

FOREWORD BY
JAWDAT SAID

TO:

NO, JURY ... IT IS
ALLAH, NOT THE KING

PLEADING OF
MAULANA MUHAMMAD ALI IN
THE KARACHI LAW-COURT, 1921,
BEFORE THE BRITISH-INDIAN JUDICIAL PANEL

TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH BY:

DR. ABDULLATIF ALKHAIAT

Foreword

By: Jawdat Said

Praise be to Allah. Peace be to His servants whom He has favored, and those who command what is fair.

I read this defense of Maulana Muhammad Ali's about thirty years ago. I remember my admiration of this pleading at the time, and the inquiries it stirred in my mind. And now I feel called upon to have my say, humbly but with confidence, as we witness the state of agitation, as stirred by the general and incessant talk about a return of Islam and Muslims to the human scene - as heralds of a new message for and a new perspective on the human dilemma - to take mankind to a different global system.

Being a Muslim who observes the international scene, I find it incumbent on me to put forth some ideas concerning the kind of picture Muslims should draw of themselves in the great hubbub around them - with all the conflict of interests, propaganda, and concepts - with two worlds that cannot come to terms of understanding. Here is the world of the rich and powerful: a world that feels confident that it merits the privileges that it enjoys; and it has the know-how to have its voice reach everywhere. If it has any anxiety, it is about ways

of preserving its privileges: how to persuade others that its privileges naturally belong to it.

But it is a futile and doomed venture, for the rest of the world, four fifths of it, to modulate those privileges or to dispute them, let alone to aspire to have such privileges disappear. You cannot plead for eliminating such privileges unless you are willing to undertake the managing of this world. All four fifths of the world are told that they do not have the necessary knowledge, or its applications; therefore, it is right for them to acquiesce into the others' monopolizing knowledge, together with its applications; that the other four fifth are not equipped to acquire knowledge - and, therefore, let knowledge be the monopoly of the white and immaculate world! It must never occur to anyone that those privileges are less than going to last forever: to cherish the impression that they may go away is a hallucination that must be put right: to be corrected with all the ways of reward and punishment. You see how things stand at present, where the Veto Right, together with 80% of the world production, must belong to 20% of the world's population. This is treated as simple facts, that may not be disputed, and, more than that, must settle at the deepest level of consciousness. It is further treated as the Will of Providence. This is the new global system: to dispute this, or to have the least occurrence of doubt concerning it, must be punished most severely. They view this system as not in need of drawing its legitimacy from any party, for it is self-legitimized.

The situation I take up for analysis is not easy to elucidate; it is vague, or rather both vague and clear. Was it easy to

realize that it is the earth which goes round the sun, rather than what was previously held, that the sun orbited the earth? We have many such issues, that are within our capacity to detect, but remain hidden from our eyes.

Let me quote something that may help in shedding light on this idea; Dr. Ali Shariati discusses such issues in his book *Man and Islam*, a collection of lectures. He quotes the following from Umar Maulud: "If you wish to employ somebody, and to be sure he is obedient, and loyal to you, you need to strip off his character: as long as he has a character, he cannot be a good servant. Likewise, to have full dominance over a people, you need to strip off their human feeling, or at least to weaken such feeling: a human with character does not make a good servant. You need a person without character: to have a good servant, you not one who is meek and loyal, and easy to direct. And hence, as long as the Easterner is sensible of his having a real human character, independent and fitting, it is not possible to have him grovel and fawn. To have him surrender to us, we need to strip from him his character; but, as long as he affirms: "I have my respectability, and, at least in my neighborhood and district, I am honored ... People expect me not to submit, and they entrust me with their hidden secrets ..." When you are dealing with such a person, nothing you may can avail - when you confiscate his money, he says nothing; when you whip him, he says nothing. Why is it so? Because he has character, which holds him back from submitting. His personality, as an individual and a race, is the obstacle that holds him back from submitting to us. Therefore, our first task it to strip this from him: once he has no sense of

character, he will come forward, on his own, and prostrate himself before our feet, saying: "I am here, Sir! Just ready to carry out all that you command."

Ali Shariati also quotes the following from an African writer: "The situation before us, the apparent opposition between two communities, may be illustrated with reference to the opposition between a mother and her child - she debases him, beats him, and banishes him; while he - in hope of warding off her wrath, and to evade her debasement, beating, and banishment, resorts to her, and huddles more and more to her lap. As a result, she banishes him no more; why? He is not a curious child, and he has repressed his original independent character: that character was the object of the mother's attack. To avoid his mother's aggression, and her insults, he takes resort with her, for this will give him security."

Ali Shariati adds: "I have seen this kind of relation between two persons when they meet, one from the East and one from the West - and as they have been represented, from Nietzsche, to Hegel, to Freud, to Renan - I have seen this tragedy with my own eyes, at a university like that of the Sorbonne in Paris, and in the twentieth century. You see a respectable physician write a dissertation in medicine; and the theme is measuring the difference between the cells of the brains of the white person and the black person. There attends the session a number of renowned, really world figures - and they give the respectable physician a doctorate.

"Not only do they condone this foolish and unjustified tragedy - they confer on it a scientific, concrete and moral appearance.

"Here is Mr. Hegel say of god: He started as an unconscious thing, then he saturated plants, then he evolved and saturated animals, then he evolved and took a human form, then the Western human being; later he evolved to be the German, then he consummated in this country of Germany, and is incarnated in our present government.

"Or let us look at Mr. Zigfried, a university professor, a celebrated social specialist, and a member of academy ... he says: "Here you find an average French person, not a particularly spectacular engineer, with his blue eyes and blond hair, show his ability in directing a sophisticated administrative system, and in establishing major projects in the East, and without any incompetence. But go to the East, and you find the best and thinking minds, unable to manage a six-person system. So why is it so? It is because the Western brain is a civic and administrative brain, and the Eastern brain is a sentimental, poetic, and agnostic brain.... Even clothes - we must have control over that: one does not choose his/her appearance: clothes and consumption are linked to taste, to community, national identity, faith, history, culture, art, and the conception of beauty. When we propose to transform an individual from the East, we must attend to all these factors. Here is a lady from the East: she wears what we design, and we can have her put down her pharynx all the victuals that we offer her. She is not supposed to say 'I like this', or 'I don't like that': You must like all that we like! Are you a human?

Are you supposed to say 'I like' and 'I don't like'? No, your own character does not belong to you. Never use the word 'I again!'"

(The above is an abbreviated quotation from Dr. Shariati.)

The same topic of asserting oneself was taken up by Muhammad Iqbal in his collection of poetry: *Al-Asrar wa al-Rumuz* (i.e. the Secrets of Asserting the Self, and the Symbols of Effacing It).

My point in all the above is that the human has two sides to his nature: he both has great flexibility of adaptation, and has great resistance to change. And the community has its understood or understandable ways of molding two patterns of the human (as in the Qur'an, 16:76) the wearisome burden, and the one who goes on a straight path, commanding what is just and fair. By the former we mean the human who is nearly an object - a human who was inspired by the community to believe that he/she was created to obey: not to protest, and not to distinguish; never to describe anything as correct or incorrect - it is enough that the overlord tells him/her what is correct and what is incorrect: he/she has a master who does all the thinking.

You find, on the other hand, a society which molds the human in such a way that he/she refuses compulsion and subjugation; a community that opens for the individual the way to think and be creative; a community which gives the individual the right to choose, to distinguish, and the society is careful to have the individual free himself/herself from being enslaved by the community. This is a community in which, even if one rejects God, His religion, and His

Commandments, the unbeliever still has the right to survive, in all his/her dignity, entitled to the same justice that is administered to others. And when you read, in such community, the Verse of the Qur'an like: "Let there be no compulsion in religion;" (2:256), or "Allah does not forbid you, with regard to those who do not fight you for your Faith nor drive you out of your homes, from dealing kindly and justly with them: for Allah loves those who are just;" (60:8) you find it to mean that God approves of such freedom of the individual to choose what to believe and what to disbelieve. It is a revolutionary stage, in human progression, to have a society in which responsibility belongs to the individual - in which the individual may break free from the community's coercion; and the individual has the right to envision a system other than what the community adopts. Just to imagine such a situation is hard, even at this time, let alone in the past. People did not imagine that there could be a system in existence superior to what the community you live in endorsed.

But I do not feel I am equipped to handle such a topic: I do not feel I possess the necessary intellectual and linguistic power to propound and expound it; so, shall I leave this topic in its darkness? Shall I accept to live in the same strait jacket that we are all born in? Or maybe, in the way the ancient Chinese used to have their children wear small molds on their feet to keep the feet small?

Yes, this can happen to the human intellect: it can be put in a mold, within restrictions that it is not allowed to go beyond. With this in mind, one may review again Verses of

the Qur'an which describe a situation in which man is utterly incapable of making use of his hearing, sight, and thinking; and of reaching a stage when what is evil can seem to him good.

We really must restudy such Verses, in all earnestness, and with fresh eyes. I can contribute an incident which may shed light on this topic: In a village not far from our village, a girl committed a sin, letting herself be seduced by somebody. Then the sin came to light, and the girl tried to hide with some acquaintances, but her brother traced her and put her to death. Then he gave himself up, was tried, convicted, and had a sentence of some months, which he spent in prison, and was set free. Then life was resumed as before, as if nothing had happened. This is the essence of the incident.

I may venture to say that the story is not so unusual in our part of the world, and maybe many can mention similar incidents. But can we analyze this story? Or we must be just pass it by and keep silent? Should not such a tragedy be handled by social experts, human experts, historians, and law specialists - for it is such a complex incident; certainly much more than someone falling victim to her desires and paying the price for it.

I personally had to go through some of the repercussions of the incidents. In our community, one must go to funerals, and the gathering that is held to express one's condolences to the dead person's family. But on this occasion, we were not notified of a funeral, although the young woman's decease was reported very briefly; and it did not occur to anyone to go for condolence. Some time later, however, I met the father -

who was a respectable person, and perhaps his esteemed status necessitated the tragic end of the girl - and when we met, I was quite at a loss what to say. I did not exactly ignore the incident, and did say something which I cannot quite recall. I had several complex ideas, and he simply accepted my words of condolence. But the whole thing kept chasing me. I kept turning it round in my mind: how the community's concepts and values take shape; how such concepts and values get transmitted and reproduced from generation to generation.

This is a real-life situation, but can we analyze it and pinpoint its components and how it takes shape? Will it be tampering with the community's taboos if I take this up and look into it? Or will it be counted for the good of society? What background may protect me when I handle this, and what are my legitimate references? Should we remember how a girl was treated before Islam, and how the Qur'an raised the issue in Verses like: "When the female infant, buried alive, is questioned - for what crime she was killed;" (81:8-9). Yes, one does remember this, when the young man very easily gets away with it, after a very brief detainment. In the eyes of many people, the young man did the only right thing for regaining the family's honor. And it may be noted that not one type of people raised a protest: not the practicing Muslim, nor the rightist, nor the leftist, nor the moderates; not the women, nor the men; not the relatives, nor the unrelated. It was complete unanimity on silence - even the mother, suppressing perhaps her mother's instinct and kept mum. And where are the representatives of Islamic law here? The Islamic ruling in

the case of this girl is quite mild in comparison with what was actually done to her. And why was the girl's partner in the sinful act never traced and punished? Are they not treated as equal partners in *sharia*? Do you see how God is treated here in comparison with the community's verdict? Why this unanimous duplicity? How did things reach this point of inequality, and to this depth? I use all this as an example of situations that are both most obvious and very vague.

Let me add that the new world system is not unlike the above situation: It expects all parties to admit that it can give life to whoever it chooses, and send to death whoever it chooses - that no one has the right to see and understand things in any different way! But may I be skeptical? May I notice how things are put in such a way that even the concept of justice may be transformed, and even the bond of kinship should be ignored - all must be ignored when it contradicts the prestige of the privileged. All existence must prostrate itself before the privileged. But they forget that human nature does always have, in its very clay, this flame of disobedience! How far from truth is this assumption that they can suppress, and utterly shut up human curiosity!

Is it clear what I am trying to dig out? There is a steel social system that has us all in its grip, most ruthlessly; and we are not supposed to examine it, and we are not free to bring it under inspection. I really feel that the ghost of condemnation chases me when I take up such topics. But must we not inquire: Was not God right when He gave this mild penalty to the sinful young woman? Is it right for us to feel scandalized that only this light and very trivial penalty is

given to her? Is it not right for one to wonder why the community should exonerate the male and not the female, when they are partners in the same sin? This must be a good demonstration of that huge and rigid system which has its grip over us, leaving us no chance to reconsider things. And it must occur to one to wonder if such iron system applies in the case of this particular situation or in many other similar situations? And when it is a most absolute predominance of this system: is it not God's creation? Is it not God's law on which a community is based?

This is then another step: If this state of things is governed by God's laws, or *sunan* in Qur'anic terms, then the way is open for us to deal with it, to bring it under control. When you know the laws, you can manipulate them to your advantage: they are created to serve those who know them - like electricity they are there to serve, but can cause great hurt.

And when I present this situation, I am aware of its not being the most critical, that one can cite more serious situations, that may raise more fury and are more burning. They may be raised some time later.

The Book of Genesis, the first Book of the *Old Testament* mentions how man ate from the tree of knowledge - as a result he had higher aspirations, and aspired to eat from the tree of immortality, or the tree of life: therefore, a very strict guardianship was kept on the tree of life, to keep anyone from reaching it: "So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life." (Genesis, 3:24).

This is to help us appreciate how difficult it is to approach the tree of knowledge - we feel that understanding, knowledge, and conception are restricted, paralyzed, and reduced: that these things are guarded with a flaming sword, that keeps turning every way, all to guard the tree of knowledge, let alone the tree of life, i.e. immortality.

It is true that humans have gone a long way in subjugating matter - by penetrating the atom, they have fallen upon an inexhaustible treasure of energy. And they have learned the laws of life: thereby they have gotten over many diseases, increased life expectancy, and penetrated into the genes - in all this, they have unveiled facts that will take quite some time to take count of their potentials.

All this must provoke us, however, to wonder when our young men and women would feel it is high time that they come to terms with the laws, or *sunan*, of society, to set us free from the chains and shackles that hamper our understanding. Is it or is it not our right to understand? Is it our right to seek some scale against which we may assess the prevalent understanding on the local level? On the international level? Unless we feel we have the right to think at the local level we may not aspire to think at the international level. This sense of the equality of humans, on the very basic level, was destroyed many centuries back, in favor of the sense of privileges and the power of the powerful: It is those with power who are given the right to set down measure and scales, and it is only they who are given the right to introduce any alteration to measures and scales. It does

appear in viewing and treating man versus woman, the white versus the non-white, and so on.

We find in the Bible: "Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free;" (John, 8:32) which signifies that knowledge has the power of liberating humans. So, all humans are entitled to taste this tree of knowledge. And, yet, the new world system is there to guard this tree, and keep it as the monopoly of the whites, who are no more than 11% of the world population: they wish to keep this flaming sword, always turning in every way, to protect the tree of knowledge.

We read in the Journal of the UNESCO Message, issue of June 1990, p. 27, this statement - and let the reader deduce from it whatever he/she likes: "Around the year 2000, the so-called 'white race' will constitute no more than 11% of the population of the earth. We must not exclude the probability of a confrontation between the radical sector of the Muslim World, and whatever remains of the Christian Civilization - such confrontation seems inevitable in fact."

Why 'inevitable'? The author is a Nobel Laureate in literature, but why this pessimism? Why so pessimistic? Why is it 'inevitable'? Why think of a dead-end? From experience, we know that it is the guilty and not the innocent who must be afraid. But this Nobel-Laureate has confidence only in himself, and not in man - not the 89% of humans, being non-white! They are, in his view, incapable of bearing responsibility. He can be trusted with knowledge, but not others! But things do not go like this: knowledge keeps leaking; the world boils over, and so do the scales they had imposed on the world. It is not possible to sense how brittle

this United Nations is - the United Nations as the basis for the new world system. How little the Veto Right worked when the situation was really critical; it was manifest then that when the South proceeded with confidence, the Veto Right was an empty claim: it proved that the South could and did come forward at the expense of the North. We should not wonder, then, that a Nobel Laureate should be apprehensive of the approaching conflicts: aristocracies cannot envision a world in which people stand on equal footing with them. Yes, Mr. Joseph Brodsky! There is another world, 89% of the world population, unfortunately non-white, but they view the world as suitable for life - and it will be a beautiful world, free from confrontations, though not without rivalry towards having a better world. The new world as the whites envision it is really an impossible world - it is impossible to protect inequality, injustice and resorting to force, not matter how powerful some parties are. Cannot you learn a lesson from the Soviets? Did they not have enough war-heads? And is the United States, with its war-heads, immune from the outcome of injustice? Is it that it has more war-heads than the Soviets? It was made from the same clay: and all the powers that protect injustice and impede justice will fall. This is the lesson we learn from human history, for the determination to realize justice will be victorious.

O beloved Messenger, Muhammad, our lord! You were the best to read history, when you summed it up in one little statement: "Your predecessors were brought to perdition when they passed by a thief if he was a noble man, and

punished a thief if he was a commoner."¹. Yes, our Prophet, ﷺ, did not envision the fate of the white race, nor the fate of humanity; he indeed did not see human destiny as dark; he saw it as bright. He did assert that history's problem was in realizing justice, but he was not pessimistic: he was fully confident that justice would predominate, and that injustice would be defeated. To him, law was realized when justice was realized, and when justice was established, then God's law was established - and survival was assured. It is as the Qur'an says: "Not your desires, nor those of the People of the Book, can prevail: whoever works evil will be requited accordingly. Nor will he find, besides Allah, any protector or helper;" (4:123).

I address all those who feel wronged: You see how what the Prophet, peace be upon him, said, as just quoted, is taking shape before our eyes. And he referred us not to the Qur'an, but to the events of history ... and history is the visual manifestation of God's law. The Prophet asserted that those who failed to be just perished, and when we now see 11% of the world being unjust in treating the other 89%, we know that, unless they change their ways, they must perish, by God's law, *sunnah*. We must observe how one's clinging to his privileges inactivates his understanding, and obstructs his perception. So, let us heed what God and His Messenger, ﷺ, warned us of: they kept exhorting us to look sharp at the past and present, and to think of how things will turn out to be in the future - all such inspection of history makes sense God's

¹ Al-Bukhari.

sunnah, or law, as stated in the Verse of the Qur'an: "But no change will you find in Allah's *sunnah*; and no turning off will you find in Allah's *sunnah*; (35:43).

I am saying that what is lawful is what is supported by history, not what 11% of the world proclaims, expecting the other 89% to act upon. What is lawful is what transpires through history, and history proceeds by the law which has its best expression in the Verse of the Qur'an: "For the scum disappears like froth cast out; while that which is for the good of mankind remains on earth;" (13:17).

This lawfulness may not be meddled with - yes, people can invent lies against God, and can meddle with what happened - but not with the outcome of conduct. History has never been, and will never be, deflected from its progress, and it knows its way, as we learn from the Verse of the Qur'an: "Allah always prevails in His purpose;" (12:21).

This last of creations, the human being, shows us, from tracing his/her history, that he/she has succeeded in getting over obstacles and barriers, no matter how often they stumbled. Man will realize what God knew, and the angels did not know, when they charged man like this, in their debate with God: "Will You place therein one [i.e. the human] who will make mischief therein and shed blood?" But God replied: "I know what you do not know;" (2:30). It is true that many humans throughout history acted in accordance with the angels' expectation, but some did bridge the obstacles, and these last realized what God knew about the potentials of the human.

It is this group of humans who will establish in the earth the way of peace,' as referred to in the Verse of the Qur'an: "Wherewith Allah guides all who seek His good pleasure to ways of peace and safety, and leads them out of darkness, by His Will, unto the light - guides them to a Path that is straight;" (5:16).

From all this, I may go on to say that the pleading of this book is about this: what is lawful and what is not: Who is failing to refer to lawfulness? Who is right to be obeyed?

When we review what Maulana Muhammad Ali said in his pleading, we need to refer to the way Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, dealt with this; and we need to look into this attitude of the Messenger's, ﷺ, in the light of history.

We must start with being clear that humans cannot live without a commonly accepted law. And this has been so since the introduction of agriculture - it was not necessary before agriculture, because agriculture was the great human revolution: before agriculture, man lived like the rest of species, which did not produce their own food. They ate what they found in nature, and so did man.

But then the human being discovered agriculture, and at once he/she was set apart from the rest of species. It seems that with the first plants planted by humans, there appeared the need for the 'taboo'. The tree planted by human hands introduced a new concept. To approach that tree was taboo, except in the legal way. Man has entered now into a new epoch of history, when less individuals can produce more food. There appeared the first stages of the division of labor, and some individuals started to have leisure, and therefore

had the time to start other activities and be creative. That is all well, but what about the legal sense of dealing with the tree, planted with human hands? How to establish justice in the epoch of agriculture? It was clear to everybody that agriculture was a great blessing, and there was no turning back, and so humans had to adjust to this new phase: they needed to find ways of establishing justice.

It is true that man planted with his own hands, and ate the product of his own hands, but agriculture was not possible without observing the law of growth: that the seed he devoured could be sown to grow a plant. This observation led to knowledge, and the act of planting could not happen without knowledge. And the human needed knowledge to decide how to live with the new reality. It is a long and splendid story.

Ten millennia back, humans learned agriculture and the domestication of animals, but they also learned how to enslave other humans - yes, some humans started to be sold together with the land on which they worked. This is the tragic aspect of the new epoch: for ten thousand years, man has been adjusting to agriculture, but he is still trying, for the adjustment has not so far succeeded: We still find some humans enslave other humans, and we still find a minority of people living in luxury on the shoulders of the majority.

And then humans discovered writing. It meant a much wider spread of knowledge. One result was more awareness of our being all the same, the same species: some admitted this fact, and some refused it. Prophets started to appear, together with other individuals who commanded justice - they

were on the side of the unity of humankind. They tried, painstakingly, and very slowly and gradually, to establish the concept of justice and lawfulness. This attempt was always opposed by the owners of monopolies: these latter were invariably enemies to the unity of humankind, and against the sense of justice. They insisted that they alone were 'God's children', but the prophets and the callers to justice said: 'No one is God's child, neither we nor you.'

Another stage came with the industrial revolution. With this stage, the problem took a much larger size - this was when a very small number could produce enough for very large numbers.

This meant a much hotter competition, among the privileged ones - but they did reach a state of cooperation for preserving the monopolies. Am I discussing the self-evident? Well, yes, it is both clear and vague; it is really the amount of vagueness that engulfs this situation that gives permanence to the privileges of the privileged of the world. And it is the responsibility of those who command what is just and fair to make this plain, for magic is invalidated once it is exposed. The industrial revolution introduced printing, and this ushered a lot of human revolutions, and there appeared democracy, but only those who had knowledge were able to adapt to it - It has been knowledge which made agriculture possible, it was knowledge which enabled humans to domesticate animals, and it is knowledge which gave humans the means of facilitating the acquisition of knowledge: the human has come to be equated with the amount of knowledge he/she has; you are a human in so far as you have acquired

knowledge; you are free in so far as you have knowledge; you merit to be given justice, and to realize justice, in so far as you have knowledge. As long as one is ignorant, he/she has not possessed the human status. Those who wish to monopolize privileges feel impelled to monopolize knowledge, with a flaming sword that keeps turning every way.

In the First World War, the conflict was among the privileged - since some had less privilege than the others.

The main problem here is that when others are ignorant, the privileged can tamper with lawfulness - for they know how to fool ignorant people, and how even to have them work against their interests - one can betray oneself in his ignorance, and can be a tool in the hands of the privileged. This was brought to light in the pleading of Maulana Muhammad Ali: an Indian Muslim who tried to raise his voice against the privileged that led the world. He saw how his brothers were enlisted to fight on the side of the privileged. Germany was the only real rival, but was deprived of colonies at that time; and Turkey, who represented the Muslim World, tried to join the Allies, but was denied that privilege - being the real prey over which the conflicts focused - and so she sided with Germany. In this context, Muhammad Ali declared that a Muslim was not permitted to be enlisted with the English, the imperialist power which dominated India, to fight against the Turks, our brother Muslims.

Let me admit that most of us, including me, know next to nothing of the details of the events in India, the huge sub-continent: What gave Muhammad Ali this position? What do we know about him? What exactly happened? What is behind

this Indian's burial in Jerusalem? What happened in India after him?

I am trying to bring to light the origins of our tragedy: We Muslims have not made it easy to access knowledge, what to refer to. We need to make the tools of knowledge within reach of everybody. History must be rewritten from our own perspective - we will not get out of our wilderness unless history is within easy reach, so that we may refer to it all the time.

Here then is the crux of our dilemma: It is not that our adversaries are strong; it is that our system of knowledge is not efficient - we need, for instance, to be able to have a clear idea, with moderate effort, of having some substantial knowledge of Muhammad Ali, and the community he represented. Being most ignorant, we do not see where our salvation really lies - we live in the illusion that we may protect ourselves and free ourselves with buying more weaponry: weaponry that we buy only at the expense of depriving our people of bread, and the price of the book - and we pay exorbitant prices for weapons.

But the weapons that we buy are soon destroyed, and we buy again, at higher prices. This has been Muhammad Ali's problem, and it is the problem of the whole Muslim World: knowledge is not a priority with us, and we are not enthusiastic about it.

When the Second World War broke out, it was among those who had knowledge. It was so, since, despite the knowledge they had acquired, some had much more than their share of privileges and colonies. And, once again, the children

of colonies were enlisted to fight the war of privileges. But there was something new: in the new world system, those with privileges had mutual understanding, and worked as a united force - it is true that they kept having their disputes over privileges, but they had accord, and each knew their limitation. The new world system brought to an end any armed conflict among the privileged: they found enough common interests to be one line. The confrontation was now between this 11% of the world and the rest: for the rest was for them no more than a market, raw material, and energy: nothing more. They were, and are, determined to defend this situation to the last breath - and as for anyone who presume to oppose this situation, he will be buried alive, and by the hands of his brothers. The privileged will not feel remorse or compassion, and no one must show compassion or commiseration, and he will be killed by the hands of a brother.

And this is what Maulana Muhammad Ali challenged. He challenged that a brother, and a sister, may be killed by the hand of their brother - and for the sake of the affluent nations, for the sake of the privileged, those who viewed the world as a market and as a source of raw material. When he chose to raise an objection to that, he had to be prosecuted under a charge of high treason.

He acted on the principle of the freedom of conviction and the freedom of opinion, and what more tolerance do people want beyond that? It is as a certain thinker said: "Sir, I disagree with every word you said, but I will fight to my last breath in defense of your right to say what you want to say."

This is tolerance ... and if this is not tolerance, then nothing is tolerance.

"If somebody or some establishment," he said in his pleading, "gives you a guarantee of bearing your own views freely, and of acting upon those views, then I think it is their responsibility to adhere to that guarantee..."

"We are appealing for our right to enjoy law's protection of our faith and our religion's teachings, distinct from any other faith's, and to see the government express its regret, and to say, 'Yes, we were in error.'..."

"Will the government abide by its commitment to guarantee freedom of faith? ...

"Or will it say: 'No! We are strong, we are dominant! We have tanks ... We have fighters ... We have defeated Europe's most powerful nations ... twenty-six nations are allies with us ... and so is India, with all its men, funds, and all its resources ... it makes no sense that we tolerate your views and religious obligations ...

"Is it not in their law that 'freedom of conviction is guaranteed'? Is it not in their law that to induce the military to rebel is high treason?"

Muhammad Ali does very good work in pointing out the contradiction, the discrepancy between the proclaimed principles and the commands: "Let them," he says, "either scrap the article in their constitution affirming free conviction, or let them permit the soldiers to put the obedience of God, whose doctrine they subscribe to, above the obedience to the king, or the government's law." He excels in revealing this contradiction, and he is apparently quick-

mindful, firm in his faith, never wavering in making the case of Islam, and in steadfast pleading for his case.

But let me move on to put the case in its wider context - a soldier is viewed and treated in our modern world as a tool, as a whip, or as a bugle. It is his part to hear and obey, and this is true of all nations of the world: every soldier is instructed that he may object only after complying with the command addressed to him. This aspect of the situation is really ridiculous: really ridiculous that objection can happen only after one has acted upon the command; and it is what is being dictated to all soldiers of the world; and they have to repeat it like parrots, and actually act upon it.

But this aspect of the military service is antithetical to Islam, squarely and definitely opposite, for the Qur'an teaches us: "But fear Allah ... and do not follow the bidding of the those who are extravagant;" (26:150-151), and the Prophet, ﷺ, says in an authentic hadith: "No obedience is due in contradiction with God's commands."²

This is then the essence of the world dilemma - that the human is expected to behave like a gun, which must shoot when its user pulls the trigger. Of course, you cannot trust a gun which does not work as it is expected to work. No military would accept such a gun. Well, that is as it should be, but according to the modern systems, a human should behave exactly like the gun - it will not do, from their perspective, if the individual hears commands, and then analyzes them in his mind, to obey if the command is right and lawful, not

² Reported by al-Bukhari, Muslim, etc.

necessarily as his commanders think - such a person is not suitable to be in the military. That is the approach predominant in the world.

This is the basic problem of the human, and the problem of goodness and evil in the world. But how can we bring man to reach this level? It is the rule I mentioned above: It is knowledge which liberates a human; and it is ignorance which makes of the human no more than a thing, a tool. Therefore, and if these ideas are clear, it will be realized why the suppressing of knowledge is one of the gravest crimes. The Qur'an teaches us that those who suppress knowledge are punishable by Fire. This is what faith teaches us, but things keep being confused: the truth is that both the believer and the agnostic are viewed and treated as a thing, as long as they have no knowledge - and knowledge in this case is to be sought by referring to history. For the pious, let him/her be satisfied that God refers us to history, as in "Travel through the earth and see what was the end of those who rejected Truth;" (6:11). History is the reference for even comprehending the Qur'an itself, and without history, it is not possible to appreciate the Qur'an.

Therefore I repeat, humbly but with all confidence, and in fulfilling my part as a Muslim who keeps a watch on the world scene, we Muslims do have a way of appearing in this world, full of uproar and confusion. And the way is for Muslims to give full trust to history; there is no need to feel hesitant, assuming that referring to history contradicts referring to God for judgment - Indeed, referring to history is the essence of referring to God: Is it not God who set solid laws for history,

sunan in Qur'anic terms, *sunan* that are not subject to change or alteration. History is the supreme arbiter, and history is the signs of the world and the signs of human life; history is the mother of all sciences, and the womb of all human knowledge - even psychology and sociology were begotten by history. If you think of Ibn Khaldun, the social scientist who is rated above all other scholars, remember that he started as a historian, and ended as a sociologist: so sociology was begotten by history.

History is getting acquainted with the beginning of creation, the history of creatures: from the atom to the galaxy, from the very beginnings of life, right to the most advanced societies. For a person to be ignorant of history, his/her knowledge is seriously defective - he/she will be driven by his/her desires and fancies, whether he/she likes it or not.

History is the embodiment of God's words: God's words as they are a visual and tangible display of God's words. It proceeds to spin the law of progression, the *sunnah* of increase in creation. And history is our scale for distinguishing truth and falsehood, which may be gleaned from the Verse of the Qur'an: "Thus Allah shows Truth and vanity. For the scum disappears like froth cast out; while that which is for the good of mankind remains on the earth;" (13:17). It brings to the observer's attention the outcome of human endeavor, what is 'better and more enduring' - and of course, what is more enduring cannot be ascertained but by observing things as they proceed through time. What is proved to be for the good of humanity, and for a longer period - proves to be the truth, for a certain time, I mean until

something of more advantage and for a longer time comes to replace it.

We learn this from history. We may ascertain by observing history that it is human communities which viewed and treated the human as a thing, a non-thinking creature that must hear and obey, automatically. And it is history which indicates that it was the prophets and those who commanded what is right and forbade what is wrong - it was they who taught man to obey what is right and just and to disobey what is evil and unjust. We must, each one of us, realize that God does not forgive one for effacing himself/herself: giving obedience solely to other humans. Nothing that was revealed from heaven and found out by humans is greater than this trust that the human is capable of distinguishing truth from falsehood - acting on what he/she realizes to be right and just, and eschewing what he/she realizes to be wrong and unjust: realizing it and declaring it. It is a false way to view things from a different perspective - whether we ascribe it to heaven or earth.

Every human is responsible in Islam. Some of the greatest things that descended from heaven to earth are Verses like: "The Day whereon neither wealth nor sons shall avail; but only he will prosper who brings to Allah a sound heart;" (26:88-89) and: "the sinner's desire will be: would that he could redeem himself from the penalty of that Day by sacrificing his children, his wife and his brother, his kindred who sheltered him, and all, all that is on earth - so it could deliver him;" (70:11-14). This is a system that releases human ability, and unless this is understood, the human will remain

as fettered as ever. People are in three categories: Some understand and proclaim what they understand; some understand but keep mum; and some who do not understand - you find them listed in the first Sura of the Qur'an, with three designations: 'those on a straight way', 'those whose portion is wrath' and 'those who go astray': and this last category are the majority, and they are the exploited group. What they need is to enlighten them, as we learn from the Qur'an: "But most of them do not know the Truth, and so turn away;" (21:24).

They need to be guided, so that they may no longer say, as the Qur'an teaches us: "Never did we hear such a thing among our ancestors of old;" (23:24) and that is what Muhammad Ali set out to do: to alert the ignorant, and to reveal the contradiction in the life of those who suppress truth, what they know to be true, and keep mum. We are enjoined upon to testify for truth, for the sake of God. And this is the point of dispute: It is between those who know the truth, and seek to disseminate it, so that it reaches everybody; and those who suppress truth, and wish to see people continue in their ignorance - who really do their best to hinder the conveying of truth to people. It is in the interest of this last group to keep people in their slumber: for as long as they are inattentive, the privileged can keep their hold on their privileges.

We need to bring things out to light. It is this area which is the area of dispute: those who are keen to bring people to understand and know, and those who are keen to keep people in the dark, in their ignorance. Let us have the situation as clear as this, for this helps in disseminating knowledge and having it spread everywhere.

I am speaking as plainly as possible because there happens a lot of confusion here, as some would like to keep things concealed. And confusion leads to transferring conflict to other spheres. Of course, those who oppose the spread of knowledge do not wish to be recognized as enemies of spreading knowledge: this will lead to their immediate defeat, in the eyes of the public, and maybe in their own consciousness. We understand such situations from God's telling us in the Qur'an: "And say: 'Truth has now arrived, and falsehood perished,'" (17:81): please notice in the above Verse that the mere appearance of truth will lead to the defeat of falsehood: You don't have to worry how to attack and defeat and crush falsehood.

When the above dawned on my mind, I felt it was a most crucial point: and I felt the need to shed as much light on it as I could, for as long as we keep this point vague, there will be all kinds of confusion.

You see, people have always insisted that the only way to get rid of falsehood was by crushing it, and some acted on this principle, instead of devoting their energy to elucidating truth: had they worked on making truth quite vivid, falsehood would have perished naturally. They do not realize that by attempting to murder falsehood, before truth has been vividly brought out will, this will really prolong falsehood's life - it may act to present falsehood in the guise of the wronged side and the ill-treated party, so that it has the right to defend itself. It may even present it in the part of the martyr. As for truth, it will enfeeble it, and present it as the assailant who is intent on wronging others, as the party caring for parading its own

merits. For all the above, it is the right policy for truth to be presented through clear proclamation, nothing more - for we have here the great phenomenon of the advance of truth and the defeat and withdrawal of falsehood. No battles are needed for that.

I know this issue is not yet evident to most people, despite its firm evidence; and I have no doubt that it will be seen better and better. Supporters of truth will realize the amazing strength that the proclamation of truth will realize; this will give them great trust that by just bringing truth out vividly they can see falsehood perish, a natural death, not by killing. People will rejoice at its death, not having stretched their hands to murder it: they will not mourn at the death of falsehood, but will turn to receiving truth in all its splendor and magnificence.

Let me now turn to another aspect of this issue: how the Prophet, peace be upon him, adhered to this approach in dealing with falsehood, how crystal clear it was to him, and how carefully and clear-sightedly he debarred the supporters of Truth from slaying falsehood, debarred it most decisively and utterly. He even prevented the allies of truth from defending themselves when the allies of falsehood attacked them.

More than half the duration of Muhammad's, ﷺ, mission was devoted to enhancing the spread of knowledge against the forces of suppressing knowledge - he banned any resort to violence on the part of his Companions, even in self-defense. This was no more than acting upon the teachings of the Qur'an, and the Prophet, peace be upon him, himself; and the

Muslims around the Prophet complied meticulously with his directions: this was sustained for the whole Mecca phase of the Islamic mission, quite a long period. It was a wonder to some of the Companions that they used to retaliate when aggressed against in the pre-Islam period, so how should they be deprived of this right after Islam? But the Qur'an was clear: "Hold back your hands from fight but establish regular prayers;" (4:77), and "do not obey him: but bow in adoration;" (96:19): You are to keep up the proclaiming of your faith, and you are not to hold it back in dread of the evil camp, but you will not stretch your hand, not even in self-defense.

You see how the Messenger, ﷺ, when he passed by the Yaser Family, who were being tortured by the idolators, he said: "Have patience, Yaser's Family: We will all be meeting in Paradise." Some Muslims used to say to the Prophet: "By Allah, if you just give the command, we shall attack them like one man;" and he used to reply: "No, we have not been instructed to do that."

It is amazing how patiently they all abided by this command from God and from the Prophet, peace be upon him. But when you reflect on it, you find that they were establishing lawful life, and extending its roots in hearts. The atmosphere they developed was such a pure and uncontaminated one that the idolators of Quraish never expected any violence from the Muslims, not even in self-defense.

We have an amazing situation here: the Quraishi people trusted Muhammad, peace be upon him, and his Companions, with their money, with their life, and with their women, more

than they trusted each other. It was as sterile an atmosphere as you expect when an open-heart operation is in process.

It sheds more light to notice that the Lord asserts again and again in the Qur'an that the Muslims adversaries had nothing to blame them for but their adherence to their faith in God, their proclaiming of His religion, and their recitation of the Qur'an, within hearing of others - here are some Verses in that regard: "And they ill-treated them for other reason than that they believed in Allah, Exalted in Power, Worthy of all praise;" (85:8) "Will you slay a man because he says, 'My Lord is God?'" (40:28) and: "They are those who have been expelled from their homes in defiance of right - for not cause except that they say, 'Our Lord is Allah;'" (22:40).

It is such a clear and uncontaminated situation, so clear and uncontaminated that nobody has challenged its being as presented above. But Muslim did think, and still think, that we are not bound to adhere to the Prophet's and his Companions' way, and later generations have invariably found outlets to avoid acting on that tradition. They would say no, things have changed, but the Qur'an and the Prophet, peace be upon him, are crystal clear about this, and there was not one instance of disobeying this among the Companions. I say no, it is not abrogated. The same situation is still with us, and those who act in disregard of this teaching by God and His Prophet are paying very dearly for their disobedience: they keep losing every time they resort to violence.

But the way I am advocating here, the way of Muhammad, ﷺ, has proved its success, and will keep proving its success; and people will find no alternative to it.

When people adhere to the system laid down by God, including the necessary conditions, this will be rewarded many times over, as Islam teaches us about the reward for good deeds.

Another thing to notice is that those who choose the way of proclaiming truth in a peaceful manner are not aggressed against in the same degree as those who resort to violent ways; it is as the Qur'an tells us: "They will do you no harm, barring a trifling annoyance;" (3:111) "But if you are constant and do right, not the least harm will their cunning do to you; for Allah compasses round about all they do; " (3:120). "O Messenger! Proclaim the Message which has been sent to you from your Lord. If you did not, you would not have fulfilled and proclaimed His Mission. And Allah will defend you from men who mean mischief;" (5:67) and "we shall certainly bear with patience all the hurt you may cause us;" (14:12).

If we adhere to this approach: to proclaim the truth, never suppressing it, to abide by not defending ourselves when aggressed against - this will secure a healthy atmosphere, an ideal atmosphere for the growth of truth, its flowering, and its dissemination steadily and surely. And this is the atmosphere described by scholars who analyze civilizations: that they need an atmosphere in which there is challenge, but the challenge must be neither too harsh to the point of paralyzing, nor too soft to the point of not provoking one's endeavor.

You need a situation in which the human has good hope to escape, and a fair amount of dreading failure - this is what brings out the best in man. It is certainly not when one is desperate, for a desperate person will just cease to try, and the

Qur'an warns us not to fall in this: "Truly no one despairs of Allah's soothing Mercy, except those who have no faith;" (12:87) and it warns us not to be too complacent: "but no one can feel secure from the Plan of Allah except those doomed to ruin;" (7:99). We have both sides in a third Verse: "they used to call on Us with love and reverence;" (20:90).

By adopting this style of calling to truth, and abiding by its exact conditions, we may ensure for the Islamic call fair progress, with minimum loss and the best results.

If we ponder enough on all the above, we may realize that when the Messenger and his Companions adhered to proclaiming the Truth, without retaliating when exposed to hurt, it was not for minor considerations: it was definitely something that we cannot do without - to disregard this way is to ruin the call to Islam.

Another important thing related this contradiction which is observed in Muslims' behavior is that when people disregard something completely and put it out of their minds, then the texts avail them nothing, and they cannot have their crucial part in directing life. This is a major issue, and we need to give it due attention. A human cannot correct his/her mistakes unless he/she is alert, quite wakeful, and is capable of reviewing their behavior on a regular basis, for a human is fallible, and we are in need of checking for any slip. An impediment in the way of society is like the breakdown in a machine: though it may appear trivial in the eyes of the worker, it can completely stop the productivity of the machine - which is also true of society.

We need to reflect long on these issues, especially their nuances.

It is right that we look at another aspect, too. You will hear many Muslims say: "We agree to the above statement in relation with the first half of the Islamic message. But then Muslims migrated, and there was the decisive command that Muslims reply to aggression, and that they prepare all the force they can muster to defeat their enemies. That Meccan stage will never return, the stage of no retaliation, and no violence even in self-defense."

I am quite aware of all the mischief that comes from leaving such issues undiscussed and unclarified.

From our above review, it must transpire that the Messenger, peace be upon him, adhered, together with his Companions, to holding back their hands until he was received with great fervor in the Medina as ruler. Until this point, he never resorted to military force or to arms. I was once presenting these facts, when a young man cried, and he was quite irritated: "Are you saying that! Do you not see that no rebellion ever erupted without much blood being shed?" "Oh, yes," I said. "This is true of most rebellions, but not of the Messenger's, ﷺ, revolution. It was not bloody. The Muslims did not kill a single individual in their progress towards a Muslim state, and, as far as I remember, only two Muslims lost their lives: Yaser and Sumayyah."

So, **the first stage** was peaceful, and it stayed peaceful until there was a state, which came into existence in a peaceful and lawful way, and a new society and state appeared. It was after this that *jihad* was enjoined, according to the principle

stated in the Verse: "Allah does not forbid you, with regard to those who do not fight you for your Faith nor drive you out of your homes, from dealing kindly and justly with them;" (60:8).

And *jihad* in the sense of fighting was not with the intention of eliminating disbelief: A disbeliever does have the right to adhere to his disbelief, even after he has been defeated on the battleground; and he has the right, as the above Verse tells us to be treated a good treatment, and in a fair and just way - as long as he does not fight others to force them to leave their faith.

It must be obvious from the above Verse that no one may be fought for his/her faith; it corroborates the main principle, graphically pointed out in the other Verse: "Let there be no compulsion in religion;" (2:256). Fighting is really for the opposite reason: not to compel people to enter a faith, but it is to prevent any party from compelling people to leave their faith, or to enter a certain faith - which is what we learn from: "Let there be no compulsion in religion;". This must be said over and over, and explicated in every way, until it is settled in people's consciousness. At present, so many Muslims seem to believe that fighting is carried out on account of disbelief.

This is not what the Qur'an tells us: it tells us that fighting must take place so that there is no force or causing pain may take place on account of one's faith, as we may notice in the Verse: "And fight them until there is no more persecution or oppression;" (2:193).

And when the Muslims fought the Quraishi people, in **this second stage**, it was on account of the latter's oppressing

people and persecuting them to make them desert their faith. What Islam undertakes is defending freedom of conviction: people are free to embrace any faith they wish to embrace.

Let it be clear to everybody that when a certain religion is faulty, that is no reason that we fight its followers, nor do we fight to support the True Religion - compulsion is absolutely forbidden. We must uphold the immunity of humans, that they may choose the faith or the opinion that they take to be convincing. The Verse we have quoted, 'Let there be no compulsion' is denouncing compulsion to have people join any faith - absolutely like this, any faith. Once compulsion of any kind is ruled out, then let man enter any faith he chooses. That one is a Muslim does not give him the right to fight or compel anybody to enter Islam. It may be noticed, for instance, that Ali bin Abu Talib, did not fight the *Khawarej* on account of their creed, and he commanded his army not to fight them unless they shed blood unjustifiably. When he did fight them, it was to prevent them from killing people.

We need to work hard on retrieving this conception, so that it takes its firm place in the Muslim consciousness, in all its clarity and evidence. It is the principle which is based on giving trust to human inborn nature *'fitrah* in the Qur'an' and to human conscience. It is the principle in which the Muslim shows his/her confidence in the Islamic faith. For those who uphold compulsion neither trust man nor their faith: what is that religion which will not be accepted except by compulsion! When one upholds compulsion, he will have been double defeated even before the battle, since they mistrust both the human and the doctrine. And there is enough

evidence for this in history - in fact, as we approach the turn of the twentieth-twenty-first century, we have more evidence than those contemporary to the revelation of the Qur'an had. So, my hope is that Muslims study and discuss such points extensively, so that they do not hurt their faith and their religion, and so that they do not have improper thoughts about God, as we are warned in the following Verse: "moved by wrong suspicions of Allah - suspicions due to ignorance;" (3:154).

Don't you notice how God, the Almighty Lord, gave His adversaries the right to exist, and permitted them to act upon their light; so why should we, mere mortals, have the right to suppress opposing voices? We choose for ourselves the way of losing, and everybody can see that Muslims are the biggest losers at present. The way out of this is to change our mistrust of God and His system and His religion: it is in this way that God will change our state of loss.

When I set forth these issues, I must not fall into the folly of supposing them to be evident: they are not evident in the eyes of Muslims, with all their doubts and preconceptions. If they read, for instance, a Verse of the Qur'an like: "Fight the unbelievers who gird you about, and let them find firmness in you;" (9:123), they take it to assert that fighting and tough treatment are on account of people's disbelief - they take '*kufr*: disbelief' as mentioned in the above Verse to be the same as '*kufr*: disbelief' as mentioned in another Verse as: "The utter disbelief those who say: God is one of three in a Trinity;" (5:73) which is a mistake. No Muslim scholar would say that disbelief as meant in the latter Verse is a cause of fighting,

even when those indicated in the Verse say God is One of a Trinity. Those who believe like this have even the right to be treated in kindness. To see the grounds on which fighting should be declared, we may look at the following Verse: "Allah does not forbid you, with regard to those who do not fight you for your Faith nor drive you out of your homes, from dealing kindly and justly with them;" (60:8) and also this other Verse: "To those against whom war is made, permission is given to fight, because they are wronged - and verily, Allah is Most Powerful for their aid - They are those who have been expelled from their homes in defiance of right - for no cause except that that they say, 'Our Lord is Allah;'" (22:39-40).

When we have arranged things properly, everything will take its place, and there will be no contradiction or clash. It is really our own inclinations which twist Verses out of their context. In fact, all the Verses on *jihad* and fighting, all the exhortation not to hesitate to go ahead when there is cause for fighting, the severe warning to those who fall behind from fighting and *jihad*, and the *hadiths* of the Messenger, peace be upon him, in the same direction - all have nothing to do with fighting against perverted conviction - it is solely and merely to eliminate compulsion in religion, and to protect freedom of conviction everywhere in the world.

They may sound odd in the ears of Muslims and non-Muslims, but I know from the Qur'an that 'the scum disappears like froth cast out, while that which is for the good of mankind remains on earth; " (13:17) that, though Muslims keep wondering at present how it could be so, they will come to realize it and return to this position: they really have no

alternative but to accept it, and even find in it solace and contentment: this will be after they have pondered upon God's Verses and the Messenger's, ﷺ, *hadiths*; his own conduct and that of his Rashidun Caliphs. It will also give peace of heart to those who study the direction of history and the future of mankind. It will be noticed how those who did not respect the freedom of thought and conviction just kept falling and their thrones collapsed: you see their homes vacant, and their weapons rotting - the huge arsenal of weaponry availed them nothing, since they disregarded the Signs of God, both in the Qur'an, as in, 'Let there be no compulsion in religion' (2:256) and in history, which teaches us that any ideas imposed by force collapsed, together with the weapons employed to support their imposition - and it is not long since the Soviet Union collapsed, though it possessed enough arsenal to destroy the whole world.

There will fall and perish those who rise above others, and divide people into groups, some marked for subjugation: to have their children slaughtered and to be banished from their homes: If it seems long in people's eyes, it is not long in God's consideration, as the following Verse promises: "And We wish to be gracious to those who are being depressed in the land, to make them leaders in faith and make them heirs;" (28:5).

And if the downtrodden have the chance to rise, and they contract the disease of haughtiness, they will have the same law of God's applied to them.

This must teach us that when Islam laid down the law of 'Let there be no compulsion in religion', it restricted very

firmly the grounds for waging wars - no war may be initiated except against those who try to compel any people to embrace any religion, those who adopt the jungle law.

If Muslims are oblivious of their religion, we must revive it and bring them to their consciousness, and must not be desisted no matter how some would like to extinguish God's light, whether well-intended or out of hostility to this religion. Let us learn from the Verse of the Qur'an: "Their intention is to extinguish Allah's Light by blowing with their mouths: but Allah will complete the revelation of His Light;" (61:8).

A third stage, or situation, is when there comes a state of corruption and weakness on those who are the vicegerents, those who are obligated to lead the way of establishing God's system. Much confusion seems to prevail concerning this stage, for it started from very tiny diversions, and it grows until it reaches its worst stages. But let me shed light on this stage. The Prophet, peace be upon him, did prophesy the tribulation and diversion; he said for instance in his 'farewell pilgrimage': "Beware of reverting after me to disbelief, when you strike off the heads of each other!" And it must be stressed here that 'disbelief' in the above hadith does not mean disbelieving in God and His system; it means armed clashes on account of differences in opinions and convictions - but even if disbelief occurs, it is no cause in Islam for killing people. Unless we have this finally settled in our consciousness, we shall keep slaying people and shedding blood, which is the worst mischief that humans may wreak.

Islam went a long way in limiting the chances for warring and shedding blood, especially in stating that no compulsion may be used in have people accept any religion.

But we must say that Muslims have regressed from holding on to the above principle, this essential principle in good human life. Islam does not allow the spilling of blood on account of people's convictions.

It is really one and the same law for Muslims to be vicegerents on earth: one single law for the beginning, in the process, and for putting things right when corruption has prevailed. It is the way of the Qur'an as one may realize by reviewing Verses like: "Those who preach the Messages of Allah, and fear Him, and fear none but Allah;" (33:39).

And God guarantees victory for those who hold on to the way of the Prophets, as we may see in the Verse of the Qur'an: "Allah has decreed: 'It is I and my Messengers who must prevail;" (58:21). It is so, since those who follow this way have acted upon the law, and it will keep serving them as long as they keep true to it, as we may understand from the Verse: "But no change will you find in Allah's *sunnah* ; no turning off will you find in Allah's *sunnah*;" (35:43).

By reviewing the Prophet's, ﷺ, *sunnah* (corpus of hadiths), one comes across many traditions which foretell the tribulations and the armed conflict; and the Prophet was so careful to warn Muslims to hold on to the way of justice. One of these *hadiths*, one of the most explicit is this: "There will be turmoil in which to be lying is better than to be sitting, and to be sitting is better than to be standing, and to be standing is better than to be walking, and to be walking is better than to

be running." The attendant Companion asked the Prophet, peace be upon him: "What is your command, Messenger of Allah?" "If any of you has camels," the Messenger said, "let him join his camels; if he has a herd of sheep, let him be with his herd; if he has a land, let him keep to his land." "But what if one has none of that?" the Companion inquired. "Well, let him then raise his sword," the Prophet replied, "and strike with it on a rock until it is blunted; and let him isolate himself as best as he can manage."³

In another hadith, the attendant Companion asks: "What if, Messenger of Allah, the adversary breaks in to me at my home with his sword raised to kill me?" "Do as Adam's Upright son did;" meaning, as the reporter explained, as in the incident related by the Qur'an, when he said to his brother, intent on killing him: "la'in ...li'aqtulak;" ().

In still a third hadith, related by Abu Musa, when the Prophet, peace be upon him, said, referring to the time of tribulations: "Break your arrows, cut of the cord of your bows, and hit with your swords against a rock to blunt them. But if someone's home is broken into, and he is assaulted to be killed, let him do the same as Adam's better son did;" (meaning to hold back his hand as that son abstained from stretching his attacking brother.)

Abu Tharr relates also a relevant hadith, when he asked the Prophet, peace be upon him, referring to turmoil, and how to behave then: "Should I not have my sword and keep ready to defend myself?" "You would be then," the Messenger said,

³ Reported by al-Bukhari and Muslim, among others.

"equal to them [those who raise the mischief];". "So, what is your command?" Abu Tharr asked. "You stay at home;" the Prophet said. "But what if they break into my home to assault me?" he said. "If you are worried that the glow of the sword will dazzle your eyes," the Messenger, peace be upon him, said, "then throw your garment over your head - the assailant will then bear both your sin and his."⁴

Do you see how far the Prophet, ﷺ, is looking - as if he is watching our own time, when he commands Muslims to destroy their weapons, and not to defend themselves, even if the aggressors break into their homes, intent on killing them. At least we can say that the above *hadiths* apply to us more than to any other age. You may wish to juxtapose the above *hadiths* with a *hadith* like the following: "Three men are admitted by God into Paradise on account of a single arrow: the one who made it, the one who carried it, and the one who shot it;". You see how the same Prophet, peace be upon him, who extols *jihad* so highly as in the above *hadith*, is the Prophet who commands us to destroy our weapons in days of turmoil, so that there is no chance that we feel compelled to use them when the crisis reaches our home. The mere possession of weapons is a mistake in such circumstances.

It is amazing how absent the above distinction between the time of bearing arms and the time for avoiding even the possession of arms - how absent it has been all along the Islamic history from the minds of scholars. Yes, Muslims must be prepared, equipped with what is necessary for the

⁴ Reported by Abu Dawud, Ahmad, and Ibn Majah: an authentic *hadith*.

current situation - and not for every situation do we need lethal weapons. I do not exaggerate when I say that all Muslims, except for a small minority, adopt the approach of the *Khawarej* who find it lawful to bear arms against other Muslims. They, the *khawarej*, believed that only they were believers; they praised Abdul-Rahman bin Muljem, the man who assassinated Ali bin Abu Talib, and their poet, Imran bin Hattan wrote a poem in boasting of their being the believers.

It is puzzling how the renowned scholars, all and one, passed by this distinction between the laudable jihad and the *Khawarej* way. How ignorant one is when he finds it good *jihad* to kill anyone that he takes to have odd ideas, ideas that the killer does not approve of! I do not wonder that the young men who engage in those acts of violence engage in them when the leading scholars do not find fault with this approach. The Qur'an does warn us not to be among those who fall into serious sins, assuming that it is good what they do.

I hope I have brought out the great need for reviving these Islamic rules and approach - for unless we have a very clear view of things, we shall go on driving huge numbers to erroneous ways and what we reap is sacrificing many lives and resources. Let it be added that God will not give up applying His laws and *sunan*; and a main law of His is that He does not change the condition of a people until they change what is in their souls: the mistaken values, concepts, illusions, etc. they cling to and bear in their minds. We should have learnt from the long history of violence, and how often Muslims resorted to violent ways to solve problems, but every time problems came back, worse than before.

At present, this idea of solving problems by resorting to violence is in control of Muslim minds in a way that it leaves no room for acquiring knowledge and spreading better thought. You can present ideas in a way that they attract attention and please the reader, but, as you see, efforts are not directed to that. To overcome our dilemma, we need a lot of creativity, and an expansion of knowledge, both in elaborating what we know and in bringing ideas and facts within access of the public. We can retrieve the way of the prophets, and can issue from darkness into light: this comes about through reviving advanced thought. The different factions that now quarrel quarrel due to their being devoid of knowledge, due to the tiny share of enlightenment that has been imparted to them - but there is really no reason for their clinging to this way of violence, and the spilling of much sacred blood. Once we succeed in spreading enough light, the light of knowledge, among them, they will certainly come to listen to each other, and respect each other, and will all condemn violence, choosing instead the way of knowledge and peace - in stark contrast with the now prevalent way of ignorance and violence. The enlightened view those who cling to violence as the only way as wasting a lot of time and effort and lives - and getting nothing for all that but loss and despair. It is a tragic situation that we keep bringing again and again on our communities, and it will keep happening as long as we believe in violence. If we do not blame the masses, what about the intellectuals and the sages? Why don't they see the way and help others see it? Why don't they learn from the lessons of history, the experience of past peoples? It must

really have drawn our attention how the Qur'an is careful to keep referring to and depicting the experiences of peoples, from Noah until Muhammad, peace be upon them all. And it is in the most effective language that it imparts all that. It says this of Noah, just to give one example: "Relate to them the story of Noah. Behold! He said to his people: 'O my people, if it be hard on your mind that I should stay with you and commemorate the Signs of Allah - yet I put my trust in Allah. You then get an agreement about your plan and among your partners, so your plan be not to you dark and dubious. Then pass your sentence on me, and give me no respite;" (10:71).

Do you notice how powerful the above Verse is, in thought, in action, and in the challenge it puts forward. Let those who would wish to follow in the way of prophets notice what freedom Noah is urging the human to possess, before any democracy appeared, not even the Greek democracy. Noah, together with the rest of prophets, were laying the bases for dealing with the human *fitrah* 'the human's given nature'.

They proclaimed in the most sonorous voice, and to the whole world, that they advocated knowledge, science, history and the written word - and they challenged all those who opposed that approach, those who opposed knowledge, science, the written stuff, and history, and opposed the prophets and those who commanded what is just among humans - they challenge all to mobilize all their forces and call their partners: let them come forth into light.

And let it be added that Noah did not hesitate in adhering to the way of enlightenment and knowledge, to the way of both knowledge and peace - quite aware of the challenge that

he meets, as is clear in his tone. We need badly to shed light on such rare instances in the human progress, in its struggle to forge ahead; it must be brought to surface how it took so many steps to reach where we have reached. From the East did all those prophets come, with light and illumination; and when the Westerners embraced the call of Jesus Christ, they glossed over its call to peace. It will be a beautiful experience to review this progression in history, where we were and where we are. It is also the story of knowledge and science, for no problem may be solved except through knowledge and science: science will put things right, as it puts right its own errors. Malek Bennabi expresses this well when he says: "In seeking truth diligently, science becomes ethical: it is ethical when it will not tolerate error, but will insist on rectifying it."

This is a Message from God, for He challenges humans that the " 'awaqeb', i.e. consequences and outcome" of behaviors will bring out Truth, some time in the future; and once truth is revealed, falsehood will disappear, as we see in the following Verse from the Qur'an: "Say: 'Truth has now arrived, and falsehood perished: for falsehood is by its nature bound to perish;" (17:81).

You see how Maulana Muhammad Ali is echoing the same problem that Noah, peace be upon him, had faced thousands of years ago. And now, more than seventy years after Muhammad Ali's stand, we still have the problem, with very little realized: we have not gone a long way in solving it. But let us view the bright side and say that the evidence has accumulated, a huge mass of evidence. Muhammad Ali was really resuscitating the prophets' call, the call of Noah that we

have indicated and the many prophets after him: He did not hesitate to proclaim his opinion; he referred people to God's Signs: No king or army, nor any of the colonizer's tools intimidated him. His pleading is so rich and glowing, but we must try to add to its glow and richness, by adding facts and illumination - in order that it has its full impact. For my part, I affirm that this tradition of all the prophets, and all those who uphold the call to justice and fairness, will be the approach which will lead to the fall of the mighty and arrogant individuals and powers - they will, all and one, understand at last and join the way of knowledge and peace. They will cease to monopolize knowledge and science: this will be a good alternative to adopting the way of Qarun (or: Korah) with his treasures and Pharaoh with his powers; better than envying such individuals and wishing to have what they had. It is such a beautiful thing to ponder the Qur'an and see how it presents such individuals as Qarun and Pharaoh as short-sighted, that they did not aim high. And we see also in the Qur'an how there were those who envied what Qarun had, and took him to be very lucky! Let us read about this in the Qur'an:

"But those who had been granted knowledge said: 'Alas for you! The reward of Allah is best for those who believe and work righteousness: but his none shall attain, save those who persevere in good;" (28:80).