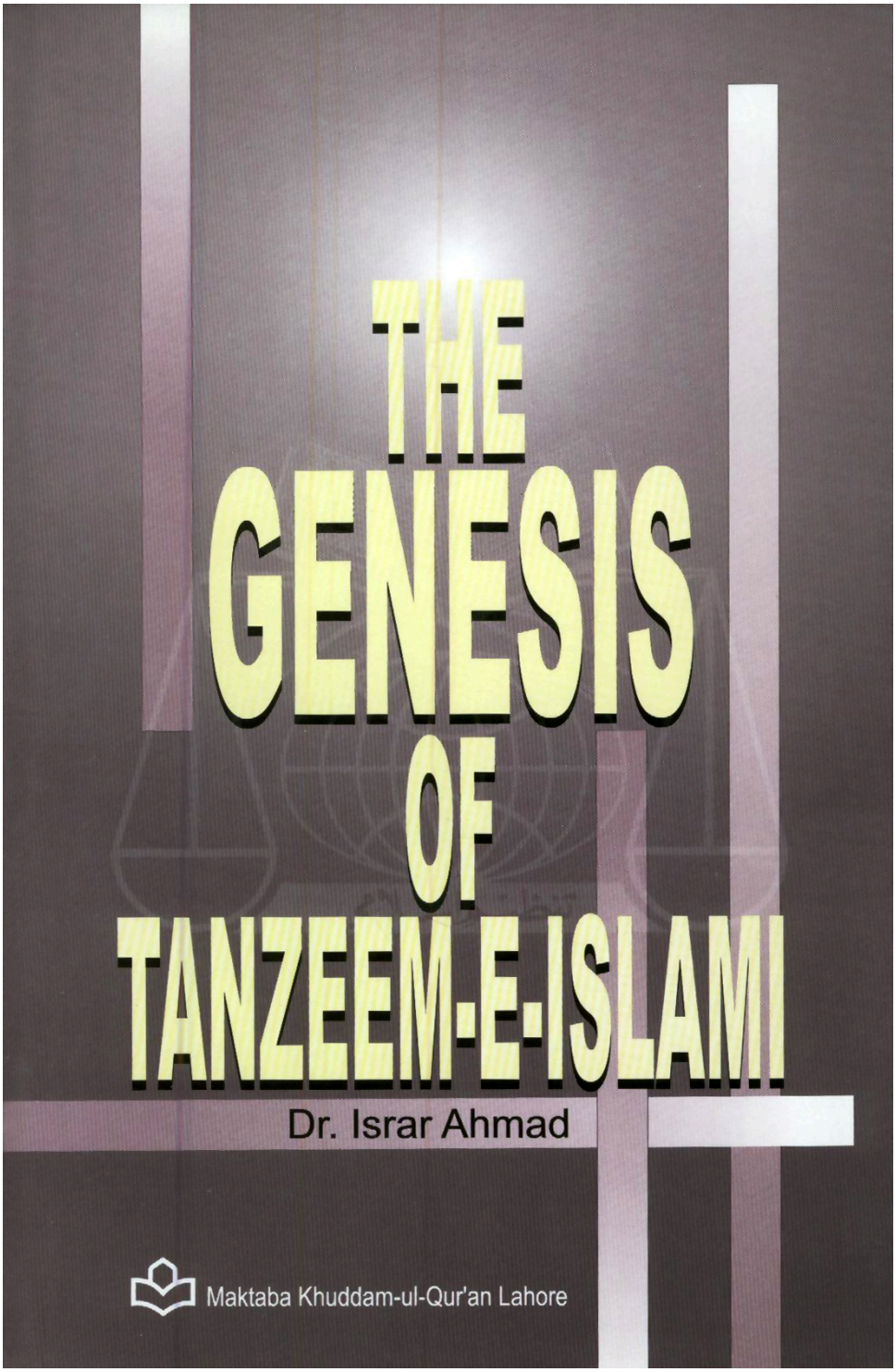

The Genesis of Tanzeem–e- Islami

ڈاکٹر اسرار احمد

The Genesis

of

Tanzeem–e- Islami

ByDr. Israr Ahmad

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Introduction

The main bulk of the present booklet consists of the English translation of a very significant lecture by Dr. Israr Ahmad, Ameer of Tanzeem-e-Islami; the lecture was delivered on July 21, 1974, at the conclusion of a three-week Qur'anic Training Camp, at Muslim Model High School in Lahore (Pakistan). The Camp and its concluding lecture were historic in their significance because it was on this very occasion that Dr. Israr Ahmad announced his decision and resolve to establish an organized Islamic *jama'ah*, a vision that was soon realized in the form of Tanzeem-e-Islami.

The name "Tanzeem-e-Islami" was first used in 1967 by a group of individuals who had earlier resigned from Jama'at-e-Islami as a result of the crisis of 1957-58, as explained in this booklet. These individuals had resigned on account of their disagreement with the leadership of the Jama'at on significant policy matters. Ten years after leaving the Jama'at, they came together and decided to form an organized group that was to fulfill the vacuum created by the post-1947 change in the direction and course of Jama'at-e-Islami. Dr. Israr Ahmad was a part of this effort to revive the original goal and methodology of Jama'at-e-Islami in the form of a new Islamic collectivity; in fact, he had played a key role in bringing these individual together on a common platform. This attempt, like other previous attempts of a similar nature, failed almost immediately, and the envisioned "Tanzeem-e-Islami" could not be established at that time. Dr. Israr Ahmad, however, resolved that instead of being disheartened by these abortive attempts, his own efforts from that point onwards would focus even more vigorously on the formation—or more precisely the revival—of this very organization. He expanded and intensified his personal efforts to impart the knowledge and teachings of the Holy Qur'an through regular *duroos* or public lectures, several references to which are found in the present booklet. As a result of these efforts,

Dr. Israr Ahmad was bestowed by Almighty Allah (SWT) with a number of comrades and associates who developed a clear awareness of their obligations as believers primarily by means of his Qur'anic lectures. This led to Dr. Israr Ahmad's decision to formally establish the envisioned "Tanzeem-e-Islami"

himself. This decision and resolve was announced in a detailed speech, delivered at the end of the above-mentioned Qur'anic Training Camp.

This speech was initially published in 1974, in the September and October-November issues of the Urdu monthly *Meesaq*. It was subsequently published in 1979 as a booklet under the title of *Sarafangdeme* (the name was derived from a Persian couplet). On the occasion of its second edition in 1991, the booklet's title was changed to a simpler *Azm-e-Tanzeem*, and now its English translation is being presented in the form of the present booklet under the title *The Genesis of Tanzeem-e-Islami*. In addition to the appendix that consists of excerpts from some of Dr. Israr Ahmad's earliest speeches and writings, this English edition also contains a chronology of important events relevant to the main text.

It is hoped that *The Genesis of Tanzeem-e-Islami* will greatly help readers in understanding the intellectual background of Dr. Israr Ahmad and his personal history prior to the establishment of Tanzeem-e-Islami. In addition, this booklet will also bring to their attention the indispensable necessity and unavoidable duty of engaging in the struggle for *Iqamah Al-Deen* by participating in an organized and disciplined *jama'ah*. Dr. Israr Ahmad makes it very clear in this booklet that even though this path is fraught with risks, difficulties, and tribulations, these must somehow be endured and negotiated; from the Qur'anic perspective, the nature of the obligation to struggle for *Iqamah Al-Deen* is such that it cannot be ignored or avoided under any condition. It is hoped, therefore, that the translation of this important document into English will go a long way towards introducing the fundamental concepts of Tanzeem-e-Islami to a wider readership, Insha Allah.

English Section.

We thank Almighty Allah (SWT) that the program of this Qur'anic Training Camp was concluded in a successful and satisfactory manner. We have had some disheartening difficulties in the beginning, due to problems relating to management as well as the inclement weather, on top of which we had frequent interruptions due to electrical shutdowns. However, all thanks are due to Allah (SWT) that arrangements for this Camp improved in the course of time, the participants cooperated by acclimatizing themselves with bad weather, and we ourselves decided to reduce the duration to three weeks instead of a full month, as originally planned. We are grateful to the Almighty Allah (SWT) for the successful completion of this program.

As all of you know, the *Muntakhab Nisab* (Selected Course) of Qur'anic Study has been of primary and central importance in this Camp. It started with a lecture on Surah Al-Asr on July 1 and came to a conclusion today with a lecture on Surah Al-Hadeed. As I have emphasized in the beginning and throughout this program, the main objective before us has been to get a clear, holistic, and comprehensive concept of our *Deen*, as well as a thorough understanding of the responsibilities and

obligations we owe to our *Deen*. Thus, the main purpose of studying this *Muntakhab Nisab* is that both the *nature* and the *demands* of our *Deen* should become clear to us.Our Obligations as Muslims

Today, after the completion of this Selected Course of Qur'anic Study, you will agree with me that although

there may have been some deficiencies in other parts of this Training Camp, the basic purpose stated above has been achieved, if not to the fullest degree then at least to the minimum required extent. Therefore, in the first place, it has become evident to all of us that our *Deen* is not limited to rituals and doctrine, as commonly believed, but that it wants to govern and control our entire life and demands from us its own implementation over every aspect of our existence. Our *Deen* demands first of all that we should implement it fully in our individual lives, and then join hands with each other to struggle for its implementation in our collective existence, over the entire surface of the earth, and that we should fully invest our physical, emotional, and material resources to achieve this end. Secondly, the error of the commonly held concept of *Deen* has also become apparent to us during the course of this Training Camp, a concept that is not only truncated and partial but also perverted. We learned that it is this restricted and perverted religiosity that has virtually paralyzed a great majority of Muslims and has reduced the Muslim *Ummah* as a whole to a state of stagnation and passivity

Now that the theoretical aspects have been clarified, it should be apparent that the real question is that of intention and resolve to take concrete action. There is a famous maxim in Urdu that one can wake up a sleeping person but not the one who is already wide-awake (and pretending to be asleep). Let us therefore leave aside the case of the person who does not wish to understand anything, and focus instead on the one who wants to learn. The fact is that if someone sincerely wishes to know the prerequisites of salvation according to the Qur'an and the basic elements and minimum requirements of redemption and forgiveness, then Surah Al-Asr is quite sufficient in a broad and general sense; and if someone wants to understand the details and fine points of a believer's responsibilities and obligation, then the entire Selected Course could be termed the last word in this regard. The next and truly crucial issue is that of taking action, and this

is the hardest and toughest step; this is where real difficulties surface. This issue of putting ideas into action is precisely why I am delivering this speech. My intention this evening is to announce a very important resolve and decision of my life and to explain its background.

Before I present the decision to you, it is important to note that uptil now my efforts have been limited to teaching and delivering lectures and thereby imparting the knowledge and wisdom of the Qur'an, and not of calling people towards any mission or goal. During all this time I have been constantly

emphasizing the fact that my status is basically that of a student of the Qur'an and at most that of a humble teacher; so far I have not been a *da'ee* or caller towards any mission.

There is a statement that often appears in the addresses of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) as recorded in *ahadith*; he used to say: "I counsel you to have the fear of Allah, and I counsel the same to myself." As far as my own self is concerned, I dare not claim the position of one who engages in *nasihah* or *wasiyyah* to others. So far, all my speeches and lectures on the Qur'an were meant to inform the audience of the obligations that all of us owe as Muslims; at the same time, these speeches and lectures were meant to serve as continuous reminders to myself as well. Our Divinely-ordained duties are clear enough. All of us are obligated to perform these duties in accordance with our individual capabilities and resources, and each one of us will be held accountable before Allah (SWT) in this regard on the Day of Judgment. As such, we should be very seriously concerned about fulfilling these obligations.

I was fully aware of the fact that this path is extremely arduous and full of trials and agonies, and in the words of Muhammad Iqbal, "one needs the valor of a lion and the curiosity of a hawk" to tread this road. The Qur'an says: "…it is indeed among the most difficult of tasks" (Luqman 31:17). There can be no doubt that a person who initiates this mission accepts the burden of a great responsibility on his shoulders. Indeed, it is no easy

undertaking to enter this perilous valley after declaring, in the words of the Qur'an, "I am the first of Muslims" and "I am the first of believers," and then to call "who is there to assist me in the path of Allah? (Al-Saff 61:14).

It is because of my awareness of the difficulties inherent in this path that I have so far been taking refuge in the safe haven of only teaching and lecturing. I did not claim that I was myself fulfilling the obligations that have made themselves manifest to me through the study of the Qur'an. That is precisely why I have not been inviting you to join me. Rather, my objective has been to simply express the truth as it is, with the hope that Almighty Allah (SWT) might accept my humble efforts and, consequently, someone from among the audience who may have the required capability and courage will come forward and call others to join hands with him, and that in this manner a caravan may begin its journey on the path of truth and righteousness.

The Resolve to Establish a *Jama'ah*

Now, after a great deal of serious thought and deliberation, and depending solely upon the assistance and succor of Almighty Allah (SWT), I have decided that in the future my efforts will not be restricted to teaching alone. Instead, Insha Allah, the establishment and revival of Allah's *Deen* will be the main and

primary purpose of my remaining life, that my best and maximum efforts will be spent inviting people towards Islam, and that from now on my living and dying will be for the sake of Allah (SWT) alone.

In this respect, I will invite my loved ones, relatives, friends, and acquaintances, even my elders, to join hands with me, and then I will organize all those who become ready and willing to tread this path into a disciplined and vibrant group—a group that would struggle and strive for the establishment of Islam in its totality.

I am starting this mission with the conscious awareness that all help and succor is from Almighty Allah (SWT) alone.

The Background to this Decision

Let me make it very clear that I have not taken this decision on an impulse; rather, there is a long background that lies behind this announcement. I do not want to present myself before you as though I am the only one who has had this realization, or that it happened as a sudden and unprecedented moment of inspiration. I am going to present the complete background of this decision so that you may understand the development of my thought process in this respect.

I would ask you in advance to kindly bear with me, as I do not have any coherent outline of this speech in my mind. You are aware that the past three weeks have been very arduous for me; my health was adversely affected during the first week of this Training Camp. During the remaining fifteen days I was forced to depend on very strong and potentially harmful medications in order to fulfill the duty that I had assigned to myself, i.e., to complete the Selected Course of Qur'anic Study. You are also aware that today has been a particularly long and hard day. In view of the two lengthy lectures that I have already delivered today, please do not expect yet another organized speech from me at this moment. My main objective at this time was to announce my decision, which I have now accomplished. As far as the background is concerned, I will try to explain whatever comes to my mind; rather I will try to explain wherever Allah (SWT) may guide my thoughts.

I pray to Allah (SWT) that He may bring some order to my incoherent thoughts.

My Early Life

I was born on April 26, 1932, in Hissar, a town in East Punjab (India). I earned my Matriculation—with distinction—from Punjab University in 1947 through Government High School Hissar (I scored 718 marks out of 850, and was ranked fourth in the entire University.)

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For most people, adolescence is a period of life that is spent in a state of pure unawareness or oblivion, and even its later years are often characterized, at best, by a state of semi-awareness. Still, it is also a fact that whatever gets inscribed in one's mind at this stage usually has very deep influences and long-lasting effects.

During this age of naïveté and innocence, I happened to be growing up in an environment where the Hindu-Muslim strife was intensifying and the Indian Muslims were being forced to struggle hard for the preservation of their national identity. Consequently, the passion for Muslim nationhood penetrated deep down into the substratum of my subconscious mind. I remember quite clearly that even in 1938, when I was only six years old, I had felt the passing away of Allama Muhammad Iqbal and Mustafa Kemal Pasha as personal tragedies as well as national losses.

The Influence of Iqbal's Urdu Poetry

This is the precise reason that, during my age of semi-awareness, my mind was first impacted by Muhammad Iqbal's Urdu poetry. I was in the fifth grade when my elder brother Izhar Ahmad bought me Iqbal's first anthology of Urdu verse, titled *Bang-e-Dara*—"The Clarion Call." I used to recite poems from this book in a melodious tone for hours on end, only partly understanding their meanings.

Among the poems of *Bang-e-Dara*, my favorites were the ones in which Iqbal had depicted a hope-inspiring picture of the future of the Muslim *Ummah*, and in which he had voiced the glad-tidings of the coming age of Islamic renaissance and the revival of the Muslim world. These poems have a strong shade of optimism, as can be perceived in the following couplet:

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The song of Iqbal is the call of the marching bell,

As our caravan prepares to resume its journey.

I particularly loved the following stanza from the poem *Tulu'-e-Islam* ("The Dawn of Islam"):

The tears of a Muslim are like drops of spring showers

Pearls will be produced once again in Ibrahim's ocean!

The scrolls of the *Ummah* are being organized once again

This Hashmite branch is going to blossom once more!

The avalanche of calamity over the Ottomans is not to be bereaved

Is not dawn produced when myriad of stars die?

Sing O nightingale, so that with your modulations

The pigeon's frail body is bestowed with the heart of a falcon!

Learn once again the lessons of truth, justice, and courage

For you are to be entrusted with the task of leading the world.

And it was with an ecstatic feeling that I used to read the following couplets:

the inhabitants of the Occident! Don't take God's city as your shop

The coins you consider genuine will soon turn out to be counterfeit.

Your civilization will commit suicide with its own dagger

The nest built on the frail branch will not be a durable one.

Coming out of the desert, it overturned the Roman Empire

I have heard from the angels, the same lion will roar again.

At that point in my life, I was not familiar with the poetic works of Altaf Husain Hali. I realized later that his poems were more closely linked to the period when the Muslim *Ummah's* downfall and deterioration had reached its lowest ebb. This explains why his poetry points a very pessimistic and gloomy picture, for example:

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Observe a decline that crosses all limits

Observe the fall of Islam and its failure to rise up again.

One wouldn't believe that there is a high tide after every low one

If one were to see the descent of our ocean.

And:

O the greatest of Prophets! It is time to supplicate

Your Ummah is undergoing the worst of times.

The Deen that spread out majestically from your land

Is like a helpless stranger in a foreign land.

Even though Altaf Hussain Hali (1837-1914) and Muhammad Iqbal (1877-1938) could be regarded as contemporaries, we find a gap of a full generation between them when we note the respective years of their death. This combination of temporal proximity and distance is the precise reason that we find similarities and differences between their poetry. Whereas the poetry of Hali is solely concerned with poignant lamentations over the downfall of the Muslim *Ummah*, Iqbal—in addition to his mourning found in poems like *Saqliah* and *Bilad-e-Islamia*—has also given the Muslims the glad-tidings of a bright future, urging them in a highly inspiring tone to move forward with hope and confidence.

Thus, during my age of semi-awareness, the most powerful impact that I received was that of Muhammad Iqbal's *milli* poetry.[1] These poems had a profound effect on me; I developed in the depths of my heart a deep passion for the revival of *Deen* and the renaissance of Islam, as well as a burning desire for the resurgence of the Muslim *Ummah* and its reconstruction.

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I must also acknowledge that this passion was greatly reinforced at one time by the epic *Shahnamah-e-Islam*, in which Hafeez Jalandhari had masterfully depicted early Islamic history in poetic verse. I recall

having spent an entire night reciting in a melodious tone the entire second volume of *Shahnamah-e-Islam* to my mother; I was a student of grade eight at that time. Dawn broke just as I was completing the book.

During 1946-47, the national struggle of Indian Muslims reached its peak; the hearts and minds of the Muslims of the Indian Subcontinent were preoccupied with the All India Muslim League's popular movement for a separate homeland. I also became involved in this movement to the utmost, even though this was what I have described as a less-than fully aware period of late adolescent life. During this period I was an active worker of the Muslim Students Federation, the student wing of the All India Muslim League. You can appreciate the level of the young generation's enthusiasm for the cause of Pakistan at that time from the fact that we, the workers of the Muslim Students Federation in Hissar, would regularly go to the railway station in order to pick up the newly arrived copies of the Urdu daily *Nawa-e-Waqt* for distribution, as this newspaper was a prominent organ of the freedom movement. I also acted as the General Secretary of the Hissar chapter of the Muslim Students Federation for some time. In 1946, I was privileged to attend a meeting of the Muslim Students Federation's Central Committee in Lahore as a representative from the District of Hissar.Introduction to the Call of Jama'at-e-IslamiWhile I pursued this intimate and active involvement with the movement of All India Muslim League, I was introduced to a new message, a new call. This call from the founder of Jama'at-e-Islami, Maulana Sayyid Abul A'la Maududi, provided a new dimension to my ardent feelings for the Muslim *Ummah*. It was this call that produced in me the strong desire to work for the

renaissance of Islam, in addition to—or preceding—the revival of the Muslims. In other words, Maulana Maududi's call added a purely religious dimension to my initial community-centered sentiments that were the result of my encounter with Muhammad Iqbal's Urdu poetry.

Despite this early introduction to the writings of Maulana Maududi, my active involvement during my high school years remained confined to the freedom movement of Muslim League. At that time in my life, this new religious thought of Jama'at-e-Islami had not yet conquered me to the extent that I would become practically involved in its realization. Still, it did influence me to a considerable degree. Whenever there was any criticism or scorn hurled against Maulana Maududi or Jama'at-e-Islami in the circles of Muslim League or Muslim Students Federation, I would exert my maximum effort to defend them both.

Since I had studied Arabic as an optional subject in school, I had no difficulty in reading or understanding the literature of Jama'at-e-Islami. I was blessed as one of the brilliant students in school, and Almighty Allah (SWT) had granted me a special affinity with the Arabic language. Consequently, I understood the fundamental message of the Jama'at through the study of several booklets that I borrowed from two individuals, Mussarat Mirza and Chaudhry Nazeer Ahmad.[2] In those days, my elder

brother Izhar Ahmad was deeply engrossed in the study of Jama‘at-e-Islami’s literature, and had even prepared detailed notes on many of its publications.

My Encounter with the Qur’an

The result of my final high school examination (grade ten, or Matriculation) was announced on July 12, 1947. The first Eid-ul-Fitr after independence came on August 18, and the very next day organized Hindu mobs started attacking Muslim neighborhoods in various parts of India. As a result of this situation, we were forced to spend the entire month of September in a state of virtual siege.

It was during this period of forced confinement that I was first introduced to Maulana Maududi’s Urdu exegesis of the Islamic scripture, titled *Tafheem-ul-Qur’an*. I vividly remember how my brother Izhar Ahmad and I used to read Maulana Maududi’s explanatory notes on Surah Yusuf while sitting together in the local mosque; these notes were being published at that time in his monthly journal *Tarjuman-ul-Qur’an*. Obviously, my elder brother was superior to me as far as general awareness and understanding was concerned; I, however, had a better grasp of the Arabic language for I had studied Arabic more recently than he had. Thus, our combined study was not only beneficial but also very interesting and rewarding.

I have no hesitation in acknowledging the fact that my first real encounter with the Glorious Qur’an came about through Maulana Abul A‘la Maududi’s *Tafheem-ul-Qur’an*; it was primarily this exegetical work that produced in me a strong desire and inclination to study and understand the Divine Word.My Introduction to Abul Kalam AzadDuring the last two years of high school, I was also introduced to the writings of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad. I came across some old issues of his journal *Al-Hilal*, and also went through the articles that were initially published in this journal and had later appeared in a collection of articles, titled *Majmu‘ah Mazameen-e-Al-Hilal* (“An Anthology of *Al-Hilal* Articles”).[3] Through this study, I realized that Maulana Abul Kalam Azad was the immediate predecessor and forerunner of Maulana Abul A‘la Maududi; I understood that at one time Azad was the leader and *da‘ee* of the same movement that was now being led by Jama‘at-e-Islami, and that Azad had called the Muslims towards the same message that was currently being propagated by Maulana Maududi. The first outcome of this realization was that my hatred for Maulana Azad—which was caused by the fact that Azad was a prominent leader of the Indian National Congress, the main party opposing All India Muslim League—was replaced by a

rueful feeling of sorrow for him. How unfortunate that a person would abandon such a great and noble mission and then lose himself in the wilderness of politics! Secondly, it became ingrained in my mind that it is the goal and objective that enjoys ultimate importance and not individual leaders; consequently, our attention should be focused on the mission and not on personalities.My Migration to PakistanIn early

October 1947, the Indian military forcibly broke down our fortifications in Hissar and compelled us to live in the camps that were established within the precincts of a newly built prison. After staying there for some times, we joined a caravan that was going to Pakistan. We walked on foot for twenty days and traveled a distance of one hundred and seventy miles to reach Pakistan; if my recollection is correct, we entered Pakistan on November 7, 1947, through Sulemanki Headworks. And thus began a new era in my life.

In Pakistan, my father was initially posted in Lahore but was soon transferred to Kasur. I was enrolled in Government College Lahore for FSc (pre-medical), and took up residence with a relative in Krishan Nagar, an old settlement of Lahore.Association with the Movement of Jama‘at-e-IslamiDuring the two years of FSc., I joined the *Halqah-e-Hamdardan-e-Jama‘at-e-Islami* (“Circle of the Supporters of Jama‘at-e-Islami”) and worked with full dedication and diligence. There were several factors behind the exceptional enthusiasm of that period. The creation of Pakistan was itself an exhilarating event; the tough and difficult times that we had to face in order to reach Pakistan further ignited my feelings of passion for the Muslim community and my religious zeal. At that time it seemed as if the goal of Islamic revival and renaissance was very near. It was felt that the main hurdle was the creation of a separate country for the Muslims of India, and since this hurdle has now been overcome with the establishment of Pakistan, it follows that the only thing

that needs to be done is to establish the Islamic Order in this country. The next step, that of waging the struggle for the global ascendancy of Islam, would be quite easy once we have Pakistan as our base. This perception—that our final destination and goal is just around the corner—added fuel to my already blazing fire of Islamic fervor. Thus, when the Jama‘at-e-Islami appeared on the Pakistani scene with a call to establish *Nizam-e-Islami* (the Islamic Order), it appealed, in effect, to the national and communal as well as the religious sentiments. As a result, I eagerly joined the active struggle for the cause of Islam, as if in a state of intoxicated rapture, along with a large number of other workers. In those days, any inkling that our destination was actually remote and far away never crossed our minds.

It was during this period that I thoroughly and painstakingly studied the literature of Jama‘at-e-Islami. The writings by Maulana Ameen Ahsan Islahi seemed quite difficult and tedious at that time, but I did study each and every word written by Maulana Abul A‘la Maududi. Despite this familiarity with its literature, I still consider my involvement with the Islamic Movement during that period as a semi-conscious one, rather than one based on full awareness.

Towards the end of 1949, I was enrolled in the King Edward Medical College, Lahore, and moved into its dorms. As a result, my organizational link with the Jama‘at-e-Islami was broken off and I started to work for the Islami Jami‘yat-e-Talabah, the students’ wing of the Jama‘at. I became a member of the Jami‘yat in 1950 and was immediately given the administrative responsibility of the Jami‘yat’s chapter

in King Edward Medical College. In 1951, I was appointed the *Nazim* of its Lahore wing as well as that of the Punjab wing. I was elected *Nazim-e-A'la* (Chief Administrator) of the Jami'yat in 1952.

Please bear in mind that I am not trying to brag about the positions I held. Rather, I have mentioned this only to show that I had worked with great enthusiasm and

dedication, and that I had fulfilled the demands of this movement as my topmost priority, even at the cost of incurring harm to my education and risking my future professional career.[4]

Let me make it very clear that I have absolutely no regrets whatsoever in this regard. In fact, exactly the opposite is true. I cherish that period of my life as a very precious one, and even today I value its memories as a great asset. I also feel that the foundations of whatever service I am rendering to Islam—the opportunity, capability, and inclination of which have been bestowed upon me by Almighty Allah (SWT)—were laid down in that very period.

Indeed, whatever modest capacity for writing and speaking I posses today is originally a product of the period mentioned above. This ability had first appeared and developed during the years of my association with the Jami'yat. I was neither an accomplished writer in Urdu during that period nor can I make such a claim today, but I owe whatever little ability of writing I do possess to the weekly organ of the Islami Jami'yat-e-Talabah—entitled *Azm*—which I used to edit. Similarly, I was neither a fiery orator or a captivating speaker at that time nor am I one today, but I owe whatever little speaking ability I do possess to the experience of public speaking that I gained during that era.

Regarding the writings of Maulana Abul A'la Maududi, I was not simply a *student* but a *teacher* of his writings, so much so that his writings pertaining to the movement of Jama'at-e-Islami and its premises, principles, and various stages became deeply imprinted in my memory. Consequently, I had developed very clear concepts of the distinguishing characteristics of the Jama'at, and there remained no ambiguity, uncertainty, or confusion concerning them in my mind.

In addition, Allah (SWT) bestowed upon me a special blessing when I developed a close intellectual affinity first with the writings of Maulana Ameen Ahsan

Islahi and then, through these writings, with the Glorious Qur'an itself. I developed a deep and close relationship with Maulana Islahi's exceptional work *Da'wat-e-Deen aur iska Tareeq-e-Kaar* ("The Call of *Deen* and its Methodology"); one could almost say that I fell in love with this book. As a matter of fact, it was through this work that I gained a lucid and clear understanding of the religious thought behind the movement of Jama'at-e-Islami, as well as the real significance of the Islamic obligations of

Da'wah and *Shahadah Al-Haq*. When Maulana Islahi published his next book, entitled *Tadabbar-e-Qur'an*, I studied it with immense interest. It was through the study of this book that I developed an intellectual harmony with the Glorious Qur'an as well as a heart-felt love for it. This exceptional work on the principles of Qur'anic exegesis was later published as *Mabadi Tadabbur-e-Qur'an* ("The Principles of Deep Reflection in the Qur'an").

During the Christmas break in December 1951 and the summer vacation in July 1952, I organized two training camps for college students. In these camps, Maulana Islahi gave lectures on selected portions of the Holy Qur'an. I received immense benefit from these lectures on account of my participation in the camps as the organizer. Consequently, I was not only drawn closer to the Qur'an but also developed a strong urge to learn and teach the Book of Allah (SWT).

The combination of my attachment to the Qur'an and the capacity for public speaking soon made me a *mudarris* (teacher) of the Holy Book. In the gatherings of the Jami'yat-e-Talabah, the task of delivering a *dars* of the Qur'an (a talk explaining a scriptural passage) was most often assigned to me. By that time, my father had settled in Montgomery (now Sahiwal); whenever I would visit my family during vacations, I would be invited to deliver a *dars* in the weekly meetings of the Jama'at-e-Islami. These public discourses were usually appreciated by the audience.[5]

The most significant reward and the main benefit that I received as a result of my close relationship with the Glorious Qur'an was that the fundamental teachings of Islam became clear to me in a direct and unmediated way, i.e., they became established in my mind on the firm foundations of the Qur'an itself. Thus, the compulsory nature of the duty of *Daw'ah* and *Tableegh*—propagating the *Deen* of Allah (SWT), of *Shahadah Al-Haq*—becoming witnesses of the Truth, and of *Iqamah Al-Deen*—establishing the Islamic Order, all became crystal clear to me in light of Qur'anic imperatives and arguments. In other words, my religious understanding developed a direct and intimate link with the Holy Qur'an that became, so to say, the strong anchor for my subsequent thought processes.

I did not appreciate the importance of this particular blessing at that time. It was only some time later that I realized that, had there been any deficiency or lacuna left in my concepts of the Qur'anic imperatives, the whole edifice of my thought—especially the holistic view of religious obligations—would have, as a result of later developments collapsed and crumbled like a house of cards. The decline in my veneration for certain personalities and even a severance of my relationship with some of them, as well as my disassociation from the Jami'yat and the Jama'at, might have caused my total detachment from the Islamic Movement itself. The reason why such an unfortunate situation did not arise was the fact that I had thoroughly absorbed the holistic concept of a Muslim's obligations directly from my study of the Glorious Qur'an. This concept was no longer dependent on my veneration of any person or my association with any group. On the other hand, there were numerous examples of individuals who

resigned from the Jama‘at-e-Islami and, subsequently, not only lost their association with the struggle for *Iqamah Al-Deen* but also lost their active relationship with Islam itself.

In short, my association with the Islami Jami‘yat-e-Talabah was the most important chapter of my life. It was

in this period that I developed an authentic intellectual relationship with Islam as well as a genuine and conscious involvement with the movement for Islamic revival and renaissance.[6] Thus, the passion for the revival of Islam and the resurgence of the Muslim *Ummah* that had first appeared under the influence of Muhammad Iqbal’s Urdu poetry, and the elements of Islamic thought and ideology that were soon added by the writings of Maulana Abul A‘la Maududi, reached another level of maturity; now this passion became firmly established on the solid and authentic Qur’anic foundations through the writings of Maulana Ameen Ahsan Islahi.

All praise and gratitude is for Allah (SWT) alone, Who has guided us to this; We could not truly have been led aright if Allah (SWT) had not guided us. (Al-A‘raf 7:43)

I successfully completed my medical studies in 1954 to graduate from King Edward Medical College. As soon as the result was announced, I resigned from the Jami‘yat-e-Talabah (since I was no longer a student) and applied for the membership of Jama‘at-e-Islami. The reason for my eagerness was that I had in my mind the tradition of Prophet Muhammad (SAW), quoted in *Mishkat Al-Masabih* and narrated by Harith Al-Ash‘ari (RAA), according to which he had said:

I declare obligatory upon you five things. They are: *jama‘ah* (organization), *sam‘* (listening), *ta‘ah* (obeying), *Hijrah*, and *Jihad* for the cause of Allah (SWT).

In light of this *hadith*, I did not want to spend even a few days of my life without being a member of an organized Islamic group.Alas! My association with the Jama‘at-e-Islami was to be short lived.My Resignation from Jama‘at-e-IslamiAs a member of Jama‘at-e-Islami, the first thing I realized was that, as far as the attachment to *Deen* and the general level of morality was concerned, the Jama‘at was suffering from a serious state of decay and degeneration. I also observed that its organizers and office-holders had developed a style and character that was more suited to political workers than to members of an Islamic revolutionary movement. Further, I realized that the manner of the call and appeal of the Jama‘at had also drastically changed from what it was in the beginning, and even in this respect the style and manner of an ordinary political party had been adopted.

When I started to ponder over the various causal factors involved in this transformation, another question immediately came to my mind: Why was it, I wondered, that the objective of the establishment of an Islamic Order, which appeared so easy and imminent in 1947, is now moving farther and farther away despite eight years of constant struggle?

The more I thought about it, the reality went on becoming more and more evident to me that after the creation of Pakistan the movement of Jama‘at-e-Islami had *deviated* from its original course. The shift in the methodology instituted by the leadership of the Jama‘at—which was itself the result of an erroneous reading of the new "opportunities" and "possibilities" that had supposedly arisen after independence—had led to the attenuation and weakening of the originally exalted mission and high aims of Jama‘at-e-Islami. The principled Islamic posture and authentic revolutionary stance of Jama‘at-e-Islami—which were characteristic features of its early years—were now a forgotten legacy. I realized that

the Jama‘at was no longer an authentic Islamic revolutionary movement; rather it had waned and deflated into merely a pro-Islamic and nationalist political party.

Initially, this revelation was the source of much distress and agony for me, and it overwhelmed my heart with sorrow and disappointment. Soon, however, other aspects of this issue started to become clearer. I realized that I was not alone in my recognition of the problem, but that there were a number of other members of the Jama‘at—including many among its senior cadres—who had perceived this radical change in the policy and character of Jama‘at-e-Islami. This was comforting to me in some ways, as I felt that the mistake could still be rectified and, with a little effort, the movement could still be put back on its original course.

With this hope in mind, I wrote a detailed, 250 page statement, comparing and contrasting the mission, methodology, and policy of Jama‘at-e-Islami in the pre-independence period with those in the post-independence period. I emphasized the shift in the methodology and its consequences on the character of the Jama‘at, and appealed to its leadership to abandon the present course and to return to the original, pre-independence revolutionary methodology.

This work is now available under the title *Tahreek-e-Jama‘at-e-Islami: Aik Tahqeeqi Mutali‘ah* ("The Movement of Jama‘at-e-Islami: A Research Study"). I do not want to say anything further on this subject, except the following: I still consider this statement to be as factually true and correct as I did eighteen years ago. There has been no change in my position on this subject; rather, my stance has become stronger with the passage of time.

Unfortunately, this difference of opinion about the policy and methodology of Jama‘at-e-Islami led to a serious turmoil within its ranks. It resulted in an acute crisis in Jama’at-e-Islami that lasted six months

during 1956-57. As a result of this crisis, at least 70 -- 80 members left the Jama'at. Apart from junior and ordinary workers

like myself, those who resigned at that time included some of the most senior members of the Jama'at, including Maulana Ameen Ahsan Islahi, Maulana Abdul Jabbar Ghazi, Maulana Abdul Ghaffar Hassan, Maulana Abdur Raheem Ashraf, Shaykh Sultan Ahmad, and Sardar Ajmal Khan Leghari. In other words, the crisis was of such magnitude and severity that the entire second tier of the leadership of Jama'at-e-Islami resigned.

This mass exodus from the Jama'at constitutes a bitter saga, and this is hardly the occasion to delve into the details of why and how this happened and who is to be held responsible. I have written down this entire chronicle under the title *Naqd-e-Ghazal*—a name that is derived from the following *ayah* of the Holy Qur'an: "Do not become like her who untwists her yarn after having spun it into durable thread" (Al-Nahl 16:92)—and any interested person can find the details there.[7]

I had submitted my application for the membership of the Jama'at-e-Islami in November 1954, and after about two and a half years, I resigned with an extremely heavy heart in April 1957.[8]

Let it be noted that my resignation did not mean that I had abandoned my life's objective for which I had joined the Jama'at in the first place, neither that I had severed myself from the struggle for the renaissance and revival of Islam, nor from the obligations of *Shahadah Al-Haq* and *Iqamah Al-Deen*—a mission that I had adopted with full consciousness that it constituted my most important obligation as a Muslim.

With the Grace of Almighty Allah (SWT), not a single day passed during the last 17 or 18 years in which I could forget or ignore the objective of the revival and renaissance of Islam. Not a single day passed during this period in which I would disregard or overlook the goal of the establishment of *Deen*. I did not, in all these years, harbor any doubt or uncertainty about my religious obligations. I have already stated that from the very beginning—and this was only with the Grace of Allah

(SWT)—my commitment and loyalty was established to the Glorious Qur'an itself, rather than to any particular person or leader. It had become clear to me, through the Qur'an itself, that *Shahadah Al-Haq* was my responsibility and *Iqamah Al-Deen* was my obligation. I knew that if I could find a *jama'ah* through which I could fulfill these obligations with full mental satisfaction, then that was exactly what I needed. But I also knew that I would not be absolved of my obligations just because such a *jama'ah* does not exist, although the task would certainly become much more onerous in that case. It is far from easy for a single person to start from scratch, invite others to fulfill their Divinely ordained obligations,

and to establish a *jama'ah* in order to carry out these duties. Alternatively, if he could not do all this, then he should at least continue to be involved in this struggle in his personal and individual capacity, and this is the minimum that he must do.

Individual leaders will appear on the stage and then leave, groups or parties will be formed and then disintegrate, but the *Deen* of Almighty Allah (SWT) will remain intact, and so will His Book. Prophet Muhammad (SAW) has said in his sermon on the occasion of the Farewell Pilgrimage:

I am leaving among you something that if you held on to it tightly then you will never go astray—the Book of Allah!

In light of this *hadith*, one's duty is to make the Glorious Qur'an his guide and leader, and to keep on treading this path. If Almighty Allah (SWT) grants a person the opportunity and the good fortune to serve his *Deen*, then he should consider this to be only a sign of Allah's blessing and favor and not of his own achievement.

28

Do not feel proud for your service to the King

Be grateful that the King chose you for his service.My Activities in Sahiwal and Karachi (1957-1965)After the exodus from Jama'at-e-Islami in 1956-57, there was a strong expectation that the individuals who had resigned would work to establish another organized group, and that this new organization would work according to the preferred, pre-independence methodology of the Jama'at. This hope was not unduly optimistic, as there was no shortage of knowledgeable and learned persons among those who had left the Jama'at. Among them were four persons who had actually led Jama'at-e-Islami during various incarcerations of Maulana Ala A'la Maududi; therefore, the standing of these four individuals was quite high from an organizational point of view.

This was the reason why, during the first two years after resigning from the Jama'at (mid-1957 to mid-1959), I did a great amount of traveling among various cities of Pakistan, especially Lahore, Lyallpur (now Faisalabad), Raheemabad, and Sakkhar. In December 1958, I even closed my medical practice in Sahiwal and moved to Karachi along with my family, though I had to return just six or seven months later due to my father's illness.

Various consultative meetings were held during this period, the most significant of which was the one I organized at Aziz Tanneries in Harappa. Almost all major and prominent persons took part in that meeting, which continued for three days.

Unfortunately, all this effort remained fruitless and due to various reasons the individuals who had resigned from the Jama‘at could not evolve a consensus on forming a new organization. Over time, all of them started to work in their individual capacities and occupied themselves in various constructive activities—each according to his own taste and inclination. Majority of these individuals became

involved in academic pursuits. Maulana Ameen Ahsan Islahi established *Halqa-e-Tadabbur-e-Qur’an* (“Circle for Qur’anic Reflection”) in Lahore, started a monthly magazine called *Meesaq*, and began working on his exegesis of the Holy Qur’an. Hakeem Abdur Raheem Ashraf established a religious school called the *Jami‘ah Ta‘leemat-e-Islamia* and focused his efforts on the weekly *Al-Mimbar*. Maulana Abdul Ghaffar Hassan worked with him for some time, but later moved to Sahiwal with a view to work in collaboration with me. Maulana Abdul Jabbar Ghazi established a high school in Rawalpindi and got involved in its administrative affairs. Sardar Ajmal Khan Leghari established an educational institute called *Idarah Ajmal Bagh* on the pattern of Delhi’s *Jami‘ah Milliah*, and so on.

I also initiated two projects after moving from Karachi to Sahiwal in mid-1959. In the first place, I established a Qur’anic Study Circle and, secondly, a hostel to impart Islamic education and training to college students. Both projects had the same purpose behind them. The former was meant to create an intellectual and emotional bond with the Holy Qur’an among the masses in general, whereas the latter was meant to achieve the same goal among college students. With this objective in mind, I made certain additions to the selections from the Qur’an that I had studied from Maulana Ameen Ahsan Islahi during 1951-52 in order to develop a relatively extended *Muntakhab Nisab*, and then started giving lectures focusing on these selected portions of the Qur’an.

For about two and a half years (mid-1959 till the end of 1961), I invested myself with full vigor in these two projects, side by side with my medical practice.

In the beginning of 1962, my elder brother offered me a very attractive proposition to participate in his construction business through which I could, supposedly, work both for this world and the Hereafter. I accepted this offer and moved to Karachi. Soon, however, I realized that this “golden opportunity” was actually a trap that would

only keep me confined. Despite my best efforts, it took me almost three years to get out of this “prison,” and I finally moved once again to Sahiwal in 1965.

My passion refused to sit idle during my stay in Karachi. I established a Qur’anic Study Circle in Maqbool-e-Aam High School, where I would give weekly lectures on the same *Muntakhab Nisab* that I

mentioned earlier. In the meantime, I also completed masters in Islamic Studies from Karachi University (graduating first in my class).

Even if nobody else benefited from the lectures that I delivered on the Selected Course of Qur'anic Study in both Sahiwal and Karachi, the fact is that I myself greatly benefited from them. Although organizationally I remained out of touch with the struggle for the cause of Islam for no less than nine years, I did maintain a close intellectual and emotional link with its basic call through lecturing on the Selected Course. As a result of these Qur'anic lectures, I remained fully cognizant of my Islamic responsibilities and did not forget what I had learned earlier.An Abortive Attempt for a New BeginningWhile I was still contemplating my future plans after moving back to Sahiwal, my father passed away on November 11, 1965. Since the attachment that I had with the city of Sahiwal was due only to my father's presence in that city, this connection was severed with his demise. Moreover, I felt somewhat shy and inhibited in setting up my medical practice yet again in Sahiwal after having moved away from that city on two occasions. In addition to these two negative factors, there was also a positive consideration. I believed, from the perspective of my life's mission of serving the cause of Islam, that it would be best to initiate the struggle in the more central metropolis of Lahore. Consequently, near the end of 1965 I moved from Sahiwal to Lahore, starting a fresh chapter in my life.

In Lahore, my intention was to join Maulana Ameen Ahsan Islahi's *Halaqa-e-Tadabbur-e-Qur'an* and to study advanced Arabic with him, as well as the science of

Qur'anic interpretation. After studying under him for some time, however, I realized that Maulana Islahi had become quite exhausted due to the disappointing results of his labor on the previous group of students, and that he was not very enthusiastic about working that hard again. Moreover, he even communicated this reluctance rather directly. Consequently, my desire remained unfulfilled.

Now, when I pondered over my future plans, the flame that had remained subdued in my heart for the last nine years sparked up once again. As a result, I focused my attention on two issues: First, I worked to bring together as many former associates of the Jama'at as possible on the basis of mental and conceptual harmony, so that they could be organized under a single discipline. The purpose was to initiate the work of *da'wah* and *tarbiyah* on a mass scale and in an organized way, so that the obligations of *Shahadah Al-Haq* and *Iqamah Al-Deen* could be fulfilled along the same lines as were adopted by Jama'at-e-Islami in its earlier, pre-1947 phase. Second, I worked to propagate the teachings of the Glorious Qur'an on a vast scale so that the young and intellectual segments of the society might feel an attraction towards the Divine Word; the objective was that, after imbibing from this fountainhead of knowledge and wisdom, these young men will then acquire the capability of presenting the guidance of the Book of Allah (SWT) in a scholarly and intellectual manner.

To achieve the first objective, I published my detailed study regarding the deviation in the methodology of Jama‘at-e-Islami that occurred in its post-1947 period. Thus, the statement that I had written ten years ago in 1956 now took the form of a book.[9] The purpose behind the publication of this statement was three-fold: First, I wanted to elucidate the actual nature of the disagreement that shook the Jama‘at during the crisis of 1956-57 for the benefit of those supporters of Jama’at-e-Islami who also had a soft corner for those who had resigned. Second, I also wanted to encourage the current members of the Jama‘at to review their standpoint and to seriously consider, in the

light of their struggle during the last nine or ten years, as to whose viewpoint was correct in that disagreement. Above all, however, I wanted the people who had left Jama‘at-e-Islami to deliberate as to why they had joined the Jama‘at in the first place, why they had resigned from it, and what is the reason for their present inaction and passivity?[10]

After its publication, the book was reviewed in newspapers and periodicals, as expected; a number of individuals expressed their views through personal correspondence. In all these discussions and comments, two points were often repeated: First, the sincerity of the author was acknowledged and the objective style of his writing was admired. Second, it was said in the circles of the Jama‘at—either to express surprise or in a manner of retaliation—that if this was indeed the basis of disagreement, then why was it that the former members of the Jama‘at failed to initiate another struggle along the lines that they preferred?

In response to this latter question or accusation, I candidly admitted that although there were a number of reasons for this inactivity, the fact remains that this was a collective shortcoming on the part of those who had resigned from Jama‘at, and it is now incumbent upon them to rectify their lapse.

With the Grace of Allah (SWT), there were indeed some positive results. In 1966-67, the individuals who had earlier resigned from the Jama‘at were somewhat galvanized into action as a result of the publication of this book, and Maulana Abdul Ghaffar Hassan and Shaykh Sultan Ahmad took an active part in channeling this new motivation in the direction of a positive and useful end. A relatively large gathering was held in Rahim Yar Khan towards the end of 1967. In this meeting, a resolution was passed regarding the formation of a *jama‘ah*; moreover, a consensus was achieved concerning the interpretation of this resolution. This significant event raised the hopes that this caravan was about to be reorganized and was about to restart its forward march for the cause of Islam.[11]

Unfortunately, due to the unwitting machinations of some “well-wishers,” not only the attempt itself was shattered before it could be properly launched, its failure also left a general feeling of bitterness, disappointment, despair, and division in its aftermath. I do not want to mention any names here, as I

believe that everyone will find the reward or punishment for his deeds with Allah (SWT).Taking the LeadIt was at this juncture that, after serious deliberations, I earnestly decided that from now on I would do whatever I have to do in my own individual capacity. I decided that I would not wait any longer for my elders to lead us forward, nor would I wait for my former colleagues and associates in this regard. On the Day of Judgment, everyone is going to be brought before Almighty Allah (SWT) and will be answerable to Him in his or her individual capacity. As such, I decided that I have to fulfill my own obligations regardless of whether or not other people moved in this direction.

When I took stock of things, I realized that Allah (SWT) has bestowed upon me a special mental harmony with the Glorious Qur'an, as well as some capacity for speaking and writing, and that Allah (SWT) has given me the ability to express my thoughts through both these faculties. Consequently, I realized that I could teach and "introduce" the Holy Qur'an to my fellow Muslims and thereby serve the *Deen* of Allah (SWT) in my own humble way, and thus take part in the great struggle for Islamic Renaissance and *Shahadah Al-Haq*. I realized that I could demonstrate to others the excellence and unparalleled greatness of the Glorious Qur'an, and that I could encourage and motivate people to study the Qur'an and to try to grasp its meaning. I also realized that even though it would be a very modest contribution from my side, it would be, in fact, a great service in its own place. This is because the Glorious Qur'an is the ultimate fountainhead of knowledge and wisdom. It is only the Qur'an that could

enlighten the hearts with the light of *Iman* and true conviction, and that only the Qur'an could reform thought processes and thinking habits, viewpoints and values. If a process along these lines could be initiated, then the net result would be a transformation in attitudes and characters to the extent that, if Almighty Allah (SWT) so wills, the same process would eventually lead to a vibrant and all-inclusive revolutionary struggle for the sake of Islam's ascendancy.

Consequently, I started my mission in the name of Allah (SWT). I decided that, from January 1968 onwards, the better part of my efforts and resources would be dedicated for this great objective.

Now that I have been working along these lines for the last seven years, I am fully satisfied that my decision was absolutely correct and that this is indeed "the real task" that needs to be done; I thank Allah (SWT) for guiding me to this decision.The Movement for Learning and Teaching the Qur'anAs a first step towards fulfilling this objective, I made an effort to revive the same blessed source of Islamic thought and the principles and methodology for deep reflection in the Holy Qur'an that were developed by Imam Hameeduddin Farahi and his disciple Maulana Ameen Ahsan Islahi. Indeed, it was through this fountain of Qur'anic knowledge that the passion for studying the Qur'an and the zeal for propagating its knowledge and wisdom had developed in my heart. Consequently, I took up the task of printing and publishing the first volume of *Tadabbur-e-Qur'an*, the exegesis of the Holy Book that is being written by Maulana Islahi.[12] It was only through the Mercy and Benevolence of Almighty Allah (SWT) that this

difficult endeavor turned out be a success.[13] Immediately afterwards, I published two more works by Maulana Islahi that had greatly impressed me since my student years, i.e., *Mabadi Tadabbur-e-Qur'an* ("Rules for Deep Reflection in the Qur'an") and *Da'wat-e-Deen aur iska Tareeq-e-Kar* ("The Call of *Deen* and its Methodology"). In addition, two of his

booklets, titled *Qur'an aur Pardah* and *Iqamat-e-Deen kay liay Anbia-e-kiram ka Tareeq-e-Kar* ("The Prophetic Methodology for the Establishment of *Deen*") were also published. Secondly, I arranged weekly Qur'anic lectures by Maulana Islahi, initially at my residence in Krishan Nagar and later in a local mosque. However, these lectures could not be continued for long due to Maulana Islahi's illness.

In July 1966, I restarted under my own editorship the Urdu monthly *Meesaq*. It was originally started by Maulana Islahi in June 1959, but was not being published for quite a while.[14] Through this publication, the propagation of the above-mentioned Qur'anic thought started to diffuse in a larger circle; Maulana Islahi's *tafseer* of the Qur'an as well as the exegetical writings of his teacher, Imam Hameeduddin Farahi, also began to reach a bigger readership through this journal.

In order to streamline the printing and publishing of these books, I had established a publishing house called Darul Isha'til-Islamiah. For lack of a better alternative, I had established this publishing house as my personal property; I had clarified, however, that as soon as a collective body or organization takes shape, this publishing setup would be transferred to that collective body or organization. Secondly, I started publishing my own lectures on the Qur'an and other writings in an organized manner. I had started delivering these Qur'anic lectures in 1967. In this regard, two Qur'anic study circles were formed in Krishan Nagar, and for a while one study circle also continued at a friend's residence on Dill Mohammad Road. However, this effort really took off through the Qur'anic lectures that I started in Samanabad (a neighborhood in Lahore) in January 1968.

It so happened that one of my cousins, who lived in Samanabad, renovated and expanded his house, during which he removed a wall between two rooms so that a larger room was created in which approximately one hundred people could sit. Since I was already looking for such a place, I immediately suggested that we should use

this room for Qur'anic lectures. He had no objection, and we started regular Qur'anic lectures at his place every Sunday morning. Initially, the attendance was limited to about 30-35 people, but it kept increasing. The host family purchased a sound system, and seating arrangements were extended to outside the room, and then to the lawn. Soon, however, we realized that even this space was not enough to accommodate the growing audience.

I had a standing invitation from Masjid-e-Khadra in Samanabad that I should move my Qur'anic study circle to that mosque. I was not very enthusiastic about delivering Qur'anic lectures in mosques, for they usually belong to specific sectarian groups and schools of thought, and for this reason it is impossible to express anything that does not conform to the views of the patrons. In addition, there is often a tug-of-war among different groups to establish their hold on a mosque's administration. Despite these reservations, I felt a genuine need for a larger place and hence I accepted the offer. The study circle was moved to Masjid-e-Khadra. I was already delivering Friday Sermons in that mosque, and now the addition of regular Qur'anic lectures on Sunday mornings caused it to become the center and launching pad for this Qur'anic movement. Contrary to my fears, the conditions in Masjid-e-Khadra remained exceptionally favorable and auspicious for a long time, which convinced me that Allah (SWT) had accepted this humble effort to serve His Book and was bestowing upon it His special support and blessing.

It was a manifestation of this very Divine support and blessing that this series of Qur'anic lectures soon became very popular in Lahore. On a Sunday mornings, when people often have to take care of their errands and are also somewhat lazy after a week's hard work, a significant number of audience would attend my lectures even though there was no element of sectarian affiliation or organizational obligation, and even though these lectures had no political content and addressed no current mundane affairs. The audience came exclusively to listen a discourse on the Qur'an. Their number reached a figure of

more than three hundred, the majority of which consisted not only of educated individuals but also high-level professionals. All this happened even though the lecturer was not a graduate of any religious seminary or the product of any spiritually scholastic institution, and according to his own admission was only a "student" of the Holy Book. Indeed, this was a manifestation of Divine blessing rather than any achievement on my part.

The reputation of this study circle did not remain limited to Lahore alone. Partly through visitors to Lahore from other cities and partly through those who used to attend these lectures and had subsequently moved to other places, its fame spread far and wide. I do not want to hide this fact—I rather believe that I must express it in accordance with the Divine imperative "Rehearse and proclaim the bounty of your Lord" (Al-Duha 93:11)—that I was extremely happy to learn that these Qur'anic lectures were mentioned with approval in Masjid Al-Haram and Masjid Al-Nabawi, as well as in Nadwatul-Ulama Lucknow (India).

This is the Grace of Allah which He bestows on whom He pleases, and Allah is the Lord of Abounding Grace. (Al-Hadid 57:21)

During the first six months, I lectured on the *Muntakhab Nisab* that had gone through a process of evolution and had almost reached its completion; afterwards, I started lectures to explain the meaning of the Qur'an from the beginning. Initially, I feared that my audience may not be able to maintain interest; however, it turned out be the opposite and with the grace of Allah (SWT) the level of interest kept rising. There was a suspension in these lectures that lasted four months in 1970-71 due to my illness and absence from the country for Hajj. When the study circle was revived after this gap, I

again lectured on the Selected Course of Qur'anic Study. After that I started lecturing on the Qur'an from the beginning, and now after six and a half years, the study circle of Masjid-e-Khadra is studying the fourteenth *juz*.

The climax of this study circle came in August 1972 when I held a ten days long Training Camp, in which the entire Selected Course of Qur'anic Study was completed at the rate of three lessons per day, and during which the sight at Masjid-e-Khadra was such as if indeed the event of the revelation of Qur'an was being truly celebrated.

In addition, several additional Qur'anic study circles were established in different localities of Lahore in which lectures were delivered on a weekly or monthly basis; in this way the call of the Qur'an was delivered to a sizeable population of Lahore.

After hearing about these Qur'anic lectures, some individuals from Karachi who knew me from Jama'at-e-Islami days visited Lahore in August 1971. Through their support, similar lectures were started in Karachi as well. During the course of my regular visits to Karachi, I also started to visit Multan, Rahim Yar Khan, Sadiqabad, and Sakkhar where I would deliver exegetical lectures on Qur'an.

Along with increased activity on this front, I started to put together some of my writings in the form of booklets. The first product was *Islam ki Nish'at-e-Thaniah: Karney ka Asal Kam* (later published in English as "Islamic Renaissance: The Real Task Ahead") which was received with great appreciation in scholarly circles. Prof. Yusuf Saleem Chisti wrote a detailed piece in its favor, expressing his agreement with its theme, while Safdar Mir wrote an article in the editorial pages of the daily "Pakistan Times."[15] With the grace of Allah (SWT), several editions of this booklet have since been published, and the booklet acquired the status of the "manifesto" for this Qur'anic movement.

Following the publication of one of my speeches entitled *Qur'an aur Amn-e-Alam* (later published in English as "Qur'an and World Peace"), I issued a booklet that gained with the grace of Allah (SWT) an immense and unprecedented popularity and acknowledgment. This was *Muslamanon par Qur'an-e-Majeed kay Huqooq* (later published in English as "The Obligations Muslims Owe to the Qur'an")

which has also been published several times. The late Prof. Mohammad Ibrahim translated this book into English with such love and devotion that is beyond expression. The same booklet was translated into Arabic and initially serialized in the journal *Al-Ba'th Al-Islami* of Nadwatul-Ulama Lukhnow and later published in a booklet form. This booklet has been widely appreciated by the general public, and approved and praised by distinguished scholars; it also received acclaim in the modern educated circles. Prof. Chishti commented: "By writing this essay, Dr. Israr has gained a lot in terms of the blessings in the Hereafter." And Maulana Islahi prayed: "May Allah grant the writer more power in his pen so that he could write more such essays in the future." Indeed, all praise and gratitude is for Allah (SWT) alone.

In short, it was a combination of these Qur'anic Study Circles and the publication of these writings that together took the shape of a "movement" for the propagation of the Qur'anic message. This movement then entered its first organizational phase with the establishment of the Markazi Anjuman Khuddam-ul-Qur'an Lahore in 1972.

Thus, it was in early 1968 when I started in my individual capacity this humble service of *Deen*, which subsequently matured into *Da'wah Ruju' ilal-Qur'an* and the movement for learning and teaching the Divine Word. In those early days, except for Maulana Ameen Ahsan Islahi's prayers and blessings, I did not enjoy the cooperation and support of any of my past associates or senior colleagues. Rather, I actually faced the opposition from some of them, an opposition that was open in some cases and veiled in others. It was nothing but the grace and

blessing of Allah (SWT) that saved me from becoming disheartened and discouraged by this opposition, and kept me focused on my mission with a single-minded dedication.Establishment of the Markazi Anjuman Khuddam-ul-Qur'anThe fact is that I had to work extremely hard in the beginning. My multiple responsibilities included taking care of my medical practice, delivering several lectures every week in various Qur'anic study circles (as well as other general speeches), editing and publishing of *Meesaq*, and handling the diverse engagements of my publication house.[16] In short, I had so many varied and at times conflicting activities going on at the same time that they resulted in a serious breakdown of my health within two years. I would constantly have a high body temperature that would turn into fever during the evening hours.

Initially I tried to ignore this problem, but soon I had no choice but to seek medical advice. However, nothing could be diagnosed even after a very thorough medical checkup, and it was decided that I should take a break from all these activities. I left Lahore and took a vacation of 2-3 weeks for the sole purpose of recuperation. When I returned and restarted the work, however, the health problems reappeared too. Finally, due to this as well as other factors I decided to go out of the country for an extended period. There was no better place to spend 4-6 months than the Holy Lands of Mecca and Medina, so I decided to go to the Hijaz towards the end of October 1970. I spent the whole month of Ramadan of 1390 A.H.

in Medina, in the company of Maulana Abdul Ghaffar Hassan. Then, at the invitation of my younger brother Absar Ahmad I went to visit him in London (where he was working on his doctorate). I came back to Hijaz in February 1971 and that was when I was blessed with the opportunity of performing my second Hajj.

Throughout this period of time, I constantly deliberated on my future plan of action, until finally, during the blessed occasion of Hajj, I was able to make the

most important decision of my life. I decided that I will discontinue my medical practice and will spend the remainder of my life in the service of the Book of Allah (SWT) and in the struggle to make the Word of Allah (SWT) supreme. As a result, when I came back from the Holy Land and restarted the work in a more focused and enthusiastic manner, it progressed so much within a few months that I felt the need to systematize it under a proper organizational structure.

This need was further strengthened by the fact that until now I was the sole owner of the publication house that was engaged in printing the books and booklets mentioned above, and although there was no profit in this venture I always felt inhibited in promoting these publications. Moreover, certain elders pointed out that this state of affairs was less than desirable.

In this way, the idea came to mind that an organization should be established that would take over all the work of printing and publishing, so that any future earnings from the publication of books by other writers would not become any individual's personal gain but rather that of the organization. And as far as my own works were concerned, neither the organization would make any profit from their publication nor would I receive any royalty from them. I wanted this arrangement so that I could say with perfect confidence that I receive no monetary benefits from these publications. Of course, the publication of these books was not the goal in itself; rather, the objective was to make them the foundation and means for an authentic Islamic Call. And the mission of calling people towards truth is so noble that it is not even slightly compatible with the state of affairs in which the caller uses his writings or speeches as a source of personal income. The position of a *Da'ee* towards Allah (SWT) is so high that it is imperative form him to be able to declare: "I do not ask for any reward from you, for my reward is with Allah, the Lord of the Universe." I believe there is some justification for a person to receive a very small fixed remuneration from an organization or institute only to meat his essential

needs, but it is not at all proper to use one's vocal or written service to the *Deen* as a source of one's livelihood. That is why it had been a practice of our noble predecessors that they spent their most productive lives in various institutes of learning on a meager and fixed income, and did not maintain any "copyrights" over whatever they published during that period. I was already acting upon this principle in my personal capacity — and that is why the first edition of *Muslamanon par Qur'an-e-Majid kay*

Haqooq contained the statement that everyone has an open permission to print and publish this booklet —but the need was now felt that all this work be brought under one organizational set up.[17]

It was now clear that a proper organizational setup was unavoidable. It was also clear, however, that the establishment of an authentic Islamic *jama'ah* on the basis of the traditional Islamic discipline of "listening and obeying" would be premature at that point in time. Hence the idea of an association, somewhat on the pattern of "Servants of Bible Society," came to my mind. At this point, the more thought I gave to the idea of an "Anjuman Khuddam-ul-Qur'an," the more it became obvious to me how such societies and associations often turn out to be fragile like a spider's web, and how malleable they often become in the hands of some individuals. More often than not, the rules and regulations of such associations are such that they lend themselves to easy manipulation in directions that are against the wishes and intentions of their founders. There were several examples before me where the very founders of particular associations, who had invested their blood and sweat in the establishment of those organizations, were expelled from their respective association just as one throws out an unwanted piece of trash.

On the other hand, as a result of long and thorough deliberations I had also reached the conclusion that the organizational spirit of Islam did not agree with modern methods of forming a collectivity; rather, it was totally different from it. The basis of an organization in modern

times consists in its constitution, rules, and regulation to which the members give their allegiance in order to join the organization. These members then choose a President, on the basis of majority vote, who is only a constitutional head elected for a fixed period. Another institution, often called the Executive Body, is established as a buffer between the President and the general members, the purpose of which is to supervise and watch over the President. From this arrangement either a Presidential or a Parliamentary form of organization emerges in order to deal with issues of distribution of power between the President and the Executive Body, and so on. The common characteristic of all these associations is that the organizational setup grows from bottom up. In other words, the general membership, rather than the President, enjoys real importance.

In contrast, the organizational structure in Islam grows from top downwards. A certain individual, motivated by the desire to serve the *Deen* of Allah (SWT), steps forward as a *da'ee* and invites people by calling: "Who will be my helpers in Allah's way?" Who is there to come and join hands with me in order to serve the *Deen*? In response, those who join hands with this individual become his associates, and the caller becomes their natural leader; he does not need their votes to be "elected." Such a leader is not only a constitutional head but, more importantly, an *ameer* (or commander). It is this *ameer* who is ultimately responsible for providing direction and guidance to his associates and comrades. Such a leader does seek advice and opinion from his associates, not in order to fulfill their rights but in order to meet his own

need. This is such a natural organizational setup that it does not require very elaborate laws and complicated regulations. To the degree that a person agrees with the call and has trust in the *da'ee*, it is to that degree that he cooperates and collaborates with him; on the other hand, to the degree that a person loses his agreement with the call and his trust in the *da'ee*, it is to that degree that he grows alienated from the *da'ee* and becomes less and less active. And those who have total agreement with the call and

have full trust in the caller take the next step and establish a personal relationship with the *da'ee*, characterized by "listening and obeying," by doing a *bai'yah* on his hand. In this way, the caller or *da'ee* naturally becomes the nucleus of such an organization.

I decided, therefore, that although the time was not yet ripe to establish a *jama'ah* based on the authentic Islamic discipline of "listening and obeying," for the time being an association should be formed under which all the activities of *Da'wah Ruju' ilal-Qur'an* and the Movement of Learning and Teaching the Qur'an could be organized and regulated, at least in its financial aspects. I decided that the organizational structure of this association should not be like other modern associations that grow from bottom upwards. Rather, this association should be based on the same principles of the Islamic organizational spirit that I have described above. Since I had full conviction in this position, I made it known to my associates as well. Towards the end of 1971, when the idea of the establishment of an association was still in its preliminary phases, I candidly expressed my thinking on this subject on several occasions, following my Qur'anic lectures in Masjid-e-Khadzra. Later, I fully explained my position on this subject in the editorial pages of the July 1972 issue of *Meesaq* in connection with the proposed "Markazi Anjuman Khuddam-ul-Qur'an Lahore" (The Central Society of the Servants of Qur'an, Lahore).

The negative reaction that I received from the public was far from surprising in this age of democracy-worship; as expected, the idea was ridiculed and mocked. However, with the grace of Allah (SWT), not even a single person from among those cooperating with me in Lahore expressed any disagreement or opposition. Finally, towards the end of 1972, the Markazi Anjuman Khuddam-ul-Qur'an Lahore was established according to the principles outlined above, and thus it happened that this small Islamic Movement started on the basis of my Qur'anic lectures entered its first collective, organized

At that time, even though the ridicule and mockery of the general public did not bother me at all, the opposition from certain respected elders did become a significant trial for me. I informed these individuals, with utmost respect, that if they could convince me on the basis of solid arguments then I would certainly change my position; otherwise, I could not retrace my steps just on the basis of deference and respect to my seniors. In this regard, some unpleasant feelings of resentment erupted and in certain matters I had to make some readjustments. With the grace of Allah (SWT) the movement did not stop; rather on the contrary, it continued to make steady progress.[18]From Anjuman to TanzeemIn

short, I have been busy during all this time in serving the cause of Islam in one way or another. My time, capabilities, and efforts have been—and are being—fully utilized under the Anjuman Khuddam-ul-Qur'an, and I am neither disappointed nor disheartened by the results of my humble efforts. Still, throughout this time, one concern has been constantly disturbing my heart. The following questions kept presenting themselves to me: Was I fulfilling *all* of my Islamic obligations through delivering lectures and publishing books? Was I not being oblivious to my ultimate Islamic obligation, i.e., the struggle to establish Islam through a disciplined *jama'ah*? Or was it that in order to escape the more difficult and arduous path of struggling for *Iqamah Al-Deen*, I was taking refuge in the relatively easy and undemanding task of teaching, lecturing, and publishing?

I have already presented before you the full background and "genealogy" of my mindset and mental approach. In view of this background, there could be absolutely no question whatsoever of my ever becoming satisfied with the limited and partial work of teaching, lecturing, and publishing. Thus, when I explained the proposal of Anjuman Khuddam-ul-Qur'an in the editorial pages of the July 1972 issue of monthly *Meesaq*, I also wrote the following:

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It should be clear that due to his peculiar mental approach and temperament, this writer is not satisfied—and never will be—with the formation of a slack association alone. Rather, the real objective before him is the grand ideal of the struggle for the establishment of *Deen* and the supremacy of the Word of Allah (SWT)…. It is also very clear to him that this objective cannot be achieved through associations and societies, but that it is essential, in the words of a tradition of Prophet Muhammad (SAW), that a *jama'ah* be established for this purpose based on *sam'* and *ta'ah* so that it could engage in *jihad* and *hijrah*. It cannot be said for sure as to when the proper time for the establishment of such a *jama'ah* will arrive. On the other hand, as a prelude to this struggle the present writer has restricted himself at this moment to the partial task of learning and teaching the Qur'an. The proposed Anjuman should therefore be considered as an expression of this partial work. It is very clear from the mission statement of the proposed Anjuman that the "dissemination and propagation of the knowledge and wisdom of the Holy Qur'an" is not the ultimate objective in itself. Dissemination and propagation of Qur'anic wisdom is required because it is instrumental for achieving "the revitalization of faith among the Muslims in general and their intelligentsia in particular." This "revitalization of faith," in turn, is the vehicle for the achievement of the real objective, which is the bringing about of an "Islamic Renaissance" and the "ushering in, for the second time in history, the blessed era in which the true Islamic way of life reigned supreme."

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Even though from the very beginning I was fully conscious of the need for the establishment of a rigorously disciplined *jama'ah*, an acute awareness of my own weaknesses, deficiencies, and shortcomings kept me from making any progress in this respect. As described earlier, the position of a teacher and a lecturer is very different from that of a caller or *da'ee*. The duty of a teacher is over as soon as he has explained the message or after he has shown the right path. The duty of a *da'ee*, in

contrast, is much more arduous for he has to take the initiative of actually leading others on the path towards which he is inviting them. A *da'ee* must take the lead, and not only invite others to move with him but also set an example for others to follow. Obviously, this responsibility is very tough and its demands are extremely taxing. Whenever I judged myself against these high standards, I realized that I did not fulfill even the minimum requirements. Consequently, I took shelter in the safety of not taking any initiative in this path.

But recently certain events happened that eventually compelled me to reconsider my own complacency.

I had a lingering unease for quite some time that my avoidance of taking the initiative might actually be a prompting of my own *nafs* leading me towards a path of escape from my duties; there was a possibility that my own *nafs* was providing me with this rationalization or excuse so that I would evade and circumvent my obligations. Then a highly respected person, the late Haji Abdul-Wahid, brought the same issue to my attention even more forcefully. He said that I should seriously consider the possibility that my confession of personal incapacities was in reality based on a false notion engendered by Satan, who was creating this psychological hurdle only to prevent me from fulfilling my obligations.

In addition, I also realized that "innocence" in the theological sense (i.e., protection from serious errors and sins) was a characteristic of prophets and messengers only,

and that after the culmination of the institution of prophethood no human being could avoid being fallible and immune from errors. Those who believe in "Innocent Imamate" could certainly wait for the arrival of their Imam who supposedly would be free of errors and defects. All others, however, must start fulfilling their obligations while *simultaneously* taking care of their training and moral/spiritual improvement. I also realized that the axiom was true—at least partially, if not totally—that participation in a mission itself serves as the best trainer and mentor. Indeed, certain practical demands of training and moral/spiritual improvement cannot be met until one takes a plunge and actually starts taking part in the struggle, and thereby receives what is called "on-the-job-training."

I knew that this path was full of dangers and pitfalls and there were no guarantees that I would not commit similar or even greater mistakes than were committed by others before me. Indeed, it was quite possible that like many others in the past—who took the initiative of serving Islam but somehow ended up doing more harm than good—I might also end up inadvertently creating a new *fitnah*. I realized that these risks could not be taken as valid excuses for not fulfilling one's obligations. Not doing anything at all is not the proper strategy for avoiding errors. Life itself is a great challenge, and every living being has to face this challenge or must resign from life itself. In the same way, Islam and *Iman* have placed the heavy burden of numerous obligations upon the believer's shoulders; one trembles with apprehension when one truly realizes the weight of this burden. However, not attempting to fulfill those

obligations is far from being a wise option; indeed, the person who remains inactive for fear of getting involved in a *fitnah* has been described by the Qur'an as having already fallen into a *fitnah* (Al-Tawbah 9:49). Those who are unaware of the fact that there are important obligations and demands of our *Deen* besides *Salat*, *Zakat Saum*, and *Hajj* may have an excuse before Allah (SWT); but the

situation would be very different for those who had consciously understood that struggling to establish the *Deen* of Allah (SWT) was an indispensable Islamic obligation for which they would be held accountable on the Day of Judgment. Such people have no choice but to throw themselves in this struggle while hoping for Allah's support and succor and all the while praying to Him for guidance and perseverance. Short of that, the Qur'an does not provide any way for a believer to be excused from this obligation.

Meanwhile, as I was going through these thought processes, certain individuals pointed out that while I was giving elaborate lectures on the obligations we all owe to the *Deen* of Allah (SWT), I was not guiding them towards any practical means of actually fulfilling those obligations. They rightly said that there were very limited opportunities for them to participate in the kind of work that I was doing. Delivering lectures on the Qur'an was not something that everyone could do, as it required extensive training in Arabic and Qur'anic studies. They asked as to how could a person who was not able to learn Arabic or teach the Qur'an participate in this work? No doubt Prophet Muhammad (SAW) had said, "The best person amongst you is the one who learns and teaches the Qur'an," but obviously quite a large number of people cannot make this *hadith* their life mission. They further argued that while I was emphasizing that *Jihad fi-Sabeelillah* for the purpose of *Shahadah Al-Haq* was an integral part of true *Iman*, I was not guiding my audience as to exactly how they should take part in this *Jihad*. Thus, my audience would be justified in demanding to know what exactly should they do? How should they organize themselves? From where should they start their journey and under whose leadership? They said, again quite rightly, that if I do not answer these questions then instead of the audience becoming responsible before Allah (SWT), I would myself become accountable for not having shown them any practical way of discharging their obligations.

Some individuals even suggested that the great majority of my audience was not interested in taking any active steps; they said—some of them sincerely and others with a hint of sarcasm—that most of my audience attended the Qur'anic Study Circle only as a ritual or to earn *thawab*, and that if I were to ask for their participation in the active struggle for the sake of Allah (SWT), the crowd would simply fade away and vanish from the scene. I believe that these remarks were not entirely true, as there were numerous instances where individuals had succeeded in bringing about great changes in their lives after becoming associated with my Qur'anic Study Circle. Still for a while I was myself getting the impression that these Qur'anic lectures were being reduced to a mere ritual; they were becoming an end in themselves rather than a means to a higher end. In other words, some participants were gaining a kind of psychological satisfaction just by routinely attending these lectures. Indeed, it is a disturbing fact that

during their period of decline and degeneration, we Muslims have generally become very skillful at reducing the highest teachings of *Deen* into ineffective and soulless rituals. But the very thought makes me tremble with fear that if even the learning and teaching of the Qur'an could be reduced to a mere ritual, then what else is going to motivate us for action? I really shudder to imagine the possibility that people could actually "swallow" such powerful and invigorating Surahs of the Qur'an as Surah Al-Saff and Surah Al-Hadeed without moving an inch from the grooves of their set lives, and that they could go through such admonishments as are found in Surah Al-Ankabut, Surah Al-Ahzab, Surah Al-Munafiqun, and Surah Al-Tawbah—not once but several times, and not superficially but with full understanding of their implications—without revolutionizing their lives. If this would be so, then according to the final *ayah* of Surah Mursalaat: "What is it that they would believe in, even after all of this?"

In this context, the most important concern for me is that if the inaction and passivity of my audience were to

be even slightly a result of my own hesitation and indecision, then who is going to shelter me from the wrath of Allah (SWT)? Personally for me, therefore, the situation is as straightforward as this: In addition to describing the obligations of a believer, I must present a clear and practical scheme for putting those obligations into practice, as well as take the lead in treading the path that I have so far been advocating only in theory. If I cannot do that, then the only alternative open to me would be to opt for silence, and leave the work of articulating the revolutionary vision of the Qur'an to a more courageous individual who would not only deliver lectures but also lead the people from the front. In other words, my situation is such that I must choose either a full and wholehearted participation or withdraw completely. Or, in a more poetic vein, I must either *become* the song or not produce any note at all.A Personal CommitmentThus, it was under these circumstances that I have decided—putting my trust solely in the guidance and support of Allah (SWT)—that from now onwards my efforts will not be limited to the learning and teaching of the Glorious Qur'an alone; rather, I will make a concerted attempt to establish a *jama'ah* whose members would make the following pledges:

- that they would stay within the bounds of the *Shari'ah*, and be willing to choose the higher and nobler alternatives over exemptions and excuses in this regard;

- that they would observe the discipline of the *jama'ah* according to the authentic Islamic principle of "listening and obeying," and be willing and ready to obey the Ameer within the limits of *ma'ruf*;

that they would restrict their worldly needs and desires to the minimum level of sustenance, and would invest their best and maximum efforts as well as a significant

- portion of their time and material resources in the struggle for *Shahadah Al-Ha*q and *Iqamah Al-Deen*.

Personally, I ask you to bear witness that I hereby pledge my life and death to the *Deen* of Allah (SWT); I pledge that I will give my Islamic obligations an unquestionable priority over my worldly affairs, that I will spend the best and maximum of my time, energies, and capabilities—in whatever degree or measure I might possess them—to fulfill the obligation of establishing the *Deen* and making the Word of Allah (SWT) supreme, and that I dedicate myself fully to this cause.

May Allah (SWT) help me to remain firm and perseverant on this pledge. I put my trust in Allah (SWT) and towards Him do I turn in repentance and hope.The Inescapable Obligations of a MuslimAfter that, each and every individual among you must also decide about his future course of action. As far as I am concerned, if someone is willing to become a fully committed associate of mine and give me his cooperation to the utmost then that is exactly what I require; I would welcome such commitment and cooperation with open arms. If someone wants to help only partially then that is also fine with me. If someone could only offer good wishes and prayers then these are acceptable as well. And if someone just wants to remain a listener and a participant in our gatherings and meetings, then he also deserves my thanks. However, for the sake of your own interest, the following should be understood and appreciated very clearly.

The first and foremost point concerns one’s thorough understanding and heart-felt conviction regarding the obligations of the *Deen* as I have outlined before you. I do not believe that anyone who has been associated with this Qur’anic call to any appreciable extent would harbor any doubts whatsoever on this issue. As I have said earlier, the backbone of this Movement of

Learning and Teaching the Qur’an is the Selected Course of Qur’anic Studies, the central theme of which deals with the essential and indispensable prerequisites for human salvation. Through the study of this *Muntakhab Nisab*, one learns in unambiguous terms as to what one’s Islamic obligations and responsibilities are in the perspective of the Qur’an. I have lectured to explain in detail this Selected Course on numerous occasions in the city of Lahore, and I am sure that anyone who has read or listened to the full *Muntakhab Nisab* even once cannot have any misunderstandings or doubts about a believer’s obligations in Islam.

We have just gone through this Selected Course during the last three weeks. Disregarding the detailed discussions about *Iman* and *A'mal Salih* in the Qur'an, if you would just focus your attentions on the central theme that runs like a unifying thread through its various lessons, the point I am making will become as clear-cut and self-evident as daylight.

Surah Al-Asr is among the shortest Surahs in the Qur'an, yet it strongly conveys the message that faith and good deeds are not enough in themselves, and that exhortation to truth and exhortation to perseverance are also among the *indispensable* prerequisites for human salvation. Then, according to *Ayah Al-Birr* (Al-Baqara 2:177), only that concept of virtue and righteousness is true and authentic which includes the active struggle to challenge and eradicate evil. After that, the second *ruku'* of Surah Luqman shows that in addition to avoiding *Shirk*, upholding *Tawheed*, being thankful to Allah (SWT) and to the parents, believing in the Final Judgment, and being regular in *Salat*, one is also required to fulfill the duty of *amr bil-ma'ruf* and *nahi anil-munkar*. In the passage from Surah Ha-Meem Al-Sajdah, there is a forceful appeal to the duty of calling people towards Allah (SWT). According to Surah Al-Hujurat, taking part in *Jihad* in the way of Allah (SWT) and spending one's bodily and material resources for this purpose are described as essential and necessary corollaries of true *Iman*. In the last *raku'* of Surah Al-Hajj,

after the believers are asked to bow down and prostrate themselves before Allah (SWT), to worship their Lord, and to do righteous deeds, it is also demanded that they exert themselves to the utmost for the cause of Allah (SWT), the purpose of this "exertion" being *Shahadah Al-Haq*. Then in Surah Al-Saff, the believers are reminded that in order to save themselves from the severe punishment they must strive in the way of Allah (SWT) with their bodily and material resources, in addition to maintaining true faith. The same Surah describes this "striving" as a prerequisites for attaining the good pleasure of Allah (SWT), and posits that the goal of this "striving" should be the establishment of the ascendancy of *Deen* of Allah (SWT) over all systems of life. Finally, in Surah Al-Hadeed, the demands of *Deen* are summarized in two pivotal terms, i.e., *Iman* and *Infaaq*. The latter obligation (spending in Allah's path) is of course not limited to monetary spending alone but also includes the investment of bodily and mental resources. This is precisely why armed struggle or *Qitaal* immediately appears in this context, as if out of the womb of *Infaaq*. In addition, this Surah tells us that the purpose of the institution of prophethood, revelation of Scriptures, sending down of the Book and the Balance, and the creation of Iron is that Allah (SWT) wishes to see who among His servants would "help" His Messengers to the extent that they would engage in fighting for His cause. Furthermore, whether it is Surah Al-Ankabut, Surah Al-Ahzaab, Surah Al-Tawbah, or Surah Al-Hadeed, indeed all of them describe that *Nifaaq* or hypocrisy is the final outcome of trying to avoid this path and attempting to escape from one's obligations due to a fear of its difficulties and tribulations.

So tell me whether all this clear exposition still leaves any escape route open? The only possible way to avoid having to fulfill these obligations is that one should not read the Qur'an at all, or if one recites it then at least he must not comprehend its meaning; for the milestones of the Straight Path towards which the Qur'an invites and guides us are definitely those as I have already described

before you. According to the Qur'an, the end point of this Straight Path is that one would either lay down his life in the way of Allah (SWT) and would thereby achieve salvation and felicity, or would continue to wait for his turn for such sacrifice.

Keep this point deeply ingrained in your minds. The Qur'an is not a product of a created being, but it is the Word of the Creator-Lord; these are not the ideas of a human individual that are subject to change, but the firm and clear *ayaat* of the Qur'an that are both explicitly categorical and unchangeable. It is not any ordinary book, but the Revealed Word of Allah (SWT) that is clear in what it intends to communicate; it is not worded in any dead and incomprehensible language but expresses itself in lucid Arabic. Please do understand that if, after studying these portions of Qur'an, your heart testifies that the interpretations and implications I have explained are true, then it means that the Qur'an has already established a solid *hujjah* or argument. After the Qur'an has made its case, there remain only two choices: Either you become ready and willing to fulfill these obligations and thereby make the Qur'an *a witness in your favor*, or adopt a path of evading your responsibilities and thereby make the Qur'an *a witness against you*. There is no third option.

The second question is whether or not you should cooperate with me, whether or not you should become an associate and helper of mine. Obviously, if you do not have trust in my sincerity due to some justifiable reason, or you have a real apprehension or reservation concerning me, then you are not obligated to cooperate with me at all. You should, however, fully understand that even though in this case you are not obligated to cooperate with me, you are still very much obligated to discharge your Divinely ordained responsibilities; you would not be absolved of your duties just because you do not have confidence in me. If you trust another *da'ee* or leader, then join hands with him; if not, then be ready to take an initiative yourself in order to prepare and organize a group of your own.

On the other hand, if you do not have a solid reason or argument against me, then it is incumbent upon you to cooperate with me rather than set up a separate collectivity. The ultimate judge in this respect is your own heart; if your heart gives a verdict in my favor then this would be a second reason for you to join hands with me. Do remember that you could refuse to cooperate by raising an objection or accusation against me; but if this were done only out of a desire to avoid and shun your responsibilities then the situation would become quite difficult for you on the Day of Judgment.

In this respect you are completely free to express any doubts or reservations about myself without any hesitation; you are also free to ask any questions about me that may come to your mind regarding my present or past, irrespective of whether it concerns my public or private life. However, you must not form any opinion or judgment about me without giving me a chance to explain my position, for it is possible that a person could form a bad opinion about someone, yet that opinion may have no basis in reality. We have only recently studied these words in Surah Al-Hujarat:

O you who believe! Avoid too many suspicions; for suspicion in some cases is a sin… (Al-Hujurat 49:12)Some Personal ClarificationsAt this point I would like to make clear certain points about myself:

First, I do not claim to be an *alim* in the traditional sense; rather I am fully aware of the limitations of my knowledge. I have no interest in giving my opinions and verdicts in matters relating to *fiqh*; rather I confess that I do not possess this capability. My status is only that of a

modest student of the Qur'an and a humble servant of the *Deen*.

However, from the study of the Glorious Qur'an I have acquired a sense of the priorities in *Deen*; I have learned as to what is of primary importance in Islam and what is of secondary importance, what are the fundamentals and what are merely marginal details. In other words, Allah (SWT) has granted me a small share from the treasure of the *hikmah* of Islam. Prophet Muhammad (SAW) had himself alluded to this notion of priorities in matter of the *Deen* when he said to his Companion Mu'az bin Jabal (RAA):

O Mu'az! Should I tell you what is the root and

foundation of this work (i.e., Islam) and what is its topmost point or apex?

I have no hesitation in saying even this—as an expression of Allah's blessings upon me—that I am absolutely sure and confident in this regard. I know with full conviction how this *Ummah* of ours has turned the various features of the *Deen* upside down by taking marginal issues and giving them immense significance as well as taking fundamental issues and turning them into trivialities. In this way the entire concept of a believer's obligations towards *Deen* has been grossly distorted, so much so that the admonishing words of Prophet Jesus (AS) "…straining out a gnat and swallowing a camel" (Matthew 23:24) have become fully applicable to us. A significant majority of Muslims have no interest whatsoever in either the "root and foundation of this work" or in "its topmost point or apex"; instead, they have taken portions of the bark on the trunk of this tree for the entire *Deen*. Consequently, the entire subject matter of their religious discourse, arguments, debates, and research has become restricted to such trivial and insignificant issues as to whether or not one should lift up one's hands at certain

points during *Salah*, whether "Ameen" should be said silently or in a loud voice, whether the correct number of *rak'aat* in *Taraveeh* prayers is eight or twenty, and so on. Based on my understanding of the Qur'an, I know with clear insight and full certainty that the only way to improve our condition is by way of setting our priorities right; in other words, we must regain the correct sense of proportion in matters of the *Deen*. I suggest that you follow any school of jurisprudence of *Ahl Al-Sunnah* as far as matters relating to the details of *Shari'ah* are concerned, and to refer to your own scholars in all *fiqhi* matters. At the same time, I would encourage you to inculcate open-mindedness and tolerance in your hearts for the followers of other schools of jurisprudence and not to burden yourselves with concerns about petty differences and disagreements. However, if you have questions or reservations about the "root and foundation of this work" as well as "its topmost point or apex," then do give me a chance to clarify and explain. After that, if your heart becomes satisfied with my explanation then accept it; if not, you are free to reject it.

Second, I am fully aware of my own shortcomings and weaknesses in matters of action and practice, and as such I do not claim to possess a purified soul. Indeed, as I have described in detail earlier, it was my cognizance of personal deficiencies that had so far prevented me from taking the lead in this path, and now that I have finally dared to take this step I am doing so only by depending on Allah's guidance and blessing:

Oh Allah! Bestow upon my soul its guidance and its purity, for you are the best of purifiers.

I am conscious of many of my own faults, and I would try my best to correct them; furthermore, I would be grateful to anyone who would alert me to my other faults

that are unknown to me at this point, and—Insha Allah—I will try to reform myself concerning them as well.

Third, I have a past that I am not at all willing to disown or reject. I simply do not feel guilty or regretful about the days I spent in Islami Jami'yat-e-Talaba or in Jama'at-e-Islami. On the contrary, I am completely satisfied that whatever time I spent serving these organizations was not wasted, and whatever energies and capabilities I invested in them were in no way lost. This is because I participated in that struggle with sincerity of intent and only with the spirit of serving the *Deen*. As such, my reward with Allah (SWT) is reserved. I was there for the sake of Allah (SWT) and I left for His sake too; I did not resign on account of any personal complaint or resentment. This is precisely why I have disclosed my entire past this evening, and in doing so I have not tried to hide anything knowingly. Even then, I would ask anyone who has the intention or desire to join hands with me to read my book *Tahreek-e-Jama'at-e-Islami: Aik Tahqeeqi Muta'liah* as well as *Tareekh-e-Jama'at-e-Islami ka Aik Gumshudah Baab.* This is

important so that you would know these details of my past life before becoming my associates, and so that you would not become perturbed upon learning them at a later time. If you have any question-marks hanging in your mind even after reading these works, then do ask me; I want you to join hands with me only after achieving full satisfaction and approval of heart.“Who will be My Helpers in the Way of Allah? (SWT)”In order to understand my future plan of action, I request that you study very closely my booklet *Islam ki Nish’at-e-Sania: Karney ka Asal Kam*. Secondly, do study the documents relating to the effort to establish Tanzeem-e-Islami that was made in 1967; these documents include Tanzeem-e-Islami’s Founding Resolution and its explanation, as well as the addresses by Maulana Ameen Ahsan Islahi and Maulana Abdul Ghaffar Hassan. The Founding Resolution and its explanation were actually written by me, and were adopted after minor

modifications. I am as convinced today of the ideas expressed in them as I was at the time of their writing.[19]

As far as details of my future plan of action are concerned, I prefer not to discuss them at this stage. These details would depend solely upon the number of people who decide to join hands with me, and how much energies, resources, and capabilities could be pooled for this purpose.

I conclude my presentation by asking the question: **“Who will be my helper in the way of Allah?”** I do not, however, require any response from you right away. If I wanted to make you raise your hands on the basis of a short-lived emotional appeal, perhaps I could have made you do that at this moment. But this is not my objective. Whoever decides to become my associate must take that decision with full and conscious awareness of its implications; he must make that decision with an agreement between his heart and intellect; and when he does join hands with me, he should do so without any reservations or qualms -- unconditionally and wholeheartedly! As they say in Persian:

The road to the beloved’s door is fraught with dangers

To become mad with passion is the foremost demand of this path.

Endnotes It is interesting to note here that after going through Baang-e-Dara in the fifth grade with only partial understanding, I managed to borrow Baal-e-Jibreel (Gabriel’s Wing) and Zarb-e-Kaleem (The Blow of Moses) from a gentleman in Hissar while I was in the sixth grade and read these two as well. Later, I was also able to acquire all three of Iqbal’s Urdu anthologies published after Bang-e-Dara — that is, Baal-e-Jibreel, Zarb-e-Kaleem, and Armaghan-e-Hijaz (The Gift from Hijaz) — from my elder brother on the basis of a subtle excuse, thereby going through all of Allama Iqbal’s Urdu poetry at a young age. There is an interesting story behind the borrowing of Baal-e-Jibreel and Zarb-e-Kaleem. I

had heard that Khan Azizuddin Hamzai, one of the famous advocates in Hissar, had a complete set of Iqbal's books in his personal library, so I went to see him along with my father. I remember very clearly that he was quite perplexed at my request, neither wanting to refuse nor willing to part with his books. After some deliberation, he found a way out and asked me to explain the meaning of Iqbal's following couplets:

He said if I could explain the meaning of the above couplets I would be entitled to borrow the books.

When I did explain their meaning to him, he was astonished but agreed to lend the books. (This gentleman passed away in Multan only few years ago.)

1. Both of these individuals are no longer with us.

2. The story of how I borrowed Maulana Azad's books is also quite interesting. Ghulam Mohammad Bhatti, an instructor at Hissar's industrial school, had a passion for collecting books. He was himself an expert bookbinder and had a great collection of excellent and beautifully bound books. When I asked him to lend me some books by Maulana Azad, he found himself in a dilemma, just like Khan Azizuddin Hamzai. In order to get rid of me, he also tried the same trick, i.e., he opened *Majmu'ah-e-Mazameen-e-Al-Hilal* at random and asked me the meaning of a Persian couplet quoted by Azad. At first I was a little hesitant as I had never studied Persian, but then I realized that the couplet contained words that were also used in Urdu and which only appeared to have been arranged in a different order. I just made a guess about the meaning of the couplet and got the book from him.

3. It was a great blessing of Allah (SWT) that my entire academic career remained free of any blemish of "failure," even though the remarkable grades I had received during my primary, middle, and high school education, as well as in my FSc and the first year of MBBS, could not be maintained thereafter.

I delivered a lecture in 1953, on the occasion of the Islami Jamiy'at-e-Talabahh's Annual Convention, the subject of which was the initial *ayaat* of the last *ruku'* of Surah Aal-Imran. I was reminded of this lecture almost 20 years later during a trip to Karachi. In 1972, I was traveling in a train when the

1. topic of learning and teaching the Qur'an came up during a casual conversation with a fellow passenger. He said in a very appreciative tone: "Sir! I once listened to a *Dars* of the Holy Qur'an in 1953, and I could feel its sweetness even today." When I questioned him further, it turned out that he was referring to my own lecture. I did not consider it proper to introduce myself, and therefore dropped the subject. Similarly, many people still mention with admiration the lectures I delivered during the Training Camp of the Islami Jami'yat-e-Talabah held in Multan in 1954. My Qur'anic lectures in that Training Camp were based on portions of the Holy Qur'an that were originally selected and taught by Maulana Ameen Ahsan Islahi in 1951-52, as mentioned earlier.

2. During this time I developed a clear understanding of the fundamental call of the *Deen* of Allah (SWT) and the obligations Muslims owe to their *Deen*. Instead of trying to prove this point by debating about it, I would like to quote only a few excerpts from some of my writings that belong to that period, so that the readers may not think that these thoughts came to me at a later date. (These writings are included in the appendix to this booklet.)

3. This has recently been published in a book form, entitled *Tareekh-e-Jama'at-e-Islami ka Aik Gumshudah Baab* (or "A Forgotten Chapter in the History of Jama'at-e-Islami") by Markazi Anjuman Khuddam-ul-Qur'an Lahore.

4. The application for membership and the resignation are both included in the above-mentioned book.

Maulana Muhammad Manzoor Nau'mani, editor of *Al-Furqan*, Lucknow (India), remarked that "…the book is very good, and the act of withholding it for ten years is especially commendable and

1. exemplary." Cf., letter written to Maulana Ameen Ahsan Islahi, published in the monthly *Meesaq*, November 1966.

2. Had my intention been to malign or slander the Jama'at, I would have published this book immediately after my resignation. On the other contrary, not even the news of my resignation was published in newspapers at that time.

3. This Resolution and its interpretation are now included in the booklet *Ta'aruf-e-Tanzeem-e-Islami*.

4. Maulana Ameen Ahsan Islahi eventually completed his *tafseer* in nine volumes. The first two volumes of *Tadabbur-e-Qur'an* were initially published by Darul-Isha'til-Islamiah, and the third and fourth volumes by the Markazi Anjuman Khuddam-ul-Qur'an Lahore. This arrangement

lasted till 1982, when Maulana Islahi chose a different publisher; for details, cf., *Da'wat Ruju' ilal-Qur'an ka Manzar-o-Pasmanzar*, pp. 179-182. (Editor)

5. Maulana Abdul Majid Daryabadi, editor of *Sidq-e-Jadeed*, Luknow, wrote the following in his review of the first volume of *Tadabbur-e-Qur'an*: "One is struck by the outward elegance of this book even before one appreciates its inner beauty. I do not recall having seen a more beautifully published Qur'anic *tafseer*; the book is unique and unparalleled with respect to the quality of paper, calligraphic script, printing, and binding." And I myself wrote: "…after the completion of a job, the question that is asked is not how long did it take, but how beautifully was it done? I am grateful to Allah (SWT) that although the publication of this book took quite some time, its calligraphic script, printing, and binding all turned out to be excellent. Even the writing of this book would not have been as great an achievement for Maulana Islahi as the publication of this book is for me."

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1. I had realized an urgent need for a monthly magazine right after the publication of *Tahreek Jama'at-e-Islami*. With some struggle, I received an official approval to publish a magazine by the name of *Al-Risalah*. But when Maulana Islahi learned about this, he insisted that I should revive *Meesaq* instead of starting a new magazine. Therefore I let go of the declaration and restarted *Meesaq*. It was a coincident that Maulana Waheeduddin Khan was visiting Lahore from Delhi at that time; he liked the title *Al-Risalah* so much that he adopted this name for his own journal.

2. Maulana Abdul Majid Dariyabadi wrote the following in *Sidq-e-Jaeed*, February 7, 1969, while commenting upon my paper and the supporting article by Prof. Yusuf Saleem Chishti: "Both articles have been serialized in the monthly *Meesaq*, and their subject is clear from the titles. Both are thought provoking, and represent sincerity and passion on the one hand and wisdom and attention to detail on the other. The diagnosis of the disease and the suggested course of action for its cure have been very well thought out. The approach in diagnosing and treating is not that of novices and quacks. This journal should be read by all educated individuals…."

3. In retrospect, I am amazed that I used to be solely responsible for editing, composing, printing, binding, and dispatch of *Meesaq* in 1969, when it consisted of eighty pages every month.

The late Professor Mohammad Ibrahim (may Allah rest his soul in peace) translated this booklet into English without any compensation. The English translation also contains the statement that there are no copyrights on this booklet and that anyone can publish it. Later, the late Professor Basheer Ahmad (may Allah rest his soul in peace) translated

1. this booklet into Persian on his own and without any re-numeration.

2. At this point in the speech, a brief overview of the activities (1972-1974) by the Markazi Anjuman Khuddam-ul-Qur'an Lahore was presented. This overview has been eliminated from the present text because it now forms part of the Urdu book *Da'wat Ruju' ilal-Qur'an ka Manzar-o-Pasmanzar*.

3. All of this could be found in the booklet *Ta'aruf-e-Tanzeem-e-Islami*.

Appendix I

Beginning of My Conscious Association with the Islamic Movement

(1950–1954)

I was a student at Government College Lahore between 1947 and 1949. During that time I stayed at the residence of one of my relatives in Krishan Nagar (a neighborhood of Lahore). Since I did not live at the college dorm, my active association remained with the *Halqa-e-Hamdardan-e-Jama'at-e-Islami* (or "The Circle of the Supporters and Sympathizers of Jama'at-e-Islami") rather than with Islami Jami'yat-e-Talabah. Even though I worked as a sincere and diligent worker during those two years, I did so without full and conscious understanding of what the Islamic movement was all about. After I enrolled in King Edward Medical College in Lahore towards the end of 1949 and moved in the dorm, I came in closer contact with Islami Jami'yat-e-Talabah. I joined the Jami'yat in 1950, the year that marks the beginning of my fully conscious and deliberate association with the Islamic movement. The excerpts given in this appendix are evidence of the early impressions that the call of the Islamic movement made on my mind, and also demonstrate my initial conception of the religious obligations of a believer, a conception regarding which I have had no doubt or second thoughts since that time.

-(1)-

The following excerpt is taken from a speech delivered by the present writer during a gathering of Islami Jami'yat-e-Talaba, subsequently published in the weekly Azm, November 15, 1950.

After observing my own situation as well as that of some of my close friends, I have reached the conclusion that our fundamental problem is the following: We never did understand the basic call of the Islamic Movement. At first sight this claim may sound incorrect to you, but this is indeed the case.…

…In fact, we tend to assume that we have understood what it means to be a Muslim only after reading a few books, and we tend to assume that we have comprehended the call of the Islamic Movement after attending few of its gatherings. The idea of our "obligation" that we form in our minds after achieving this limited comprehension is such that after distributing a few pamphlets and after taking part in a few discussions for our intellectual pleasure, we feel that we have fulfilled our role in this Movement.

I have myself taken part in this student movement under the aegis of which we are gathered here today, and I have myself worked with pro-Islam elements outside the college. I did not, however, participate because the clear concept of worshipping and obeying Allah (SWT) was ingrained in my mind, or because I was motivated by the urge to gain the good pleasure of Allah (SWT); rather it was only because I was impressed by the writings of some of the individuals who were leading the Islamic Movement, and I had accordingly assumed that whatever they were saying must be true. Or, I was addicted to listening to the speeches of certain individuals, so that whenever anyone would tell me that such and such was giving a talk, I would go and attend the lecture. Thus, whenever I would see the workers of this Movement distributing books and pamphlets, I would also join them

and distribute a few publications; and I would defend this Movement against its opponents in heated debates. I was under the assumption that by doing all this, I was fulfilling my duty….

After the analysis of my associates, and my own mind, the following suggestions were given:

....The most important point to understand is the call of this Movement, which is the same call as that given by the Prophets in the past: recognize and accept Allah (SWT) as your Sovereign and Lord; accept His guidance and surrender your entire life to His obedience... Establish the correct relationship between yourself and Allah (SWT). This is precisely the compass that will set your life on the right path. And make the gaining of the good pleasure of Allah (SWT) the objective of your life. This is the force that will keep you on the right path even in this dark environment and in spite of great hardships.
-(2)-The following excerpt is taken from a speech delivered by the present writer on November 2, 1951, on the occasion of the 4th Annual Convention of the Islami Jami'yat-e-Talaba, held in YMCA Hall, Lahore. This session was presided by Maulana Ameen Ahsan Islahi. This speech later became an integral part of the literature of Jami'yat-e-Talaba under the title of "Our Call and Methodology."

.... It is clear from the passage that I just read to you that the way of life that we have adopted in order to gain the good pleasure of Allah (SWT) is based on three points, viz., the *Ibadah* of Allah (SWT), *Shahadah Al-Haq*, and *Iqamah Al-Deen*. Now I will briefly explain what we mean by these three points.

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Our understanding of *Ibadah* is that we should accept Allah (SWT) as our Owner, Sovereign, and Master, and that we should dedicate our entire lives to His obedience by surrendering our own freedom to Him. This obedience to Allah (SWT) should be such that nobody and nothing—whether it is our own desires, our relatives, our family customs, our society or state, indeed our whole environment—could make us go against the Will of Allah (SWT). We should honor only His Commandments. We should do whatever is His Will, and we should reject whatever is against His Will. In short, our life should be exclusively subservient to His dictates. Moreover, this obedience to Allah (SWT) should not be limited to only one or even certain aspects of our lives, but it should cover all aspects and all spheres. This attitude determines and shapes our existence in a certain way and sets it along a path that is straight, without any crookedness, without any abnormal extremes. This is a path that leads not only to success in this life but also to eternal salvation and felicity in the Hereafter.

Our understanding of *Shahadah Al-Haq* is this: After adopting an attitude of obedience to Allah (SWT) as a way of life, we should represent and embody the *Deen* both individually and collectively so that we could stand as witnesses to the truth of this *Deen* over all of humanity. We are obligated to convey and deliver the guidance of Allah (SWT) to others, a guidance that has come to us from Prophet Muhammad (SAW). In order to fulfill this obligation, we must invite and persuade others to accept obedience to Allah (SWT) and to adopt His *Deen*; at the same time, we should lead our lives in a way that represents and embodies the acceptance and adoption of Allah's *Deen*.

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Our understanding of *Iqamah Al-Deen* is that we must endeavor to establish in our collective lives the same *Deen* that we have chosen for our individual lives, that we spread the guidance of Allah (SWT) throughout the world, that we exalt the Word of Allah (SWT) over all other words, and that we make this *Deen* the way of life for the whole world. The goal of this struggle is that the sovereignty and kingdom of the whole world belongs to Allah (SWT) alone, that no one on the surface of the earth is obeyed except Him, and that no way of life is followed other than the way of Allah (SWT). This understanding focuses our struggle upon a central point and determines its direction; through this understanding, we realize the goal and ideal of our lives, an ideal that provides us with a destination towards which we may advance our caravan.-(3)-*The following excerpt is taken from a lengthy essay written in January 1954 in order to explain the obligations of students in the Islamic Movement. This essay was never published anywhere, although some of its excerpts were included in the introduction to* Tahreek-e-Jama'at-e-Islami: Aik Tahqeeqi Muta'liah. *The writer still possesses the original manuscript of this essay.*

Whatever I have understood in this respect, and upon which my own practice is based, is that in principle our *Deen* demands exactly the same things from students as it demands from other individuals. In terms of religious obligations, there is no distinction or difference between students and non-students. There is only distinction in *Deen*, and that is the division between awareness and unawareness. There is no accountability for any religious

obligation unless a person reaches the age of conscious awareness; after reaching the age of conscious awareness, when a person develops the capacity of independent thinking, he becomes responsible for all the obligations that are imposed by Islam. These obligations are the same for all believers. In this respect, there is no difference in responsibility due someone's special profession or engagement. Every believer, whether he has adopted a profession or is still busy in preparing for one, is obligated to fulfill his duties to the extent of his capacity.

What are these obligations? Briefly, there are two obligations:

(1) First, a human being after recognizing his Real Lord should surrender his life to Him, and should resign from his freedom in favor of obedience to Allah (SWT). This is the call for *Ibadah* to Allah (SWT) that was given by all the prophets and that has been determined by Allah (SWT) as the only desired mode of action for humans and jinns

In case an Islamic State is in existence and is fulfilling at a collective level the responsibility of witnessing the Truth and representing Islam to the world, then the duties of *Iqamah Al-De*en and *Shahadah Al-Haq* do not apply to Muslims in their individual capacity. In this case, individual Muslims are only required to obey Allah (SWT), to avoid evil deeds, and to perform virtuous acts.

(2) If the *Deen* of Allah (SWT) is not established in practice and if the forces of evil and transgression (*Taghut*) are in power, then every individual who claims to have *Iman* is obligated to witness the Truth and struggle to establish the *Deen*, in addition to the duty of obeying Allah (SWT) in one's individual capacity. This second obligation

must be discharged with all its prerequisites; in case it is not discharged, the individual's obedience to Allah (SWT) and the virtuous deeds that he may perform will have no worth. Under the circumstances in which the *Deen* of Allah (SWT) is not established, witnessing the Truth and struggling to establish the *Deen* is not an additional or supererogatory good deed but in fact constitutes a fundamental obligation that has to be carried out as an expression and testimony of one's *Iman*. This is such a fundamental obligation that one's very *Iman* is not credible unless one carries out this duty. In case this duty remains

unfulfilled, all other acts of obedience and virtues, as well as one's piety and spiritual enlightenment, will remain worthless.

Among the prerequisites of *Iqamah Al-Deen* and *Shahadah Al-Haq*, the first and foremost is one's participation in an organized collectivity or *jama'ah*. It is incumbent upon every individual believer to fulfill this duty in the form of a collective struggle. If there is already such a group in existence, one should join it; if one doesn't find such a group then one should rise himself, call people to this duty, and thereby establish a *jama'ah* that could discharge the duties of *Iqamah Al-Deen* and *Shahadah Al-Haq*.

It is quite apparent that we are living in a period where *Taghut* is dominant, the *Deen* of Allah (SWT) is not established, and an Islamic State does not exist anywhere. Under these circumstances, anyone among the Muslims who attains to the age of conscious awareness, and any individual among non-Muslims whom Allah (SWT) blesses with the capacity to accept the Truth, will have only one option—to dedicate his life for the *Ibadah* of Allah (SWT) and, except for a small portion utilized for sustenance,

invest the greater part of his energies and capabilities in the collective struggle for *Shahadah Al-Haq* and *Iqamah Al-Deen.*

Once a person reaches the age of conscious awareness, this duty toward the *Deen* becomes obligatory upon him as soon as he understands and realizes the demands of the *Deen* and of *Iman*. Regardless of whether he is a student or has well passed that stage of his life, he has only one option and that is to start working to fulfill these obligations. Being a student is no excuse for not performing any one of these obligations, and there is no basis for this kind of differentiation in *Deen*.

Following these words, the present writer quoted in that essay some excerpts from the writings of two top leaders of Jama'at-e-Islam, as given below. The first excerpt is taken from Shahadat-e-Haq by Maulana Abul A'la Maududi, and the second from Da'wat-e-Deen aur iska Tareeq-e-Kar by Maulana Ameen Ahsan Islahi.

(A) First of all we remind Muslims of their obligations and tell them in clear words what Islam is, what are its demands, what does it mean to be a Muslim, and what are the responsibilities that go with being a Muslim? Then we tell those who understand these points that all of the obligations of Islam cannot be fulfilled individually, and that a collective effort is needed…. In order to establish the entire *Deen* and to fulfill its act of witnessing properly, it is essential that all those who are aware of the responsibilities of being a Muslim and have the will to perform them should unite and try to practically establish the *Deen* in an organized manner; they must strive to call humanity towards the *Deen* and must remove the resistances and hurdles that they may find in the way

of establishing the *Deen* and of calling people towards it. This is why collectivity and organization are essential in the *Deen*; the correct sequence in the *Deen* is that there should be an organized collectivity first and only after that there should be a struggle for the cause of Allah (SWT). This is also why life without *jama'ah* has been called a life of *jahiliyyah* and separating oneself from the *jama'ah* has been described as being equivalent to severing one's relationship with Islam itself. A reference has just been made to a hadith in which the Prophet (SAW) said:

I command you to observe five things; Allah has ordered them to me. These are: organization, listening, obeying, *Hijrah*, and *Jihad* for the sake of Allah. The one who separates himself from the *jama'ah* even by a distance of an arm's length has removed the rope of Islam from his neck, until he returns back to the *jama'ah*. And whosoever calls people towards *jahiliyyah* (i.e., separation and divergence) will go to Hell.

The Companions (RAA) asked: Oh Prophet (SAW)! Even if that person keeps fast and offer *Salat*? The Prophet (SAW) replied: Yes! Even though he offers *Salat* and keeps fast and claims to be a Muslim.

This hadith proves three points:

(i). In order to work for the *Deen*, the correct sequence is to have the *jama'ah* first, whose organization should be such that everyone listens to a leader and obeys him; then, depending upon the circumstances, *Hijrah* and *Jihad* should be performed.

(ii). Separating oneself from the *jama'ah* is like leaving Islam, as it indicates that the person is reverting to the pre-Islamic period of *jahiliyyah* when nobody listened to anyone else.

(iii). Most of the demands and goals of Islam could be fulfilled only through a collective struggle; that is why the Prophet (SAW) declared that the one who separates himself from the *jama'ah* is like one who has left Islam, even if he performs *Salat* and observes fasts and claims to be Muslim. The saying of Umar (RAA) that "There is no Islam without a *jama'ah*" is the elaboration of this very concept.

(*Shahadat-e-Haq* by Maulana Abul A'la Maududi; pp.24-26.)

(B) This indicates that the real motivation for *Da'wah* is the consciousness of this great obligation that has been imposed by Allah (SWT) on Muslims; what needs to be kept in mind as the objective and goal of this *Da'wah* is that the Order of Calling Humanity towards Virtue could be established once again so that humanity could be guided towards the *Deen* and the veracity of the *Deen* could be established. So

long as this Order of Calling Humanity towards Virtue is not established, the highest and the most important objective for every Muslim should be that he should do whatever he could to achieve establish this Order. His sleeping and waking, his eating and drinking,

his living and dying, everything should be for the sake of this goal. In the absence of this struggle, the Muslims' existence is against the Will of Allah (SWT), and they would not be able to find an excuse before Allah (SWT) for failing in this duty.

(*Daw'at-e-Deen aur iska Tareeq-e-Kar* by Maulana Ameen Ahsan Islahi; p. 32).

"....In case we succeed in this struggle then that is what we desire; and if we do not succeed, then we should remember that the path of truth among all paths is such that there is no question of failure in it. The first step on this path is the destination itself, and so is the final step; there is no possibility of disappointment in this realm. We have to believe and make a firm resolve to tread this path; if we get a fast moving vehicle then we shall travel on it, otherwise we would travel on a slow moving one. If we do not even get a slow moving vehicle then we would walk on our own two feet; if we lose our feet as well then we would at least continue to look towards our destination with longing. If we lose our eyesight then we would still have the heart whose sight nobody could snatch away, provided *Iman* is present…."

(*Da'wat-e-Islami aur iskey Mutalbaat* by Maulana Ameen Ahsan Islahi)

Appendix II

Chronology of Events

1837 Birth of Altaf Hussain Hali

1857 War of Independence; Full Establishment of British Colonial Rule

1863 Birth of Hameeduddin Farahi

1877 Birth of Muhammad Iqbal in Sialkot

1888 Birth of Abul Kalam Azad in Makkah

1903 Birth of Sayyid Abul A‘la Maududi in Aurangabad (Hyderabad)

1904 Birth of Ameen Ahsan Islahi

1906 All India Muslim League founded in Dhaka

1913 Hizbullah founded by Abul Kalam Azad

1924 Ottoman Caliphate Abolished

1924 Publication of *Baang-e-Dara*, Muhammad Iqbal’s first anthology of Urdu poetry

1930 Demand for a separate Muslim homeland presented by Muhammad Iqbal in Allahabad

1930 Maulana Hameeduddin Farahi passed away

1932 Birth of Dr. Israr Ahmad in Hisar (East Punjab)

1938 Allama Muhammad Iqbal passed away

1941 Jama‘at-e-Islami founded by Sayyid Abul A‘a Maududi

1947 Pakistan appeared on the world map; Dr. Israr Ahmad migrated from East to West Punjab

1950 Dr. Israr Ahmad joined Islami Jami’yat-e-Talabah

1956 Dr. Israr Ahmad joined Jama‘at-e-Islami

1957-58 Crisis in Jama‘at-e-Islami; Dr. Israr Ahmad resigned with 70 -- 80 other members

1958 Maulana Abul Kalam Azad passed away

1959 Amin Ahsan Islahi founded monthly *Meesaq*

1962 Dr. Israr Ahmad moved to Karachi and joined for a short while his brother's construction business; completed masters in Islamic Studies from the University of Karachi

1965 Dr. Israr Ahmad returned to Sahiwal; death of his father; moved to Lahore

1966 Dr. Israr Ahmad restarted monthly *Meesaq*; started teaching the Qur'an in various study circles; published *Tareekh-e-Jama'at-e-Islami: Aik Tahqiqi Mutli'ah*; attempts began by former members of Jama'at-e-Islami to establish a new organization called "Tanzeem-e-Islami" under the leadership of Amin Ahsan Islahi

1967 *Islam ki Nish'at-e-Thaniah: Karney ka Asal Kam* was published in *Meesaq*; the project of "Tanzeem-e-Islami" was abandoned before its formal establishment; Dr. Israr Ahmad decided to take the lead on his own; his Qur'anic study circles continued to flourish

1968 Dr. Israr Ahmad delivered lectures on *Muslamanon par Qur'an-e-Majeed kay Huqooq*

1971 Dr. Israr Ahmad performed Hajj; decided to abandon his medical practice and dedicate himself full-time for the cause of Islam

1972 Markazi Anjuman Khuddam-ul-Qur'an Lahore was established

1974 Dr. Israr Ahmad announced his decision to establish "Tanzeem-e-Islami"

1975 Tanzeem-e-Islami was established

1977 *Baiy'ah* adopted as basis for membership in Tanzeem-e-Islami

1979 Sayyid Abul A'la Maududi passed away

1997 Ameen Ahsan Islahi passed away