wassom. Behind them sat eight other Pakistani generals.

A Cessna security plane completed a check of the area – a normal precaution since an attempt to shoot down his plane with a heat-seeking missile some six years before – and the control tower gave permission for Pak One to take off.

After the plane was airborne the control tower asked the pilot for his position and the pilot radioed back: “Pak One, stand by”.

But there was no further contact from the presidential plane. Only minutes after taking off the plane was missing.

Some six miles away villagers working in their fields near a river saw a plane lurching in the sky as though on some kind of invisible roller-coaster. After its third loop it plunged straight down, burying itself in the sandy soil. The plane exploded into fire. All 31 people on board were dead instantly – or before.

The time was 3.51. It was just five minutes from take-off.

God had given his decision, said the Khalifa the following day in his Friday sermon.

He had warned Zia of the wrath of God, but he had paid no notice. So God had destroyed him utterly. God had also destroyed those generals who had helped him in his abuse of power.

It was not correct to rejoice in the death of one's enemy, the Khalifa continued. He had therefore

sent a message of condolence to Zia's family.

He continued: "We cannot deny that Ahmadis all over the world are happy and cheerful. It is not because someone is dead. They are happy because they have witnessed the victory of God.

"It is a great heavenly sign of the succour that God has extended to us. In time to come future generations will remember with pride how God came to the help of their ancestors."

There were many who were not Ahmadis who agreed with the Khalifa's statement. One of them was Benazir Bhutto, the daughter of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto the prime minister Zia had overthrown and then hanged.

"Zia's death must have been an act of God," said Benazir Bhutto.

The journalist, Christian Lamb, reporting Zia's funeral for the *Financial Times* of London, wrote, "The crowds thronging through Islamabad on a sunny afternoon could easily be mistaken for people celebrating a holiday . . . while men seemed to enjoy a day out in a country starved of entertainment. . . . As the coffin containing only his teeth (nothing else of him could be found) was lowered into the grave, a 21-gun salute sounded."

His teeth which had once laughed at the mubahala were now buried six feet deep, said one Ahmadi.

The team investigating the crash eliminated, one by one, by technical analysis various possible reasons for the crash.

There had been no bomb aboard for the wreckage was not scattered over a wide area.

Nor had it been hit by a heat-seeking missile for the heat would have marked the aluminium panels of the fuselage.

Nor had there been a fire aboard for the autopsy on General Wassom, the Head of the US Military Mission, showed that he had died before, not after, the fire started by the crash.

Nor had there been an engine failure for examination showed that the engines were running at full speed when the plane hit the ground.

Nor had the fuel been contaminated in any way.

Nor had the controls been sabotaged. The Pak One Hercules had three sets of controls and the investigators established that they were all in working order.

The only possibility remaining was that the pilots, and perhaps all the passengers, had suddenly lost consciousness.

How this had happened the investigators were unable to say.

Why it had happened the whole world knew.

CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE

The Murdered Man Returns

There are those who say that the trial of Zulfikhar Ali Bhutto on the charge of murdering the relative of one of his political opponents was a conspiracy. It is certainly true that in most democratic countries he would be unlikely to have been brought to trial – the evidence was flimsy. But Pakistan at that time was not a democracy – it was under the rule of a dictator.

So Bhutto stood trial. Perhaps the most cogent argument against his guilt was one that could not be voiced publicly – he really had no need to resort to such crude methods to retain power. However, if it were a conspiracy then it was a most clever one. His conviction for murder rendered international opinion almost powerless. They could protest against political persecution and political tyranny and political genocide, but it was extremely difficult to protest against what was said to be an ordinary trial for murder, albeit with political overtones. In due course those who might have been able to shed light on Bhutto's alleged misdeeds disappeared, Bhutto was hanged and Zia could well believe that he had wiped out political opposition without creating a political martyr.

Could it be therefore that a similar plot was hatched against the Khalifa and that it only came apart when, because of Zia's own mistake, the

Khalifa flew out of Pakistan quite openly?

There was certainly never any doubt about General Zia's determination to crush the Ahmadiyya Movement. He regarded the Fourth Khalifa as a most dangerous opponent who had to be silenced as quickly as possible. He therefore embarked upon a campaign of character assassination that was to range from the malicious to the absurd. It was designed to present the Khalifa as a most dangerous man, dangerous to the well-being of the country of Pakistan, dangerous to the lives and property of its citizens, dangerous to Islam. No lie was too small or too great to be used. The idea was, said Ahmadi officials, that when he struck against the Khalifa most of the people of Pakistan would have been brainwashed into believing that Zia was only protecting Pakistan against the stratagems of the Khalifa.

Zia did not lack allies among the fundamentalist divines and the newspapers which preached religious strife as blatantly as some Western newspapers peddle pornography to increase their circulations. Both could be considered to come from the same mould.

The campaign began just 14 days after the installation of the Khalifa when the Urdu daily newspaper Nawai Waqt asked: Is an atomic plant being prepared under the official residence of the Khalifa in Rabwah?

It was a suggestion so absurd that it was laughable, but it is a well-known maxim that the bigger the lie the more likely some people are to believe it.

A weekly newspaper called *Laulak* joined the fray. It declared: Since the election of Mirza Tahir Ahmad the preaching activities of the Movement have become not only intense but violent and aggressive.

The fundamentalist divines, knowing they had Zia's support, raised their voices in chorus. The newspapers printed their denunciations and accusations without fear of libel action. No Ahmadi was likely to find justice in a court in a country ruled by Zia.

On February 17th, 1983, a lift attendant called Aslam Qureshi disappeared. He had told his family he was going to a nearby village to preach a sermon against the Ahmadis. He did not return and two days later his family informed the police and said they feared he had been abducted and killed by Ahmadis. The only reason they could put forward to substantiate this accusation was his great hatred of the Ahmadiyya Community.

Though only a lift attendant Aslam Qureshi was already widely known in Pakistan. Some years earlier he had accompanied Mr M. M. Ahmad, then a government minister, into a lift and tried to assassinate him. He was sentenced to 14 years rigorous imprisonment. He had, however, been released after serving only three years.

Though never before considered as anything other than a lift attendant he was now dignified in some newspapers as 'Maulana Qureshi' meaning that he was an Islamic scholar. The news of his disappearance made news. In a little while the fundamentalist divines and the newspapers,

without the slightest evidence to support their claims, were announcing both the manner of his death and the name of his murderer – he had been dismembered in the cellars beneath the Khalifa's house in Rabwah and the Khalifa was responsible!

The newspaper *Laulak* declared: Since the election of Mirza Tahir Ahmad the Movement has started a terrorist campaign – a non-Ahmadi teacher has been beaten up by Ahmadi boys, a mosque destroyed and Aslam Qureshi has not only been abducted but possibly killed by Ahmadis.

Riots broke out. Ahmadi homes, shops and mosques were pillaged. Ahmadis were attacked and injured. Some were killed. The demands and denunciations of the mullahs became ever more violent – the police should raid Rabwah to discover if Aslam Qureshi was still alive, the Khalifa should be arrested immediately and physically forced to confess his crime.

One well-known critic of the Ahmadiyya Movement declared that he was so certain of the Khalifa's guilt that he was quite prepared to jump off a building if the Khalifa was found not to be guilty. Even children were brought into the campaign of a hatred. A comic book was produced that showed Aslam Qureshi held a prisoner in chains with commandos bursting in to free him.

General Zia did all that he could to stoke the fires of religious intolerance and ensure that the disappearance of Aslam Qureshi was kept in the headlines. Once he sent Aslam Qureshi's family a cheque for 10,000 rupees with a letter saying that their sorrow was always in his mind. At another

time he set up a special police team to investigate the disappearance.

It was a strange conduct. In Pakistan, as in every other country in the world, dozens of people disappear from their homes every month without telling anyone where they are going. Presidents do not normally rush to the aid of their dependants nor do they organise special police search teams.

However, his actions meant the stage was now set for the crushing of the Ahmadiyya Movement. Even the detention centre where the most prominent Ahmadi would be held was ready. It was described officially as an army camp.

One prominent Ahmadi described the conspiracy as he saw it.

“Ordinance Twenty would abolish the right of Ahmadi Muslims to have mosques and call themselves Muslims. General Zia thought that the Khalifa would tell Ahmadi to resist. He would then have the mullahs call up the mobs and there would be riots. He would then move in troops to restore order. Rabwah would be cordoned off and potential leaders sent off to the detention centre.

“The Khalifa would be arrested. In due course ‘evidence’ would be found implicating him in murder. He would be tried and found guilty of murder just as Bhutto had been found guilty. After a couple of years, when the world’s attention was elsewhere, suddenly one morning Zia would authorise his execution just as he had authorised Bhutto’s execution. Zia would then forbid the holding of any elections to elect a new khalifa.

“As far as he was concerned that would be the end of the Ahmadiyya Movement.

“There were three things that went wrong with the conspiracy. The first was that the Khalifa didn’t lose his head and tell Ahmadis to resist this persecution. The second was that Zia didn’t quickly press a charge of attempted murder against the Khalifa, though it is believed that the charge was to be made on the morning of the day he left Pakistan. If he had the Khalifa would not have left – he told us that he would not leave if there was any criminal charge against him.

“The third thing that went wrong – and this is, of course, the most important – God stretched forth His hand and sheltered the Khalifa. He made Zia make a mistake in the order banning him from leaving the country and so the Khalifa walked onto the plane. Everyone knew who the Khalifa was, but no one tried to stop him. God was with him.”

As for Aslam Qureshi he suddenly reappeared in the most mysterious circumstances in July, 1988, five years after his disappearance. He was produced at a press conference by the inspector-general of police of the Punjab. Qureshi told the assembled journalists that he had decided to disappear because of personal problems, he had financial and family difficulties and was disturbed by literature he had read about the Ahmadiyya Community so he had decided he would leave. He said that he had travelled to Iran and joined the army and fought in the Iran-Iraq war.

He added that he had written to his family saying where he was. His son, who was also at the press

conference, admitted they had received a letter, but they were not totally sure it was from him.

However, there those who said privately that Mr Qureshi had reappeared because there was no point in his staying hidden any longer – the Khalifa had long ago escaped from General Zia’s power.

His reappearance was a considerable embarrassment to the people and to the newspapers who had main-tained that he had been murdered. The newspaper The Nation spluttered pusillanimosly “that he was wrong in breaking the law of the land by crossing the national frontier without a passport” – surely the lightest smack on the back of the hand possible for a man who admitted that he knew his disappearance was causing riots.

The mullahs who had proclaimed so loudly that they were certain that Qureshi had been killed by the Khalifa and were ready to jump off high buildings if they were proved wrong, stayed silent and kept their feet very firmly on the ground.

The police decided that the best thing to do was to keep Mr Qureshi out of sight for a little while until the hubbub died down so they charged him with creating a civil disturbance and had him committed to prison on remand for seven days. When he reappeared in court Mr Qureshi had changed his story – he had been abducted by Ahmadis, he said, and held prisoner in Rabwah. Moreover they had a lot of guns in the cellar there he said.

Though some of the most diehard mullahs claimed that Qureshi had been tortured and that the police were in league with the Ahmadis,

everyone else wanted to forget the whole business. However, it was not Mr Qureshi's last malevolent public appearance. Some little time later he again attempted to murder someone. He went back to jail.

CHAPTER THIRTY

Homoeopathy

In the room behind the office of the Khalifa's secretary in the London Mosque there is a long cupboard, some two feet deep and eight feet tall. It used to contain stationery and other office oddments. Today it contains hundreds of little bottles with liquids in a veritable kaleidoscope of colours. It is from here that the homoeopathic medicines prescribed by the Khalifa are dispensed for people throughout the world.

The Khalifa receives a hundred or more letters a day from people describing their symptoms and asking him to prescribe a homoeopathic medicine for them. Most requests are naturally from Ahmadis, but there are many from people who have heard of the success of his treatments and have asked if he will prescribe for them.

He does so without charge for he is convinced of the efficacy of homoeopathy and is keen to bring it to the attention of as many people as possible. The office files are full of letters from people who say his prescriptions have cured or alleviated their illnesses.

He was not always a believer in homoeopathy though for generations the Mirza family have been involved in medicine. The Khalifa's great-grandfather, Mirza Ghulam Murtaza, used to treat the villagers of Qadian when they were ill. There were no doctors in the vicinity and, as the chief of the

village, he was asked for his help no matter what the crisis.

He passed his knowledge of medicine to his son Ahmad, who became The Promised Messiah and was renowned for the success of his treatments. His son, the Second Khalifa, became very interested in medicine and studied allopathic treatments, local and herbal medicines and, when homoeopathy arrived in India, he became one of its first practitioners.

But until he was fourteen the Fourth Khalifa thought homoeopathy was “just hocus pocus and quite meaningless”.

“I knew from the scientific studies I had done at school that the dilutions of liquids in homoeopathic prescriptions were minute. It seemed impossible to me that they could have any effect. For instance, a potency of 30 means a dilution of one with 60 zeros after it.

“Such a dilution is astronomical. It seemed to me that it was impossible for any medicine to be diluted to such a degree and have any value. So I just disregarded it.

“My father prescribed both allopathic and homoeopathic medicines when we were ill. So when we recovered we never really knew which medicine had worked.

“I used to suffer from very severe migraines. They could not be cured by ordinary aspirin. I sometimes took five or six aspirin tablets but they still did not work. The only thing that cured it was a particular analgesic which was very powerful. My father used to order it from Calcutta.

“Once I was suffering from a very severe migraine and lying in bed and feeling very ill. My mother was with me and she sent a maid to my father to ask for two tablets of this analgesic. The maid came back and said there were no tablets left, but my father had given her a homoeopathic powder for me. I didn’t think it was worth anything, but I felt so ill that I didn’t protest. My mother put it on a spoon and I swallowed it.

“My mother stayed beside me as mothers do and she was asking me how I felt when suddenly I realised I no longer had a headache. It had been there and now it was no longer there.

“When I recovered I began to think about it. Now theory must follow observation. You cannot bend your observations to suit theories. My theory said: It is impossible. My observation said: It happened.

“It is like the question of God being there or not being there. Those who know that God is there and are in touch with him, how can any argument persuade or dissuade them from believing in God?

“So you must follow the facts that you know. Don’t bend your facts according to a theory. This was my principle and I still follow this principle. So I said: There must be something in it .

“Later on I was to suffer from a severe cold. It did not respond to any treatment. So I asked my father to give me something for the cold. He asked me various questions and then he sent me various powders. I was cured within one day.

“My father was very ill at that time and he could not instruct me, but of course there had been many

conversations in the past. I started to study. I had access to his library and I began to read all the books he had about homoeopathy. I am afraid that I started to build my library at the expense of his. I never returned any of the books I borrowed.

No one else was interested in these books.

“Gradually I built my knowledge and finally I decided ‘No more allopathy’. At that time I also used to suffer very frequently from attacks of malaria. These were very severe and the allopathic medicines that were used to treat it would produce with me side effects which were very, very painful. I would have three or four days of intense suffering – my hands were swollen and I had a feeling as though I had an itch inside me. It made me want to tear at myself. I did not know what was worse – to suffer the malaria or the side effects of the drugs I took to combat it.

“So I decided I would try homoeopathic medicines. I failed repeatedly and when I was certain that what I was doing was useless I would resort to the allopathic medicines, dreadful though they were. This went on for about two years until I finally managed to prescribe for myself the homoeopathic medicine that worked. Since then, whenever I have had an attack of malaria, I have prescribed this medicine for myself. It always cures me.

“After that I began treating my children and other people. It was a big responsibility. I studied very, very intently. Sometimes I would sit up all night working out what I should prescribe for a

patient whom I had seen and who was to return the next day.

“This constant study and practice finally gave me the knowledge that I needed. As a result I can now very quickly decide which medicine is required by each patient. Sometime I can see a patient and when I look at his face I know immediately what medicine I should prescribe.

“But this is the result of more than 40 years of work and study. I have had truly vast experience.

“Of course it is not the same when patients write to me and describe their symptoms – and I get letters from all over the world – but many doctors have written to me privately about patients for whom they had given up hope. They had come to me because they had heard that I was successful in the past.

“These are cases that were considered to be terminal and yet they are still alive today. I think one must put prejudice aside and go on facts. And there are so many facts about homoeopathy. We have so many facts in this office. We keep all the records of what has been prescribed. We also keep the records of what their doctors say and what the patients say.”

One of the doubters about the efficacy of homoeopathy was Mr B. A. Rafiq. He suffered from diabetes and as a result always carried a supply of insulin with him. It was not always easy to obtain in Pakistan and when he was in isolated areas where the electricity supply was erratic – or sometimes did not exist – he found that keeping the insulin in good condition was difficult. Before he

left for Pakistan one time he therefore obtained from the Khalifa a prescription.

“Try it,” said the Khalifa. “If it does not work then do not use it.”

Mr Rafiq’s son-in-law, a doctor in the United States, was totally sceptical of homoeopathy. “It is impossible for it to work,” he said.

But during that particular visit to Pakistan it was difficult to obtain insulin and Mr Rafiq decided to try the Khalifa’s prescription.

It worked!

“I know nothing about medicine,” says Mr Rafiq. “My son-in-law is as sceptical as ever. I can only say that it worked for me.”

As a result he mentioned it to Zafrulla Khan who was also a diabetic. He was even more sceptical. “I have been a diabetic for forty years so I don’t think any homoeopathic medicine is going to help me.”

But two months later he wrote to Mr Rafiq. It works he said. Zafrulla Khan was to use it for the last 10 years of his life until he died aged 93.

The Khalifa does not press his beliefs about homoeopathy. It is open to every Ahmadi to believe or not to believe.

CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE

Questions for the Khalifa

The Khalifa's exile in London intensified world-wide missionary tours. From now on he travelled for three months in every year. In six years his personal missionary efforts brought 300,000 people into the Ahmadiyya Movement. Many of his followers were to say that it was God's will that he was placed in London at the beginning of the second century of the Ahmadiyyat.

The Khalifa himself commented, "I know that The Promised Messiah had a revelation from God. God told him, 'I will carry thy message to the ends of the world'.

"I am the successor of The Promised Messiah and I know that what God promises is always carried out."

For the second century of the Ahmadiyyat the Khalifa called upon Ahmadis all over the world to intensify their missionary work. More of everything was needed he said – more missions and more missionaries, more hospitals and more doctors, more schools and more teachers, more agricultural experts. And, despite their generosity in the past, still more money.

The Community responded. Young Ahmadis pledged themselves to specialist work in undeveloped countries in Africa and the East. In some African countries elementary education is free, but

there are not enough schools. So the Movement built schools and the government paid the salaries of the teachers.

In other countries the Movement built hospitals and provided equipment and the government paid the salaries of the doctors. Experts in all kinds of skills were provided by the Movement without charge, the experts receiving a minimal maintenance allowance from the Movement while they were away from their ordinary jobs.

For talented youngsters the Movement provided bursaries so that they could continue with secondary education or even go on to technical colleges or universities.

The Khalifa encouraged everyone to even greater efforts. He was received by heads of state, met with official receptions, garlanded with flowers and presented with official robes. He spoke to meetings of professors and doctors and students in Nigeria, Ghana, Liberia, Sierra Leone and other countries in West Africa. He toured East Africa.

He went to Mauritius and Fiji. He went to Germany, France, Italy and Holland. He toured Scandinavia. He went to South America. He was interviewed on the radio, appeared in TV news programmes and gave long interviews to journalists. He was available to everyone.

A devout Catholic, an alderman of Edmonton, Canada, wrote of his meeting with the Khalifa, "As an elected official I was seated beside him and had the opportunity to speak with him. . . You are confronted with a truly beautiful face and eyes that shine with a message of love, wisdom, under-

standing and compassion. Very shortly you feel the power of his presence and realise that you are in the presence of a holy man. You feel strongly attracted and confident that this is truly a man of God and that he will do nothing but increase your own love of God and your own knowledge of religion regardless of your personal beliefs.”

He added, “To know him is to love him and to want to know him better. To speak with him is to know more of life and living. I have never met anyone who has had such a great impact on what I am as a human being.”

But always he went to see the people – the people who were working in the fields, the people who were working in the streets and in the factories. And there were always more Ahmadi when he left than there had been when he arrived.

To several West African countries, when Zia was still alive, had come offers of money from Pakistan to build new schools and hospitals. But they came coupled with the request that all Ahmadi missionaries be turned out of the country. All the offers were rejected

One head of state told the Khalifa, “I told them I would happily accept their money, but we were not going to start persecuting people because of their religion. We already had enough trouble without that. And I told them the Ahmadi had not laid down any conditions when they came – they just offered to build schools and hospitals and help with teachers and doctors.”

In Nigeria he discussed its problems in depth. When he left the President held back one of his

entourage who was Nigerian by birth. ‘How does he know so much about our problems?’ he asked. ‘He has only been here five days.’

The Nigerian Ahmadi replied that his missionaries kept him informed of what was happening and that he always made sure that he was fully briefed long before the tour started.

There was very little luxury in the Khalifa’s tours – at first he was to travel economy on all the airlines!

His financial officers had suggested that he travel first class. It not only befitted his position, but it was important that he get as much rest as possible before starting these tours.

The Khalifa refused. He refused even to travel second class. The money that paid for their fares had been contributed by Ahmadis, many of whom were very poor. So the money was in trust. It should not be spent on inessentials.

But where his financial officers had failed, his security officers were to succeed. They could not protect him adequately in a crowded economy class section of an airliner.

He had given the same reply when it was suggested that the apartment at the London Mosque was too small for him and his family and that officials of the Mosque should look for a much bigger residence.

His pleasures remained simple. He tried to start or finish all his tours from Holland. From the mosque near Nünspeet he and his two youngest daughters could cycle peacefully along quiet country roads. “I like the area very much – it is full

of flowers. There are literally flowers everywhere. And all the houses are pretty. There isn't an ugly house."

Not that all his pleasures are placid. Once, when they were planning a visit to the North of England Major Mahmood Ahmad, his head of security, suggested that they stop off at Lake Windermere and go canoeing for an hour or so. The Khalifa agreed enthusiastically and so Major Ahmad packed inflatable canoes in the boot of their car.

The day they arrived at Lake Windermere it was raining as it can only rain in Britain. Though it was summertime the sky was a sullen grey, the rain was battering down and the wind was howling. It was cold and miserable and even British holidaymakers had deserted the lake.

When the canoes were inflated the Khalifa asked Major Ahmad to go back to the car and tell his wife that the canoes were ready, she could come now. The Major, his clothes dripping with rain, gave her the Khalifa's message.

She looked at him in horror. "Are you mad?" she said. "No one can go out in this weather."

But the Khalifa and Major Ahmad did.

The Khalifa's wife smiles now when she relates the story.

He was to continue playing squash until he was fifty-eight. "Then I was prevailed upon by some Community members. They felt very anxious about the hazards I faced – being hit by opponents' raquets, hitting my head against the wall. Some were also afraid for my heart. The specialist I consulted said it was absolutely OK, but I should

stop when I was out of breath. I hope I haven't stopped permanently."

He decided to keep his eye in by clay pigeon shooting and target practice with a crossbow.

The Khalifa is asked all kinds of questions on all kinds of subjects on his tours. He is questioned about morals and morality, about his belief in homoeopathy and the spread of AIDS. At Oxford University he was questioned by students about fine points of meaning in the Holy Quran.

One of the most frequent questions is purdah and the use of the niqab to hide a woman's face. Did he expect European and African women to cover their heads and faces in the same way?

"It is a minor thing. The only fundamental principle mentioned in the Holy Quran is that women should dress with the fear of God. Now what this means is that women should dress with modesty – they should not dress in a way that excites men's minds and distracts them from good to evil thoughts. That type of dress will not be dress with the fear of God.

"Whatever the nature or form of the dress may be if it is within the four walls of the fear of God then that dress is fine. Apart from that how a woman is dressed is immaterial."

He was asked, too, why not a single medical discovery in the last 100 years which had benefited mankind had come from a Muslim country whereas once Islam had been at the forefront of medical discovery and Europe had been in the Dark Ages.

It was unfortunately true, he replied. Scholars had turned their backs on the true meaning of the

Quran and a distorted concept had been born.

The Quran, he emphasised, could never be against any creation of God. There was no contradiction in any way between the word of God and the work of God.

Anything good is acceptable says the Quran. Islam was not against science though in the past, because of distorted views, it had seemed as if this were true.

On the increasing militancy of some Muslims he wrote a book entitled *Murder in the Name of Allah* which became a bestseller.

Was the Ahmadiyya Movement growing too quickly?

“As far as I am concerned,” said the Khalifa, “we can never go fast enough. I am always conscious that we have to make up for the loss of so many years in the past where, in some areas, people began accepting things and never rose to their responsibilities.

“My only fear related to moving fast is the inherent danger of not being able to train more deeply and solidly those people who join us. So I have to think in terms of balance. I pray to God: ‘Fast, fast, but not too fast. Not so fast that we fail in our obligations to train people.’”

Of the fact that he alone, as Khalifa, had the responsibility for taking decisions that affect millions of people, he commented, “It is a grave responsibility, but we have one advantage over the rest of the leaders of the world. We are always conscious of how God would like us to take the decision.

“The reference is never to the people around or to the Community – it is to God. So even if I think the Community will not like the decision I will make the decision with reference to God.

“I will make an attempt to put myself in God’s mind. How would He like me to take the decision?

“In areas where there are so many blanks, where the facts are too few to guide me properly, I find it extremely difficult. I have to pray constantly before taking a decision. I pray and ask guidance from God.

“That guidance sometimes comes in the form of some dream – which leave a very clear message. Sometimes I gain more confidence while praying and I begin to see things more clearly and then I know the decision I am going to take is right.

“The more momentous the decision is that I have to take the more I fear making a mistake. In the ordinary way of life this does not happen because the decisions I take are based on well-formed principles and long experience. There I can take decisions very quickly and without any fear of making a mistake.

“But if I discover that some mistake has been committed I never hesitate to rescind the decision and reverse the process. But that, I think, seldom happens because the decision has been taken with reference to God.

“If I do take a wrong decision as Khalifa in the end God makes it the right decision.”

CHAPTER THIRTY-TWO

The Future of Islam

At 8.34 pm. on Thursday March 23rd, 1989, in the banqueting hall of a luxury hotel in Park Lane, London, the Khalifa stood up to deliver his centenary message. In front of him were men and women from all over the world.

There were government ministers and members of parliament from many countries. There were writers and professors, doctors and lawyers, theologians and businessmen. Some wore dinner jackets, others the national dress of their country, white robes from Sudan, many-coloured robes from countries in East and West Africa, a Scotsman in a kilt.

It was a distinguished gathering.

One hundred years earlier, Ahmad, The Promised Messiah, had taken the oath of covenant of the first of his followers in a room used for baking bread in a very modest house in the town of Ludhiana in India. He had prophesied the conversion of the world to Islam within three centuries.

The Khalifa did not mention figures in his address but the centenary souvenirs on display detailed their success. There were now more than 10 million Ahmadi Muslims. Some five million were concentrated in Pakistan, but the rest were in almost every country in the world, from Canada to

China, from Burundi to Burma, from Russia to Rwanda.

In all they knew that there were Ahmadis in 120 countries. In most they had built mosques or missions. In others, because of restrictions, they met in private houses.

It had been accomplished entirely by sacrifices and hard work. These achievements were magnificent, but they were still not enough said the Khalifa. Most important of all from now on was that all Ahmadis must now become missionaries in their own right.

“The minimum standard expected is that each Ahmadi should convert at least two people to Islam. It is the duty of each missionary to train and prepare others to become missionaries,” said the Khalifa.

As a result conferences were organised to decide the best way to bring the message of Islam to the world. Successful missionaries told how they had succeeded and new converts stood up to explain why they had become Ahmadis

Pilot missionary schemes were started with five people in each group so that they could give each other support and generate ideas in the campaign to win converts. Each group was given a target number of converts to aim at over the next six months.

First win their hearts and then you can win their heads, the Khalifa declared.

Throughout the world Ahmadis put his message into practice. In Africa the women’s organisations made clothes and bedding for poor people. They

visited the sick in hospitals and convicts in prison. All over the world they enrolled in thousands as blood and kidney donors, most of them wearing the badge that proclaimed that they were Ahmadi Muslims.

In Europe and North America they organised sponsored cycle runs and marathon walks to raise money for charities helping old people and mentally-handicapped children.

They must win converts by their own example so be good neighbours, said the Khalifa. Don't throw litter around. Don't play radios too loudly.

Get to know your neighbours, he urged. So there were garden parties on the holidays of Eid for neighbours of their mosques and visits from nearby schools and teacher training colleges.

The success of the second century of the Ahmadiyyat depends on young people he said. So the missionaries organised study groups in the school holidays with lessons on the Quran in the morning and sports, first aid and speaking classes in the afternoon.

The Khalifa emphasised that he wanted women as doctors, architects, lawyers, teachers and engineers as well as men. Women had not only equal rights in Islam, they had special rights.

He encouraged the women's groups to organise tennis, swimming and other sports.

Do not neglect our new converts said the Khalifa. Islam does not belong to the East. It belongs to the world.

He was to enlarge on this statement: "I seek to inculcate an attitude of universality among all

Ahmadis. There should be a feeling of ‘oneness’ – that we belong to humanity and no geographical or racial barriers should be permitted.

“That is all right as a beautiful motto, but very difficult indeed to inculcate among people. The difficulty I have found is not a sense of superiority but the inferiority complex that sometimes runs in nations.”

So he stressed that all converts should immediately become active members. Involve them in all our organisations so that they know how the Movement works and so they can help us more easily. Do not let them feel they are strangers because of social or linguistic differences.

It was not up to the converts to learn Urdu he said. We must learn English, German, Dutch, Danish or whatever the local language is so that we can talk easily with them.

At the moment most Ahmadis were of Indo-Pakistan origin, but that would not always be so. In time converts would vastly outnumber all the people of Pakistan and India at the present time.

It was already true in a minor way. In some towns in the North of England there were more Ahmadis who were converts than those who had been born into the Ahmadiyyat.

The Khalifa asked also for new missionaries. In the first two decades of the second century of Ahmadiyyat he would need 5,000 new missionaries, he said.

Dedicate your unborn children to the service of God he declared. By 1991 five thousand children – some already arrived, some still on the way – had

been dedicated to the Ahmadiyya Movement as potential future missionaries.

It did not mean that the parents received any special help from the Community, only that the children grew up with the knowledge that, before their birth, their parents had wished that they become missionaries. If they did not wish to take up the life of a missionary then there was no compulsion on them to do so.

For all parents there were special tasks. He told them, "While the victory of Islam is certain you must now ensure that the spiritual and moral values of Islam are inculcated into your lives. Victory in terms of numbers will be meaningless if we lose the spiritual battle which has to be won in our homes.

"We must examine our homes and our behaviour and create righteousness in our lives and those of our children. In homes where regular prayers are offered children learn quickly how to behave as Muslims and so remain dedicated to God throughout their lives.

"Our children's lives should display the love of God and reflect the values of Islam and Ahmadiyyat. Create an atmosphere of purity and truth in your homes so that your children shall become true servants of God."

He made one special request to the five thousand families who had dedicated their youngest child to God. As far as possible they should be taught Chinese, Russian or Spanish.

"In the second century of the Ahmadiyyat it is China, Russia and South America where we will

have the greatest need,” he said.

“In Africa we have plenty of English speakers and in French-speaking Africa we are now well-established and making good progress. But in South America, China and Russia we have just started.”

* * *

The Khalifa did not talk of these particular things when he spoke at the Centenary Celebration Dinner. He talked instead of the future of the Ahmadiyya Movement.

The path might sometimes be dark and dangerous, he said, but the future was bright.

He quoted poetry, of the courtier who wrote to his monarch that it was not the heights that he was scared of but the fear of falling.

The reply he got back was “If thy heart fails thee, climb not at all”.

The people of the Ahmadiyya Movement had no fear of falling, said the Khalifa.

And he recalled the words of The Promised Messiah:

“The rebirth of Islam demands a great sacrifice from us. What is this sacrifice? It is our lives. On this sacrifice depends the life of Islam, the life of Muslims, the manifestation of God in our times. Sacrifice is the essence of Islam. This is the Islam God wants to restore.”

The Khalifa continued, “I call upon God as my witness that the message of Ahmadiyyat is nothing but Truth. It is Islam in its pristine purity.

“The salvation of mankind depends upon accept-

ing this religion of peace. Islam is the religion which does away with all discriminations between Man and demolishes all barriers of race colour and creed which divide humanity.

“Islam liberates man from the bondage of sin and strengthens his ties with his Creator. It is a religion so simple yet so highly organised that it meets the demands and challenges of the changing world.

“Islam permits no exploitation – be it social, political, economic or religious. The political philosophy of Islam has no room for false or deceptive diplomacy. It believes in absolute morality and enjoins justice and fairness to friends and foes alike in every sphere of human interest.

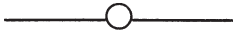
“Islam neither permits coercion for the spread of its own message nor gives licence to other religions to do so. Indulgence in terrorism, even in the name of the noblest objectives, is entirely incompatible with the teachings of Islam.

“Islam is the cure for all maladies and ailments of suffering humanity today. Islam teaches us that unless man learns to live at peace with himself and his fellow human beings then he cannot live at peace with his God

“It is to this Islam that I invite all mankind.”

There had been people of many faiths at the dinner and four days later the Khalifa received a letter from one of them – the head of a Sikh organisation. The letter spoke of the solemn yet serene atmosphere of the dinner. It had been pervaded with “tranquillity and peace” he said.

He added, "Some divine power was certainly behind it"



Glossary of Arabic and Urdu Words

<i>assalaam-o-alaikum</i>	Peace be upon you
<i>azan</i>	the call to prayer
<i>Ameer-ul-Mominin</i>	Commander of the Faithful
<i>Ahle Bait</i>	Progeny of the Prophet
<i>Eid-ul-Fitr</i>	The Festival of the breaking of the Fast
<i>fatwa</i>	edict
<i>Kalimah</i>	The Muslim article of faith—There is no God but Allah and Muhammad is His prophet
<i>Khalifatul Muslimeen</i>	The Caliph of the Muslims
<i>Khalifatul Mominin</i>	Caliph of the Faithful
<i>masjid</i>	mosque
<i>mubahala</i>	prayer duel – a prayer to God to decide who is right by punishing the imposter
<i>munazara</i>	debate
<i>nabi</i>	prophet
<i>niqab</i>	veil
<i>pardah</i>	literally, a veil
<i>Razi Allah Anhu</i>	May God be pleased with him
<i>Sahabee</i>	A Companion of the Prophet
<i>salat</i>	prayer
<i>shirk</i>	the offence of associating someone or something with God
<i>Ummul Mominin</i>	The Mother of the Faithful
<i>ulama</i>	clerics

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Rather than footnotes I have preferred to provide a glossary of Arabic and Urdu words.

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ہیں بادہ مست بادہ آسمان احمدیت چلتا ہے دورِ مینا و جام احمدیت
لشہ لبوں کی خاطر ہر سمت گھومتے ہیں تجھے ہوئے سبوئے کفلام احمدیت

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وہم و گماں سے بالا عالی مقام احمد ہم ہیں غلامِ خاک پائے غلام احمد

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دور و کہ بعد مدت از راہِ دور جا کر وہ تیز گام آگے بڑھتا ہی جا رہا ہے

تم کو بلا رہا ہے، خدا م احمدیت

The poem composed by the Khalifa as a boy about the building of Rabwah.

مردحق کی دُعا

دو گھنٹی صبر سے کام لو ساتھ تیرا آفتِ ظلمت و جورِ طل جائے گی
آہِ مومن سے ٹکرا کے طوفان کا، تیرے پلٹ جائے گا، رت بدل جائیگی

تم دعائیں کرو یہ دعا ہی تو تھی جس نے توڑا تھا سب کبرِ نمود کا
ہے ازل سے یہ تقدیرِ نمودیت، آپ ہی آگ میں اپنی جل جائیگی

یہ دُعا ہی کا تھا مغیرہ کہ عصا، ساحروں کے مقابل بنا اثر دھا
آج بھی دیکھنا مردِ حق کی دعا سحر کی تاگوں کو نیکل جائیگی

خونِ شہیدانِ اُمت کا اُسے کم نظر، رائیگاں کب گیا تھا کہ اب جائیگا
ہر شہادتِ ترے دیکھتے دیکھتے، پھول پھل لائیگی پھول پھل جائیگی

ہے ترے پاس کیا گالیوں کے سوا، ساتھ میرے سے تا ئیدرِ بالوری
کل چلی تھی جو لیکھو یہ تیغِ دُعا، آج بھی اذن ہو گا تو چل جائیگی

دیر اگر ہو تو اندھیر ہرگز نہیں، قولِ اُمّی لَقَمْتُمْ اِنْ كَيْدِي بَيْنِي
سُنَّتِ اللّٰهِ سِبْءِ لاجرم بالیقین، بات ایسی نہیں کہ بدل جائیگی

یہ صدائے فقیرانہ حقِ آشنا، پھیلتی جائے گی شش جہت میں صدا
تیری آواز اے دشمنِ بدخوا، دو قدم دور دو تین چل جائے گی

عصرِ بیمار کا ہے مرضِ لا دوا، کوئی چارہ نہیں اب دعا کے سوا
اے غلامِ مسیح الزماں ہاتھ اٹھا، موت آجھی گئی ہو تو طل جائیگی



The poem written by the Khalifa warning General Zia of his fate.

میرے بھائی آپ کی میں سخت چنچل سائیاں
شعلہ جوالہ ہیں ، آفت کی ہیں پرکالیاں
آپ کی داڑھی کا برگد دیکھ پاتیں یہ اگر !
اسی پہ پینگیں ڈالتیں ، گاتیں ؛ بجائی تالیاں
توڑ دیتیں ڈالیاں ، آٹا نہ کچھ ان کو خیاں
آپ تو داڑھی منڈا کر بیچ گئے ہیں بال بال

The humorous poem written by the Khalifa about a relative who shaved off his whiskers.

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ + مُحَمَّدٌ صَلَّى اللّٰهُ عَلَیْهِ وَاٰلِہٖ وَسَلَّمَ
ہو اے خدا کے فضل اور رحم کے ساتھ آج



دیار سے برابر دم معلوم لکھتے اور فریق ہے
السلام علیکم ورحمتہ اللہ وبرکاتہ

لندن
17-6-18

۱۱۷/۱۲۸۵

آپ کی خواب سے تو معلوم ہوتا ہے کہ فیضانِ الٰہی اصلاح کی
جگتے عناد میں بڑے گا۔ عملاً وہ ایسا ہی کر رہا ہے
مباحلہ کے صلح کے تقسیم کے جرم میں بیعت سے الوداع کر
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والسلام
فاکر

کنز الخلالہ
خليفة المسيح الرابع

The letter written by the Khalifa on the morning of General Zia's death.

The Author

Iain Adamson is the author of a number of biographies, histories and other books. He was born in Westerton, Strathclyde, Scotland and educated at the Glasgow Academy. He represented Glasgow at rugby as a schoolboy. He served in Malaya with the Seaforth Highlanders, the Malay Regiment and the Gurkhas. After being injured in a Commando training exercise he went to the University of Paris and took a diploma in political science. Representing France he won an open travel scholarship from an American university and continued his studies in Germany and Austria. He then became a foreign correspondent for a number of British national newspapers and travelled widely in Europe, North Africa, the U.S.A. and Mexico. He worked as a consultant for the Government-sponsored Consumer Council and became their TV spokesman. He then set up a successful public affairs agency and became the managing director of a private educational institute. He is the youngest son of a famous Scottish journalist and writer.

Baptised and married in the staunchly Protestant Church of Scotland he has always been deeply interested in the Protestant and Catholic values of Christianity.

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