

## **Elucidation of Freedom, Slavery and Islamic teachings**

**Full English Translation of Friday Sermon: November 25<sup>th</sup> 2011, delivered by Hadhrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad(aba), Khalifatul Masih V, Head of the worldwide Ahmadiyya Muslim Community**

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*After reciting Tashahhud, Ta'awwudh and Surah Fatihah, Hudhur (aba) said:*

“Nowadays, certain countries in the continent of Africa are celebrating the Golden Jubilee of their independence. Our Pan African Association is also taking part in these celebrations. This association was formed here during the era of Hadhrat Khalifatul Masih IV(rh), and consists of African Ahmadi brothers. As I said, this Association is also partaking in the celebrations of African countries and are holding programmes to this effect. They also asked me to attend the function which they are organising on this occasion. So *Insha'Allah* (God Willing) I will be attending that function.

But today, with reference to freedom, I would like to say a few words before you. Freedom from slavery, freedom of religion and freedom of conscience are great blessings. Africa is that continent in which the majority of countries for a long period of time were subjugated countries who lived enslaved. For this reason, the celebration of the independence of these countries and commemorating their jubilees are most certainly for them extremely significant, and this is their due right. May Allah make it so that this freedom, which they obtained 50 or 60 years before today in various countries, be a true form of freedom and may they never ever again be chained in that slavery. In fact, if with a pious intention, if with trustworthiness and honesty, if with justice, they derive benefit from this freedom, then it is not implausible, that at a certain time, the continent of Africa, in the years to come, will lead the entire world.

If we glance at the history of religions, one of the most important tasks which the founders of the religions and also the prophets who come from Allah the Almighty are commissioned for, is for freedom. Be it freedom

from tyrannical rulers and pharaoh-like leaders, or be it freedom from slavery for such people who as a result of religion being distorted by those who in the name of religion call themselves so-called caretakers of religion, who for their own vested interests, carry out ceremonies or religious rituals, and they place (figurative) yolks around the necks of people. Every form of freedom is brought about by the prophets.

But it is most unfortunate that many nations fail to understand this reality and they rejected the true standard-bearers of freedom. By doing so, they were not only deprived of true freedom themselves; in fact, they came under the wrath of Almighty Allah and were destroyed. Such people gave preference to worldly rulers and being subjugated and enslaved to them, rather than choosing to be enslaved to the *Ahkamul Hakimeen* (the Best of Judges). They gave preference to the other slavery rather than that type of slavery, through which new avenues of freedom are opened. So therefore, by changing their preferences and priorities of freedom, not only did they go on losing their freedoms, but in fact they ruined their lives in this world and in the hereafter.

Therefore, if you delve deep into the depths of the study of freedom, then true freedom is really brought about through the source of the prophets. And the biggest sun of freedom that we find before us, the rays of which spread far and wide, and encompass every single form of freedom, is in the person of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (saw).

He provided freedom from apparent slavery and he also provided freedom from those people who had various (figurative) yolks tied around their neck. In fact, by connecting with him in the true sense today as well his person is a tremendous source of attaining freedom. God Almighty addressed the Holy Prophet (saw) as the *Khatamun Nabiyyeen* (the seal of all prophets). This encompasses all worldly and spiritual matters and in the process provides a seal. So therefore, there can be no doubt in this whatsoever that after Allah's testimony and proclamation, no good natured or righteous person can have any doubt that it is only, and only the seal of Muhammad (saw) that provides a seal of all forms of excellences. And the pinnacle of all these excellences are found in the person of the Holy Prophet (saw).

Thus, when the height and pinnacle of every task and matter were to be fulfilled through the person of the Holy Prophet (saw), then the excellences of bringing about freedom in any way, shape or form were to be only to be brought about through his person and this is exactly what occurred. The

world witnessed that with a great splendour and glory these excellences were fulfilled through his person and until today those who connect with him in the true sense are witnessing how this is being fulfilled.

The Perfect Book that was revealed to the Holy Prophet (saw) is also called *Khatamul Qutub*. Within it, the subject of freedom has been expounded with reference to different issues and also in different ways. The Holy Prophet (saw)'s most perfect example glorifies and enhances this beautiful teaching further. In the Holy Qur'an, Allah the Almighty says in one place "*to free one from bondage*" (Ch.90:V.14), or this can be explained in other words as to free a slave or to support someone in attaining freedom. Allah the Almighty then says in one verse, a part of which only I shall read out, "*and spends his money for love of him to the kindred, the orphans and the needy, the travellers and those who ask for charity and those who free people from bondage or free the captives.*" (Ch.2:V.178).

In other words this means to free people from slavery. Placing this in context of what is being said in the preceding part of the verse then what has been expounded is that this is a great form of piety. That after believing in Allah, the Last Day, the Angels, the Books and in the Prophets, these are the pious acts that when a person acts upon, enables him to achieve nearness to God. Included amongst these pious acts is also the freeing of slaves. Therefore, in order to maintain the state of one's faith, in order to go on performing pious deeds and to establish the highest levels of righteousness, the freeing of slaves or to free any human life is a great and major form of piety.

There are numerous examples relating to this found in the Hadith. In one Hadith, which is a narration of Bukhari, Hadhrat Abu Hurairah (ra) has narrated that the Holy Prophet (saw) would say that whichever Muslim would free a slave, Allah the Almighty would grant him complete salvation from hell.

Islam then teaches the freeing of slaves as expiation. This teaching is found in many places in the Holy Qur'an. In one place the Holy Qur'an teaches that if a Muslim accidentally kills another Muslim, then he should free a slave and also give blood money. This punishment is not limited to only the killing of a believer, nor is this elucidated if only a Muslim has been killed, that is, the freeing of a slave; rather, what has been said is that if you have a pact with any nation and a disbeliever of that nation is killed by you, then in that instance also, a slave is to be freed.

Then, in terms of the various punishments for breaking an oath sworn by God, where various possibilities have been given according to one's capacity, that if this is not the punishment then this should be the punishment and if not this, then this punishment should be meted. One of the punishments mentioned is the freeing of a slave. So thus, the freeing of slaves that has been cited on different occasions for the reason that Islam gradually wants to eradicate slavery altogether.

In the time of the Holy Prophet (saw), or the time preceding the Holy Prophet (saw), the keeping of slaves was a normal practice. With the advent of Islam it has given emphasis on the subject of slavery at different occasions in order to eradicate it, as I have explained.

We find a narration in the Hadith related by Asma bint Abu Bakr (ra). She relates that the Holy Prophet (saw) would say to the Muslims that when the solar eclipse occurs, free a slave. That is, those who can manage to do so and are able to free a slave; they most certainly should free a slave upon the eclipse of the sun.

The Holy Prophet (saw) upheld the honour of the slaves and safeguarded their rights in an excellent way. For example, it is mentioned in the Hadith that there were seven brothers who had one slave shared between them. On one occasion, one of these seven brothers became enraged with the slave. In his anger, he firmly slapped that slave. When this incident came to the knowledge of the Holy Prophet (saw), he stated: "Free this slave. You do not have the right to keep this slave any longer because you are not aware of how to treat the slave in a good manner."

In short, if we delve into that era when keeping a slave was normal practice, and for those who were rich keeping a slave was a great asset—the more slaves a person possessed, the more he would be deemed to be wealthy or rich—in such circumstances, this commandment is given, that if you desire true wealth, which is the wealth of faith, it is better for you that you should free slaves and provide the means of their freedom. Upon this commandment, the Companions of the Holy Prophet (saw) according to their capacity, freed dozens, sometimes thousands of slaves.

It is said regarding Hadhrat Uthman bin Affan (ra) that he freed 20,000 slaves at just one time and separate to this, at other times he also freed thousands of slaves. Other companions freed dozens of slaves. So they freed slaves according to their capacity.

For those who had slaves to carry out different tasks, the Islamic teaching upon them was that treat them like your brothers; whatever you wear yourself, clothe them with; whatever you eat yourself, feed them with.

The Holy Prophet (saw)'s own model was such that when after marriage to Hadhrat Khadijah (ra) she gave all her possessions and slaves to him, he freed them all. Hadhrat Zaid bin Haritha (ra) was one of those slaves. The Holy Prophet (saw) adopted him as his son. He treated him with such compassion, kindness and love that when Hadhrat Zaid (ra)'s real parents came to retrieve him, Hadhrat Zaid (ra) refused to go with them.

In short, it was the extremely kind and loving treatment of the Holy Prophet (saw) and his supremely excellent, benevolence that meant Hadhrat Zaid (ra) preferred slavery to freedom. As a result of that love of the Holy Prophet (saw), Hadhrat Zaid (ra) left behind his blood relations. Therefore, those who raise objections against Islam and the Holy Prophet (saw) cannot offer even the tiniest fraction of an example the like of the Holy Prophet (saw), that anybody could have provided means to this extent for the freedom of slaves and for the freedom of humanity.

The Holy Prophet (saw) said to his followers, that when you are ascertaining work from your slaves, treat them in a good manner, and if you give them difficult work to carry out, then give them a helping hand.

As such, the Holy Prophet (saw) transformed the history of slavery.

As a result of this, an Italian Orientalist, Dr Vaglieri, has written, that 'the custom of slavery has existed since the outset of human civilisation itself, and it continues even today. Whether pertaining to the nomadic Muslims or to the civilised Muslims, the state of slavery amongst them was far better than the other peoples. It would be unfair to compare the slavery in Eastern countries with the slavery that existed in America 100 years before today. In the Hadith, we find great compassion for mankind. The Holy Prophet (saw) said "Do not say that he is my 'slave', in fact, say he is my son, and do not say that she is my female 'slave', rather say that she is my daughter.'" Then this orientalist writes that 'if we reflect upon these accounts from a historical perspective, we become aware that the Holy Prophet (saw), in this respect, brought about spectacular reforms. Prior to Islam, a person who could not repay a debt faced the possibility of losing his freedom. (In other words, a person who took a loan from someone in those times and was unable to repay it would become enslaved to the debtor until he repaid that the debt; or at least there was a possibility of becoming a slave to that

person he owed that money to. The orientalist continues that) after Islam, no Muslim could enslave another free Muslim. The Prophet of Islam (saw) did not only limit slavery, rather he also introduced regulations and inculcated Muslims to continue marching onwards in this regard until such a time arrives when slowly but gradually all slaves would be free.”

Professor Vaglieri wrote this book in Italian which has been translated into English. At one time the USA Jama'at published his book. In this book the teachings of Islam have been presented in an excellent manner. Indeed, this book should be republished. If the rights from that time are not preserved under anybody's name and the America Jama'at had permission to publish it, they should republish it. This book is sufficient to render speechless those opponents who raise allegations against Islam and the Holy Prophet (saw). Thus, this teaching and model, which even non-Muslims cannot remain without praising and admitting, is the excellent model and teaching that is the essence of human freedom.

I have presented a few examples from the Holy Qur'an and the Hadith. We find countless injunctions, guidance and counsels within them. It is this true teaching by following which the world can attain real freedom and peace, and through which justice and reconciliation can be established. TO those who have acquired freedom in Africa, it is the responsibility of Jama'at Ahmadiyya, of those who have become Ahmadis that they should spread these teachings to the maximum degree possible and they should bring people under the submission of the Holy Prophet (saw) so they can become familiar with the reality of freedom. By just commemorating a one-off golden jubilee, freedom will not be established. Freedom will be established when you understand this reality, both the rulers and also the public, of how we are to maintain this freedom and for this what means are to be adopted for that freedom to be sustained. That means will only be found in the perfect example of the Holy Prophet (saw), and also in the Holy Qur'an.

Professor Vaglieri has only stated that a *Muslim* cannot be enslaved, but in a true Muslim society, it can never occur that *anybody* becomes a slave.

For a Muslim, this is extremely important and something he should always bear this in mind that the Holy Prophet (saw), before his demise, in his final counsel to the Muslim community at large, said this: “Do not forget my teachings regarding prayer and also slaves.” However, it is most unfortunate that the majority of Muslims, in particular the leaders and the people in authority, have forgotten these two very teachings. They neither

display that interest and that passion and zeal in their prayers, nor do we find the fear of God within them, and nor are there any attempts to remove slavery on their part. Although that form of slavery does not exist as such today where slaves are bought with cash, however in the name of the government, the public are treated like slaves.

In certain countries there is restlessness and also tumult, in particular in certain Arab Muslim countries, because the public at large have now realised that they are being treated like slaves. One government emerges in the name of democracy and it endeavours that whoever is made the leader remains should be leader for life. After this, his children then take over the government. Those who engage in flattery, and also people who have vested interests, surround these leaders and they have transformed entirely their preferences and also their priorities. They make every single possible effort to establish their own government. In the process, they fire bullets at even their own people.

Then the forces against Islam, or the major powers, all who have vested interests, in order to realise their personal interests and to seize the national resources and wealth of certain countries, fan the flames of the disorder and uproar of the public, who had instigated this disorder in order to free themselves from the cruelty of the government. These powers enter on the pretext of aid. Such a vicious cycle begins that the progress of the nation is taken back 100 years and the efforts of the public to attain freedom are taken further into enslavement. By coming out of slavery of their own people, they fall into the slavery of other powers. If not direct slavery, then they fall to indirect slavery.

I have stated this before as well. Certain major powers have supported certain governments. For years they keep them in the seat of authority, and do not care in any way shape or form about the public's loss of freedom. When their own interests come to an end in those nations, then in the name of the freedom of the people, they topple those governments and try to remove them from power. But now the situation is such that these major powers have become anxious and concerned observing certain countries where in the recent past, the government was toppled and new governments emerged,. The governments that they desired to come into power, did not. Those changes that they desired to see did not materialise in certain places, or certain circumstances are emerging where changes cannot occur. So this is becoming a means of the anxiety and restlessness.

A new sequence of disorder and a wave of hypocrisy is about to begin. In fact, in certain places this has already commenced. The public have fallen prey to misconception. They have come out of the slavery of one government and are now falling into the slavery of another. In actuality, in some places they have now realised that they *have* fallen into this enslavement. The wealth of the nation even now is not being spent for the welfare and betterment of the people, is not being spent to provide them with rights and justice, is not being spent to make them educated, and nor will it be spent for these purposes, because those governments that are now coming into power are bringing with them their vested interests. The poverty and the low standard of living existed amongst the people before. It is wishful thinking that this will be removed. In fact, this will remain the case. You will witness this in the near future for yourselves. This has all occurred because the rulers have not acted upon the Holy Prophet's (saw) advice. They call themselves Muslims but they do not implement what Holy Prophet Muhammad (saw) taught.

In earlier times, a person would keep slaves according to his wealth. Now, the national wealth is being used to enslave the people of that country. Now, even the media have started raising voices and are also presenting images in the countries which generate oil, that there is poverty rife. On the one hand there are golden palaces and on the other hand in these countries there are households in which they cannot afford even two square meals in a day. Therefore, by usurping the rights of the people, the people are being enslaved, and they have been made into slaves.

There was a time when Hadhrat Umar (ra) had to recall his forces from the Christian regions, because due to the strength of the enemy force, the Muslims could not maintain their hold there. At the time, the Muslims returned the money to the Christians which they had taken by way of tax. That tax which had been taken for the safety and welfare of the Christians, in order to fulfil their rights, was returned to them explaining that "Because we can no longer fulfil your rights, we therefore return this money to you." The Christian subjects then would cry, and whilst weeping they stated that "We pray that you should return to power here because we have never seen any rulers like you. The justice and the rights that we have received under the Muslim government, we have never received from our own governments."

And now in the current time, Muslim rulers are looting the wealth of Muslims themselves. Justice is no longer to be found in the country. Rights are being usurped. Nobody's life or property is safe any longer. Then with



great audacity it is proclaimed that “whatever we are carrying out for the people cannot be carried out by anybody else.” In this revolutionary state that has developed in different countries and through which, as I stated, people with vested interest are deriving benefit from, some, on the pretext of religion, are making efforts to achieve their personal gains. All of this would never have happened if the rights of the people were granted to the people. If the government established justice, this would not have occurred. If the freedoms of the people were preserved and safeguarded this would not have come to pass. Governments, instead of being greedy, should have striven to establish and maintain justice. If they did so this would not have taken place.

I mentioned their religious leaders. Due to the public not possessing religious knowledge being uneducated in terms of religious matters; these religious leaders have introduced incorrect interpretations and erroneous customs and have shackled and enslaved the general public through them. Regarding the great Prophet (saw), who came to establish the greatness of mankind, Allah the Almighty says, *this Prophet of ours removes their burdens and also removes the shackles that are around their neck* (Ch.7:V.158).

But what is happening instead here today? We find the complete opposite in the current situation. Muslim countries who believe in this Prophet, or who at least profess belief in the Prophet; after following him, they should have established justice and honesty and they should have been models of providing freedom. Other countries and non-Muslim nations should have been able to look at their justice and honesty and the way that they provide freedom and are progressing and look to that as an example for themselves. Yet here we find the contrary to be true. And the Muslim ‘Ulema (clergy) who should have spread the true teachings of Islam, and who should have freed the Muslims of all kinds of innovations, have also put shackles upon them. So both of these sets of people have shackled the Muslims and the public. They have suppressed enslaved them in this way.

Therefore, the blame lies not only with the rulers. Rather, the Muslim clergy are also counted amongst those people who introduce false customs, false doctrines and interpretations in the name of religion and have played with the sentiments of the people and in this way, have made them enslaved in one respect. This will continue and will never come to an end until they accept the Chosen Person sent by God Almighty who Allah the Almighty sent in this era to establish human values; and who was commissioned to remove all burdens from us and to free us from all

shackles. And who taught us to be enslaved in only one way, which is to be enslaved to Allah and His Messenger (saw). Through this slavery and submission, new avenues of freedom are realised. Justice is observed, equality is manifested and such a beautiful society is witnessed where in order to obtain rights, processions are not needed. In order to acquire freedom, erroneous approaches are not adopted. In fact, in order to *give* and *grant* rights, the king and also the beggar both make efforts together.

In short, now, to uphold the honour of the Muslims and to safeguard themselves from every type of disorder there is only one path alone, that act upon the commands and the teachings of Allah and His Messenger (saw). This is impossible until they refrain from denying and rejecting that person who Allah the Almighty sent in this era to establish those two types of rights. The Promised Messiah (as) on different occasions has presented this teaching in most beautiful manner. This teaching establishes truth and also justice and is a guarantor of permanent freedom. He says that "Remember, a Muslim should ever be ready to discharge the rights of God and the rights of mankind. Just as one verbally regards God as one and without any partner in His person and in His attributes, in the same way one should practically demonstrate this and should treat the creation of Allah the Almighty with kindness and also compassion." The Promised Messiah (as) says: "Until your dealings with each another are not in order, your dealing with God cannot be in order. Although in both of these rights, God has a greater right, but to have a clear dealing with his creation is a kin to be a reflection of it. A person who does not have clear dealings with his brother cannot also pay the dues of God." The actual matter is that a person should consider the other as a brother. If one believes himself to be superior and he believes somebody else to be inferior to him and looks down upon others, it can never be expected of him that he will display justice and also brotherhood. The Promised Messiah (as) says further in one place that "Every person within the Jama'at that our Holy Prophet (saw) established was of pure nature. Every single one of them sacrificed their lives for their faith. Not even one of them led a hypocritical life. All of them without exception paid the dues of the rights of God and the rights of mankind."

In short, only when faith takes precedence over the world can that state can be developed when becoming purified, a person fulfils the right owed to God and attention is also then drawn towards fulfilling the rights due to mankind. Today, we do not apparently find a single leader amongst the Muslims or in the Muslim countries who reaches to these standards. When rulers desiring of justice who fulfil rights are not to be found, then

everybody acts in their own way to obtain their rights and freedoms. As I stated, those with ulterior motives or vested interests pursue their own gains and in the name of justice and freedom, new tales of cruelty and oppression begin. Therefore, 'freedom' today entails in the name of freedom, leaving one type of slavery and entering into another form of slavery.

Look in most countries of Africa or in other Muslim countries; this is that very situation that you will find. If they acquired freedom from the slavery of foreign powers, then their own people have enslaved them. May Allah make it so that the leaders of the Muslims countries and also the leaders of African countries, their political leaders and the army, who often in the name of revolution cease power upon the governments, also religious leaders, or those who call themselves the Muslim clergy, understand this reality, that to shackle your fellow citizens in slavery, by not treading on the path of justice and by not fulfilling the rights of others will bring them under the wrath of God Almighty.

Every ruler will be questioned that "did you fulfil the right of your rule? Those responsibilities of yours, did you fulfil them, or did you fill your coffers with the nation's wealth? You did profess the name of Allah and His Messenger, but did you truly care about Islam?" If they answer in the negative, then most surely they will come under God's Chastisement because no lie can be stated in front of God and nothing can be hidden from His sight.

In the Holy Qur'an, Allah the Almighty states that true believers are they "*who are watchful of the trust and their covenants.*" (Ch.23.V.9). Therefore, leaders will be asked about their trusts. In particular, they vow in the Name of Allah the Almighty, they pledge that they will look to the benefits of the country, the betterment of the people, the fulfilment of their rights, the establishment of justice and also for the sake of freedom; they will make every single effort. But it is most unfortunate that for the most part we observe that they loot the national wealth. There are the Muslim clergy, who have made religion a way of making money. As I stated, they have introduced incorrect customs, rituals, teachings and doctrines and they shackle the public with those incorrect approaches and they use them only to subjugate the people. The people also do not fulfil their dues.

In short, by not fulfilling or honouring their trusts, everyone is inviting Allah's Wrath and Chastisement. The disorder rife in countries nowadays is a natural outcome of all of this. Extremism, financial downturn, and general

disorder are not only circumstances of today. In fact, they are indicating towards a most harrowing and worrying future.

For example in Pakistan, since its independence around 63 years ago, all the aforementioned matters have reached their pinnacle. Every single day we find that these issues increase. Nobody can say what will occur tomorrow, so then how can we expect that the situation will improve in the future? We did obtain freedom from the subjugation of the British, but instead, we have been shackled in the slavery of our own people even tighter.

May God Almighty have Mercy on our country and also upon our people.

That Pakistan, which Qaid-e-Azam [the founder of Pakistan] at the time of independence declared that "here followers of all religions would have religious freedom and as Pakistani citizens, all citizens were equal." But what is not happening against Ahmadis? Incorrect statements are attributed to Ahmadis. Regarding the *Khatamal Anbiyya* (the Seal of all the Prophets), the Holy Prophet Muhammad (saw), who Ahmadis give preference to be in the slavery of, over thousands of freedoms and who are ready to have their necks smited for this purpose, yet they make false accusations against Ahmadis that, God forbid, Ahmadis insult the Holy Prophet (saw).

We consider being deprived of our rights as citizens of no value whatsoever nor do we consider that of any significance. Even if we are deprived of every single one of our rights we will bear this, and we are tolerating this. But, in accordance with the wish of these so-called Muslim clergy and rulers, we can *never* separate ourselves from the Holy Prophet Muhammad (saw). Why cannot Ahmadis utilise the right to vote in Pakistan? It is for the reason that they say that "your right to vote and your freedom are conditional upon this proclamation that you need to make that, you are not Muslim and you are not associated with the Holy Prophet (saw)."

By God! Every single one of us Ahmadis are ready to be cut into pieces but we would not even spit on such freedom and right to vote which would separate us from our Master the Holy Prophet (saw)! Therefore, such freedoms are welcome for you worldly people. We prefer the slavery which makes us the dust under the feet of the Prophet Muhammad (saw). And in the process makes us true servants of God who have the true depiction of the rights due to God, and enables us to fulfil them, and also gives us the perception of the rights due to people, and enables us to fulfil those.

*InshaAllah* (God willing), a day will come when this very humility and slavery of ours will demonstrate to the world the true scenes of freedom. And those people who call themselves free, who are actually shackled, chained in bondage and enslaved, they or their future generations one day will be proud to be in the slavery of that Messiah of Muhammad. They will then have the perception of the real freedom for the establishment of which the Holy Prophet Muhammad, the Chosen One (saw) arrived. May Allah make it so that the world witnesses this day of freedom quickly and that the world is saved from those frightening consequences which are caused by rejecting those who are sent by Allah. May Allah the Almighty enable every single one of us, every Ahmadi to go through these difficult times with patience and steadfastness and also in prayers. *Amin.*"

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### **Key for Abbreviations:**

**(saw)** means SallAllaho alaihe wassalam= Peace and blessings of Allah be upon him

**(as)** means Alaihe Salam = upon whom be peace

**(ra)** means either RaziAllaho Taala unho/unha meaning Allah be pleased with him/her

or **(ra\*)** means Rahmullah alaih= Allah's Mercy be upon him

**(aba)**means Ayyad Allaho Taala be Nasril Azeez = Allah's Help and Succour be with you always