



AHMADIYYA
MUSLIM COMMUNITY
Love for All, Hatred for None

Garden of Peace

A Monthly Newsletter for New Converts



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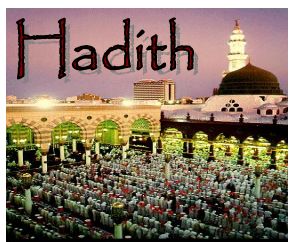
'Most of all it is my purpose to plant once more in the hearts of people the pure and shining unity of God.' -Promised Messiah (as)



The Holy Quran

Allah is the Friend of those who believe; He brings them out of all kinds of darkness into light. And those who disbelieve, their friends are the transgressors who brings them out of light into manifold darknesses. These are the inmates of the Fire, therein shall they abide.

(2:258)



“Entertain no ill-will, or envy, nor indifference, nor cutoff mutual relationship; be servants of Allah, brothers to one another. It is not permissible for a Muslim to keep away from his brother for more than three days.”

(Anas)



MKA USA *Ijtima* 2008:
Through the eyes of converts

Majlis Khuddam ul Ahmadiyya (MKA) represents boys and men under the age of forty in the Ahmadiyya Muslim community. This year MKA USA held its *Ijtima*, or annual convention, in upstate New York in August in which 1,118 members participated. The participants came from diverse backgrounds - Black, White, Hispanic, South Asian. Yes these superficial differences melted away under the common spiritual bond of brotherhood.

As always, the cornerstone of *ijtima* was “brotherhood”: A reaffirmation of the Islamic teachings that no one can claim superiority based on race or ethnicity and that all are created equal in the eyes of God. However, we *can* become better human beings through our actions, *not* through our lineage. As the Holy Quran reminds us, “the most honourable among you, in the sight of Allah, is he who is the most righteous among you.” (Quran 49:14) Thus the key objective of this annual gathering was to promote righteousness, and to pull each other towards this common goal.

A lot can be said about the various activities that took place during the course of the 3-day convention. There were sports, religious knowledge competitions, speeches, discussion forums, and plenty of opportunities to reconnect with old friends and make new ones. However, since this is a publication for converts into Islam Ahmadiyyat, we shall limit our discussion to the experience of converts.

In fact converts to Ahmadiyyat were one of the highlights of this year’s *ijtima*. As Ahmadiyyat continues to blossom in the United States, one cannot ignore the services and sacrifices rendered by some of the early converts to Ahmadiyyat in the US. In order to honor and recognize such men of courage, MKA organized a special event on the evening of the first day of celebrations.

The ceremony honored four individuals with the “Mufti Muhammad Sadiq Award” for their long service to Islam in the U.S. The award is given in memory of the first Ahmadi missionary to the US, Hadhrat Mufti Muhammad Sadiq. Mufti Sadiq was an early companion of the Promised Messiah, Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (as). After dedicating his life to the cause of Islam, Mufti Sadiq was sent to the United States as a missionary in 1920. Despite having no financial resources or any other material support upon entering the U.S., Hadhrat Mufti Sadiq succeeded in winning the hearts of almost 700 Americans towards Islam. He also established the first Ahmadi mosque in Chicago, and start a religious magazine “The Muslim Sunrise” which continues its publication to this day.

The four recipients of the Mufti Muhammad Sadiq award this year echo the spirit with which Hadhrat Sadiq spent his life. The four recipients were:

Sister Aliyyah Shaheed from Pittsburgh – She accepted Islam Ahmadiyyat in 1932 and with the grace of Allah she is 95 years old today. She holds the distinction of serving Ahmadiyyat in many capacities, including as National President of *Lajna* in the United States (auxiliary organization of Ahmadi Muslims representing women). Her award was accepted by her son on her behalf.

Brother Abdur Rahman from Baltimore – He grew up as a Baptist in North Carolina, and converted to Ahmadiyyat in the 1940s in Baltimore. He is currently 99 years old with Allah’s blessings, and has a long list of services for the cause of Islam Ahmadiyyat.

Brother Yousef Abdul Lateef from Boston – He grew up in Detroit, accepted Islam Ahmadiyyat in 1948, and served the community in many capacities since then. He is currently 86 years old, and holds a doctorate in education from University of Massachusetts. He wrote his dissertation on “An Overview of Western and Islamic Education”. Mr. Lateef is also an accomplished world-renowned musician. Many of our readers may recognize his name as the Grammy winning artist in 1987.

Brother Bilal Abdus Salaam from Philadelphia – He accepted Islam Ahmadiyyat in 1961, and was a Christian minister before accepting Islam. He holds the honor of serving Ahmadiyyat in many capacities, his distinction being a lifetime devotee to the cause of Ahmadiyyat (*Waqf-e-Zindagi*).

The award recipients later addressed the audience and shared their life experiences. They highlighted the struggles they had to go through as early converts to Islam in the U.S. They also highlighted the strength that their faith gave them in overcoming the obstacles in life, and shared their collective wisdom with those in audience.

The *ijtima* was also attended by recent converts to Ahmadiyyat, some of whom were attending the event for the first time. They shared their *Ijtima* experience, as well as their experience since joining Islam Ahmadiyyat at an informal lunch gathering with Dr. Faheem Younis, the President of MKA in the U.S. Every convert had a remarkable story to tell. They shared their spiritual journey from varied backgrounds into Islam. We have been sharing many such stories with our readers through this newsletter over time, including a new profile this month featuring brother Dante from Milwaukee. A common theme of the discussion over lunch was how much people were influenced by the peaceful teachings of Islam, and by the practical demonstration of love and brotherhood in the Ahmadiyya community.

Perhaps the best gift of the *ijtima* came in the form of a guest from Chicago who, seeing the practical demonstration of love and peace, decided to join the Ahmadiyya movement in Islam! We leave our readers with pictures of the Mufti Muhammad Sadiq award recipients, and recent converts attending the *ijtima*.



After the Sunset



Dante Abdul Rauf Cross

I recently attended my first *Ijtema* and was requested to write a short piece about my experience relating to Islam Ahmadiyyat. I agreed and thought to myself, "What shall I write about?" Then it occurred to me, "I will write a piece on what is Islam to me and why I choose to live my life through Islam." I am writing this passage out of the inspiration and desire to please God and the hope of bettering the world and myself. Therefore, before I begin this piece, let me start out with saying, "Peace, in the name of Allah, the Gracious, the Merciful. All praise belongs to Allah, the Lord of all the worlds..." There is a passage in the Holy Qur'an that I cherish dearly. It states, '*Did you then think We had created you without purpose, and that you would not be brought back to Us?*' (chapter 23: verse 116). I take great inspiration from this verse because I grew up in a world where so many things seemed hopeless and false. Although I was blessed with many opportunities as a child, I came from a family where faith was not strong and drugs had taken over my elders' lives. As a result our values lacked balance and structure. There was no one around that we could look up to as a leader, someone who could guide the young in our family. My mother had to play the role of both a mother and a father, and did a good job in both roles.

As much as people hate hearing it, the absence of a positive father figure in the African-American households has a huge impact. I felt this absence, but I was also in search of my own balance and growth. I was angry and depressed at many things inside, and spent my entire life striving to keep my focus on finding the truth and being successful in life. I could feel that I need something to lift my soul.

Years ago, as an adolescent, I read about a man that really intrigued me. There were short passages in our school's history books on a man whose analysis of Blacks in America - and America itself - was considered too radical and out of control. He was known for quotes such as, "By Any Means Necessary" and "We didn't land on Plymouth Rock, Plymouth Rock landed on us." I grew very interested in the life of this man - Malcolm X.

I read his autobiography, and realized that my life was very similar to Malcolm's. Like Malcolm, I was in search of answers to better my community and my knowledge, and to find a path that will make me better. I questioned everything because nothing made sense. I felt games were being played on my life and the lives of others in society, especially through religion. I did not feel free growing up in a system that controlled and affected the lives of my family and peers. I felt as if I were locked-down in a societal prison.

I attended the African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) church as a child. My mother would send me to this church for thirteen years of my life. I learned a lot from attending the church as A.M.E. was the first major religious denomination in the Western World that had its origin in sociological rather than theological beliefs and differences. However, I was still discouraged due to the history of Christianity and the New World slave trade.

I found Holy Qur'an as a book full of inspiration, motivation, and facts on life. The further on I read the more life began to make sense. I was able to answer my own questions. Everything in this book was common sense and there is no other book like it. The Holy Qur'an is not a book of fairy tales, it is a manual that focuses on God and develops your spirituality. Once I read the Holy Qur'an and X's autobiography, I felt as if I were being taken back home spiritually.

The more I have studied, the more experiences I have gained, and the more people I have met, I have come to the conclusion that Islam is the true guidance. It gives us knowledge, tolerance, respect, love, paradise, freedom, unity, universality, spirituality and Allah. Islam is not a religion; it is a way of life. Some may disagree with me, but to me this is Islam.

Through Islam, I have become anxious to learn and seek the truth. Islam taught me the importance of education, and the difference between institutionalized knowledge and universal knowledge. I have become more in-tune with my soul and myself. I gained the true knowledge on why our bodies are temples. It is through Islam that I see women as spiritually equal to men, and to be respected.

Islam has also contributed to my love of traveling. Ever since I have entered Islam, I have met some interesting and intelligent people. Islam attracts and unites intellectual, universal, and caring people that are in search of spiritual development.

No matter what your race is, what land you are from, what language you speak, or what your struggle is, Islam is the REAL REVOLUTION. It teaches you how to love others and most of all how to love yourself. I have had tough times in my life and have made numerous mistakes. However, Islam taught me to get up, not to even think about failing. Through Islam, it is impossible to fail.

Allah saved me through the Ark of Islam Ahmadiyya

Sameh Mostafa, Cairo, Egypt - August 5, 2008

It is my great belief that Allah wants all good for mankind and is ever inclined to lead him in the right direction. He guided me to the truth of Islam Ahmadiyyat despite my exposure to many wrong ideas about religion growing up. Before finding Ahmadiyyat, I had a number of misunderstandings and confusions about questions such as the creation of man, fatherhood of Adam, and the concepts of Satan and Jinn. As a young boy of about 12 years old, I had read a book with negative writings about the Ahmadiyya community. Since I was only a young boy at the time, I could not judge the merit of the book. However, later on as I grew older, Allah guided me to Muslim Television Ahmadiyya (MTA). MTA is a 24/7 television network run by the Ahmadiyya community with an aim to spread the true teachings of Islam the world over.

When I started seeing its broadcast in Egypt, I could not understand its content because of language differences. However, I soon found out that there were about a couple of hours of night time programming devoted to the Arabic speaking population. These programs changed my life, especially the program by Mr. Tameem Abu Daqqa. Everyone in the program *Al Hiwar al Mobasher* spoke in Arabic and wore Arab attire. So step by step I slowly started to understand the true teachings of Ahmadiyyat. (Since then an entire 24 hour channel is now devoted to broadcast in the Arabic language!)

I also found a lot more information about the Ahmadiyya community and its teachings

from their Arabic website <http://www.islamahmadiyya.net/>. Finally I found my good friend Mr. Alaa Othman of Syria, who introduced me to my dear teacher Mr. Hatem Al Shafei. With the grace of Allah now I am an Ahmadi Muslim and continue to learn more from this great blessing of Allah.

Have a letter, a story, a request or even a question you want to share with Garden of Peace... write to us today:

Write your letters to:

Garden of Peace

3421 White Plains Rd, Bronx, NY 10467



Faculties for seeing God can be developed in this very world

The Holy Quran teaches us that salvation is a matter that is manifested in this very life as He has said:

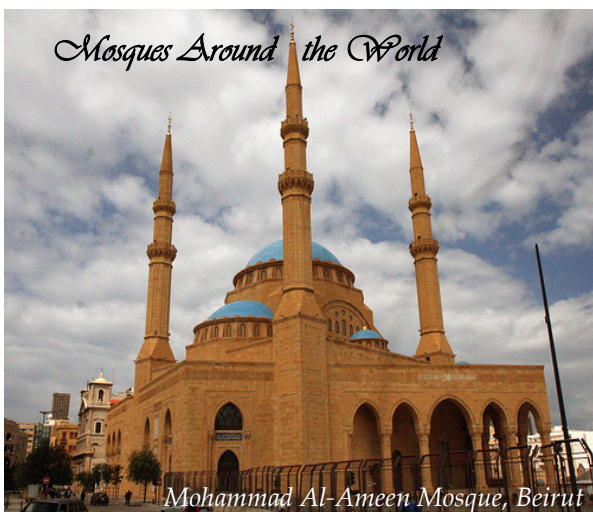
'He who is blind in this world will be blind in the hereafter also. (17:73)

This means that a person takes with him from this world the faculties for seeing God and the means of eternal salvation. He has repeatedly indicated that the means of man's attaining salvation is eternal as God Himself is eternal. It is not that after a time He recalled that if men cannot attain salvation by any other means, He should bestow salvation on them by killing Himself. A person can be described as having attained salvation when all his passions are consumed and God's will becomes his will and he becomes so devoted to God out of love that nothing remains his and everything becomes God's. All his words and deeds and movements and designs should be for God and he should perceive in his heart that all his delights are now in God and that a moment's separation from God means death for him. He should be so inebriated with the love of God that everything beside God should be naught in his estimation. If the whole world should attack him with swords and should seek to separate him from God through fear, he should remain steadfast like a firm mountain. The fire of perfect love should flare up within him and he should hate sin. As other people love their children and wives and friends so that their love pervades their hearts, and the death of any of them distresses them so much as if it was their own death, that type of love and indeed a greater love should be generated in his heart for God, so much so that he should become like an insane person in the grip of that love and should be ready to endure every torment and every wound for the sake of that love so that God Almighty may be pleased with him.

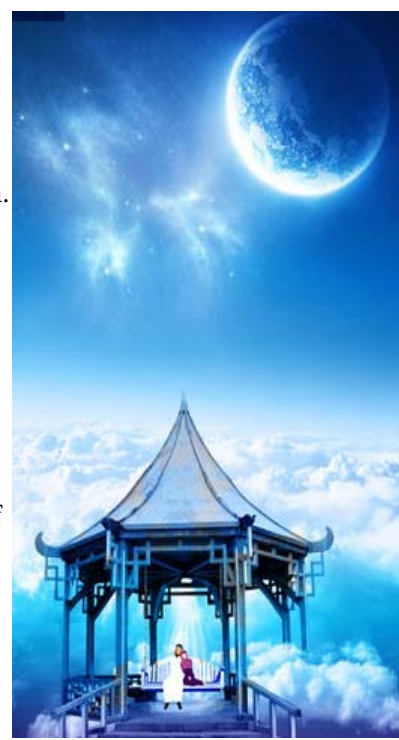
When a person is overcome to this degree by his love of God, all his passions are burnt up by the fire of love and a great revolution takes place in his nature and he is bestowed a heart that he did not possess before, and is bestowed eyes that he did not have before, and he is so much affected by certainty that he begins to see God in this very world. That burning sensation for the world with which the nature of the worldly is afflicted like hell, is totally removed from him and he is bestowed a life of comfort and pleasure and delight. This condition of his is called salvation inasmuch as his soul falling upon the threshold of God with love and devotion finds unending comfort and the union of his love with the love of God transports him to a station of devotion which is beyond description.



Mosques Around the World



Mohammad Al-Ameen Mosque, Beirut



What are the prohibitions regarding marriage in Islam?

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

1. There are certain people that a Muslim is not permitted to marry. These are listed in the Holy Qur'an (see 4:24), and include mother, father, sister, brother, aunts and uncles, nephews and nieces. However, Muslims are permitted to marry cousins. There are still other prohibited marriage relationships. For example, a man cannot marry his stepdaughter if he has cohabited with her biological mother. Nor can he have two sisters in marriage at the same time. (See Holy Qur'an, 4:23).
2. Islam also makes clear whom a Muslim is allowed to marry as far as his/her religion is concerned. Marriage with an idolater is totally forbidden (see Holy Qur'an, 2:222) for both sexes. However, men are allowed to marry women of the "people of the Book" (i.e., those who follow a revealed scripture), although it is not considered preferable.

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

Please submit your question to joinislam@gmail.com or mail it to Garden of Peace, 3421 White Plains Rd, Bronx, NY 10467. All questions will be answered.

Conditions of Initiation (Bai'at) to Islam

By: Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian
The Promised Messiah and Mahdi (peace be upon him)

- I. That he/she shall abstain from Shirk (association of any partner with God) right up to the day of his/her death.
- II. That he/she shall keep away from falsehood, fornication, adultery, trespasses of the eye, debauchery, dissipation, cruelty, dishonesty, mischief and rebellion; and will not permit himself/herself to be carried away by passions, however strong they might be.
- III. That he/she shall regularly offer the five daily prayers in accordance with the commandments of God and the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him); and shall try his/her best to be regular in offering the Tahajud (pre-dawn supererogatory prayers) and invoking Darood (blessings) on the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him); that he/she shall make it his/her daily routine to ask forgiveness for his/her sins, to remember the bounties of God and to praise and glorify Him.
- IV. That under the impulse of any passions, he/she shall cause no harm whatsoever to the creatures of Allah in general, and Muslims in particular, neither by his/her tongue nor by his/her hands nor by any other means.
- V. That he/she shall remain faithful to God in all circumstances of life, in sorrow and happiness, adversity and prosperity, in felicity and trial; and shall in all conditions remain resigned to the decree of Allah and keep himself/herself ready to face all kinds of indignities and sufferings in His way and shall never turn away from it at the onslaught of any misfortune; on the

contrary, he/she shall march forward.

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



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Garden of Peace is a monthly newsletter for the Nau-Ma'la'ah (new converts) published by Majlis Khuddam-ul-Ahmadiyya, USA. All new converts are welcome to submit their own articles, experiences and opinions to the newsletter team. Please send your request to: By Mail: 11205 Hambricht Rd, Huntersville, NC 28078. By Email: joinislam@gmail.com • Garden of Peace Team: Ahmad Antar, Bilal Rana, Atif Mian, Hanzla Ilyas, Tyab Rashid.

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