

Meeting delegates to the World Muslim Conference (*Mu'timar 'Alam Islami*) and his fame abroad

A World Muslim Conference was held in Karachi in February 1951. After participating in the conference many delegates came to Lahore, and for nearly one week they kept on calling at Maulana Muhammad Ali's residence to meet him, as he was too weak at that time to go out due to illness. The leader of the Turkish delegation, Mr. Omer Riza Dogrul, who was a famous writer as well as a member of the Turkish Parliament, wrote an account of his impressions of his meeting with the Maulana which was published in the May 1952 issue of *The Islamic Review*. Some extracts from it are quoted below:

“... We had read his writings in Turkey for 30 years with great benefit to ourselves. He enlightened us on many matters, for he had penetrated deeply into the spirit of Islam and understood its aims and objectives, and had set out to explain them to others. ...

On our arrival at the Maulana's house I asked that we should cause him no inconvenience. ‘I will go to his room and kiss his hand,’ I said. I was promised that my wishes would be fulfilled, and so I waited in the drawing room. After one or two minutes I saw a light shining through the open door; I was irresistibly drawn towards it, and a moment later was embracing Muhammad Ali. His form had really acquired a sort of transparency and translucidity which were not of this world. His hair and beard, which were exceptionally white, surrounded his face like a halo. He was of striking stature. His eyes were pale and dim, and gave the impression that his thoughts were already not of this world. I spoke in order not to tire him; I treated subjects which I knew would interest him, and as I was very well informed about these ideas, he received my remarks with a sympathetic smile. ...

I asked him: ‘What are your other occupations?’ He replied slowly in a deep voice:

‘I have sworn an oath to send a complete set of my works to all the libraries of the world. I have 5,000 complete sets of my works, for which my friends have collected money in order to send them to all the important libraries of the world. Would you kindly give me a few addresses of libraries that would be interested in receiving them?’

I immediately wrote down several addresses, and he gave them to his secretary.”

Then as Mr. Dogrul took his leave Maulana Muhammad Ali stopped him and said to him:

“I beseech you to do all that lies in your power to express the enlightenment of Islam. I am sure that you will never in any way give satisfaction to the fanaticism of the narrow-minded people or even consider supporting the views of the intolerant.”

Mr. Dogrul told the Maulana that if anything could keep the Muslims alive it is the interpretation of Islam which was spreading in the world through this *Jama'at*. He informed Maulana Muhammad Ali that many of his books were already translated into the Turkish language and other books would be translated in the near future.

Similarly, delegates from other countries also visited him. The leader of the Ceylon (Sri Lanka) delegation made a special effort to locate Muslim Town in order to come to see Maulana Muhammad Ali, and praised his services and those of the *Jama'at*. He expressed the wish that the translation of the Holy Quran into Tamil may be published soon as this language

is spoken by the Muslims of his country as well as a large section of the other population. The Thai delegate, Mr. Ibrahim Quraishi, visited Maulana Muhammad Ali twice and showed him beautifully printed books in the Thai language which were translations of the Maulana's writings. He informed that he was translating the Quran into the Thai language using the Maulana's translations. He was taking the explanation of the meanings of Arabic words from *Bayan-ul-Quran* and the footnotes and commentary from the English translation. Likewise, the Chinese delegate said that translations of the Maulana's books had been published in Chinese.

During those days Maulana Muhammad Ali received a letter from a high Arab official in Egypt by the name of Muhammad Saeed Ahmad, who was Secretary in the Egyptian Ministry of Railways, Telegrams and Telephones. He asked permission to translate the book *The Religion of Islam* into Arabic, which the Maulana granted with pleasure. A little later, on 27 April 1951, the Egyptian Ambassador to Pakistan, Abdul Wahhab Azzam, who later on became Secretary General of the Arab League, came to see Maulana Muhammad Ali. As on 5 April the Maulana had had another attack of illness and was unable to leave his bed, Abdul Wahhab Azzam was received in the bedroom where they talked at length. He gave the Maulana further details about the proposed Arabic translation of *The Religion of Islam*, and copies of the Maulana's various books were presented to Mr. Azzam.

It is also relevant to mention here that, a little earlier, when Liaquat Ali Khan, the Prime Minister of Pakistan, was visiting the U.S.A., he received a telegram from Mr. William Aherberg, Secretary, Religious Section of the United Nations in New York. The message was as follows:

“Through you I want to convey to the people of Pakistan that we appreciate and value the good work of publishing Islamic religious literature in English being done by Maulana Muhammad Ali and the Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha‘at Islam of your country. In order to create better understanding between Pakistan and U.S.A. ... you must encourage these intellectuals of Lahore to open a branch in the United Nations Centre in New York. This branch could be a part of your [i.e. Pakistan] delegation at the United Nations or be independent. This will give them access to the international press and radio and other facilities.”

In this connection, another incident would be of interest. A Turkish woman journalist, Miss Kuterman, correspondent of the famous Turkish newspaper *Alwas*, came to Pakistan in 1950. In Lahore, while attending a gathering of journalists, she began to make inquiries about where Maulana Muhammad Ali lived. By coincidence Maulana Yaqub Khan, who was at the time editor of the *Civil and Military Gazette*, was there. He arranged for her an appointment with Maulana Muhammad Ali, who invited her to an afternoon tea. She related to the Maulana that although her mother, who was a religious lady, had arranged for her to learn the Holy Quran, but the Quran remained a closed book for her and she was alienated from religion. Later on, her newspaper posted her to its London office as chief reporter and there by chance she saw a copy of the Maulana's English translation of the Quran. When she read it, it opened her eyes to Islam. Then she read his other books and decided that she would go to Pakistan and kiss the hands of the man who had kindled her interest in the Holy Quran and in religion. She was thankful to God, she said, for receiving that privilege today. Then she kissed his hand and before leaving she requested him emphatically to visit other countries and come to Turkey as well, where Muslims would receive him with great honour.

Similarly, a woman writer from Lebanon, who was also president of the women's association of Lebanon, by the name of Habiba Shaban Bekan, wrote that after reading the Maulana's book *Muhammad and Christ* she kissed it and hugged it again and again, as it had relieved her of the great confusion and perplexity that she had suffered from regarding the issues discussed in the book. This lady got many of his books translated into Arabic and printed in Beirut at her own expense.

A distinguished lady from Lahore, after visiting the U.S.A., related on her return that it was by going abroad that she became fully aware of the honour and respect in which Maulana Muhammad Ali was held. In the U.S.A. she met some new Muslim men and women and when they came to know that she was from Pakistan they asked her with great interest the place in Pakistan she had come from. On hearing the name of Lahore they were thrilled and asked her to tell them about Maulana Muhammad Ali, how he lives and what he does. They told her that they had become Muslims after reading his English translation of the Holy Quran and other books. Similarly, there was a gathering of black Americans who had become Muslims, and they also inquired from her about Maulana Muhammad Ali and remarked that she was fortunate to live in a city where such a learned, saintly figure was residing.

There are many other events of this kind, which cannot be related to avoid prolonging this book. In brief, the real greatness of the work of Maulana Muhammad Ali is realised from foreign countries. In numerous countries there are people who had drunk deep at this fountain whose source was Muhammad Ali. His books have been translated into so many languages that it is difficult to procure a complete record. Books such as *The Religion of Islam*, *Muhammad the Prophet*, *The Early Caliphate*, *The New World Order* and others were even translated into Arabic and acquired great popularity. It is highly remarkable that while Islamic literature (the Holy Quran, Hadith, books on life of the Holy Prophet and Islamic law etc.) already existed in Arabic, as this is of course the original language of Islam, yet books on Islam should be *translated from English into Arabic* whose author is not an Arab, who had himself acquired his knowledge from another non-Arab, and who belonged to a movement which had been widely denounced with condemnations of heresy. This is the most powerful testimony to the personal greatness of that man, and more so it is evidence of the greatness of his teacher who set him on this path and made him capable of rendering this magnificent service to Islam.