

Life After the Cult

By Shahid Kamal Ahmad, former Ahmadi, March 2005

Three months ago I left *Ahmadiyyat* and reverted to Islam.

I began writing a document, the notes for which I had compiled during Ramadan 2004. The motives behind "A Fracture in Belief" were to:

- Highlight my thinking process behind leaving *Ahmadiyyat*
- Describe the circumstances in which I left
- Dispel doubts about why I left
- Encourage others to do the same
- Share my journey in the hope of helping others

"A Fracture In Belief" is about half-way complete. I have shown early drafts of it to a handful of people and it has been met with a favourable response thus far.

Fortunately/unfortunately, depending on your perspective, I have become sidetracked by my regular postings on www.ahmedi.org, my posts to my Cough Remedy blog, the odd letter to a friend and msn/email correspondence with various lovely people. I have also started to learn things that I should have learned years before.

Some Ahmadis are very sensitive about *Ahmadiyyat* being referred to as a cult. The very fact that people need a document like this should dispel those doubts. After all, if it were not a cult, what need for this message?

One of the sections in "A Fracture in Belief" is called "Life After the Cult". It is a "survival guide" if you like - many Ahmadis are terrified of what will happen if they should leave. Not necessarily fearful of their physical safety *per se*, though it's easier in the West than in Rabwah I'd imagine, but a gnawing fear in general of the unknown. I know I felt like this a little, before I made the decision, then everything was just fine!

They have some difficult and also some easy questions. I'm still working on that section, but in order to help those who are thinking of leaving, or have recently left and don't have the benefit of a guide, I'd like to list ten points in summary form as I feel it might be of some benefit to those right on the edge needing that gentle nudge.

1. I'm scared. What do I do?

Pray. Pray. Pray some more. Give your will over to Allah SWT. Make *salah* a cornerstone of your life. If you miss a prayer, make it up in the day, or very soon after!

Make a ***firm pact*** with yourself that you will never miss a prayer again so long as you live. In your first *sajdah* as a pure Muslim, give thanks to Allah SWT and cry tears of gratitude. Stay down there for ages (unless you have blood pressure or arthritis or whatever - do seek medical advice and don't sue me etc.).

The Allah SWT who gave you *hidayah*, will help you better than any human being. You are afraid. That's natural. You have possibly known *jama'at Ahmadiyya* all your life and know nothing else.

Perhaps you think all Muslims out there are really jihad-crazed-messiah-waiters with big scary beards or Muslimah are hardcore-hijabis-with-attitude. Nothing could be farther from the truth!

It's natural to fear the unknown. Let go. Islam is your *natural* state. Continue to live your life either in a state of *sabr* or *shukr*. Expect trials. They will pass. Expect joy. It too, will pass.

When you are really a Muslim in your heart; when doubt has been washed away; when you realise just how misguided you were before and how entranced by innovation and distraction you had allowed yourself to become – and in that realisation, awakening to the purity and beauty of pure submission – your heart filled with undiluted love for RasulAllah SAW, humanity's final prophet, then your fear will melt along with your doubts. *Insha'Allah!*

2. How do I officially become Muslim? Is there some Muslim Worldwide Bai'at system? Do I pay Chanda?

You take a full bath. You say the *shahadah* with full conviction and awareness. I recommend you do this before *Fajr* on a *Jumu'ah*. It is a blessed time! That's it. You are Muslim. Now you must live it.

Of course, Ahmadis are deluded into believing they are Muslims and will be utterly bemused at this fuss I'm making about becoming Muslim. First, this discussion is for another time and place. Second, you'll understand when you do it. You will feel like a burden has been taken off you and your soul will feel a lightness like never before.

Ahmadis call Islam a "dead and Satanic" religion. I'm here to tell you, from the other side, that Islam is alive, Islam is beautiful, and it is still the religion of Allah SWT and His Messenger SAW.

There is no worldwide bai'at system. And you no longer have to pay *chanda*, it has no basis in Islam. You pay *Zakah* when it falls due, and you give *Sadaqah* out of what you can comfortably afford. Allah SWT wishes no hardship on you, though you might well be tried with it from time to time.

Allah SWT does ask us to spend in His way, for which we will be rewarded, but *chanda* is not His Way. *Sadaqah* and *Zakah* are.

The Prophet said, "Giving charity is obligatory upon each Muslim." It was asked, "What do you say of him who does not find (the means) to do so?" He said, "Let him do manual work, thus doing benefit to himself and give charity." It was asked, "What about one who does not have (the means) to do so?" He said, "Then let him assist the needy, the aggrieved." It was asked, "What do you say of one who cannot even do this?" He said, "Then he should enjoin what is reputable or what is good." He asked, "What if he cannot do that?" He (the Prophet) said, "He should then abstain from evil, for verily that is charity on his behalf."

(Reported by Muslim)

You will soon discover just how beautiful a concept charity in Islam really is. You will not get unbearable office-bearers phoning you up, embarrassing you with requests for money for a multitude of funds. You will feel more inclined to give when you do not feel the pressure of someone asking. Charity in Islam is about *Zakah* and *Sadaqah*. No more, no less.

3. What about the *KhatmeNubuwwat* people? Don't you have to denounce *Ahmadiyyat* through them?

No. I did, but it's not for everyone. It *was* right for me.

Especially *Muslimah* - it's not easy for you. The world still doesn't take care of women the way it should. The politics of why I re-iterated my *shahadah* in public, through *KhatmeNubuwwat*, is a private issue funnily enough. I might or might not discuss it in "A Fracture in Belief".

However, if you're strong, if you have no fear, if you want to put a stake in the ground, there is no more public, consistent, powerful and *worldwide* way of declaring that you are out of the fold of *Ahmadiyyat* and into the fold of Islam. Write to me on this matter if you wish - I will be happy to answer any questions.

Personally, I like Sohail Bawa at KhatmeNubuwwat Academy at Upton Park, London - a lot. He has been there for me, he has supported me and given me all the books and literature I could ever want. He has shown courtesy, hospitality, brotherhood and love. He has asked for nothing in return. I thought he would be this crazy Mullah type. He was anything but. There is a band of brotherhood there, if you'll pardon the expression, that is simply indescribable, but which I only find with Muslims. A lot of Muslims from all around the world have been hugely supportive. If and when you leave, you will *insha'Allah*, if you reach out, find the same warm welcome.

You don't have to go down that route. It's up to you. I would advise you to do *something* though. Write your intent in a letter. Send it to the current leader of the movement: you'll recognise him, he is the one wearing the regal outfit, protected by a huge entourage and will invariably be a descendant of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad Sahib, and copy your local president.

If you don't feel you have the strength to do even that, say if you're young, or a *Muslimah*, or vulnerable, then write a letter to yourself, post it and leave it unopened when you receive it. It constitutes solid proof that you were not "kicked out of *jama'at*".

You should feel strong when you leave. If you **truly** desire to seek the pleasure of Allah SWT over the love of this world, then you will not have any fear. *Insha'Allah*.

4. What about my friends and family?

'Of no profit to you will be your relatives and your children on the Day of Judgement: He will judge between you: For Allah sees well all that ye do'

(The Noble Qur'an 60:3)

Allah SWT has spoken. What do you want me to say?

Ok, ok, it's tough, I know! They won't be happy. All these people whom you have loved and who love you will be really hurt. They'll get over it. Time is a great healer. Blood is blood. And maybe some of them are waiting for someone brave like you to make a stand before they do what their heart has always cried out to them is the right thing to do?

5. I'm lonely. These Muslims, I don't know any of them!

Immediately reach out. Get in touch with people on ahmedi.org who have left. Get hold of their email addresses and start corresponding. They will all be delighted to help you. They will all be hospitable. If you go to their countries and cities, they will welcome you into their homes with open hearts. There are a billion-plus Muslims out there. Most of them are lovely, lovely, lovely people.

It has been my pleasure to be helped and guided by people who left the delusion of *Ahmadiyyat* after I had made my decision. They have been consummately gracious and have sought nothing in return. With absolutely no ulterior motive, they are genuine God-fearing people. And in your heart of hearts, you always knew that the best of Muslims are like this, and not following a "dead and satanic" religion, as you have been told.

Insha'Allah, I will work on a directory of people who are happy to be contacted – an ex-Ahmadi support network if you like. This will be mentioned again in "A Fracture in Belief" and sent to you on request. I won't just list the names and email addresses of these people in a document or web-site, for obvious reasons! They will be people who like those who helped me, will be happy to be contacted and will offer you as much support and guidance as you wish.

Another way of meeting new people and reaching out is to go to your local mosque. Which leads me to..

6. Which mosque do I go to now?

That's the beautiful thing. *Any* mosque. That's right! You will be welcome anywhere. And you will find it a beautiful experience. I promise you. If you're not totally happy at one mosque, try another! And another!

I've been very fortunate. My local mosque is beautiful and the Friday sermons are always inspiring, uplifting and refresh me for the whole week. What's more, they are practical and I can relate them to my life. Each week I get a beautiful nugget of Islam which I can apply to my life for the following week and which enriches me - and once habit, stays with me forever.

Something beautiful will happen too - *jumu'ah* is so much easier! You can go to *jumu'ah* no matter where you are - there will be a mosque nearby!

In "A Fracture In Belief" I will give you a couple of beautiful stories about this. Suffice to say that it feels uplifting to go into a mosque feeling like I belong there.

7. Which sect do I join?

Up to you. My advice though is, to join the sect of RasulAllah SAW and his rightly guided caliphs and companions, peace be on them all. All the other differences are mildly doctrinal. Apart from some wacky fringe stuff, you're pretty safe anywhere if you have this approach! If anyone asks you which sect you belong to, you ask them right back "Which sect did the Messenger of Allah SAW belong to?". That is your sect. If you want to join one of the others, that's fine, and your choice. You have left an unhealthy cult that doesn't tolerate free thought or action, that's the main thing. I would encourage the direction I've already outlined, but really, *there is no compulsion in religion*.

8. What's all this Hanafi/Shafi stuff I keep hearing about?

These are famous imams which give slightly different rulings on esoteric details of Islam. They all believe that RasulAllah SAW was the final prophet to be commissioned by Allah SWT. If you want to get into the more esoteric stuff, I will explain some more in "A Fracture In Belief". Otherwise, there are many learned people on the Internet, including my favourite ahmedi.org who can help. Once you are Muslim, you can go anywhere, join in with anyone.

9. What about Isa AS - what do I do with my belief in that issue? I mean - I'm really convinced by the Ahmadi argument because it makes so much sense?

Well - I say - do some reading, speak to some knowledgeable *imams*, ones who have really studied properly, authentically, and make your own mind up.

Allah SWT gave you your mind and you are now *AlHamdolillah*, free to use it! Keep an open mind. That's all I ask.

And by the way. I promise you, Isa AS isn't buried in Yuz Asaf's tomb - and despite all the conjecture - nobody really knows what actually happened. Don't get conned into believing something just because it's in someone's interests to sell it to you. I used to believe in *jama'at Ahmadiyya's* version - now I don't. I read a ton of material from a number of conflicting sources.

Now I have an open mind. I don't have the facts, but I will be open to them when they arrive instead of supporting conjecture. I should remind you of course:

That they said (in boast), "We killed Christ Jesus the son of Mary, the Messenger of Allah";- but they killed him not, nor crucified him, but so it was made to appear to them, and those who differ therein are full of doubts, with no (certain) knowledge, but only conjecture to follow, for of a surety they killed him not:-

(Noble Qur'an 4:157)

10. Will I be happy in three months time?

Yes. Insha'Allah. Yes. Yes. Yes. Sunshine, wisdom, beauty, brotherhood, sisterhood, the unity with a pulse that stretches across the globe.

Welcome, welcome, *welcome* to the beautiful world of Islam. It's not what the Western media says it is. It's not what *jama'at Ahmadiyya* says it is. From someone who is on the "other side" I say "come on in, the water's fine".

May Allah SWT guide you all and bless you and keep you healthy and steadfast. *Ameen*.