

Muhammad
the Liberator of Mankind

(peace and blessings of Allah be upon him)

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Hazrat Mirza Bashir-ud-Din Mahmud Ahmad
Khalifatul-Masih II^{ra}

Muhammad^{sas} the Liberator of Mankind

By Hazrat Mirza Bashir-ud-Din Mahmud Ahmad
Khalifatul-Masih II^{ra}

An English rendering of
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Hazrat Mirza Bashir-ud-Din Mahmud Ahmad
Khalifatul-Masih II^{ra}

The Author

Hazrat al-Haaj Mirza Bashir-ud-Din Mahmud Ahmad (1889–1965), was the Second Khalifah of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community. He was the son of the Promised Messiah and his birth was the fulfilment of the Musleh Mau'ood (Promised Reformer) prophecy. This prophecy was published by the Promised Messiah^{as} as a sign of the truth of Islam in reply to a challenge put forth by the Arya Samaj.

From his early youth, he was gifted with knowledge, both secular and divine, and he had developed a deep love for the Holy Quran. In 1914, at the age of 25, he was elected as Khalifatul-Masih II. During his almost fifty-two years of Khilafat, he led the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community on an international level, expanding the Movement to forty-six countries, and building dozens of hospitals and schools. It was due to his leadership and foresight that the important schemes of *Tahrik-e-Jadeed* and *Waqf-e-Jadeed* were initiated for the Community.

Hazrat Mirza Bashir-ud-Din Mahmud Ahmad

was an avid scholar and a prolific author, who penned scores of books. His magnum opus, *Tafsir-e-Kabir*—a ten-volume commentary of the Holy Quran in Urdu—is revered as a treasure trove to this very day. Likewise, he was an orator of unmatched eloquence, captivating his audiences for hours on end.

Hazrat Mirza Bashir-ud-Din Mahmud Ahmad implemented the current organisational and administrative structure of the Jama'at. He established the auxiliary organisations for men, women, and children. His many momentous achievements include the establishment of the Electoral College for the election of Khalifatul-Masih and the establishment of the Community's headquarters in Rabwah, Pakistan after the Partition of British India in 1947.

He passed away on 8 November 1965 in Rabwah, Pakistan, and was succeeded by Hazrat Mirza Nasir Ahmad as Khalifatul-Masih III^{ra}.

Note

The words in the text in regular brackets () and in between the long dashes—are the words of the author and if any explanatory words or phrases are added by the translator for the purpose of clarification, these have been placed in square brackets [].

The name of Muhammad^{sas}, the Holy Prophet of Islam, has been followed by the abbreviation ^{sas}, which is an abbreviation for the salutation *Sallallahu 'Alaihi Wasallam* (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). The names of other prophets and messengers are followed by the abbreviation ^{as}, an abbreviation for *'Alaihis-Salaam* (on whom be peace). The actual salutations have not generally been set out in full, but they should nevertheless be understood as being repeated in full in each case. The abbreviation ^{ra} is used with the names of the companions of the Holy Prophet^{sas} and those of the Promised Messiah^{as}. It stands for *Razi Allahu 'anhu, 'anhaa, 'anhum* (may Allah be pleased with him, with her, with them). The

abbreviation ^{rtā} stands for *Rahimahullahu Ta'aala* (may Allah have mercy on him). The abbreviation ^{at} stands for *Ayyadahullahu Ta'aala* (may Allah, the Exalted help him).

Because of their frequency of use and for ease of reading, Islamic terms such as *hadith* or *ummah* have, for the most part, not been italicised or transliterated in the main body of the text. Anyone interested in the correct pronunciation of these words can refer to the glossary at the end of the book.

All English renditions of the verses of the Holy Quran have been taken from the 2004 edition of Maulawi Sher Ali's translation.

Foreword

Slavery, a concept as old as human civilisation itself, presents a labyrinth of moral quandaries and historical complexities. Its roots delve deep into the annals of our shared past, intertwining with the evolution of societal norms, moral frameworks, and the very essence of human existence. To embark on a comprehensive exploration of slavery is to confront the multifaceted nature of this institution and to grapple with its enduring presence across different epochs and cultures.

Delving into the origins of slavery, Hazrat Mirza Bashir-ud-Din Mahmud Ahmad^{ra} confronts the primal instincts of early human societies, where conflict resolution often necessitated violence and elimination. In this primal era, moral understandings were rudimentary, and survival instincts prevailed, shaping the contours of societal norms and ethical frameworks. As civilisation progressed, so too did the moral consciousness of humanity, leading to nuanced distinctions and evolving attitudes towards slavery and its justification.

Huzoor^{ra} outlined the notion of slavery as defined by Islam and hailed it as the only religion that truly removed the idea of slavery that seeks to harm the world.

In light of these reflections, we are compelled to acknowledge the pivotal role of the Holy Prophet^{sas} in reshaping perceptions of slavery and advancing the cause of human liberation. True enlightenment, as discerned by the wise, resides in the teachings espoused by the Holy Prophet^{sas}, heralding a path towards genuine freedom and moral rectitude.

This essay was originally published in Urdu under the title حریت انسانی کا قائم کرنے والا رسول ﷺ (*Hurriyyat-e-Insaani Kaa Qaaim Karne Waalaa Rasool^{sas}*) and can be found in Volume XII of *Anwaaraul-'Uloom*.

Munir-ud-Din Shams

Additional Wakilut-Tasneef

March 2025

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the Liberator of Mankind
(peace and blessings of Allah be upon him)

اَعُوْذُ بِاللّٰهِ مِنَ الشَّيْطٰنِ الرَّجِيْمِ¹
 بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيْمِ نَحْمَدُهٗ وَنُصَلِّيْ عَلٰی رَسُوْلِهِ الْكَرِيْمِ²
 خدا کے فضل اور رحم کے ساتھ۔ هُوَ النَّاصِرُ³

Muhammad the Liberator of Mankind *(peace and blessings of Allah be upon him)*

Slavery is a profoundly complex issue, understood by very few and contemplated by even fewer. It is unfortunate that many fail to grasp its intricacies and form opinions without due reflection. Slavery cannot be universally condemned across all times and contexts, nor can it be abolished with a mere stroke of a pen. Those who seek to challenge entrenched societal norms or a long chain of historical precedents without principally addressing all the underlying complexities are destined to sow the seeds of their own failure. Even if their ac-

¹ I seek refuge with Allah from Satan the accursed. [Publishers]

² In the name of Allah, the Gracious, the Merciful. We praise Allah, the Exalted, the Greatest, and we invoke His blessings on His Holy Messenger^{sas}. [Publishers]

³ By the grace and mercy of God Almighty—He alone is the Helper. [Publishers]

tions are momentarily accepted in the eyes of the world, there will come a time when their triumphs sour into failures, and their accomplishments lose their lustre.

A stage within the broader spectrum of human civilisation

If we calmly contemplate the issue of slavery, disregarding societal judgments and the opinions of those who prioritise superficialities over deeper meanings and realities, we will realise that slavery represents a stage within the broader spectrum of human civilisation. It is not something that can be entirely eradicated from our world.

What does slavery entail

It means that an individual is entirely submissive or has been coerced into subservience to another's will. If absolute obedience to another's whim is deemed unacceptable, then partial obedience is equally unacceptable.

Partial slavery

Nevertheless, we can observe that many institutions in our society operate on a form of partial slavery. When a child attends school, they become subject to the school's system without being consulted on its establishment, schedule, or selection of the teachers. Their deviation from the system may result in physical punishment. What sets apart the child from a slave? The distinction lies in the duration of

their servitude: a slave remains enslaved around the clock, whereas the child experiences it for only five to six hours a day.

Alternatively, while the beneficiary of a slave's labour gains from their services, a student's efforts primarily benefit themselves. Nevertheless, the element of blindly adhering to authority and the [established] system which is a core aspect of slavery remains prevalent in the student's experience.

Not all forms of slavery are objectionable

Thus, from this viewpoint, we may conclude that both absolute slavery and servitude solely benefiting another are objectionable. However, if servitude is temporary and serves one's own interests, it may not be objectionable. Nonetheless, it would be premature to categorically deem all forms of slavery objectionable.

Slavery imposed on children

However, it appears that there exists a form of slavery even more profound than that experienced by students, that is imposed on children by their parents. Until reaching maturity, every child is entirely subservient to their parents' desires. Any earnings the child may acquire belong to the parents, and contributions to household chores are often taken for granted. The child holds no sway in household affairs and dutifully follows

parental directives regarding food, drink, and attire. Their input regarding the foundation of their future is disregarded as their parents dictate and orchestrate their life trajectory. Consequently, every child, until the age of 10-12 years, remains entirely reliant on their parents, exhibiting no discernible difference from a slave in terms of obedience, conscience, possessions, or freedom of action.

Which form of slavery is objectionable

If someone argues that parents treat their child with profound love and care, ensuring that the child mirrors their lifestyle by eating the same food and wearing similar attire; it's worth noting that childhood is not necessarily a time of discernment. Without guidance, a child might inadvertently pose risks to themselves and others. The directives imposed by parents are typically for the child's benefit. Hence to me, it seems that objections to slavery arise primarily when a distinction is made between the master and the slave, disregarding the benefits conferred upon the latter. In cases where a slave possesses wisdom and understanding, yet they still remain constrained into slavery, [objections may be warranted]. However, when considering the parent-child relationship, a form of servitude which does not involve confinement cannot be deemed inherently unjust.

Slavery in the dynamics of employment

The third category of slavery manifests itself within [the dynamics] of employment. In certain instances, employees find themselves wholly dependent on others or submissive to them, yet this arrangement is not typically labelled as slavery, despite having no differences among the two. Some might argue that employees differ from slaves because they enter into such service willingly, whereas slaves are forcibly subjugated. However, this distinction is flawed, as it implies that selling oneself into slavery willingly would be permissible, [which is not the case]. If this is not permissible and an individual agrees to being enslaved, we must acknowledge that it still qualifies as slavery. Alternatively, one might argue that the ability of employees to terminate their employment distinguishes them from slaves. However, this rationale suggests that slavery is objectionable only when the enslaved cannot free themselves at will. And slavery, where the individual retains the option to free themselves, is not a genuine form of slavery.

Slavery is an integral part of human civilisation

In any case, the aforementioned examples undeniably illustrate that slavery is an integral part of human civilisation, and its exact meaning remains ambiguous to our world. To delve deeper into this matter, we must

come to terms with one of two possibilities. Firstly, we must acknowledge that slavery exists and will persist in our world, asserting that it is indispensable for societal functioning. Alternatively, we may adopt the perspective that, like many other aspects of human existence, slavery is acceptable in certain contexts and unacceptable in others, lawful under specific conditions and unlawful under others. Therefore, without appropriate constraints, we cannot outright condemn it nor can we fully sanction its practice.

The origins of slavery in our world

Following this introduction, let's delve into the origins of slavery in our world. Examining human history, we observe that in the early stages of human existence, when the human conscience was not yet fully developed, moral understanding was rudimentary and people were unfamiliar with the intricacies of morality and lacked moral customs. Individuals, when faced with obstacles, resorted to one solution: elimination, typically through killing their rival. At that time, humans lacked the capacity to comprehend alternative means of defence beyond the killing of their opponent. Thus, murder was perceived as a viable solution and a fundamental method of self-preservation. In this era, killings resulting from conflicts were not deemed morally reprehensible; rather,

they were viewed as necessary acts of self-defence. Every individual faced the prospect of being killed if they did not eliminate their adversaries, unless mutual reconciliation was achieved. Consequently, during wars between nations—irrespective of the fact that they were on the right or wrong side of the war—or when reconciliation was unattainable, not only were enemies slain in battle, but even those captured after the conflict were often executed. In the context of that era, such actions were not considered objectionable but rather essential for self-protection, in accordance with prevailing moral standards. The only nations considered truly cruel were those targeting women and children.

Following this period, a new era dawned, marked by an elevated standard of morality. Hence, distinctions were made based on the principle that only the instigator of anarchy should face retribution, while others could be spared if they posed no threat. This was because societal norms had yet to reach maturity, and governmental systems were far less sophisticated than those of today. At that time, it was determined that in conflicts with other nations, soldiers should be captured and distributed among the citizens because the government lacked the resources to manage prisoners or construct prisons for them. Consequently, citizens were tasked with overseeing

the captives, with the understanding that in exchange for bearing the costs associated with the captives, they were expected to work for their captors. Since, it was the common perception that slaves posed a potential threat to their lives, it was believed that any fleeing captive would likely return to their homeland and incite others to retaliate against their captors. Thus, the practice of executing escapees was considered essential for the safety of society, given the prevailing circumstances, despite its perceived cruelty by contemporary standards.

**How industrialisation, deemed pivotal for society,
advanced**

As civilisation advanced, slavery became an [integral] part of the society. Occupations requiring perseverance, resilience, and continuous hard work were often delegated to slaves. This practice laid the groundwork for industrialism, which was deemed pivotal for societal advancement and progress at that time. Consequently, since the ages, industrial labour came to be associated with humiliation, and nations engaged in industrial activities were viewed as inferior as compare to other nations. The stigma stemmed from the association of certain tasks with slavery, leading to their perceived degradation.

In that era, association with industrialism often implied a person's status as a [former] slave. Following the abo-

lition of slavery, when industrialism became widespread among free individuals, those with a lineage traced back to slaves faced discrimination and prejudice. The stigma attached to being descendants of slaves extended to others engaged in similar professions, leading to [their marginalisation and] humiliation within society.

**Slavery arose not from cruelty
but from a sense of compassion**

The historical narratives mentioned above suggest that the institution of slavery initially arose not out of cruelty, but rather out of a sense of compassion. Its inception was motivated by a desire to spare the lives of individuals engaged in warfare, rather than resorting to their outright execution. For as long as people perceived this phenomena as true they regarded it as a righteous endeavour, promoting humanitarian values and fostering societal advancement. However, as time passed and this perspective faded from collective memory, the same practice came to be perceived as punitive in nature. Particularly, during the period of intellectual evolution when the mind was acquainting itself with the intricacies of moral enlightenment, some individuals began to question the necessity of such drastic measures for self-protection. Instead, they advocated for exploring alternative means of safeguarding against the brutality

of enemies, [thus reflecting a growing awareness of the nuances of morality] and the pursuit of more humane solutions.

Illicit practices of slavery

Apart from the conditions of slavery that were legally sanctioned in their respective eras, there emerged illicit practices as well. For instance, as individuals became accustomed to the use of slave labour and witnessed the exorbitant prices paid for slaves, some resorted to the abhorrent practice of kidnapping free individuals or their children for sale. They trafficked people across borders, profiting immensely from this deplorable trade. Such conduct has consistently been condemned throughout various periods of human history, deemed irrational and morally reprehensible [across diverse cultural contexts]. The inception of slavery, rooted in the belief that enslavement served as a means of self-preservation that would spare them from imminent death, led to the emergence of another form of slavery wherein individuals willingly sold themselves or their children. This decision was often motivated by the hope of improving their own circumstances or the situation of their children by securing employment with a wealthy individual. In the context of that era, I too do not view this viewpoint as necessarily abhorrent. For many,

the prospect of lifelong servitude under a wealthy benefactor seemed preferable to a life of constant hunger, illness, and watching one's family suffer. In exchange for their submission, the enslaved individuals received assurance of shelter and sustenance from their master.

Reflecting on the preface and the historical context of slavery that I have presented, it becomes evident that there are phases in human society where slavery is deemed necessary. However, the inherent flaws of slavery are as follows:

1. Complete deprivation of a person's freedom.
2. Lack of any advantages or benefits to the captive individual.
3. Coercion of an individual who possesses the capacity to discern right from wrong.
4. Inability of the individual to secure their freedom.
5. Absence of compassion in the relationship between master and slave.

How can slavery be eradicated

If such a law exists that addresses and removes fallacies from all the aforementioned aspects, it becomes the

primary means through which slavery can be rightfully eradicated from our world. Until the conditions necessitating slavery are eliminated—conditions that at times compel free individuals into servitude—complete abolition of slavery from the world remains unattainable. Moreover, until individuals who fail to restrain their impulses and seek to disrupt societal order and the foundations of civilisation, [jeopardising peace and stability], are effectively deterred through stringent punishment and imposition of limitations, the eradication of slavery and the establishment of lasting peace will remain elusive goals.

Guidance from the Holy Prophet^{sas} on how to abolish slavery

It's regrettable that attempts to eradicate slavery have often overlooked these crucial considerations and chose to remain content at superficial measures that lack substance. Meanwhile, slavery persists and will likely continue in the future, as certain conditions conducive to its existence are deemed acceptable rather than objectionable. Despite efforts to abolish some aspects of slavery, they persist in reality and will continue to exist until society's cultural foundations are rooted in teachings that eradicate the inclination and essence towards slavery. Only Islam, as established by Muhammad^{sas}, the

Messenger of Allah, offers the teachings that hold the key to eliminating the essence of slavery.

Sir William Muir's allegation

Despite this, individuals like Sir William Muir, unacquainted with reality, asserts:

"Setting aside considerations of minor import, three radical evils flow from the faith in all ages and in every country, and must continue to flow *so long as the Kor'ān is the standard of Belief*. FIRST: Polygamy, Divorce, and Slavery strike at the root of public morals, poison domestic life, and disorganise society."¹

The reality, however, remains that through the Holy Prophet^{sas}, Allah the Exalted provided guidance on removing these three major evils. Overlooking this approach can lead to a cycle of rectifying one flaw for another to arise in its place, followed by yet another. Attempting to navigate these pitfalls without adhering to the teachings established by the Holy Prophet^{sas} ultimately leads to deeper entrenchment [in the aforementioned issues]. Hence, even these individuals would be forced to return to the divine path set forth by

¹ Sir William Muir, *Life of Mohamet*, p. 521-522, 1923 [Publishers]

Muhammad^{sas}, the Messenger of Allah.

Islam's comprehensive teaching regarding slavery

I have elucidated the teachings that justify the imposition of limitations on human freedom, as well as those teachings advocating for the necessity of such constraints. Furthermore, I have expounded upon the true definition of slavery as the restriction of some aspects of human freedom. If my perspective remains accurate on these three fronts, based on my research and knowledge, then I contend that all individuals who contemplate slavery in a principled manner would concur with these assertions. Consequently, I assert that no valid objections can be raised against the perfect teachings imparted by the Holy Prophet^{sas} regarding slavery.

How Islam abolished slavery

First, I will take on the different types of slavery that are distinct from the common ones. The first involves forcibly selling a free person into slavery. The Holy Prophet^{sas} conveyed the teaching that anyone who forcibly sells a free individual is deserving of death. Hence, a number of Christians from Najd lodged a complaint with Hazrat Umar^{ra} that certain individuals among them had been captured and enslaved by neighbouring nations without any cause for war. Hazrat Umar^{ra} freed them, stating

[that this was a crime committed before the advent of Islam] if such were not the case, according to Islamic teachings, he would have sentenced those holding free individuals as slaves to death. Any individual reflecting on the consequences of such slavery cannot ignore the fact that detaining a person in this manner, separating them from their family, children, and homeland, is an exceedingly condemnable act. The punishment for this should indeed be death because a person engaging in such actions affects thousands of lives, causing them to perish.

The Second Form

Furthermore, another illicit form of slavery prevalent in this world entails neighbouring nations attacking one another to acquire slaves, or engaging in warfare to seize wealth and resources, often accompanied by the enslavement of individuals. However, Islam categorically rejects such practices, establishing a code of conduct wherein no nation is permitted to initiate hostilities against another unless it can substantiate violations of its rights by the other party, and unless efforts at reconciliation between neighbouring nations have been exhausted. Even then, in the event of conflict, Islam prohibits the enslavement of captives, emphasising the restitution of violated rights or the reimbursement of full

or a portion of the expenses incurred. This principle is exemplified in the Qur'anic injunction as instructed by Allah the Exalted:

وَإِنْ طَائِفَتَانِ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ اقْتَتَلُوا فَأَصْلِحُوا بَيْنَهُمَا ۚ فَإِنْ
بَغَتْ إِحْدَاهُمَا عَلَى الْأُخْرَىٰ فَقَاتِلُوا الَّتِي تَبْغِي حَتَّىٰ تَفِيءَ إِلَىٰ
أَمْرِ اللَّهِ ۚ فَإِنْ فَاءَتْ فَأَصْلِحُوا بَيْنَهُمَا بِالْعَدْلِ وَأَقْسِطُوا ۚ إِنَّ
اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُقْسِطِينَ¹

And if two parties of believers fight *against each other*, make peace between them; then if *after that* one of them transgresses against the other, fight the party that transgresses until it returns to the command of Allah. Then if it returns, make peace between them with equity, and act justly. Verily, Allah loves the just.

This verse underscores Islam's prohibition of arbitrary aggression in warfare, and instead mandates intervention by other nations to facilitate reconciliation between warring factions. Should one nation refuse to uphold the rights of another, Islam permits collective action by all nations to address the transgression, with the ultimate goal being reconciliation. Consequently, this would remove any

¹ *Sūrah al-Hujurāt*, 49:10 [Publishers]

notion of slavery or the infringement of rights under any circumstance. It is essential to note that these directives are not exclusive to believers; rather, the term "believer" is utilised because they are the ones who adhere to the teachings of the Holy Quran. In principle, all nations can abide by these injunctions and benefit from them.

The Third Form

The third form of slavery, distinct from prevailing worldly norms, involves individuals either selling themselves or their spouses and children. Islam strongly opposes this form of slavery and unequivocally prohibits the enslavement of free individuals, whether with or without their consent. However, as I have mentioned earlier, there are circumstances where slavery may be preferable to freedom. A free individual who falls ill, becomes unemployed or encounters a similar situation that hinders him from earning a livelihood may suffer less as a slave than as a free person. Similarly, the suffering of their dependants, such as their children, may be alleviated under the circumstances of slavery. Therefore, the prohibition against selling oneself or one's family cannot be deemed advantageous or worthy of implementation unless solutions to the difficulties arising from such circumstances are provided. While this prohibition

has been upheld in society because of the progress of civilisation, solutions to the associated hardships have not been adequately addressed. However, the Messenger of Allah, Muhammad^{sas}, has offered a solution to this dilemma. In an Islamic nation, it is the government's, or in other words, the collective responsibility of all citizens to ensure that every individual is provided with food, essential clothing, and shelter. By fulfilling this obligation, one of the [main] necessities that drives free individuals into slavery is abolished.

**Enslavement resulting from worldly
battles is forbidden**

I will now elaborate on the circumstances in which slavery has been deemed permissible. This occurs when two nations engage in conflict due to a grievance or dispute, and the victorious nation takes individuals from the defeated nation as captives. Islam unequivocally rejects the enslavement resulting from worldly battles and provides the same guidance for this scenario as previously mentioned. Firstly, efforts should be made to prevent such conflicts altogether. If prevention proves unsuccessful, the resolution of these conflicts should prioritise reconciliation and be based solely on [justice] and the restoration of rights, without resorting to enslavement. Islam establishes a rule

for such battles, stipulating that other impartial nations should participate to ensure that no nation resort to transgression.

Enslavement resulting from religious battles is forbidden

Another type of conflict pertains to religious wars. In such instances, Islam advocates the principle of **لَكُمْ دِينُكُمْ** and **وَلِي دِينٍ**¹ and emphasises that:

لَا إِكْرَاهَ فِي الدِّينِ ۚ قَدْ تَبَيَّنَ الرُّشْدُ مِنَ الْغَيِّ²

That is, everyone enjoys the right to practice their own religion. Islam asserts that after presenting clear evidence and guidance, there is no justification for coercion or to use force against others. If someone fails to accept the right path despite being presented with proper guidance, they bear the consequences themselves; no one else has the authority to pressure or compel them to adopt a particular religion. Consequently, Islam unequivocally rejects the initiation of battles to impose one's religion on others, and similarly, abolishes the practice of enslaving individuals through acts of aggression.

¹ For you, your religion, and for me my religion. *Sūrah al-Kāfirūn*, 109:7 [Publishers]

² There should be no compulsion in religion. Surely, right has become distinct from wrong. *Sūrah al-Baqarah*, 2:257 [Publishers]

Permission for the oppressed nation

Nevertheless, it cannot be assumed that every individual will adhere to the teachings of Islam. Often, nations susceptible to religious attacks are those that are vulnerable and unstable, particularly under the influence of more modern religions. Neither do the warring nations show any sympathy towards them, nor do other nations intervene. In such circumstances, the principles governing global conflicts may not be applicable here. Nations, whether they share a similar religion with the aggressor or not; or whether they harbour severe disagreement with the religion of the nation being attacked, may not support the oppressed nation. Therefore, it is imperative to equip the oppressed nation with some means of defence to safeguard its rights and instil a sense of fear in the oppressor. Thus, Islam permits a distinct treatment for captives taken in battles that is waged to impose religion on others. These captives are permitted for trade, as burdening the oppressed nation, already weakened by the attack, with the upkeep of captives could lead to its further deterioration. Whether termed slavery or regarded as a different form of captivity, the reality remains that Islam has allowed it. However, it requires no stretch of intelligence to recognise that attacking a vulnerable nation with the intent of depriving them of their only

possession—their connection with Allah—and permanently enslaving them to Satan, warrants condemnation. Indeed, such actions underscore the profound pain inflicted by stripping away someone's freedom. If individuals who rob others of their conscience were to face the deprivation of physical freedom as punishment, it would pale in comparison to the gravity of their acts to strip away someone's religion.

Mandatory conditions

Despite the severity of the crime for which Islam permits the ownership of a slave, the punishment remains lenient. Furthermore, specific conditions are established, distinguishing this form of captivity from the conventional and universal notion of slavery. Islam mandates certain provisions for these captives:

1. The captor must provide the captive with the same food and clothing that they choose for themselves.
2. It is forbidden to inflict physical harm upon the captive.
3. Do not assign tasks beyond the captive's capabilities.
4. Do not assign captives the tasks that the captor finds themselves distasteful; rather, the captor

should lend their help to the captives.

5. If captives seek freedom and can offer ransom, they must be released immediately upon payment.
6. A ransom payment condition is stipulated: if a captive lacks wealth and cannot secure ransom from relatives, the captive may enter into an agreement with their master to pay in instalments by a specified date. Upon agreement, the captive gains control of their wealth, with earnings considered their own, contingent upon the punctual payment of the prescribed instalments. Full freedom is attained upon complete payment. The captor will be bound to uphold this agreement.
7. The slave has the right to pursue their freedom if subjected to mistreatment by their master.

In which scenarios is it permissible to limit human freedom

These laws demonstrate that the only condition in which Islam takes away certain aspects of human freedom are those in which individuals lack the capacity to discern right from wrong, akin to children. Those who seek to impose their own opinions through coercion and force, hinder the mental development of humanity,

contradicting the true purpose of life. Such individuals aim to deprive mankind of achieving their lofty goals by considering the sacrifice of millions of lives as acceptable. Consequently, those who exhibit such ignorance are considered [to possess intellect even] lower than that of children and merit prolonged captivity.

However, in situations where the government lacks the resources to maintain a regular army and the financial burden of battles falls upon the citizens, the most effective method of detaining prisoners is by dividing them to help cover battle expenses. Conversely, when the government possesses a proper army and can afford war expenditures and the citizens do not bear the cost of war, prisoners will not be distributed and are instead held in government custody.

How Islam removed the prejudice surrounding slavery

One of the intolerable aspects of subordination was the humiliating treatment of subordinates, a factor which contributed to the hatred of slavery. However, Islam's directive that a master should provide a slave with the same food and clothing as themselves, refrain from assigning tasks beyond the slave's capabilities, avoid tasks the master would not do alongside the slave, and refrain from physical abuse—knowing that such abuse would

automatically grant the slave freedom—transforms the situation of such a slave into one resembling that of a younger sibling or child. If a younger sibling or child cannot be labelled as a slave, then this individual also falls outside the conventional definition of slavery.

The third flaw attributed to slavery is the lifelong confinement of individuals to a certain provision. Islam addresses this issue by granting slaves the right to purchase their freedom through ransom. If a slave cannot afford to pay in full, they are permitted to negotiate with their master to pay the ransom in instalments. Once the terms of the instalments are agreed upon, the slave gains freedom of action akin to any other free individual and assumes control over their wealth. Consequently, for every captive taken in a religious war, there exists the possibility of achieving freedom. When an individual holds the power to attain freedom through their own means, such captivity cannot be termed the same as the conventional slavery.

The Holy Quran delineates two conditions for slaves: *فَأَمَّا مَّنْ بَاعَ وَإِنَّمَا فَدَاءٌ*¹. In the context of religious warfare, captives must either be released out of mercy or upon payment of ransom. Therefore, according to Islamic

¹ Then afterwards either *release them as a favour* or *by taking ransom*. *Sūrah Muḥammad*, 47:5 [Publishers]

teachings, it is entirely unlawful to hold a person captive if they have the means to pay their ransom. However, there remains a scenario in which neither the captive can afford the ransom nor the master has the means to release them without receiving payment. It is entirely possible that the expenses incurred in the battle may have depleted the master's own financial resources. In such cases, the Holy Quran instructs believers:

وَالَّذِينَ يَبْتَغُونَ الْكِتَابَ مِمَّا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُكُمْ فَكَاتِبُوهُمْ
إِنْ عَلِمْتُمْ فِيهِمْ خَيْرًا¹ وَأَتَوْهُمْ مِنْ مَالِ اللَّهِ الَّذِي آتَاكُمْ

This indicates that slaves wishing to settle their ransom in instalments should engage in negotiations, and if slave owners are convinced of their ability to earn, they should be freed. Moreover, it is encouraged for slave owners to assist them with the resources bestowed upon them by Allah the Exalted. This entails providing slaves with investments or means to generate income for paying their ransom.

Islam advises affluent individuals and governments to liberate those who lack the means to pay their ransom.

¹ And such as desire a deed of manumission in writing from among those whom your right hands possess, write it for them if you know any good in them; and give them out of the wealth of Allah which He has bestowed upon you. *Sūrah an-Nūr*, 24:34 [Publishers]

However, for those unable to earn a livelihood and who would resort to begging if freed, their masters are instructed to retain custody and provide for their basic needs. They should be nourished from the master's own provisions and clothed with their own garments.

Slavery does not exist within Islam

Every person who reads these teachings can acknowledge that considering the conventional definition of slavery that exists in this world, slavery does not prevail in Islam. Although, according to the interpretation provided by the philosophical teachings regarding slavery and based on which, slavery might actually be considered acceptable or even unacceptable, or it could be considered necessary or unnecessary; few forms of slavery have been considered legal in Islam. These forms of slavery are termed acceptable and necessary, the cessation of which would not be favoured by any discerning individual. Discontinuing them could potentially incite riots and uproars, impeding genuine freedom and obstructing societal progress. Islam has shunned the unacceptable aspects of slavery and has not only discouraged slavery, like others, but has also provided a solution for the reasons and motives for slavery so that man would not be obliged to indulge in slavery.

The true liberator of mankind

Therefore, blessed is the existence of Muhammad^{sas}, the Messenger of Allah, who removed the notion of slavery that seeks to harm the world; and blessed the world with true freedom. Those short-witted people who removed slavery only through words, and kept establishing it through their actions, their example is like the proverbial man who spits at the moon but it falls on his face.¹ Those who are wise understand and soon the world will come to realise that true freedom only exists in the teachings set out by the Messenger of Allah, Muhammad^{sas}, the liberator of mankind.

وَإِخْرُ دَعْوَانَا إِنِ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ²

(*Al-Fazl*, 08 November 1931)

¹ They endeavoured to ridicule this noble person but it resulted in their own humiliation. [Publishers]

² And the conclusion of our prayer shall be, 'All praise be to Allah, the Lord of the worlds. [Publishers]

Glossary

Hadith or Ḥadīth (حديث): the recorded sayings and traditions of the Holy Prophet^{ṣas}.

Ummah (أُمَّة): the global community of Muslims.

Hazrat or Hadrat: A term of respect used to show honour and reverence for a person of established righteousness and piety. The literal meaning is: His/Her Holiness, Worship, Eminence, etc.

