The Island of Black Waters

By:

Hadrat Maulânâ Muhammad Ja’far Thanserî Sâhib

Jointly Published by:
Madrasah Arabia Islamia and ZamZam Publishers
The Island of Black Waters

Title: The Island of Black Waters (Kâlâ Pânî)

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Publication No: A - A299

First Edition: Sha’bân 1432, July 2011

Jointly Published by:
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Translators Note
In the endeavour of India attaining independence from the mighty British empire, and expelling the English oppressors from its land, the Ulamâ of Islam played a vital role, which can never be forgotten. Their effort for freeing the land, as well as preserving the religion of Islam was indeed unique. In attaining their pursuits, wealth, time, and lives were sacrificed. From 1830 to 1919, five superb struggles were initiated against the English, four being active resistance, and the fifth, which finally resulted in independence being achieved, being passive. The summary of these struggles were as follows:

1) The first occurred in 1830-31, and ended with the martyrdom of Hadrat Maulânâ Sayyid Ahmed Shahîd â, and Hadrat Maulânâ Muhammad Ismail Shahîd Sâhib â.

2) The second struggle was the famous revolt of 1857, in which Hadrat Hâjî Imdâdullâh Muhajir Makkî â, Hadrat Maulânâ Rashîd Ahmed Gangohî â, and Hadrat Maulânâ Qâsim Nânautwî played leading roles.

3) The third was during 1862 to 1864. The heroes spearheading this struggle were the Ulamâ of Patna, Maulânâ Muhammad Ja’far Thanserî â and his companions.

4) The fourth was the one which became famous as ‘The Silken Cloth Movement’, organized by Shaikhul-Hind, Hadrat Maulânâ Mahmûd Hasan Sâhib â, Shaikhul-Islam, Hadrat Maulânâ Husain Ahmed Madanî Sâhib â, and Hadrat Maulânâ Ubeidullâh Sindhî Sâhib â.

5) The fifth struggle was the passive resistance movement, which began in 1919, during which
Gandhi and Nehro became famous. The Ulamâ that played a pivotal role in this movement, included, amongst others: Shaikhul-Islam, Hadrat Maulânâ Husain Ahmed Madanî Sâhib ﷺ, Hadrat Maulânâ Abul-Kalâm Azâd Sâhib ﷺ, Mujåhid-e-Millat, Hadrat Maulânâ Hifzur-Rahmân Sâhib ﷺ, etc.

The contents of the book in hand, deal primarily with the third struggle, made in 1862, spearheaded by Maulânâ Muhammad Ja'far Thanserî Sâhib ﷺ, a wealthy saint of his time. The book, penned as an autobiography, describes, in the most beautiful of ways, the sacrifices made by this giant of Islam, which includes, amongst others; being framed by his associates, being issued the death sentence, having all his possessions confiscated, having his sentence changed to life-imprisonment at Kâlâ Pânî (Black Waters), an island of Indonesia, used by the British as a prison base for those prisoners who were regarded as most dangerous to the state, etc.

The book describes, at full length, how, when Almighty Allâh ﷺ decides to keep one in a comfortable condition, no power on earth can change that decision. It gives an example of how the fire of Ibrâhîm ﷺ was turned into a garden, by illustrating how the island of Kâlâ Pânî became as comfortable as home, for this servant of Allâh ﷺ.

Where he had to suffer being separated from his wife and children, Almighty Allâh ﷺ offered him recompense almost immediately, that while still in captivity, he was able to make two more nikâhs (marriage contracts), and was blessed with ten more children, naming each one after the one he had lost in India. Finally, after twenty years of imprisonment, he returns to his homeland, as a sign of the power of Almighty Allâh ﷺ, that for whomsoever Allâh ﷺ has written honour and respect, none can bring upon him disgrace.
Reason Prompting the Translation
Hadrat Maulânâ Ba-Yazîd Pandor Sâhib , a well-known student and Khalîfah of Shaikhul-Islam, Hadrat Maulânâ Husain Ahmed Madanî Sâhib , used to visit the Madrasah (i.e. Madrasah Arabia Islamia, Azaadvîle) frequently. On one of his last visits to the Madrasah, he brought with him the Urdu-version of the book, requesting that it be translated, since it offered a detailed explanation of the methods employed by the enemies of Islam, in persecuting and torturing anyone regarded as a hurdle in their pursuits, despite having no proof, as being committed presently by America and its puppets, against the innocent masses of Afghanistan, Iraq, etc.

Upon the death of Hadrat Maulânâ Ba-Yazîd Sâhib , the translation was initiated. May Almighty Allâh , in His Grace and Mercy, accept it, and make it beneficial for all. Amîn. (Translator)
Preface

After my release and return from the island of Andaman, many colleagues would enquire regarding my experiences during my twenty-year term behind bars. Finding it time-constraining to repeatedly relate a twenty-year long history, I decided to pen it down, thus ensuring that with the passing of time, nothing would be forgotten, and so that it may prove beneficial to all interested.

During the year 1879, while writing “Târikh-e-Ajîb”, (a book on the life of Rasûlullâh ﷺ) my appeal for pardon was rejected. Not losing hope in the mercy of Allâh ☪, I requested, in the preface of the book, that readers should continue making du’â for my release, so that I may complete the second volume of the book in my homeland. A few days after writing this request, the ruling to set me free was, most surprisingly, issued.

I request the reader’s du’âs that Almighty Allâh ☪, just as He ☪ had granted me salvation from the terrors of that prison, may He ☪ bless us all with death on Îmân, and save us from all calamities. Âmîn

Almighty Allâh ☪ says

آَحْسَبَ النَّاسَ أَنْ يُتَرَكُّوا أَنْ يَقُولُوا آَمَّنَاهَا وَهُمْ لَا يُفْتَنُونَ وَلَقَدْ فَتَنَّا الْدِّينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ فَلَيْعَلُّمَنَّ الْلَّهُ الْآَوْلِينَ صَدَفُوا وَلَا يَعَلَّمَنَّ الْكَافِرِينَ (العمرو)

Do men think that they will be left alone to say, “We believe”, and that they will not be tested? We did test those before them, and Allâh will certainly distinguish those who are true from those who are false.

The main reason behind our entire episode, as far as I understand, is what has been mentioned above. Allâh ☪ desired that the truthful be distinguished from the hypocrite. Otherwise, Allâh ☪ has promised, and His ☪ promises are indeed true, that a disbeliever shall never be given strength over a believer. Had it not been to test the sincerity behind
our Îmân, Allâh ﷺ would never have inflicted this difficulty upon us, through the filthy hands of the English.

Rasûlullâh ﷺ has clearly stated: “A man is tested in accordance to the quality of his Dîn.”

During the trials and difficulties we endured, we clearly witnessed the reality behind these most noble words. People, whose Îmân was of steel, endured the most severe of punishments, but never gave up. The sincere were clearly distinguished from the liars. The details I shall now pen down should be regarded as an explanation of the verse mentioned above. If the reader keeps this verse in mind, he will understand many of the divine secrets underlying what occurred during this entire period.
The Initial Stages of Divine Love
During the year 1270 Hijrî (1863) a major battle was waged against the British in the area of Yâghistân, which is situated on the border of West India. General Chamberlain was appointed as commander over the British forces. During this battle the foreign forces suffered heavily. Mullâ Abdul Gafûr Sâhib, together with his disciples, joined forces with many Afghan and Pathan warriors, as well as those mujahidin (Muslim warriors) whose only purpose of joining was to attain the lofty rank of martyrdom. The war continued for about two to three months, during which over seven thousand lost their lives. General Chamberlain himself was injured during this period. Forces, from the entire Panjâb area were summoned and sent to the border to assist the government forces. While all this drama was carrying on, the viceroy of India passed away, leaving India without a governor.

During this period of turmoil, on the 28th Jumâdal Ukhrâ 1280, an Afghan, who had a little information regarding my affairs, realizing that his security lied in spying for the British, informed the police that plenty of aid for the mujahidin was coming from my side, information that had more lies in it, than truth. A warrant to search the premises was issued at Ambâla, and at about 4 a.m., police surrounded my house. A letter which I had written just a few days previously was found, in which I had made mention of sending some money to one of the leaders of the Mujâhidîn. Because they had not yet received a warrant for my arrest, the police left after finding what they had come looking for.

Fleeing from the Enemy
As soon as the police were out of sight, I gathered my family, as well as my mother who was still alive, and sought their advice. All felt that, based on the evidence acquired from my place, a warrant of arrest would soon be issued. Besides fleeing immediately, there was no other recourse. Thus, on the 13th of December 1863 I took leave from my
family. Knowing that my movements were being watched, I proceeded to the town of Pîplî, where the police-station was situated. I pretended that I had come to seek advice, since I had been framed. The police advised me to carry on to Ambâla and seek legal help from the police officers who were investigating my case. I acted as though I had agreed to their decision and after thanking them, set of towards the road leading to Ambâla. As long as some trace of light remained I did not waver a bit from this path. Only after darkness had enveloped everything around and there was no sign of any one besides me, did I change my course and move towards the forests. The following day I took a cart to Delhi, where I met with some friends and explained to them my intentions. My friends had brought with them some money collected from Patna. I accepted it and handed it over to the owner of the house in which we were staying, asking him to somehow deliver it to the Mujâhidîn.

I felt that since the warrant for my arrest would be issued in Ambâla, which was in the west, none would be looking out for me in Delhi. I thus took no special precautions to hide my identity and I would move around Delhi without any fear of being noticed. On December 15th, accompanied by my two friends, we set out for Alighar. I remember showering the driver with lots of cash, thus encouraging him to drive faster so that we could be able to catch a train from Alighar faster. I was still lumbering under the misconception that it would take ages for anyone to trace me, since I had left with such guile.

Meanwhile the police of Ambâla, after arresting the two men at my house and confiscating my documents and letters, had a warrant for my arrest issued. The following day, the police returned and after realizing that I had gone missing, sent out an alarm. Numerous houses were searched and more than a hundred family members and friends were arrested. My mother and 13 year-old brother, Muhammad Saeed were also taken in for questioning and subjected to the worst forms of humiliation one can ever imagine.

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A party was also sent to Panîpat to search for my wife, but fortunately through the courageous efforts of the wife of Maulvî Radi-ul-Islam, she managed to escape. My brother unfortunately did not share the same spirit, and finding the hiding too severe to bear, spilled the beans and guided the police to Delhi. I must admit that I was largely to blame for this error, since such secrets should never be disclosed to anyone, especially not to a child. A reward of ten thousand rupees was offered for any information that could lead to my arrest.

The house of Muhammad Shafî’ Sâhib, in Ambâla, was also searched. He was at that time in Lahore and was thus not arrested immediately. His brother, Muhammad Rafî’, was however taken in for questioning, as well as his two associates, Maulânâ Muhammad Taqî’ and Munshî Abdul Karîm. After being threatened with execution, Muhammad Rafî’ and Maulânâ Muhammad Taqî’ agreed to bear witness against me, in exchange for their freedom, whereas Munshî Abdul Karîm, due to not being prepared to sell out his friend, was sentenced to life-imprisonment, together with Muhammad Shafî’. After hearing that I had fled to Delhi, the police of that area were informed and a major search was organized, during which many colleagues were arrested. The news leaked that I had already left for Aligarh, accompanied by two other people. The police of Aligarh were thus ordered to be on the lookout.

**My Arrest**

We were arrested as soon as we entered Aligarh. First we were taken to the quarters of the district superintendent, and thereafter moved to the magistrate’s headquarters, to be kept until further orders were received. Instructions were soon given that I be placed behind bars, and that three guards be appointed over me. While in prison, I found time to ponder over the events of the last few days, and realized that my fleeing from the enemy and being proud of my schemes were acts not liked by Allâh. Due to fleeing, the case against me became very strong and such punishments
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were meted out to us, which we would most probably not have experienced, had I chose not to escape arrest. For a lover of Allâh to flee at the time of being tested is indeed most inappropriate. When one of the guards asked as to why were three guards appointed over me, whereas one was more than sufficient, I replied that it was due to the fact that I had committed the greatest offence, i.e. I had tried to run away, without the permission of my Master, Allâh. My Master thus became angry and ordered that I be brought back.

The first meal I received in jail consisted of two slices of bread and a small portion of greens, which was barely chewable. In the bread, one could distinctly make out that a large amount of sand had been mixed with the flour. I later learnt, that since the inmates would never get a full meal they would, during their session of kneading dough, chew on the grains of wheat and thereafter add sand, to make it reach its desired weight. For the new-comer, the food would barely go down the throat, but after a few days, when the pangs of hunger would start, such food would be accepted with relish. There is no doubt that when hunger strikes, everything becomes delicious.

The Test of Love

We were later transferred to Ambâla, after passing through Delhi and Karnâl. The journey was undertaken with strict security measures imposed. Stopping during the journey was forbidden. Relieving ourselves during the journey was thus out of the question. Salâh would be performed with gestures, after making tayammum.

Our interrogation began in Ambâla, after the Fajr Salâh. Several men entered my chamber and warned that if I withheld any information I would face dire consequences. I replied that I had nothing to reveal. I was thereafter subjected to such torture, which I am unable to describe. Finally, when they found no more strength with which to
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inflict pain upon me, they left. I felt that my death was close, and thus decided to complete my missed fasts.

The following day began with a slight beating. They then took me to the deputy-commissioner’s office, where I was given the chance to rest. The commissioner spoke to me in a most polite manner, making offers of emancipation and high posts, if I would turn state-witness and give the names of the other members of the jihad-movement. He also mentioned that if I chose not to speak I would be hung. I replied that I had no information to give. How can I ever describe the beating I received thereafter? From eight in the morning till eight in the evening I was lashed, but with the grace of Allâh, I never submitted to their demands. During the hours of torture the following du’â would constantly appear on my lips, “O Allâh ﷺ, this is the time wherein my love is being tested. Let me not fail!”

Having exhausted themselves to no avail they finally returned me to my quarters, wherein I broke my fast on the leaves of a nearby tree. A friend of mine, Munshi Hamîd Sâhib, who held a high post in his area, was also arrested, merely on account of some correspondence that had occurred between the two of us some time ago, which had been interpreted incorrectly by some jealous contemporaries. Seeing him sitting in front of my quarters with his face in his lap, grieving over his misfortune, made me forget all the torture received thus far. Alhamdulillâh, after much investigation, he was finally released and re-instated in his previous post. After this incident I was never again offered the chance to turn state-witness.

Searching for Witnesses
After giving up on me, the investigators turned their attention to Muhammad Rafî’ and Maulânâ Muhammad Taqî’. Their statement, made in lieu of freedom, led to the arrest of Muhammad Shafî’, who had hardly anything to do with the case.
Hundreds were arrested and thousands were threatened with life-imprisonment if they withheld any information. Many Muslims gave false testimonies, just to be let off the hook. From Peshâwar to the eastern and northern borders, practically every affluent Muslim family, and every person regular with Salâh, was interrogated.

During the investigation it became clear that finding the truth was not at all a priority. Rather, saving face, and acquiring promotion was all that mattered. Sticks were made to resemble snakes and moles would be portrayed as mountains. To receive huge grants from the government, many hypocrites sold out their own family members, portraying them as enemies to the British.

From 1863 to 1873 the Muslims had to face the humiliation of being treated as convicted criminals. Unable to bear the brunt of such persecution, hundreds of families chose to migrate. For ten years, news of this investigation received the full attention of the media and through its propaganda, a guilty-verdict was passed upon all Muslims.

**The Trial Begins**

Our case began in April, five months after our arrest. My brother, Muhammad Saîd, and the brother of Muhammad Shafi’, Muhammad Rafî’, were brought in as prime witnesses after being threatened with execution, if they chose not to comply with the demands of the British. Besides them, there were another sixty, who also gave witness under duress.

Many of the witnesses, after taking the stand, could not bear looking towards me, and many broke down in tears. The fear of execution however, compelled them to repeat whatever the authorities desired. From the time of their being brought in, until their testimony was heard, they were kept in custody. Their clothing and food would be provided at the expense of the state. Under no circumstances were they permitted to leave or meet with the other witnesses.
The hard-heartedness of these animals can never be fully described. Abbâs, a young lad, who had grown up in front of me, after being brought onto the stand, broke down in tears and was unable to say anything. After being taken back to his quarters, he received such beatings, which ultimately lead to his death. The authorities however, to save face, attributed his death to some made-up illness.

Through one of the officers, my brother was able to make contact with me, before taking the stand. He mentioned that to avoid further torture, he had given false evidence. He now desired to retract, in front of the court. I discouraged him from doing so, since the case of the state against me was already solid. Even without his evidence, my being found guilty was certain. I thus felt it best that he also toe the line and receive state pardon, instead of acting stubborn and getting jailed for no reason.

My mother had already lost one son, (i.e. myself). I did not want that she lose the other as well. Despite this command of mine, when he finally took the stand, he flatly refused to speak, saying that everything he had previously said was a lie. Fortunately the state had mercy on him, due to his tender age. He was sent home and his name was removed from the list of witnesses. Due to the great number of witnesses, for an entire week, no other case was heard in the court. Permission for Salâh during the court sessions was refused. When the time for Salâh would enter, I would, without even asking, perform tayammum and read my Salâh with gestures.

After the case was heard, the prisoners were once again re-united in one cell. This brought great relief to all. The seclusion of the past four months however, had not passed in vain. During that time, great spiritual benefit had been attained. The enjoyment experienced in Salâh and fasting during that time was probably far greater than what we could have ever acquired in seclusion elsewhere.
I would daily contemplate over the favours which Almighty Allâh had thus far blessed me with. Despite my unworthiness, Allâh ﷺ had offered me the opportunity to give some sacrifice for His religion. I shall never be able to thank Allâh ﷺ enough, that during this test of love, He kept my feet firm. Similar was the enthusiasm with which my companions bore the difficulties of prison-life. The poem, which one friend would constantly repeat, still rings in my ears:

Filast abali khi aqtil muslama ‘alai shay quot;kan allahu mashrafi
wa zalik fi dah allah wa an yashaa’ yibarak ‘alai worsal shawmiz

It makes no difference how my death comes, as long as I die as a Muslim, I will sacrifice my life for Allâh, hoping that His blessings fall upon my scattered limbs.

This was the very poem which Hadrat Khubeib ﷺ read before being martyred. The news of his death and his salaam was thereafter conveyed to Rasûlullâh ﷺ by Hadrat Jibrâîl ﷺ.

Our case resumed towards the end of April. Muhammad Shafî and Abdul Karîm were represented by Mister Ghudâl. Maulânâ Muhammad Hasan and Maulânâ Mubârak Alî sought the legal counsel of Mister Pilodan, a lawyer well known for his wisdom. When Pilodan came to meet the accused and have them sign certain documents, which would allow him to handle the case, eight of the accused signed. I however chose to represent myself. Pilodan’s presentation of our case was superb. He brought forward sufficient evidence that according to British law, the crime of lending aid to a conspiracy, but not physically taking part in it, was pardonable. I also had a marvellous time in proving that the testimonies of the witnesses were unreliable. However our efforts were in vain, for our fate had been pre-determined. The court rulings were a mere formality. The judge was not at all interested in letting justice prevail.
Judgement
Judgement was finally passed on the 2\textsuperscript{nd} of May 1864. The jury was asked to write down their verdict, which held practically no weight. Understanding well that the judge would not accept anything else, and not wanting to be singled out for supporting state criminals, every member of the jury penned us down as guilty. After hearing their verdict, the judge recommenced the session by reading out his judgement, which had in fact been penned out long before. Addressing me, the judge said, “I have found you to be well-versed and acquainted with the law of the country. Yet you have unfortunately chosen to waste this talent in opposing the state. You were instrumental in aid and weapons reaching the enemies of the state. I thus find no punishment more suitable for your treachery than having you hung, and having all your assets confiscated!”

Upon hearing his ruling I boldly replied, “Giving and taking life lies in the decision of Almighty Allâh ﷺ alone. If He so desires He may even take your life before mine’s.” This remark infuriated the judge, but as there was no other punishment worse than hanging, he could do nothing. I can still remember the sensation that overtook me on that day. The possession of the seven continents could never bring such a feeling of happiness, as the one I had experienced on that day. It seemed as though Jannatul-Firdaus and its damsels were displaying their beauty in front of me.

Maulânâ Yahyâ Alî and Muhammad Shafî also received the death sentence and the remaining eight were sentenced to life imprisonment. Their assets were also confiscated. Maulânâ Yahyâ Alî too experienced the same feeling of joy which had overtaken me. The court was packed to capacity, but when the ruling was heard, there was dead silence. A group of armed officers escorted us to the jail. On the way, one remarked, “You should be in tears. Your death is looming right above, yet you a laughing as though you have been set free!” I replied, “Martyrdom is the greatest gift one
can ever receive. You however, shall never be able to comprehend this!

The sobbing of friends and family escorted us from the court. Understanding it to be the divine decree of Allâh, some eventually managed to subdue their feelings, while others went mad in grief. Three of us were separated, while the remaining eight were placed with the other inmates of the prison. The night passed with great difficulty, since the cells were dark and cold. In the morning we pleaded with the officer-in-charge to spare us this torture and allow us to rather spend the night in the open. They flatly refused, but then, to their and our amazement, an order was received from higher quarters, ordering that we be left to sleep in the open. Perhaps this was meant as a way of increasing the torture, but for us it was Allâh’s mercy in disguise. Meanwhile our clothing and ropes for the day of execution were prepared with great care.

**The Chief Court**

As a last resort, our lawyers desired to lay an appeal with the chief court. I also, after acquiring a copy of our entire case, sent in an appeal, with detailed proofs that the verdict was bias. Our attorney, Pilodin, once again brought up the point, that in accordance to the law of the government, our actions were to be pardoned, and punishment could be given only if the crime was to be repeated. The judge himself agreed, but due to the severity of the case, chose to postpone the case, in order to acquire the advice of his seniors.

Despair now changed into hope, and the feeling that we were to be freed became so strong, that our family had clothing sewn for the occasion of our release. We remained in our cells from the 2nd of May (the date of being sentenced to death) until the 16th of December. During this period we would receive European visitors on a daily basis. The signs of happiness they would perceive on our faces would amaze them, and many would even ask, “Aren’t you afraid to die!”
We would reply, “To be killed on the hands of an oppressor attains for one the rank of martyrdom. This rank is a gift sought by all believers!”

During this period, our relationship with the guards became so strong, that one night they even offered us the chance to escape, saying that they were prepared to bear the brunt of their seniors for their negligence. After expressing our gratitude to them for their kindness and praying for their guidance, we explained to them that we had resigned ourselves to the decree of Allâh ﷺ. If freedom is destined for us, we shall be released with honour. And if Allâh ﷺ has destined captivity for us, then none could ever set us free!

While in captivity, Qadî Miyâ Jân Sâhib, fell ill and had to be transferred to hospital, yet whenever he would find the strength he would come to visit us in the jail. A few days before passing away, he saw himself in a dream being lifted to the heavens on a jewelled slate. Upon his death, the interpretation of the dream came forth, that his conveyance from Jannatul-Firdaus was soon coming to fetch him. He was the oldest from amongst us, yet very independent. May Allâh ﷺ bless him with the best of the pleasures of Jannah.

During this very period, I received the news of the death of my mother. According to the information received, she had been bitten by a snake and her death resulted from the strength of the poison. While receiving medical treatment, certain family members sought permission to seek the help of some non-Muslim sorceress. My mother flatly refused saying, “While my son was in the house shirk (acts of disbelief) were never allowed. Now in his absence, how can I ever allow it!?" Shortly after her death, Maulânâ Yahyâ Alî Sâhib saw my mother in his dream. She was sitting on a beautiful throne, in a manner fit for a queen. Upon enquiring the reason for such a high rank, she replied that it was all on account of the patience she bore, with regards to her son’s difficulties.
Kâlâ Pânî (Black Waters)
While awaiting the outcome of our case, a saint of our times was blessed with a vision, that instead of execution, we would be imprisoned in an island known as “Kâlâ Pânî (Black Waters)”, and would one day be freed, with great honour. We had so much of conviction on his words, that even before receiving news regarding the court’s decision, I wrote to my family, informing them of our fortune. The attitude of the government towards us at that time however was so harsh, that for majority of my family, such news was unbelievable. During those days, anyone found merely sympathizing with us, or lending aid to our families, would face the wrath of the government. Even if the king of Rome were to plead on our behalf, it would fall on deaf ears.

While awaiting the final verdict, news of our eager anticipation of martyrdom reached the ears of our arch enemies within the government. They therefore issued a second ruling, which was read out to us on the 16th of September. The new ruling was as follows:

“Having heard that execution would be a source of joy to you and your companions, the high court has agreed to alter the initial judgement. Instead of execution it was felt that life-imprisonment would be more suiting to your crime.”

In accordance to the law of the prison-board, our hair and beards were then shaved. I can still remember Maulânâ Yahyâ Ali Sâhib grasping onto a few strands of his beard and saying, “Grief not over your misfortune, for these strands have been blessed with acceptance in the most divine of courts!”

Hard Labour
In preparation for my execution, the prison had a silken rope prepared. After receiving news that the decision had been changed, the prison had the rope placed aside, to be used for the execution of someone else. During that very
period, the case of an Englishman accused of murder, had just been finalized. Finding him guilty, the death sentence was passed and the very rope, which had been prepared with such care, for the execution of a Muslim, was now used to take the life of one of their very own people, i.e. a European. Regarding this to be a sign of Allâh’s love for us, many Muslims flocked to witness the execution of the European, and finally the rope itself was cut into pieces and divided amongst them, as an item of blessing.

Despite the jail-warden’s inclination towards us, the fear of angering the superintendent forced him to choose the hardest form of labour for us. Within a short while, due to the severity of the work assigned to us, our feet became numb. At that very moment, by the grace of Allâh, the doctor of the prison walked in. Seeing our most pitiable condition made his heart go soft. He had us immediately removed from that area and assigned elsewhere, where the work was much easier. We would work during the day and take rest at night.

When we first arrived in Ambâla, the prisoners would receive nothing but bread and gravy as their daily diet. Meat and milk products would not even be smelt. Within a few days after our arrival, a law was passed that all prisoners be given fresh meat and milk, on a regular basis. Since this new law coincided with our arrival, many of the prisoners regarded it as a sign of Allâh’s love for us. The amazing thing however is that as long as we remained in that prison, these items remained on the menu. When the time came for us to be transferred to the island, “Black Waters”, the menu was sent for a review, which resulted in all these products being removed. Even the quality of the bread was degraded.

During our stay in Ambâla, fever accompanied by delirium broke loose amongst the prisoners. The severity of the plague resulted in the loss of many lives. I also was amongst those affected. Due to the illness, I had to be transferred to the prison hospital, were I remained for many
days. The doctor on site paid special attention to me. After a few days, having found no significant improvement in my case, he enquired if I could prescribe some herbal medicine for myself, since his medicine did not seem to agree with me. I wrote down the names of certain ingredients, which were immediately purchased. My medicine was then prepared in accordance to my instructions and within a few days my strength returned. This pleased the doctor tremendously and to ensure total recovery, he prescribed milk and meat as part of my diet.

While in hospital I found time to reflect upon my past. My life before the 12th of September, the day my house was searched, was one of luxury and affluence. I had in my possession land worth thousands. Scores of people were employed by me, and horses and cars were always at my disposal. After the search however, everything disappeared. Angered by my attempt to flee arrest, the English had all my possessions confiscated. Besides a cottage which was given to my brother, after his laying claim, that in accordance to the law, he was deserving of half my estate, everything else was put up for auction. Even the land which I had included as part of the dowry for my wife was taken, after dragging her out, together with our two suckling children.

After the cancellation of the death-penalty, we remained in the prison of Ambâla for about five months. During this period, delicious food would reach us regularly from the house of Muhammad Shafî’. Our craving for good food was such during those days that one night a guard summoned me to deliver a plate of food to Muhammad Shafî’, which had just arrived from his house. Unable to resist its delicious smell I filled my mouth with a couple of morsels, thinking that it would never be missed. Allâh ,No, in His kindness, would not allow my body to receive nourishment from that which was doubtful. The morsel got stuck! It was not going down my throat, nor was I able to vomit it out. Unable to breathe I fell to the ground. Help arrived immediately and with much effort the doubtful morsel was forced out, saving
my life and at the same time disclosing my greed in front of all. I still remain thankful to Allâh for his countless bounties, amongst which was the protection he afforded to our bodies during those days, due to which harâm and doubtful never filled our bellies.

**Maulânâ Ahmadullâh Sâhib**

While in Ambâla, news reached us that in the event of our appeal for freedom being rejected by the high court, the British were planning to file similar accusations against Maulânâ Ahmadullâh Sâhib, who was from amongst the high-ranking saints of the time. After receiving news that the appeal had been declined, their efforts to bribe friends and family and extract from them false witness began.

Mir Mujîbuddîn, who had been imprisoned on bribery and fraud charges, was hired to encourage one of us to give witness against Maulânâ Ahmadullâh Sâhib. Having been promised freedom if he succeeded, he left no stone unturned in trying to convince one of us to do what the British wanted. To ensure his failure, we explained to our companions that our worldly life has already been ruined. Now we have only the Hereafter to look forward to. Why should we then destroy our Hereafter just to please the British. Our words had such an effect that Mir Mujîbuddîn found no resort, but to ask the authorities to shift us to another prison, saying that as long as Muhammad Ja’far and Yahyâ Alî are around, nothing could be done.

The decision was thus passed to relocate us to the central prison of Lahore. Shortly after our transfer, Muhammad Shafî and Abdul Karîm agreed to turn state witness against Maulânâ Ahmadullâh Sâhib, and through their confessions, the court sentenced the saint of the time to life-imprisonment on the island of Black Waters.

Just imagine the state of the justice system of these infidels. First they claimed that the evidence against Muhammad Shafî was so damning that it demanded all his land to be
confiscated by the state, which was worth millions. One year later, just on account of his false witness, they dropped all charges and set him free. His properties however were never given back. If he really was as big a criminal as they claimed, then why did they drop all charges and set him free?! And if he really was innocent, then why was his property never returned?!

When the time approached for my transfer to Lahore, my family came for a final greeting. I was allowed the opportunity to spend a great deal of time with them in a hut outside the prison. The mere sight of my pitiable condition and the chains, with which I was bound, brought tears to their eyes. I consoled them, explaining the immense rewards that are in store for those who remain patient. On that day, after about one and a half years, I got the chance to see my son, Muhammad Sâdiq. Little did I know that this was to be my final worldly glance towards him.

The Journey to Lahore

On the 22\textsuperscript{nd} of February, in a group of about forty prisoners, with chains dragging behind us, we began our march to Lahore. The journey was long and the weight of the chains made it even more difficult. The opportunity to enjoy fresh air, under an open sky, however, made us immune to the pain. The company of Maulânâ Yahyâ Alî Sâhib  added even more spice to the journey, making the day seem as Îd, and the night like the 15\textsuperscript{th} of Sha’ban. By the will of Allâh , on that very day, the marriage of Maharaja Muhandar Singh was taking place, and his entourage happened to pass us, coming from the opposite side.

As the two groups came face to face, the deception behind the honour and disgrace of this temporary world was quite evident. The Maharaja himself must have scorned at our sight, feeling that our presence spoilt the beauty of his entourage. Little did he realize that the world of reality was fast approaching, wherein he would realize the true meaning of honour. His call came shortly after the marriage,
separating him forever from the bride for whom he had spent so much, and delivering him into a court where king and pauper both appear empty-handed.

During the course of the journey, we spent whatever money we had on food, drinks and snacks, knowing quite well that within the prison walls, these delicacies would never be accessible.

We arrived at the central jail of Lahore just after three. Our files were checked thoroughly, and we were thereafter presented in front of the superintendent. In a tone of fury he commanded that our feet also be chained together. In obedience to his order, an iron rod was placed between our legs, which made moving around and taking rest extremely painful. This command was based purely on hatred, since no other prisoner in the jail was to be seen burdened with the same.

**Central Jail – Lahore**

The second command issued regarding us was that each one of us be kept in a separate cell. Separation proved even more painful than the chains on our feet. However, within a week, by the grace of Allâh ﷻ, this command was cancelled, the reason being that after the news of our being ill in the Ambâla prison was received, the jail warden feared that our sickness could very easily spread to the other inmates. He thus decided to separate us from all the other cells. Due to the shortage of cells, the only possible option was to re-unite all the Ambâla-inmates in one cell, at a distance from the other cells. The happiness experienced due to this reunion can never be explained.

The superintendent thereafter handed me the responsibility to ensure that all the inmates of my cell abided to all the rules. When he would come for inspection, it would be my duty to hop around with him, informing him of issues relating to the inmates and taking note of any new
instructions. Despite this position, the harshness of the superintendent towards me, still remained the same. I can still picture the morning when he decided to make a random search of our cell, to see if any inmate was in possession of items not permitted. During these searches, punishment would be meted out for trivial matters, to the extent that a lashing would be given if any food product was found in one’s possession. A small amount of salt was found under my mattress, but before anything could happen, a friend of mine, Dhadal, spoke out saying, “The salt is mine and that mattress belongs to me!”

The superintendent enquired that if the mattress was his, then why was he lying somewhere else and what was I doing on his mattress. His sudden reply left me astounded and compelled the superintendent to burst out laughing. His reply was, “Maulânâ and I had both gone to relieve ourselves, when we heard your footsteps. In our haste to get back to our places, we erred and landed up at each other’s place.” On that day, when punishment was meted out to many, for being in possession of unpermitted items, Dhadal and I were spared, on account of the spirit of self-sacrifice which Dhadal displayed, while trying to save me.

**Of to Karachi**

At the end of October 1865, our journey to Karachi began. Whilst being escorted to the train station, our faces were covered with hoods. In addition to all the other chains which we had grown habitual of, an extra chain was also included, to bind every two prisoners together. These hoods and chains remained on throughout the journey blinding us from the beautiful scenery which we were so desirous to see. We reached Multan just after eight and retired to bed without receiving any supper. After passing two days in the Multan jail, without getting the chance to see anything of the city, we were boarded onto a ship leaving for Kotli, after which we would be transported to Karachi by train. On board, we were seated in rows, with huge chains binding us together, making even slight movements impossible. During the
journey, we were forced to relieve ourselves in our places and despite being surrounded by water, we would perform our Salâh with tayammum.

Despite these difficulties, the mere opportunity to be able to enjoy fresh air, under a beautiful sky, in the company of friends, made the difficulties seem trivial. While in Ambâla, the thought would many a time pass, that due to my ability to read and write Urdu and Persian, I would also enjoy added privileges in the prison, and would always be given the responsibility to see to the affairs of the other inmates. This notion was soon proven wrong, since all offices had now begun using the Sindhi language, which we knew nothing of. We were now treated as all the other illiterate and thus, the pride of being educated was soon eradicated. By the grace of Allâh ﷻ, the prison of Karachi was found to be most comfortable. Most of the chains that had burdened us up till now were removed and the privilege to wander under the open sky at night was afforded to us. After two years we now had the opportunity to enjoy a moon-lit-night or a night under the stars. Even the food of this place was delicious, when compared to what we had been given in the other prisons. The only difficulty faced was that of relieving ourselves. The spot for relieving was situated in such an uncomfortable position, making concealing oneself practically impossible.

**Bombay**

After enjoying a full week in Karachi, our ocean journey to Bombay began. The ship was quite small, but that did not worry the officers transporting us at all. Like lifeless corpses, the prisoners were all shoved into a small, stuffy cabin, piled upon each other. Then, when the nausea began, due to the rough waters, we had to bear the most disgusting of feelings, as prisoners began vomiting on each other. After three days, as we entered the dock at Bombay, our ordeal came to an end,. We were thereafter transported by rail to Bombay.
Life in Prison
We arrived at the prison close to nightfall. The prison was like a huge fort, surrounded by a deep trench. We were again searched and this time even our shoes were taken away. We had heard that a prisoner once attacked the jail-warden with his shoes, thus the law was passed that the prisoners should be left barefoot. At night we would receive two pieces of bread and a small portion of gravy.

The 1st duty assigned to our group was to break stones, which took about two days. Shortly after our arrival, a new department of labour was introduced within the prison, and a man from our cell was appointed to instruct other inmates in that field. Due to the great respect he held for us, he mentioned to the authorities that Maulânâ Yahyâ Alî and I were highly talented in that particular field, and thus obtained permission that we work together with him. The work of this field was relatively easy, thus our one month stay in this prison passed quickly.

The language of this prison was Marhati. Urdu and Persian-speaking were thus regarded as illiterate. After learning this, my hopes of ever being recognized as an educated man evaporated. I now placed my hopes fully in the divine mercy of Almighty Allâh, that the chance to hold a pen may one day arise. The chief jailor was a cruel Brama, but fortunately his deputy was a kind-hearted Muslim, who would do whatever was in his power to ensure our being comfortable. Even when the time came for us to be shifted, he instructed that the heavy chains around our legs be removed and replaced with much lighter ones.

In the jails of Hind, life would be made extremely difficult for the noble, whereas ruffians would enjoy plenty of freedom, just on account of their wearing English dress, or being European.
The Journey to “Black Waters”
This journey began on the 8th of December 1865. All the sailors were Englishmen, making communicating with them quite difficult. Fortunately, amongst the captives, there was one, well-acquainted with the English language. Through him, most of our work would be completed. The food for the Muslim captives consisted of rice, dhall and dry fish, while the Hindus would receive chick-peas. Our Punjabi mates, who were used to their roti, soon became fed up with rice twice a day.

Due to the rough waves, nausea soon set in, and one captive, who had only five years left of his sentence, passed away. We received permission from the captain-in-charge, who was a kind-hearted person, to bury the captive in the manner prescribed by the Sharî’ah. After performing the Ghusl and shrouding the deceased in a Kafn, we tied many pieces of stone to his feet and lowered him into the ocean.

On the 11th of January, after thirty-four long and tiring days, we reached our destination, Andaman. The journey from Ambâla to Andaman, all in all, took eleven months.

Andaman
From far, it seemed that the black rocks of the island were herds of buffalo moving in the water. A short while after docking, the lieutenant in charge of the port approached in a small boat. Accompanying him was an Indian sailor. Without any real hope of receiving a positive answer, I posed the question to him, ‘Tell me, is there any value for the educated here?’ To my surprise, he responded in the affirmative, saying, ‘My friend, here if you are educated, you shall live like a king!’ After having lost all hope of my literary talent ever being realized, this statement brought for me new life.

Many big boats thereafter came and began escorting all those on board, towards the shore. As we neared the shore,
the figures of Ulamâ in white robes could be made out, as though they were awaiting our arrival. We were still preparing to descend, when the voice of one person on shore rang out, ‘Are Maulânâ Muhammad Ja’far and Maulânâ Yahyâ Alî amongst you?’ I scream out loud, ‘Present!’ Hearing my voice, some men jumped into the water and hand in hand escorted us onto the shore.

We were later informed that six months earlier, Maulânâ Ahmadullâh Sâhib had arrived, after spending one year in Patna. Prisoners, who were with us, had arrived two days earlier, in another ship, and had informed him of our coming. It was due to his command that all these people had come to welcome us.

After exchanging greetings, we separated from the other prisoners and proceeded to the quarters of Ghulâm Nabî, who was in charge of the marine department. There, Maulânâ Ahmadullâh Sâhib and other respected people met us. Arrangements had already been made that we would stay with Ghulâm Nabî, for the time being. Our chains were removed and we were clothed with garments which had already been sewn for us. Although I was only set free twelve years later, but with regards to the luxuries received on this island, it could easily be said that we became free the moment we set foot on the island.

We would receive invitations for meals regularly, and such delicious food would be prepared, which we had never tasted before. We had already resigned ourselves to the belief that jail-food would remain our source of sustenance for the rest of our lives. Allâh however was now showing us a glimpse of His power, by blessing us with freedom while still in captivity. On the island we noticed that many of the prisoners, male and female, had tattoos inscribed into the skins of their foreheads, revealing their names, their crime and the words ‘captive till death’. However, solely due to the grace of Allâh, shortly before our arrival, this law was also abolished.
The Island of Black Waters

According to research, Andaman was once part of Asia, and then separated to form thousands of small islands. The highest mountain on this island is Mount Hirat, which is approximately 1116 feet high. There are no springs or dams that provide sweet water. During the rainy seasons, water flows from the high mountains, but this dries up as soon as the rain stops. The only animals, on the island, are swine. Fruits and vegetables grow on the island in abundance, and a great amount is exported to various countries as gifts. After clearing a great portion of the jungle area, over fifty villages had sprung up. Items that do not grow on the island, or its neighbouring islands, are imported from Calcutta and sold at a minimal price. Thus, the inhabitants of this island are hardly ever short of anything.

The air of the area is so pure, that contagious sicknesses are unheard off. There is no severe cold in winter, nor severe heat in summer. The weather throughout the year remains almost constant. Even during the winter nights of December and January, there is only a need for a quilt. The trees and grass remain green throughout the year. Perhaps Allâh ﷻ had adjusted the temperature of this area to suit the needs of the primitive man of the area, who would move around without any proper dressing. Had there been any real cold in this area, these people would never have survived, dressed as they were.

Rain falls continuously from May until November. For this reason, the roofs of the area are made very solid. Our roofs in India, which are made of mud and straw, would not be able to manage even one day of such rainfall. Hail however does not fall, nor does the area ever experience storms or hurricanes. The jungle is dense, and traversing it is quite difficult. The trees go high, as though they are conversing with the skies. The snakes and scorpions of the area are not considered dangerous.
A wild primitive clan still roams in the jungle, naked. It is not known when and from where they first came. Some claim that they are not even from the children of Adam since hair does not grow on their bodies.

Approximately one hundred years previously, a man by the name of Blair, who was the captain of a British ship, laid anchor on the island, and the island thus received its name, viz. Port Blair. At that time, the island was being used for exiled prisoners. In 1796 the island was deserted, due to the air not suiting many of the prisoners. After the revolt of 1857, the British reopened the island, to be used as a prison-base.

**The Original Inhabitants of Andaman**

During the initial stages of the English inhabiting the island, the locals would rebel time and again. After receiving crushing defeats, they realized that there was no other option but to accept Imperial rule. Now, whenever they come in front, they greet with extreme courtesy. They are about four to five feet in height, with a white complexion. Their eyes bulge out slightly and their hair resembles the wool of sheep. They are short but extremely strong. On the island, there are about twelve different such tribes, each with its own language.

As with regards to belief, they believe in the existence of one powerful God, born from none, from ever and who shall remain forever. His palace exists in the heaven and He is invisible from the eyes of all. Rain, thunder and lightning emits from his palace. Death is subservient to His command. All good emanates from Him and he alone is the provider. He has a wife who is also from ever and shall remain forever, however she occupies a lower pedestal then her husband. She is the creator of the fish in the ocean and she throws it down from the heavens.

These people also believe in the existence of an evil force, one known as Iram, who causes corruption on earth, and
the other, who moves about in the ocean, known as Jorowanda. Death on earth is attributed to Iram and death at sea is attributed to Jorowanda.

They believe in angels who reside in the jungles and see to the protection of man. Although they believe in the existence of a god, they do not worship him, nor do they worship anything else besides him. They also speak about the floods of Nabî Nûh and claim that finally the ship of Nûh anchored on the island of Andaman.

They are unable to count. If they need to refer to any number they refer towards it with their fingers. They are uncomfortable with clothing and it is only their women who wear a small cloth, which covers their most private area. Both men and women remain bless. Even the weddings occur in the most strangest of manners. The bride and groom first rub fat over each others bodies, in front of all. A senior member of the tribe then takes the groom towards the bride and throws a bow, some arrows and a spear in front of him, saying, “Hunt with this and see to the needs of your bride!” The groom responds in a voice audible to all, “I accept!”

After marriage, the bride and groom remain together forever, with no option of divorce or separation. Amazingly, adultery amongst these people hardly ever occurs. Childbirth also enjoys no privacy amongst them, and their women deliver in view of all. On the first day, the child is made to drink the milk of a strange woman and thereafter returned to her mother. After birth, the mother resumes to her daily chores almost immediately.

Their houses are simple and practically bare. Their capital possessions consist of a bow, an arrow and perhaps a small boat, with which they move between islands. When a guest comes from another island, he first sits at a slight distance from the house of his host, and the host sends the food to him. After eating, all come to meet him. These people are
not familiar with farming and do not even eat vegetables. Their diet consists of nothing but fish, and insects of the ocean, which they eat without any flavouring or spice, after roasting it over the fire. They also occasionally partake of the roots of some trees, its fruits, leaves of the jungle, honey and the flesh of swine.

They are excellent divers and archers. Their arrows hardly miss its target. They have no doctors or herbalists amongst them. All sicknesses are treated with their amazing method of cupping. When anyone falls sick, he himself, or some close family relative pierces him with the edge of a bottle and lets his blood flow.

Upon the death of a member of the clan, the deceased is placed in a basket by bending his knees and tying it onto his chest. The body is covered with the leaves of trees and the basket is buried. A fire is then lit near the grave. After one or two months the grave is re-opened and a mourning session occurs. Thereafter the bones are removed and distributed amongst the deceased’s family.

They do not believe in the hereafter. According to them, after death, man’s existence comes to an end. Singing is a common practice amongst them, but without any type of musical instruments. Although they follow no religion, their qualities of honesty and courtesy are unique. Until recent times, they held no value for money. If anyone had to receive any cash, he would scrutinize it and then throw it to the ground. However now greed has settled in, and one shall find them begging all over.

Their age-span is not much. Their girls mature at a very young age and old-age settles in quickly. One of our Indian friends actually married one of these women, but after being set free, he set of for India and left her weeping behind.

During the years 1858 to 1865, the air of the area became poisonous. Any wound would result in death. The wound
would rot by the third day and the wounded would die on the fourth. At the beginning of the English settling on the island, a plague spread with great force. Due to this sickness, the mouth would burn and the knees would become stiff. In this plague, thousands of prisoners passed away.

**Life at Andaman**

By the grace of Allâh ﷻ, one year before our reaching the island, all the sicknesses of the area strangely disappeared. The air became so pure, as though the area had changed into Kashmir. During our twenty years on the island, we did not even experience as much as a headache. Due to the plague and having the island re-opened only recently, the attitude of the British towards the captives was initially most lenient. After environmental conditions changing for the better, their treatment towards the captives took a different course, so much so, that it became even harsher than the jails of Hind.

By the grace of Allâh ﷻ, we arrived just before these new laws could be implemented. We were able to enjoy almost total freedom on the island, and we would even receive a salary for our work. Now, new arrivals are subjected to harsh labour, and food barely edible. One sentence of the resolution of Andaman, which was passed in 1876, reads as follows: “It is vital that all captives of Andaman be subjected to the most harsh forms of labour and made to survive on a bare amount of food.”

Due to the revolt of 1857, whichever captives were brought from India, irrespective of the position he previously held, would be treated with contempt, just due to him being from Hind. As for the European prisoners, or practically every Christian-English-speaking prisoner, they would receive the best form of treatment a prisoner could ever accept. They would be given separate living quarters, a full-time servant and a monthly salary of fifty rupees.
A vivid example of this is what happened in 1879. An Indian rajah was arrested and after a great hue finally exiled to Andaman. Due to his complexion being dark, he received the same treatment as the rest of the prisoners. Having grown up in an environment of luxury, he obviously could not adjust to the harsh conditions and soon fell ill and thereafter passed away. During that very period, another prisoner arrived, who although also being dark in colour, but merely due to his European name, and English attire, was allotted a separate quarter to reside in, and given the food which the Europeans enjoyed. Instead of hard labour, he was appointed as a clerk of the court and allowed to pass his sentence with great ease and comfort, solely due to him being more European than the first.

Marriage
By the grace of Allâh ﷻ, within a week of our arrival, a request was received to have about fifty educated and literate prisoners shifted to another British island. Due to this, many high posts were now left empty and replacements were being urgently sought. Through the agency of Maulânâ Ahmadullâh Sâhib ﷻ, and also because of what the newspapers had written about me, my credentials as an educated man was already well known. I was soon appointed as secretary of the chief commissioner, and allotted my own personal quarters, as well as a full-time servant. I was given freedom to move about the island and do as I pleased. My age at this time was reaching thirty-seven, thus I found living as a bachelor quite difficult.

I requested permission to have my wife brought down to the island as well, but my request was turned down. I thus decided to take as a second wife, a Kashmiri prisoner, who had arrived about six months after me. Although young in age, this woman proved to be most virtuous and an excellent companion. I began seeing everything which had been snatched away from me, being replaced in the most amazing of manners. As for those who were behind my capture, destruction began overtaking them, one after the
other. When I was eventually freed and returned home, not one of them was alive.

On the 25th of December 1867 Maulânâ Abdur Rahîm Sâhib arrived at Andaman and was very soon appointed as a helper at the hospital. He occupied this post for about nine years and thereafter received permission to start a business, and it was on account of this very business that he was later on released.

Many of the prisoners have to sail continuously from island to island, to fulfil various assignments. Since the Indian prisoners are not very well-acquainted with sailing, drowning of prisoners is a frequent occurrence.

Three Close Encounters with Death
During my twenty years on the island, I also faced many deadly encounters. When I thought I would most certainly drown, the thought to turn to Allâh would come in my mind, and the help of Allâh would then arrive in the most amazing of ways. I shall suffice by making mention of three such incidents.

Once when aboard a boat sailing for the island of Roos, we found ourselves trapped in a storm, so fierce that besides destruction, nothing else could be hoped for. A wave lifted up the entire boat and shoved it in the direction of a nearby bridge. With an amazing bout of energy I, together with a close friend, took a daring leap onto the bridge. We barely landed on the bridge, when another wave took control and smashed the ship onto the bridge, breaking it into pieces and causing injury to all on board.

The second incident was also quite similar, where I managed to jump onto a bridge just before the ship crashed into its boulders. Fortunately, the other sailors also survived, but just barely.
On a third occasion our entire work-force got caught up in a severe storm at sea. Due to the intensity of the storm, we all lost hope in life. There was no island nearby, nor any help in sight. We were surrounded in darkness, thus the chance of anyone seeing us from far was minimal. The deck was hit and water started entering. I then turned to Allâh  and from out of nowhere another ship appeared. Seeing our pitiable condition they helped us board their ship and escorted us safely to shore.

In the year 1868, during the month of January, I had to travel quite a distance from where we were stationed. On the 20th of February 1868, Maulânâ Yahyâ Alî Sâhib passed away. Being assigned far away, I did not receive the news of his death. Allâh , out of his sheer grace, created some need for us on the island of Rûs. Preparations for the Salâh were already underway when we arrived, thus all of us were able to participate in his funeral.

My wife was a disciple of Maulânâ Yahyâ Alî Sâhib , and was greatly fond of him. She received a great shock by the news and on the 30th of April, about two months later, she also passed away.

**Trading on the Island**

After the death of my wife I sold all her jewellery and began sending three hundred rupees every month, to my wife in Delhi. I instructed her to purchase with this wealth clothing and shoes, and have it sent over to me, since items in Port Blair were being sold at twice its price. Unfortunately most of what was sent never reached, and the little that did reach, came only after two years.

I then made another attempt to have more goods sent from Calcutta, but the agent who I had sent was captured and the letter, which I had written, was found. Being an employee of the government, I was not permitted to trade. Having been caught red-handed, there was really no hope of being let off, except with a harsh penalty. However, by the
sheer grace of a Most-Kind Allâh ﷻ, I received no punishment, except of having all my selling goods confiscated. I thereafter accepted the fact that business had not been written in my destiny.

After the death of my Kashmiri wife, I remained without a spouse for another two years. The area in which I was appointed was unfortunately bubbling with women, many of whom were slaves to their passions. Time and again, I would find them attempting to seduce me, and had it not been for the grace of my Creator, I would most surely have succumbed. I even tried bringing my wife in India over to the island, but she was not prepared. And when she finally began showing some form of inclination, I was unable to receive permission from the government.

I finally decided to marry again, and thus turned to Allâh to provide for me a suitable spouse. My friends suggested one of two Punjabi women. From the outset, both showed an interest in the proposal, and there was no real factor barring the marriage, yet the matter would just not get finalized. The religious condition of these women was at that time difficult to ascertain, due to them being captive. Later, after their marriages to some other men, their immodesty and filthy character came to the fore. It was then that I realized why Allâh had not allowed the marriage.

**My Third Marriage**

A Hindu woman was brought in with the new prisoners and brought under my jurisdiction. I found her to be a woman of great modesty and good character, except that she was a die-hard for her faith. She would not even tolerate being touched by a Muslim woman. One day, as a passing remark, I mentioned to her that if she were to accept Islam, she would find within it the goodness of both the worlds, and salvation from eternal doom. My statement was met with shock, but what had been destined from the beginning was now not going to change. This woman had been divinely chosen as my spouse and had now been delivered to my
care. Even though she had grown up in a Hindu household, she had always avoided idol worship. Even her habits were such, that on seeing her, a jogī mentioned to her mother that she was not going to remain with them for long.

During the very same month that my Kashmiri wife passed away, a sad event occurred in the mountains of Al-Moura, which became the cause of her being delivered to me. While playing near a well, her friend slipped and fell in, and was severely injured. Even though my wife was not at all responsible, but due to the enmity which existed between the two families, a docket of attempted murder was opened up. The wound healed within a few days, leaving the case extremely weak. It was impossible to conceive that she would receive life in prison, but since Almighty Allâh ﷺ had already decided to send her, as my spouse to Port Blair, there was no way that she could avert it. In fact on the first night after being arrested, she dreamt that a Muslim of noble countenance had given her a push and instructed her to perform Salâh and make du’â. He also said that her being in jail was better for her than being released. Being a Hindu, she was completely unfamiliar with the terms Salâh and du’â, and thus enquired from a Muslim guard the interpretation of her dream.

The guard’s interpretation was one hundred percent on target, even though it did not appeal to her at all. He said, “You shall be imprisoned and finally accept Islam.” Due to this dream, she finally succumbed to my invitation of Islam and also accepted to enter into my wedlock. It was on the twenty-seventh of Ramadân that she accepted the faith, and in its celebration I had a feast prepared. A short while thereafter, after she had gained a great deal of familiarity with the injunctions of Islam, on the 15th of April, Maulânâ Ahmadullâh Sâhib ﷺ performed our Nikâh. She bore ten of my children, of which eight are still alive, and it was this wife that finally returned with me to Hindustan. I found no comparison to her in her piety, trust on Allâh and purity of faith.
Bitter Enemies versus Kind Friends
During my stay in Port Blair I would at regular intervals write to Muhammad Shafî, regarding the comfort and ease I was enjoying. I would exaggerate greatly, solely to make those burn, who had giving false testimony against innocent Muslims, merely to secure their personal interests. I never received any reply to those letters. Someone however did convey this information to the government and stirred up a hornet’s nest. The governor of Port Blair was contacted and it seemed very possible that all these enjoyments were going to be snatched away. But Almighty Allâh’s mercy, and the kindness of those that I worked for, ensured that such a situation did not materialize.

It was also from the grace of Allâh that when we initially arrived at Port Blair, all the officers stationed there were not familiar with the revolt that had occurred in 1857, thus their attitude towards us was free of prejudice. They never acted harsh towards us, rather due to our good behaviour; they honoured us much more than all the other prisoners.

All this changed however when Dr Hunter began his tricks, making mountains out of mole hills. His writings were poisonous and he made it quite clear that Wahâbîs and rebels were one and the same. Due to his poisonous remarks, when new recruits of the army would arrive at the port, they would view us differently than what we were used to. At times, they would even point towards us in a criticizing manner. Then there were those who would search for opportunities to get us in trouble with the law, but their efforts would always fail. When the true Protector decides to protect, none can ever cause harm.

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1 The word “Wâhâbî” at that time, was used as a derogatory term, referring to those who had no love for the Messenger of Allâh ﷺ. To create hatred for the Mujâhidîn, the British would use the term for anyone they regarded as a threat to their ambitions. It has nothing to do with the Wahâbi Movement of Muhammad ibn Abdul Wahhâb.
During the term of Colonel Mean, an accusation was levelled against me from very high quarters that I had assisted in the unlawful sale of stolen property. Colonel Mean was famous for the hatred he bore against us. I was immediately summoned and asked to explain. My friends suggested that I lie to save my neck, but I was determined to say nothing but the truth. When questioned regarding my role in the whole affair, I replied that owned land was unjustly confiscated and put up for sale. Due to being appointed to record all sales, I had also recorded this one. Thus, if anyone is to be found guilty, it should be the one I had been appointed to work for, and not the one who had only fulfilled what he had been ordered to do.

My speaking the truth was greatly appreciated. The man I had been appointed to serve was fired from his post and asked to leave the island. I was with great honour allowed to resume my duties.

During the year 1879, Îd-ul-Adhâ fell in the month of April. We purchased a cow to be slaughtered for the occasion. The Hindus however, were not pleased and made several attempts to have the cow snatched away, but we refused to submit to their demands. Two hundred armed Hindus gathered on the Day of Îd to ensure that their so called “God” be saved. We were only five, but our religious fervour made us oblivious to the impeding danger, and we thus slaughtered the animal right in front of their eyes. Had the police not arrived at that very moment, there would surely have been bloodshed.

**The Unsuccessful Attempts of the Hindus**

The matter, however, did go to court. Had it not been for the efforts of my senior, Prathro, we would surely have faced severe punishment. Had I been more mature at that time, I would have slaughtered goats instead, and averted great dissension.

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The Hindus of Port Blair thereafter formed a committee, passing a resolution that even if thousands had to be spent, it would be tolerated, as long as Muhammad Ja’far faces the consequences of his deeds. Munga Lâl, a Hindu working under me, was instructed to forge documents and receipts, so that some case of theft could be levelled against me. Certain associates were bribed into presenting false witness and a strong case was formed. All this continued, whilst I remained totally unaware. It was only when the police surrounded my quarters and confiscated all the documents in my possession that I realized something was cooking.

I immediately turned my attention towards my only true support, i.e. Allâh ﷻ. Through his mercy, I managed to convince the man entrusted with guarding the documents to let me have it for just one hour. Within an hour, with the divine aid of Allâh ﷻ, I was able to rectify all the forgery that had been done, over the past couple of months. The next morning, when the books were opened in front of a commission of enquiry, to their amazement, everything was in order. Munga Lâl was reprimanded severely and upon the insistence of Prathro Sâhib, was given a six-month’s jail sentence.

While being escorted out of the court, Munga Lâl made a final, desperate attempt to prove his innocence and my guilt. He placed his hands together in front of Prathro Sâhib and said, “Sir, remember the expensive wood, which you had handed over to Muhammad Ja’far, so that it could be utilized in the market, he used that wood for his own furniture! If you permit, I shall bring those items forth, immediately!” I lowered my head in du’â, knowing full well that those items were in my possession.

Allâh ﷻ again used Prathro Sâhib, as a means of my defence. He exclaimed, “I had given that wood over to Muhammad Ja’far, to use as he saw fit! What right do you have to object?” Munga Lâl was thereafter dragged out of
the court. As we were leaving, Prathro said to me, “In future, be more on guard!”

During the year 1869, there was a time when a great amount of cash was left in my possession. The money was meant to be used for the needs of the prisoners of “Station Hiddo”. During one of those nights, a thief gained access into my room. He blew out the candle that was burning at my head side, plunging the room into complete darkness. As he headed for the small box, which I had placed near my bed, Allâh ﷺ, in his infinite mercy, allowed my eyes to open. As soon as I realized what was happening, I screamed to my servant, who was sleeping in the adjoining room. The noise startled the thief and he was forced to flee, empty-handed. Had he been allowed to get away with the box, I would surely have faced grave repercussions.

In the year 1870, during the month of March, in preparation for my marriage, I included 150 rupees in an envelope, which I addressed to Munshî Ghulâm Nabî Sâhib, a man who held a high post in Calcutta. My intention was to purchase items needed for the Nikâh, but due to the restrictions placed upon us, which prohibited purchasing, as well as sending money abroad, I had to ensure that none should come to know of my actions. For this reason, I even had the letter signed by a businessman of the area, as though the goods were intended for him.

However word soon got out, and my Hindu enemies wasted no time in taking the matter straight to the chief-commissioner. The money was immediately confiscated and a few days were given to decide on a suitable punishment. When I received news of the approaching calamity, I at once, turned my attention towards Allâh, and begged for divine help. Thereafter, I informed Prathro of my predicament. Allâh ﷺ once again caused his heart to feel pity for me. He, without any hesitation, proceeded to the chief-commissioner, and after explaining the true matter, returned with my money. I still remember his words, when
he handed my parcel over to me. He said, “The Hindus are your enemies. Always remain vigilant!”

**Lord Muir and his Assassination**

In the year 1871, General Stewart, was appointed chief-commissioner over Port Blair. During his reign, Lord Muir was able to establish many harsh rules against the inmates of Port Blair, in fact, making it the harshest of all the prisons. In 1872, Lord Muir was assassinated, the details of which, shall Inshâ Allâh, be given below.

On the 8th of February 1872, at approximately 7 o’ clock, Lord Muir arrived on the island of Andaman. He was accompanied by many senior officials, all coming solely for touring the islands of the area. At 8 o’ clock, as he stepped off the ship, onto the island of Rus, which was the capital of Port Blair, 21 cannons were shot, as a welcome. Thousands of men and women, including captives, gathered to witness this scene.

He was then taken to view the markets, schools, hospitals and prisons of the island. Thereafter he was taken for lunch to the bungalow of the chief-commissioner. After taking a short rest, his tour of the surrounding islands began. He visited the prison of Weeper Island, which was where the most rotten would be sent, and then proceeded towards the island of Châtam, which was situated quite close to Mount Hirât. As they moved closer to the mountain, the desire arose to climb part of the mountain. Despite the insistence of the private secretary and chief-commissioner that the time was not appropriate, Lord Muir was adamant. One could say that since his death was calling, there was no way he could resist.

The group thus proceeded to Hope Town, which was situated at the base of Mount Hirat. A captive, Sher Alî, joined the group at Hope Town. From the time of his capture, he had made it his ambition to assassinate at least one senior British commander. For this purpose, he always
kept a knife with him. During the journey he was unable to find the opportunity, thus Muir reached the island, unharmed. The scene of the sun-setting was such, that Muir was forced to exclaim, “In my life, I have never seen anything so beautiful!” As darkness fell, the group began their descent, with Muir surrounded by armed personnel. It was only when Muir approached the vehicle awaiting him that the guards backed off. Sher Alî, realizing this to be the best chance he could ever get, sprang into action, and stabbed him with such force, sending him rolling down the last part of the mountain, into the ocean. In the confusion that followed, had it not been for another captive wrestling Sher Alî to the ground, he would have most probably been able to kill a few more. Muir was pulled out of the water, but died soon thereafter.

When Sher Alî was questioned as to the motive behind the killing, he responded, “Allâh  had commanded me to do so!” When asked if anyone else had assisted him in his deed, he replied, “Yes, Allâh  had assisted me!” After a brief trial, he was executed.

Sher Alî was an Afghan from Peshawar. He himself mentioned that from 1869 it was his ardent desire to murder any high-ranking British official. In 1872, when Muir arrived, he had his knife re-sharpened. He attempted several times to get close to Muir, but always met up with some obstruction. Then, one night, he found Muir right on his island, making preparations to climb Mount Hirat. Since he knew the area well, he was taken along. As they descended the mountain, he found the opportunity. He lay in ambush, behind one of the parked cars, and as Muir approached, attacked, aiming his dagger straight for his heart.

Even though not well-built, the daring spirit of this Afghan could in no way be doubted. Until his execution, he showed no sign of remorse, nor fear. In fact, the last words with which he departed from this world were, “O my brothers,
bear witness that I have slain your enemy and that I am a Muslim!”

For a lone captive to be capable of slaying such a high-ranking officer like Muir, this spoke volumes regarding the feebleness of man, and the great power of Allâh ﷺ. When the time of death arrives, thousands of soldiers and armed forces are left standing helpless. Allâh ﷺ alone does as He pleases.

Previous to this, a similar incident occurred in Calcutta, and the assassin also happened to be a Pathân. One would have expected that the attitude of the British towards the Pathâns would now change for the worse, but contrary to expectation, their conduct with the Pathâns became even gentler. As for avenging the deaths of their seniors, they could find no target more passive than us, who they referred to as Wahâbîs. In fact, a delegation left from Calcutta, with the sole aim of having the captives of Port Blair implicated in the assassination of Muir. By the grace of Allâh, General Stewart and Prathroe did not fall for their tricks, and reprimanded them for attempting to frame innocent men.

Learning English
In the year 1872, after the assassination of Muir, I devoted an entire year to learn proper English. During my free time, I would conduct lessons in Urdu and Farsi, which would be attended by many affluent, English-speaking people. During these lessons, I found the opportunity to further strengthen my English, and within a short while, I was able to gain a firm grip over the language. During that time, captives working for the state had permission to write and send in appeals for pardon. Since these appeals had to be written in English, and since I was the only Muslim well-versed in the language, I was able to attract a good amount of customers, all desiring letters to be translated, appeals to be written, requests to be checked, etc.
The Island of Black Waters

My aid would also be sought in major court cases, and through this language, Allâh ﷻ enabled me to save the lives of many, who had been falsely accused and were facing the death-penalty. I doubt that these people shall ever forget the favours I rendered to them, on account of knowing English. The permission for captives to write and send in appeals remained until the year I acquired my freedom. After that, if any captive even attempted writing a small government document, he would be removed from his post. I thus regarded this to be from amongst the many favours Allâh had blessed me with on the island.

After mastering the language, I visited various libraries and took great benefit from the knowledge the English-speaking world had to offer. I was left amazed at how much of work the English had done, in recording the geography and history of recent and ancient times. Unfortunately, as I soon came to realize, the harm and poison contained within its literature, by-far outweighs its benefits. I am almost certain that any person, not well-versed in Qur’ân and Ahâdîth, who studies the books written by the English, shall fall for its deception, and soon take to the path of irreligiousness. In fact, its poison is so severe, that I doubt there shall be much hope left, with regards to reforming such a person.

The Poison within Western Education

The harm caused by English literature is something that can never be denied. It creates such doubts, regarding the fundamentals of Islam that penetrate to the core of one’s heart. After totally weakening or at times even killing one’s spiritual power, laziness creeps into one’s ritual practices. One shall still call himself a Muslim, but remains bereft of even a trace of Îmân.

To prove this, allow me to narrate a personal experience. Despite my pure upbringing, and Islamic nurturing, the poison of these books spread with enormous speed, and soon the gift of Tahajjud was taken away. I had developed the habit of Tahajjud from an early age, but shortly after
creating a bond with English literature, this habit dissolved into thin air. My eyes with still open, but the courage to get out of the bed was lacking. I would just lie there from two in the morning until Fajr. I became lax in performing Salâh in congregation, and at times even missed Jumu’ah. Reciting Qur’ân, which had always been a joy, now seemed a burden. I soon forgot the Sûrahs which I had memorized, and the Ahâdîth which I would previously quote so perfectly. I would dedicate hours on end for the English literature available around me, until even Ramadân’s began passing with hardly any Qur’ân being read. Previously, I would devote hours in du’â, but now merely lifting the hands became burdensome. I barely managed to remain steadfast on my Fard Salâh and fasts, but besides these, everything else began falling away, bit by bit.

The poison in their literature soon penetrated to the core of my heart, and my understanding of Islam began changing for the worse. Shaytân duped me into believing that mere recital of the Kalimah is enough, and that over-burdening oneself with ibâdah is not required. Soon thereafter, Shaytân’s whispers, regarding the non-existence of Allâh ﷻ, began. There remained but a few yards, between myself and kufr. Fortunately, Allâh’s ﷻ mercy came to my rescue, and my doors towards good were once again opened. My return to true Islam began thus:

During the December of 1880 I fell extremely ill. A pimple emerged, which became a source of severe pain. Pus would regularly flow out of it and at times even blood. Due to the pain, I was unable to eat, and this lead to the sickness deteriorating further. I remained in hospital for five weeks, until finally all lost hope in my ever recovering. It was during these moments of anguish that I realized my folly. I turned immediately in repentance, and promised that if I recover, I shall, once again, become punctual with my Tahajjud, as well as with occupying myself with the Qur’ân and Ahâdîth.
Allâh  accepted my plea, and very soon, whatever had been lost, began returning. I regained my strength, and with a slight effort, revised and brought back to memory whatever Qur’ân, Ahâdîth and du’âs, I had previously memorized. The sweetness, which I was no longer experiencing in my Salâh and recital of Qur’ân, also returned. It was quite clear that my illness had been meant as a reprimand. As soon as I returned to my quarters, I involved myself in the study of Qur’ân and Ahâdîth, and within a short space of time, progressed tremendously. Where I was finding it burdensome to spend more than a few minutes with the Qur’ân, now I could remain reciting throughout the day, without any tiredness or boredom overtaking me. I learnt a valuable lesson in this whole episode, i.e. Allâh’s  obedience and worship is only possible, when Allâh  allows it.

The Cry for War against us so-called “Wahâbîs”
The flames which had been lit against us “so called Wahâbîs” in 1863 had never been extinguished. Rather, day by day, it grew, being fuelled, not only by Hindus, but by our own Muslims as well. Doctor Hunter played an enormous role in ensuring that the government policy regarding us never changed.

In 1872, this fire was lit in the areas of Patna and Bangal. Respected men, like Maulânâ Tabarak Alî , Maulânâ Amîrûd-Dîn Sâhib  and Ibrâhîm Mandal were found guilty of treason, and sentenced to life on Kâlâ Pânî. Here also, besides false witness, the state could provide nothing in their support. One glaring example of their “so called justice” was when they arrested a simple businessman, Amîr Khân. Without even being afforded a proper hearing, he was found guilty and sentenced to life in prison, together with the order that all his possessions be confiscated.

Four years later, an enquiry into the procedure followed in his case began, Amîr Khân was suddenly released and sent back home. He received his freedom after four years, but
from what had been confiscated, not a penny was returned. Had the evidence really been so solid against him, he would never have been released so quickly. And if there was no evidence, then why was he found guilty, or at least, why were his belongings never returned thereafter. These questions were and shall never be answered, lest it reveal the true nature of the British oppression.

It was in March 1872 that Maulânâ Tabârak Alî Sâhib and Maulânâ Amîr-ud-Dîn Sâhib reached Kâlâ Pânî. Since the laws of the island, regarding their leniency towards prisoners, had now changed, these poor souls had to endure much more hardships than what we had ever experienced. With the grace of Allâh however, soon work positions became available, and they were removed from hard prison labour. Maulânâ Tabârak Alî was appointed as station inspector and Maulânâ Amîr-ud-Dîn took the position of teacher at the school. Ten years later, together with me, they also attained freedom, and all returned home. Thus, despite their initial suffering, their short jail-term made them, so to say, equal to me in punishment received.

The oppressive system of randomly arresting anyone suspected of being a so-called “Wahâbî” continued for over ten years. During this time, I would continuously break down in tears, saying to myself that all this hardship was a result of the evil within me, and that it was from my very house that this fire of oppression was lit.

Anyway, Maulânâ Tabârak Alî and Maulânâ Amîr-ud-Dîn finally arrived at the island, accompanied by the wife of Miyâh Abdul Gaffâr and her two sons. Miyâh Abdul Gaffâr had, through the intercession of the chief commissioner, asked that his wife and children also be brought to Port Blair. Just imagine, despite desiring nothing but the humiliation and suffering of the Muslims, the very same government, had to spend its own money, to reunite a rebel with his family. Is this then not a clear manifestation of the great power of Allâh?
The Island of Black Waters

The purpose behind these ten years of oppression was to annihilate and remove every single trace of so-called Wahâbism. However, upon my return to my home country, I found that the exact opposite had occurred. Before my arrest, it would have been difficult to find even ten, genuine so-called Wahâbîs in the entire Panjâb. After my return, however, the signs of Wahâbism could be found in at least twenty-five percent of the area. The rise of this group, could be likened to the Protestant Movement, that started small, but soon engulfed the entire Europe. The more persecution meted out, the greater the resistance grew.

Experience has clearly shown that stifling a resistance with oppressive measures is probably the strongest fuel it requires to breed. The very same occurred with the Sikhs, whose resistance was countered by the harshest of means, yet they just continued rising, until finally they snatched all the land between Peshawar and Delhi, from the hands of the Moguls. When Allâh desires any nation to rise, no power in the world can ever subdue it. Rather, whoever attempts to do so, only throws himself into destruction.

Children
On the 13th of April 1872, my eldest daughter was born. The Aqîqah ceremony was well attended. After that, my second daughter was born. I gave her the very name, which I had given my daughter in India. Her Aqîqah was also well attended. On the 26th of November 1875, my son, Muhammad Sâdiq was born. I also gave him the very name which I had given to my eldest son, in India. The birth of this child, was indeed, for me, a sign of the great power of Allâh. On the very day of his birth, the news reached us regarding the death of my eldest son, Muhammad Sâdiq, in Pânî Pat. I thus saw in the new-born an immediate replacement for what I had lost.

After learning English, I had a great desire to read the book of Dr Hunter, ‘The Indian Muslim’. With great difficulty, I
managed to purchase the book from Calcutta. The paragraph, in which Dr Hunter made apparent the great hatred which he bore for us, really hurt me. Doctor Hunter had the following to say, ‘If the state, out of its kindness, does decide to set free the Wahâbîs, imprisoned at Kâlâ Pânî, then there is a great fear that these prisoners shall regard their freedom as a favour from their God. Thus, when they return to their country, they shall show even greater determination to oppose the government.’

Even before reading this, my hopes of ever getting free, was minimal. These words were thus more than enough to extinguish the last few flames of hope left. Even when the British passed the law that life-imprisonment would from now on mean twenty years, our cases were excluded from the rule. The matter got even worse in 1881, when we heard that Dr Hunter had been appointed as assistant to the governor general of Hind.

What hope could there now ever be of attaining freedom, when the very man, whose writings were enough to ensure our permanent imprisonment, was now sitting in the very office where the decisions were being made?

**A glimmer of Hope**
Despite the odds being against us, from the year 1881, I began experiencing a strong feeling that my days of imprisonment were short-lived, and that soon I was going to be set free. The feeling was so strong, that I even wrote to Maulânâ Anwâr-ul-Islam   and Hafiz Muhammad Akbar Pânî Patî, that I would be seeing them soon.

In June 1876, I was appointed as secretary on the southern part of Port Blair, where once again I was re-united with my former superior, Major Prathro Sâhib, and I remained in this position until my release. With my help, he prepared a full report regarding life at Port Blair, which after being approved by the government, was widely distributed. I even prepared an Urdu translation of the document, and that too
was published. Witnessing my excellent behaviour, and years of service, Pratho felt obliged to write on my behalf, to the government, requesting them to review my chances of being set free. The intention behind the appeal was to increase my chance of being set free, but unfortunately, it found the bad side of the home department, and instead of making matters easier for me, it actually diminished my hopes even further.

At the end of 1881, Maulânâ Abdul Fattah, came to Port Blair, to visit his father, Maulânâ Abdur Rahim. After staying on the island for one full year, he began preparations for his return. His father instructed him to send an appeal to the governor-general of India, for his release. Upon his arrival back home, his mother wrote out an appeal, stating that her husband had never really been proven guilty of any crime. For that reason, even the presiding judge over his case had said, that if his behaviour remains good, they could consider pardon after serving about fourteen years. Due to her husband having already served eighteen years, and having now reached an old age, she desired that the state look into his matter once again, with an eye of sympathy.

When her letter reached the head office, the opinions of the Bengal and Punjab governments were sought, regarding whether any harm would come from pardoning the Wahâbîs, imprisoned at Kâlâ Pânî. Due to the request only being made on behalf of Maulânâ Abdur Rahîm, and due to his crime not being serious, the rest of us never even thought that our matter would also be discussed, with his.

In 1881, Maulânâ Ahmadullâh Sâhib, fell ill. His age at that time was already close to eighty. Sensing his death to be close, he summoned his son Maulânâ Muhammad Yaqîn Sâhib over, for what he felt would be a final meeting between the two. Normally, such a meeting would have been easily approved by the government, as many visitors had already come to the island, but just due to his being from the Wahâbî group, his request was turned down. I had
also written such a letter, requesting a meeting with my brother, merely to see what the reaction would be, and my request was also turned down.

**The Death of Maulânâ Ahmadullâh Sâhib**

When Maulânâ Ahmadullâh Sâhib became bed-ridden and his condition began deteriorating rapidly, Maulânâ Abdur Rahîm Sâhib sent a request to the governors of the area, that since he was the only family that Maulânâ Ahmadullâh had in the area, it would be most appreciated if the old man could be given permission to move in with him. Normally, such a request would have melted the hardest of hearts, but merely due to both of them being from the Wahâbî group, the request was turned down.

Finally, as a final resort, a request was submitted to allow Maulânâ Abdur Rahîm Sâhib to at least spend the nights with his bed ridden companion. After much hue and cry, permission was finally received, on the 20th of November. By Allâh’s will, on that very night, at one o’ clock, the soul of this illustrious man left this world of captivity for the eternal bliss of Jannah. Three days before his death, Hadrat Maulânâ had slipped into a coma, but during the last few seconds of his life, his eyes opened and with a clear voice he recited, ‘La ilâha illAllâh, Yâ Mâlikal Mulk!’

The news of his demise reached us the next morning, upon which preparations began immediately for the burial. According to the law, anyone wishing to visit another state or town must first receive written permission from the seniors of the area. Due to this process being lengthy, and understanding the harsh attitude they displayed towards us, I felt it better to leave immediately, and face the consequences later. I did leave a note, explaining my plight, and asking forgiveness for breaking the law.

A request was also sent to the governor, to allow the deceased to be transported to Aberdien, so that he may be
buried next to his brother, Marhûm Maulânâ Yahyâ Alî Sâhib . This request was also turned down.

My experience over 20 years had made me realize that whenever I placed my trust on any official, thinking him capable to aid me, I would later find that very person being instrumental in having me taken to task. And whenever I would repent, and turn my attention solely to The True Decider of all Matters, I would find the very people, whom I feared would be in the fore front of my opposition, Allâh would use those very same people to sort out all my matters. In this manner, I found Allâh ☦ protecting me from all forms of shirk, not tolerating in the least bit my placing trust on any mortal.

In 1882, my wife wrote, explaining that my eldest daughter had now reached the age of marriage, and since they could not see me being released in the near future, she requested permission to go ahead and get her married, in my absence. Thus, on the 14th of October, I sent a parcel, containing jewellery and cash, for the marriage, as well as a note instructing her to choose a pious Muslim boy for my daughter. The parcel left on the 14th of October, which was about one and a half months before my release.

Free at Last
After the parcel reached Panipat, preparations began for the wedding. Instead of happiness, the atmosphere was filled more with grief, due to my absence. At that time, there was absolutely no hope of being set free. Perhaps it was the pleas of my wife and daughter, at that time, that caused the doors of acceptance to open.

On the 30th of December 1882, without any appeal, and without any intercession, my wife was given the good news that a decision had been taken to set me free. As soon as I received the news, I began purchasing gifts for all, to be given upon my return. Since the announcement had not as
yet been made public, there were many who showed great astonishment and perhaps even ridiculed my actions.

However, on the 22\textsuperscript{nd} of January 1883, the announcement was made public, that all Wahābīs had been pardoned, and the government was in the process of finding suitable accommodation for all the captives. At that time, there were six of us imprisoned at the island, viz. Maulânā Abdur Rahîm Şâhib, Miyâh Abdul Gafûr Şâhib, Maulânâ Tabârak Alî Şâhib, Maulânâ Amîr-ud-Dîn Şâhib, Miyâh Mas‘ûd Gul Şâhib and myself. Letters were sent from various quarters, thanking the authorities for their grace and sympathy.

A friend of mine, Captain Tempel Şâhib, upon hearing about my release, wrote immediately, seeking permission to arrange my accommodation. Realizing this to be divine aid, I consented immediately. He thereafter contacted the government of Punjab, with his proposal, and in this manner had all restrictions lifted from me.

When the announcement of freedom was made, my wife had only completed fourteen years of her life sentence, thus I was ordered to remain behind, waiting for her pardon. I wrote to the government, explaining that I already had a house on the island, and was earning 300 rupees per month, whereas I had no residence in India, not any job, and there was always a fear, that due to being labelled as a rebel, the authorities of Hind may continue hassling me and impeding my movement. I thus sought permission to remain on the island, and receive permission, at regular intervals to visit my family in India.

The chief commissioner of Port Blair interceded on my behalf, in this respect, but the government of Punjab refused to accede, giving assurance that a suitable job shall most certainly be found.

On the 13\textsuperscript{th} of March 1883, Maulânâ Abdur Rahîm Şâhib, Miyâh Abdul Gafûr, Maulânâ Amîr-ud-Dîn and Tabârak Alî, left the
island and reached home safely. Then, on the 28th of April 1883, Miyâh Masʿûd also departed. I was now the last of the Wahâbîs left on the island. Finally, on the 1st of May 1883, my wife was set free, but was at that time, six months pregnant, and the storms at sea had just began. I received permission to prolong my stay until November, which would correspond with the month of Muharram. Within these few months I managed to sell all my belongings, accepting any price, no matter how low. Finally, in the month of October, I requested permission to endow my house for a Masjid, which could benefit the Muslims till the end of time, but unfortunately the deputy commissioner opposed the idea, stating that the Masjid would then be used for Wahâbî purposes.

**A Final Glance at Port Blair**

Before mentioning the emotions felt when leaving, I feel it appropriate to make mention of some of the laws and regulations of the island, and the living conditions of the captives. The government of this island conducts itself without any interference from the British authorities. The chief commissioner of Andaman holds full authority over the island, and he issues authority to whosoever he wishes. None hold the right to appeal against his decision. It is only in matters of executing prisoners that permission is sought from higher authority. All imports and exports occur only after authorization from the chief commissioner.

The laws of the island laid down in 1858, have been amended time and again, with laws regarding captives becoming more and more stringent and harsh over the years. Every year about 2000 prisoners arrive on the island, and there are presently about fourteen thousand held captive. After the first month of captivity, the chains are removed. Since there is no proper jail on the island, new captives are placed under the supervision of older captives, in a spacious sort of park.
During the day they are put through hard labour, after which they receive their allotted share of food. In short, supervising the prisoners, distributing work amongst them, etc. this is all handled by the older captives. These older captives receive a monthly allowance from the state. Even new captives, on account of good behaviour, can start receiving this allowance, after about three years. The next privilege offered, for good behaviour, is a captive pass, which entitles the prisoner to leave the compound, and move around the island, freely. The captive, after receiving this pass, is then entitled to start a business, or work on a farm. Due to this law, there are presently about fifty to sixty villages made up only of such captives. Captives going into farming, are allotted a fair-sized plot of land, as a gift from the state, as well as some financial aid. Aid is also given to those intending starting small businesses.

Female captives are kept separately, on another island, under the supervision of female officers. Due to this separation, the chance of adultery and fornication rarely arises. Manual labour, in the form of sewing, grinding wheat, etc, are taken from them. After five years of hard labour, female captives are issued a pass, which allows them to move around freely. Young women however, even after receiving this pass, are not allowed out of their island, unless they first get married.

As for the male captives, as long as they do not receive a pass, they are prohibited from marriage. After receiving permission to marry, a male captive will go over to the island, wherein the female captives are kept. There he shall make an attempt to find a suitable match, and earn the female’s consent as well. After finding one’s spouse, the two will then proceed to the chief-commissioner and acquire from him a signed document, showing his approval.

After twenty years of imprisonment, most captives would be set free, on condition that their behaviour was found to be good. After this, the freed person would have the choice to
either return home, or stay on the island. After receiving a pass, captives are allowed to engage in business, and are giving the privilege to send and receive letters regularly, whereas without this pass, no prisoner is allowed to have in his possession any cash. Permission to send and receive letters from home is also limited, to once or twice a year at most.

Port Blair is such a place wherein one shall meet people from around the globe, be it China, Burma, Malaysia, Kashmir, Iran, Arabia, Abyssinia, Portugal, America, England, France, and many of the Indian states, like, Nepal, Assam, Punjab, Sindh, Gujarat, Madras, Bengal, etc.

When prisoners from one area sit together, they will normally converse in their own language. If different countries however get together, the language used is Hindi. Whoever comes to this island, in a short space of time, masters this language, since without this language, to get any work done on the island is extremely difficult.

When a man of one tongue takes a spouse of another tongue, it becomes quite hilarious when one witnesses their arguments, with each shouting and retorting with such words, which the other hardly understands.

The age old malady of Hindustan, where one only marries in one’s own community, is forgotten as soon as one steps onto the Island of Port Blair. Here, merely being a Muslim is sufficient for another Muslim to take as his spouse.

With regards to the dishes and curries that can be found on the island, one could easily say that it is as though chefs from around the world have gathered, to display their arts in front of the rest. Some of the dishes cooked, however, are so repulsive, that its stench finds one, even if he be a mile away, the fish of the Chinese and Burmese being an ideal example of this.
On the island I learnt that what one’s tongue and nose becomes accustomed to at birth, and during youth, remains entrenched in his system till the end. No matter how delicious we may find our curries to be, for people of other tastes, it is barely manageable. The Arab can’t conceive how we manage so much of spice. Our perfumes cause headaches to the English. Covering the body for the jungle tribes is seen as a disgrace, and eating insects for them, is what biryânî is to us.

Returning Home

The 9th of November 1883, was scheduled as the day of my departure. As a last gesture of love, I sent out a last-minute invitation to as many as I could remember, with the following message:

‘This humble servant shall be leaving for home in the next hour or so, after eighteen years of imprisonment, with the possibility of never returning. Whoever reads this message should please respond immediately, since time is tight.’

The atmosphere in the house was one of mixed feelings. Whoever wished to make a farewell speech, broke down in tears, almost immediately, and returned to his seat. I too, had intended to offer some final advices, but emotions overpowered my tongue, leaving me speechless.

My final day on the island, fortunately happened to be Jumu’ah. I thus had the good fortune of performing my final Salâh behind Maulânâ Liyâqat Alî . Hundreds of companions thereafter accompanied me as far as they were allowed. After a final greeting, ten of us preceded ahead, myself, my wife and my eight children. I had on that day, in my possession, eight thousand rupees.

I couldn’t help expressing amazement that 18 years previously, when I first landed on the island, I was in a most humiliated state. I had been sent to receive the worst torture imaginable, but when Allâh  desires good for one,
none can stand against his wish. I came alone, and today leave the island with a family of ten.

After taking out what I felt sufficient for the journey expenses, I divided the rest between my two wives. Besides my books and a few pairs of clothing, I felt it best to free myself from all worldly possessions, and in this manner, no wife could later lay claim on what the other has in her possession.

Together with us, on the ship leaving for Hindustan, were many other freed captives, as well as other Europeans and Indians. The weather was fine, the ocean winds were cool and the waves were calm. It was the 10th of Muharram and the 14th Islamic century had just begun. The anchor was lifted just as the sun set, and we set our final gaze at the island, which had now become like a home for us. On that moonlit night, the waves showed their beauty.

For a few days we experienced rain, which caused a slight amount of uneasiness, but this difficulty was only short-lived. A trader, aboard our ship, Alî Radâ, offered great service to us, during our journey, which included delicious food, chicken, fish, fruits and sweet-meats, due to which our journey was made quite enjoyable.

During those few rainy days, as the ship was being tossed from side to side, and all were experiencing a bit of nausea, at that very time, the wife of one of our friends, Nûrruddîn, went into labour. Despite the odds being completely against her, the birth was extremely easy, and where everyone else was left with motion-sickness, the mother and new-born experienced no problems whatsoever. When the ship reached port, the age of the child was only two days old. The name chosen was Samandar-Mien (the child of the ocean).

On the 14th of Muharram 1301 (13 November 1883), our feet felt the earth of Hindustan once again. We preceded straight to the residence of Maulânâ Abdur Rauf Sâhib, the
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brother of Maulânâ Abdur Rahîm Sâhib . Three days later we left for Calcutta, then for Allahabad, Kanpur, Aligarh, Sahâranpûr, and finally Ambâla.

Since the weather at Andaman had always been most moderate, my family had never experienced severe heat, nor severe cold. The first few days on land were thus slightly uncomfortable for them, but as the days passed, everything fell into place. In fact, due to seeing freedom after 20 years, every day seemed like Îd, and every night seemed as Qadr.

On the 22nd February 1865, we had left the prison of Ambâla, in chains, and eleven months after, we set out for Kâlâ Pânî. Now, after twenty years, as we set out with great honour for Calcutta, and then for Ambâla, the fine clothing on my body, my children and my wealth sent shock waves through my enemies, spread awe amongst the general public, and left me and my family amazed at how Allâh  had showered his favours upon us, throughout this entire period.

As we travelled throughout the land, people from far and wide would come to meet and enquire about our experiences. Nearly every person who would hear our story, would be left in astonishment, and exclaim, ‘Glory be to Allâh, He does whatever He desires!’ People would say, ‘Your returning to this land, in this state, is nothing less than as though you have come back from the dead. Anyone who sees you and still does not recognize the power of Allâh, indeed he is as blind as a bat!

I had to sacrifice my one wife, on my return I found with me two wives. When I was arrested, I had to leave behind two young sons, upon my return I had with me eight. Whatever wealth was taken away from me, upon my return, I found every cent returned.

I found my example similar to that of Nabî Ayyûb , with regards to who Almighty Allâh stated,
And We returned to him his family, as a favour and a lesson for Our servants

Indeed, whoever shall read and ponder over my story, he will see in it the signs of Allâh ﷺ, but only he shall benefit who has understanding.

**Home at Last**

We reached Ambâla after Fajr, and after seeking permission from the higher authorities, we proceeded to Camp Ambâla, to meet my old boss, Captain Temple Sâhib.

Temple Sâhib extended a warm welcome, and as an extra gesture of love, offered to arrange a monthly salary of 20 rupees, until a suitable job could be found. With the help of Temple, many influential people began studying under me, and very soon my monthly salary rose to 50 rupees.

I rented out a house, situated within Camp Ambâla, and after purchasing essential furniture and groceries, I sought permission to visit my family and friends for one week. I began my journey with one day in Delhi, after which I set off for Pânî Pat, on the 13th of December.

Amazingly, 20 years previously, the day I departed from Thanser, and left my wife in Pânî-Pat, after which I set out for Delhi, with the intention of escaping the British, was also the 13th of December. The same date, the same season, the same roads, it made it feel as though I had left my wife in Pânî Pat that very morning, whereas 20 years had already passed.

I arrived home after Maghrib, and was welcomed by an over-excited wife and 20-year old son. When I had left, my son was only a few months old. After five days, I left for
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Thanser, where I spent one night, and thereafter returned to Ambala.

Whichever town I passed, I was greeted by throngs of people, all excited to see my face and hear of my experiences. In Thanser, the crowds were so enormous, that despite spending the entire night awake, meeting guests, it was still too little. Many returned without even getting a glance at me. Due to this, for months thereafter I would receive guests in Ambâla, all coming solely to greet me, and hear of my travels and days of captivity.

In my one day in Thanser, I took the opportunity to pay a visit to my old residence. I sought permission from the new owner, to gather the women of the house in one room, so that I may have the chance to glance at what had been home for me twenty years ago. The owner, after recognizing my voice, opened up his arms for me, and allowed me as much time as I desired to spend in my old dwelling.

I make du’â that Almighty Allâh ﷺ accepts the sacrifice of this house, and in lieu of it, build for me a palace in Jannah. Anyway, after recording my life-story of 20-years, I now intend bringing my book to a close, ending with the mention of a few of the innumerous favours Almighty Allâh ﷺ has showered upon me.

Conclusion

From Almighty Allâh’s ﷺ innumerable favours upon this lowly slave is that during my twenty years of captivity, He always blessed me with conditions of ease. Five years before my arrival on the island of Kâlâ Pânî, the area went through great-development stages, and due to this, the laws regarding prisoners were made extremely lenient.

The plagues which had vested the island for so many years suddenly came to an end, and the island which was known as an island of death became the envy of Kashmir. During
my twenty years as captive, I enjoyed the best years of my life.

Upon my return to India, I found myself blessed that despite the environment of India conflicting greatly with that of Kâlâ Pânî, my children were able to adapt most rapidly. Many other children, who came from the island, passed away young, due to being unable to adapt, whereas my children remained perfectly healthy. In fact, Almighty Allâh blessed me further with another two boys, who are also well.

Whenever plagues have spread in Hind, I have found that Almighty Allâh  always spared my household. Before returning to Hind, the area of my return experienced severe drought. This too changed before my arrival, with a few months of good rain, and surplus of crops and produce.

Before arriving home, I had some concern regarding what work I would do, and where would I stay, upon returning home. All my land at Thanser had been confiscated and sold on auction. Also, the men in charge of Ambâla were the very people who were behind my arrest. Almighty Allâh  again showered his favours upon me, by opening up the heart of Captain Temple Sâhib, who was at that time the magistrate at Camp Ambala. He gave me support from the beginning, at the time when the English superiors around me could not stand my sight. He continued fighting my case and took the responsibility of my earnings upon his shoulders. This continued until he was finally transferred, and then too Allâh’s  grace caused more doors to open up. The council of Arnoli, without my even asking, offered me a job, with a fair income, and that has remained my occupation, until today, by the grace of Allâh.

Indeed, it is nothing but the favour of Allâh, that my living quarters and monthly income was all arranged on the hands of non-Muslims.
After my return to Hindustan, whatever laws were put in place to ensure my movements were checked regularly, all these laws were lifted, through the intervention of Captain Temple Sâhib. I was thus free to able about at will. After the transfer of Captain Temple Sâhib, Allâh’s ™ supreme command caused a letter to be sent from the secretary government in Punjab, ordering all laws to be lifted, whereas this too was never requested. More amazing is the fact that these laws were lifted only from me, and not from any of my companions who were jailed and released with me.

I now live as a free man, moving around as I wish. Due to state work, I travel quite frequently between Lahore and Calcutta. In fact, very soon I shall be setting out on a journey to the area known as Wilâyat, where I shall be able to sit in front of my old enemy, Dr Hunter, and force him to believe that there is a power in charge, a power more powerful than their entire kingdom.

When I now glance at the courtroom of Ambala, from where I heard the judgement regarding my execution, and when I enter and leave the jail in which I spent one and a half years, and when I walk across those roads, over which I was taken in chains, in all these areas, when I ponder over the great and supreme power of Allâh ™, my heart shakes in amazement. Who could have ever thought, on the day when the verdict for my execution was passed, that one day I would be able to move freely in these very courts, and through these very jails?

Indeed no man could have ever imagined that this useless, humble servant would one day enjoy such fame and glory. This is indeed nothing but the Grace of Allâh ™, who gives to whosoever He wishes.

Do not regard my writings as the writings of a lone prisoner, rather regard my biography as a sign from the signs of Allâh ™. Regarding such incidents, Almighty Allâh has said,
Verily in these incidents are signs for men of intelligence!

My final du’â is that Almighty Allâh accepts these humble efforts, purify it from pride and enable all to benefit from it.

Notes