

Newspaper reviews and messages at his death

Those who mourned the death of Maulana Muhammad Ali were not only his own family and members of the *Jama'at* but people in many countries throughout the world, even in the farthest corners of the earth which could not be imagined, were also shedding tears for him. The wide scale of the sorrow felt at his death can be judged from the numerous letters of condolence received by his relatives as well as by prominent members of the *Jama'at* from all over the world. Many of these letters were published in the issues of *Paigham Sulh* from October 1951 to January 1952. All those letters would make up a book by themselves. By way of example, some newspaper reviews and letters from Muslims who were not Ahmadis are given below.

***Dawn*, leading Pakistan English newspaper, Karachi:**

“Maulvi Muhammad Ali, whose death occurred in Karachi, probably did more writing on Islamic subjects for almost half a century than any contemporary individual. Immersed in scholarly pursuits and gifted with a researcher’s frame of mind, his aims were not academic. He was a missionary who awoke to his calling in life in the environment of the last century when Islam in this sub-continent was a target of concentrated scurrilous attacks from Western missionaries and votaries of a venomous revivalist Hinduism. A man of his academic distinction, in the late nineties, must have overcome a strong temptation in declining to enter Government service — the inevitable goal of education in those days — and choosing a missionary career. The object to which he dedicated his life was the translation of the Holy Quran into English; and he lived long enough after the first edition of his translation and commentary appeared in 1917, to follow it up with many other works. The best among these subsequent works are believed to be his *Muhammad*, *The Prophet* and *The Religion of Islam*. The former is a biography which pre-eminently serves its purpose; and the latter is almost cyclopaedic in its range of information. As a missionary Maulvi Muhammad Ali had profitably studied the publicity techniques of European missionaries and his prolific writings reflect his ability to devise a suitable approach to almost every individual section of his readers. Stupendous was the energy that he could put into this task; and as the years grew on him the will-power made up for what was lacking in physical strength. He died working almost till the last. Silent and unassuming as he was, both the man and his works were appropriately reflected in the fact — paradoxical as it might seem — that his writings were better known than the man himself. His death is a real loss. He will be mourned by a wide circle of friends and admirers. We extend our heartfelt sympathy to the bereaved family.”[\[footnote 5\]](#)

***Star*, Lahore:**

“On October 13, at 11.30 a.m. in Karachi, there passed away from this world a well-known scholar and religious leader — Maulana Muhammad Ali, head of the Ahmadiyya Anjuman Ishaat-i-Islam, Lahore.

Soon after finishing his education, and while still very young, Maulana Muhammad Ali joined the followers of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian, and came to the fore as a writer in English on Islam while he edited the *Review of Religions*, a monthly organ of the Ahmadiyya Movement of which the first issue came out in January 1902. The monthly journal, devoted to the comparative study of Religion, did yeoman’s service under Maulana Muhammad Ali’s editorship by defending Islam against the onslaught of Christian Missionaries and European

Orientalists of the old school whose writings were more marked by a virulent prejudice against Islam than by a spirit of honest enquiry and scholarly research.

After the death of the founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement, Mr. Muhammad Ali was assigned the task of preparing a translation in English of the Holy Quran; but the work could not be finished in the life-time of Maulvi Noor-ud-Din. Moreover, after the death of Maulvi Noor-ud-Din, a split occurred in the Ahmadiyya Movement over some points of belief and doctrine, as well as general policy to be followed in carrying on the mission of the Movement. Maulana Muhammad Ali was the Head of the section that broke away from Qadian and established itself in Lahore, finally coming to be known as Ahmadiyya Anjuman Ishaat-i-Islam, Lahore.

The translation of the Holy Quran into English, prepared by Maulana Muhammad Ali, was published in 1917, and was at once accepted as a most valuable addition to Islamic literature in English prepared by Muslim scholars and divines themselves, as distinct from what European and American scholars write on the subject, practically always under a deep anti-Islamic bias characteristic of Christian missionaries.

Apart from his translation of the Holy Quran, Maulana Muhammad Ali brought out a translation of *Sahih Bukhari*, and many other books on subjects connected with the superiority of Islam as a religious and social system. By removing him from our midst, death has thus created a vacuum that will long be felt by all interested in the revival of Islam as the most dominant spiritual force in the lives of the Muslim peoples.” [\[footnote 6\]](#)

Abdullah Battersby (British convert to Islam):

“In the heart of the late Maulana Muhammad Ali, the beloved President of the Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha‘at Islam, there burned that *inextinguishable light* and that tremendous zeal for the Faith of Islam that gave him the power to overcome the frailty and weakness that marked his declining years. In his anxiety for the spread of Islam to the West and his own profound belief in his mission, he surely taxed his strength and, when it was my privilege to meet him, a little less than a year ago, at his Muslim Town home in Lahore, I was struck by the sheer simplicity of this man who had achieved so much in the holy cause of Islam. ...

His immense scholarship and learning easily gave Muhammad Ali a place of pre-eminence among Islamic savants, and no nobler monuments to his memory can be raised than his translation and commentary of the Holy Quran and its companion volume ‘The Religion of Islam’.

The renaissance of Islam that is taking place in the West today owes much to the labours of this revered scholar. ...

Nothing seemed able to deter him in the pursuit of this noble ideal. His faith enabled him to live a life of self-abnegation and purity, and one feels that, like Sir Galahad, he could have recited: ‘My strength is as the strength of ten because my heart is pure.’

He was a man of culture and a civilized mind, who loved virtue for its own sake, who held a deep faith that Islam shall conquer in the end.

He was prompted from within to sail like a sailor into new seas of thought, to explore the dark channels of Western misunderstanding and to throw the broad gleams of the light of his scholarship along their murky depths. He was inspired by his intense zeal for the Faith to work to the last with haste — the night of life was approaching and his passion to carry out his mission made him impetuous to complete it.

He forgot that time was passing and in his anxiety worked feverishly till eventually God called him to Himself, and there passed from our midst one of the greatest and most beloved scholars of our time.” [{footnote 7}](#)

Maulana Abdul Majid Salik, editor *Inqilab*:

“Maulana Muhammad Ali became a true and staunch Muslim by living in the company of Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad. Not only that, the greatness of the religion of Islam was so impressed upon his mind and heart that he devoted the whole of his life for its propagation. Every moment in his life was spent in the service of the faith. Besides the English translation of the Holy Quran, he wrote countless books on religious subjects. In my opinion, the best of these is the book *The Religion of Islam*, by studying which an English-knowing person can acquire such detailed knowledge about the religion which even the fully-qualified *maulvis* do not possess.

For the last fifteen years, Maulana Muhammad Ali had been living in Muslim Town, where I also have my residence. So we used to meet often in various gatherings and functions. Despite his religious and pious nature, he was quite informal. He was, no doubt, an Ahmadi, but his relations with other Muslims were extremely sincere and fraternal. One reason was that he was the head of that group of Ahmadis whose beliefs are not intolerant. Secondly, he was by nature peace-loving. He used to give sympathetic support to the campaigns and movements of the Muslims, and did not tolerate *takfir* of them, because he believed that calling Muslims as *kafir* was inconsistent with the work of propagation. He presented the message of Islam not only to India but to the Western world as well. And it is a fact that he possessed the capability of doing so in every way. He was not only a learned man of the religion, but also a high-ranking commentator of the Quran and *mujtahid*. He was an English writer of the highest standard, who well understood the Western mind. He presented Islam to Western-educated people as well as to Westerners themselves in such a style that they could not help becoming convinced of the greatness of this faith. I believe that hundreds of seekers-after-truth in the Western countries became Muslims by reading the writings and books of Maulana Muhammad Ali, and it is as a result of his efforts that today the name of Islam is mentioned with respect in the West, hostility towards Islam having much diminished. The selfless service of Islam, over a long period, will surely be a source of Allah’s mercy for Maulana Muhammad Ali, because Allah never wastes the efforts and exertions of the true servants of his faith.” [{footnote 8}](#)

***Sidq*, Sunni Muslim periodical, Lucknow, India:**

“The services which the deceased rendered to Islam with the pen in his long literary life are incomparable and unparalleled in their place. His pen was the greatest blessing for English readers and also for Urdu readers influenced by Western thought. God alone knows how many people had their faith [in Islam] restored by him, and how many Americans and Europeans seeking guidance found the path to Islam through him. ... The deceased devoted each and every moment of his life to the service of the religion.” [{footnote 9}](#)

Khawaja Hasan Nizami, spiritual leader, Delhi:

“In connection with the work of the propagation of Islam, I had cause to meet the Maulana from the beginning of my life till today. I consider him to be a very great and very successful worker for Islam. May Allah grant him protection, and patience to the bereaved.

I inform my disciples and their leaders in India and Pakistan to hold meetings of reading the *Fatiha* for him. He has rendered so much service to the Quran and Islam that I believe it essential to hold the reading of the *Fatiha* for him.” [{footnote 10}](#)

Malik Abdul Quyum, Principal, Law College, Lahore:

“*Maut-ul-‘ālim, maut-ul-‘ālam* — the death of a great scholar (*‘ālim*) is tantamount to the death of an entire world (*‘ālam*). If this adage applies anywhere, it applies to the death of Hazrat Maulana Muhammad Ali. It is not easy to find in this age in the whole of Asia, let alone Pakistan, another example of a life like his and of his constant struggle and sacrifice. ... His efforts, day and night, of seventy years have today not only been rewarded by Allah but the place he has attained in the field of the propagation of Islam itself represents a singular achievement. ... The late Maulana is included among those greatest figures in the history of Islam who can, without exaggeration, be called the founders of a new era. ...

In this age, in the world of Islamic writings and literature, his English translation of the Holy Quran and the translation of Bukhari are standard translations and books ...

The late Maulana’s life, both physical and spiritual, contains the best possible lesson for Muslims generally and the Muslim youth particularly. He used to rise at 3.00 a.m. and perform *tahajjud* prayers, and after that he was busy with work all day till as late as after the *‘isha* prayers, showing the true example of the practice of the righteous Muslim leaders of earliest times. His sincerity, his virtues and his integrity reflected like shining gold on his unblemished character. He is, and will be, counted among those famous Muslims who were born to serve Islam and gave their lives in the same way. He was one of those revered men described in the Quran as: ‘These are drawn nigh to Allah, in Gardens of bliss’ [56:11–12].” [{footnote 11}](#)

Mr. A.J. Khalil, Advocate, High Court, Maisur:

“He was a true *mujahid* of Islam, who proved to the world by his work that the pen is mightier than the sword. ... The world has not recognised his greatness as it ought to have done. He was the true, great *mujahid* of this century. ... I believe that it was the will of God the Most High that the precincts of the civilized world be adorned with those pearls of Islamic teachings that have been prepared in the form of the literature he has written on Islam and the Holy Prophet Muhammad. The English translation of the Holy Quran and the translation of Hadith done by him would be sufficient in the sight of Allah the Most High to grant him salvation. ... Such men will rarely be born till the end of time, and the Muslim people will not be able to fill the void left by this servant of Islam.” [{footnote 12}](#)

Mr. Bashir Ahmad, Ambassador of Pakistan to Turkey:

“Maulana Muhammad Ali was one of the greatest religious and spiritual leaders of Pakistan. For a lengthy period in Lahore he did such work as will make him remembered always and

forever. The English translation and commentary of the Holy Quran, life of the Holy Prophet, the history of the early caliphate, and his books in English on Islamic teachings are unique. Even those who differ with him acknowledge their usefulness. These books are read in all parts of the world. One year ago Mrs. Muhammad Ali sent to my wife a few copies of these books in Turkey. The Turks accepted them as being highly sacred gifts. A Turkish official who is a friend of mine said to me a few months ago: However you can, please have me sent the English translation of the Holy Quran by the Pakistani author Maulana Muhammad Ali, I am prepared to pay any price for it.

The work that Maulana Muhammad Ali has done in freeing the Islamic world of today from doubts and confusion is an achievement of which Pakistan can be justly proud.”[\[footnote 13\]](#)

Mrs. Bashir Ahmad, wife of Ambassador of Pakistan to Turkey:

“In the 20th century of the Christian era, Maulana Muhammad Ali has tried to take to every corner of the world the message of unity and truth which the Holy Prophet Muhammad delivered to humanity 1300 years ago. He dedicated his life to present to the world the real and true point of view of Islam. Due to his hard work and effort, of night and day, such a magnificent and superb translation of the Holy Quran was completed which is being highly appreciated in all countries. His books on Islam have been acclaimed in many countries. In my two years of stay in Turkey this fact has become clear that the Turkish people have a truly high regard and estimation for the Maulana’s services to Islam. His good name is well known among the religious sections of Turkey. His book *The Religion of Islam* is being translated into the Turkish language. ...

We are proud of the fact that in the land of the Punjab, which has produced many famous men, this standard bearer of Islam was born who rendered such magnificent services to Islam from which all the Muslims will derive benefit for centuries. I had correspondence with him from Turkey and received his last letter one month before his death. We had close friendly relations with him for years.”[\[footnote 14\]](#)

Maulana Abdul Majid Daryabadi:

“To deny the services of the deceased to Islam is to deny the existence of the sun in broad daylight. In 1930, twenty-one years ago, when I was drowned in the poison of agnosticism and rationalism spread by Western ideas, it was the deceased’s English translation of the Quran which guided me. Otherwise, only God knows for how much longer I would have been lost, and only God knows for how many people it proved to be the guiding light, as it did for me. Then his writings: the Urdu commentary of the Quran, translation of Bukhari, ‘Early Caliphate’, Life of the Holy Prophet, ‘Islam the Religion of Humanity’, ‘A Manual of Hadith’ — each more useful and excellent than the other — are in existence. ... I had only one occasion of meeting him personally, and that meeting was very amiable. There was an inner light radiating on his face, which is only produced by waking in the night [for prayers] and by spiritual exertions.”[\[footnote 15\]](#)

Shamsul Ulama Dr. Umar ibn Muhammad Daudpota, Karachi:

“Maulana was a divine of great insight into the teachings of Islam, which he disseminated through his memorable books. His services to Islam and his efforts to make its true value appreciated by both Muslims and non-Muslims will remain an abiding monument to his

learning and erudition. We have lost in him one whose compeer can scarcely be found among the so-called Ulema of Pakistan.”[\[footnote 16\]](#)

Feroz Khan Noon, Pakistani statesman:[\[footnote 17\]](#)

1. “I was very sorry to read in the papers of the demise of Maulana Muhammad Ali. Please accept my deepest sympathy. It is a loss which not only I but the whole Muslim world will share with you fully. His works will remain for ever and I do not know of any man who has done so much for the revival of Islam ... not even during the last 500 years.”[\[footnote 18\]](#)
2. “For the present generation of non-Arab Muslims, Islam was a closed book. The late Maulana, by his scholarly translation of the Holy Quran, has opened the door to this sealed treasure, especially for Muslims of the present times. This translation and the other writings of the Maulana have played the most prominent role in the religious, cultural and political revival of the Muslims. Due to this work future generations will always be grateful to him.”[\[footnote 19\]](#)

Footnotes

[\[5\]](#). *Dawn*, Karachi, 16 October 1951, as quoted in *The Light*, 8 November 1951, p. 2.

[\[6\]](#). *Star*, Lahore, 20 October 1951, as quoted in *The Light*, 8 November 1951, p. 2.

[\[7\]](#). *The Light*, 1st January 1952, p. 7.

[\[8\]](#). *Paigham Sulh*, special issue, 26 December 1951, p. 65.

[\[9\]](#). *Ibid.*, p. 67, quoted from *Sidq*, Lucknow, India, 26 October 1951.

[\[10\]](#). *Ibid.*, p. 65, quoted from *Munadi*, September–October 1951.

[\[11\]](#). *Paigham Sulh*, 26 December 1951, p. 66.

[\[12\]](#). *Ibid.*, p. 66.

[\[13\]](#). *Ibid.*, p. 67.

[\[14\]](#). *Ibid.*, p. 67.

[\[15\]](#). *Ibid.*, p. 67.

[\[16\]](#). *The Light*, 8 November 1951, p. 7.

[\[17\]](#). Feroz Khan Noon was Governor of East Bengal, Pakistan, at the time of writing these tributes. Later he also served as Prime Minister of Pakistan.

[\[18\]](#). Letter dated 16 October 1951, published in *The Light*, 8 November 1951, p. 7.

[\[19\]](#). Message for *Paigham Sulh*, special issue; published in *Paigham Sulh*, 16 January 1952, p. 6.

