3

Peace, Love, and Harmony in Sri Lanka and the United States

Bawa Muhaiyaddeen [d. 1986]

A striking example of pacifist Islamic thought is embodied by Muhammad Raheem Bawa Muhaiyaddeen [d. 1986], a figure 'noted for an explicit commitment to the pursuit of world peace' [Pettman, 2010: 206]. Whereas the subjects of previous chapters stand out for their anti-colonial resistance, our present focus chose to make his home in the lands of the new global hegemon. Known to his followers as Bawa, the Sri Lankan émigré to the United States of America is remarkable both for the salience of nonviolent ethics in his teachings and for the eclectic and ecumenical fashion of their exposition. These are examined in this chapter, with particular attention to his collection of essays entitled *Islam and World Peace* – published with a foreword by one of the most prominent scholars of Sufism of her generation, Harvard University's Professor Annemarie Schimmel [d. 2003]. The particular character of this figure and his idiosyncratic manner of teaching calls for some contextualisation and explanation before he too can be systematically related to this study's wider concerns with forms of pacifism and nonviolence as they are articulated through the great variety of modern Islam. Though there is much which makes him a difficult object of study – particularly using the traditional textual tools of Islamic studies – he is also remarkable for his

success in translating an Islamic imperative for moral improvement into languages which proved accessible and appealing to multireligious liberal milieux in North America. At its centre lay an understanding of Islamic nonviolence as the result of spiritual striving towards perfection as the 'whole or perfect man' [*insān kāmil*] whose nature would reflect that of a harmoniously ordered cosmos.

It is worth observing at the outset that while the native Tamil speaker was himself 'unlettered' [Schimmel in Bawa Muhaiyaddeen, 1987: i], records and reflections on Bawa Muhaiyaddeen's wide-ranging oral teachings by his followers provide us with a significant textual corpus. Indeed, these comprise some thirty published books. His influence, crossing religious and linguistic borders, is still more substantial – not least in his having directly affected the 'Philosopher of the United Nations', Assistant Secretary-General and Chancellor of the United Nations University for Peace Dr Robert Muller [d. 2010] [Ahamed Muhaiyaddeen in Bawa Muhaiyaddeen, 1997: xix]. Bawa Muhaiyaddeen inspired scholars and civil rights activists including African American feminist Dr Gwendolyn Zohara Simmons, who would refer to him as 'my Sheikh' [Simmons, 2003: 238]. He was reported upon in the international press (including, for instance, *Time Magazine* [Webb, 2006: 97]) and attracted 'a significant following' [Ernst, 1997: 72] in the United States as well as Canada and Sri Lanka [Xavier and Dickson, 2015: 587]. By the close of the twentieth century, his mausoleum (or *mazār*) in Coatesville, Pennsylvania had become the most visited by Sufi Muslims in all of North America [Xavier and Dickson, 2015: 587].

While Bawa Muhaiyaddeen's later life was often lived under the spotlight of public attention, relatively little is known about his early years. His own autobiographical account cannot easily be taken at face value. It presents the reader with a tale echoing the life-course of the Buddha Gautama [d. ca. 400 BC] – or perhaps the more fanciful fabrications with which the celebrated Lebanese poet Gibran Khalil Gibran [d. 1931] impressed his wealthy American patrons, such as F. Holland Day and Mary Haskell [Najjar, 2008]. Bawa Muhaiyaddeen presents himself as having abandoned an opulent royal station in a mysterious and disappeared Oriental kingdom, the better to pursue a life dedicated to truth, faith, and service of God [Bawa Muhaiyaddeen, 2003; Xavier and Dickson, 2015: 586]. He likewise recounts wide-ranging peregrinations throughout China, India, Iran, Egypt, and the Levant, where he ostensibly studied the wisdom of the Hindus, Zoroastrians, Christians – and of course of the Muslims [Bawa Muhaiyaddeen 2003].

Irrespective of the truth or otherwise of Bawa Muhaiyaddeen's tales of having travelled the length and breadth of the Eurasian continent in search of religious truth, his exposure to multiple faiths is undeniably evident. Muslims account for a relatively small minority of majority-Buddhist Sri Lanka, while Christians and especially Hindus are also present in large numbers. Reports from his older followers recall that many of his first students were in fact Hindus in the Jaffna area of northernmost Sri Lanka, and that they referred to him not as *shaykh*, *pīr*, or *murshid* (as one might expect of a Sufi guide), but with the Sanskrit honorific of *swami* [Webb, 2006: 91] conventionally applied to Hindu renunciates. The first mosque he founded, in 1955 in Mankumban, was dedicated to Mary(am) the mother of Jesus (both of whom are of course also Quranic figures of great importance). While Bawa Muhaiyaddeen identified as a Muslim – indeed even more specifically with the Qādirī Sufi tendency and the Ḥanafī ethico-legal tradition within the Sunni sect – the ecumenical element of his teaching was and would remain a strikingly salient feature.

ECUMENISM, SYNCRETISM, AND ADAPTATION

The ecumenical element is so evident in the manner of Bawa Muhaiyaddeen's speech that it raises questions as to whether it constitutes a pedagogical rhetoric on the one hand or a syncretic blending of religious traditions on the other. This is naturally also a question of interest to our present investigation, and we have already encountered attempts at construing Islamic nonviolence as an alien effect of outside influence [see Chapter 2]. The main text with which we are concerned here, *Islam and World Peace*, is filled with terms and turns of phrase borrowed from other religious traditions. Allusions to typically Judeo-Christian images and narratives – such as the venerated status of Mary/Maryam – are perhaps to be expected from a Muslim preacher. The Quran itself explicitly embraces earlier revelations and reiterates a great deal of Biblical content (sometimes with small but significant differences, such as Abraham's attempted sacrifice not of Isaac but of Ishmael, the assumption of Jesus into heaven in lieu of his crucifixion, or the focus on Abel rather than Cain [see Chapters 4 and 6]). On other occasions, we also see him producing close paraphrases of some of the most famous Biblical passages in their own rather than in Islamic scriptural terms. The reader is repeatedly exhorted to 'love his neighbour as himself', for instance [Bawa Muhaiyaddeen, 1987: 119, 128]. Muhaiyaddeen even explains the

meaning of 'neighbour' in this famous line from Leviticus [19:18] favoured also by Jesus [Matthew 22:35–40; Mark 12:28–31; Luke 10:25–28] in characteristically Christian terms as indicating not only those nearest to one, but furthermore those who are most different [Bawa Muhaiyaddeen, 1987: 121] and whom (like the Samaritans of Gospel parable) one's own community might normally regard as enemies.

Of course, while the phrase 'love your neighbour as yourself' is not to be found in Islamic scripture, it is certainly consonant with overarching Quranic preoccupations with mercy, compassion, and equality. Indeed, a very similar sentiment is attributed directly to the Prophet in what is likely the most widely read Hadith selection in history: the *arbaʿīn* or *forty ḥadīths* of Imām Nawawī [d.1277]. There, the thirteenth reported utterance of the Prophet Muḥammad reads '*lā yu'minu aḥadakum ḥatta yuḥibbu li-akhīhi mā yuḥibbu li-nafsihi*' ['none of you is a believer until he loves for his brother that which he loves for himself']. Bawa Muhaiyaddeen's warning that 'the one who picks up a sword will one day die by that same sword' [Bawa Muhaiyaddeen, 1987: 84], so familiar from the Gospel of Matthew [26:52], finds fewer obvious parallels. Yet it has by now entered so widely into broader secular culture as to demand less specific attachment to Christianity, and the dramatic irony of Ecclesiastes and Proverbs it echoes is itself a commonplace in Islamicate cultures (viz. the Arabic idiom *man ḥafara ḥufratan li-akhīhi waqaʿa fīhi* – 'he who digs a pitfall for his brother falls into it himself').

Bawa Muhaiyaddeen's recourse to Biblical language is not especially surprising for a Muslim preacher – particularly one addressing North American audiences, many of whom were or even remained Christian and Jewish [Webb, 2006: 93]. His frequent adoption of the rhetorics of South Asian Dharmic traditions is perhaps more remarkable, though their currency in late twentieth-century American counterculture was also growing. *Karma*, or the cosmic principle of causality, is for instance referred to frequently in his lessons [Bawa Muhaiyaddeen, 1987: 41, 48, 57, 85, 121, 134]. When listing the evils besetting humankind, moreover, he does not only speak in Abrahamic terms of sin and misguidedness, but also in those of the more Vedic and Buddhist concern with 'illusion' [Bawa Muhaiyaddeen, 1987: 48, 57, 85, 134]. Indeed, he goes so far as to use the Sanskrit term for delusion or illusion [*māyā*] in the title of one of his other works: *Maya Veeram or the Forces of Illusion*. This is not for lack of more characteristically Islamic metaphors for the same function – contrast, for instance, Wahiddudin Khan's parallel deployment of the more Quranic image of 'veils' obscuring true understanding [e.g.

Wahiddudin Khan, 2004: 41; see Chapter 5]. When referring to long periods of time, we find Bawa Muhaiyaddeen speaking of *yugas* [Bawa Muhaiyaddeen, 1987: 101]: a term redolent of Hindu cosmology. While he does not embrace that tradition's vision of cyclically recurring eras within infinite time, his persistently dismal vision of modernity arguably parallels Hindu, Sikh, and Western esotericist identifications of the present with the spiritually lowermost *kali yuga*. The chronological extension of *yugas* in Hinduism is furthermore prodigious – exceeding not only Biblical narrative but the timescales of palaeoanthropology. Perhaps relatedly, Bawa Muhaiyaddeen adopts a characteristically Vedic lexicon of exceptionally large numbers. He is comfortable counting even in 'hundred[s of] trillion[s]' [e.g. Bawa Muhaiyaddeen, 1987: 134]. This may seem an unusual habit for a Muslim preacher in spite of the wide prevalence of Indic counting systems in South Asia, but it is one with ancient provenance in Hindu religious culture through terms such as *pakoti* or 10^{14} [Ifrah, 2000: 440–510; cf. contemporary secular commonplaces such as *lakh* for 100,000 and *crore* for ten million].

Not only does Bawa Muhaiyaddeen adopt terms and images from Buddhist and Hindu traditions but he also brings them into productive tension with their new discursive context. When diagnosing the dangers of compulsively goal-oriented fixation on passing ephemera, he employs the evocative phrase 'monkey mind' [Bawa Muhaiyaddeen, 1987: 39] – coined by Chinese Chan and later adopted by Japanese Zen Buddhists as well as by Chinese contemplatives including some Daoists. Even more strikingly, he uses the Hindu Sanskrit word *gnāni* or enlightened knower (familiar also to Sikhs through the Guru Granth Sahib) as a gloss on his discussion of the Sufi concept of the Perfect Man or *insān kāmil* [Bawa Muhaiyaddeen, 1997: 108]. We return to this notion later in the chapter, but suffice it here to point out that he often uses conspicuously Hindu and Buddhist terms in order to explain classically Sufi ideas. While this need not be considered a thoroughgoing religious syncretism, it does sometimes appear as such.

This ostensible syncretism reaches its zenith in Muhaiyaddeen's theologically shocking acceptance of reincarnation [Bawa Muhaiyaddeen, 1997: 110]. Though that doctrine is a mainstay of Dharmic religion it is almost entirely alien to Abrahamic religious culture (with some exceptions such as among the Druze). It is certainly well outside the mainstream of Islamic thought. Yet he goes on to explain his understanding of reincarnation as referring not to the transmigration of souls or the rebirths of an eternal *jīva* but rather as occurring within a single earthly lifetime. 'It is while you are living in the world, in this very birth, that you undergo all

these rebirths' [Bawa Muhaiyaddeen, 1997: 115]. The idea of reincarnation is thus transformed from a cosmological aspect of eternal Saṃsāra (as it might be to a Hindu or Jain) into a restatement of mainstream ʿAsharite Islamic theology's occasionalist doctrine that God gratuitously creates each moment anew, arguing like Leibniz that effect follows cause by divine habit alone. The karmic or causal aspect of rebirth to higher and lower orders of being is by the same stroke reimagined as a metaphor for the individual believer's potential for spiritual improvement or decline within their lifetime, God willing [Bawa Muhaiyaddeen, 1997: 110]. A decidedly non-Islamic concept is thereby fundamentally transformed and Islamised. Muhaiyaddeen is no more embracing the metaphysics of reincarnation as it is conventionally understood than are Evangelical Christians in calling themselves 'Born Again'. It is in this connection that he quotes a favourite Prophetic *ḥadīth* among Sufis: *mūtū qabla an tamūtū* ['die before you die'] – a phrase which also provides the title of another of his collections [Bawa Muhaiyaddeen, 1997)]. It is radical reformulations such as these which encourage the view that his adoption of apparently non-Islamic language is a rhetorical strategy in the service of Islamic proselytism [*daʿwa*] rather than evidence of deeper interreligious syncretism.

THE PERFECTION OF MAN

Bawa Muhaiyaddeen was avowedly a Muslim and a Sufi. This is the case irrespective of the significance or otherwise of his early contact with the relatively austere and Shariah-minded *ṭarīqah qādiriyyah* [Webb, 2006: 91, 94]. Nor indeed of his lifelong reverence for its eponymous founder, the Baghdadī Ḥanbalī jurist and ascetic ʿAbd al-Qādir al-Jīlanī [d. 1166], whose birthday *mawlid* is celebrated each year at Bawa Muhaiyaddeen's funerary *mazār* [Xavier and Dickson, 2015: 589]. Not only does he explicitly present himself as a practitioner of Sufism and successor to one of Sufism's most famous early saints (al-Jīlānī), that is, but he relies heavily upon its characteristically mystical metaphysical concepts throughout his teaching. He spoke often, for instance, of the Muḥammadan Light [*nūr muḥammadī*; Bawa Muhaiyaddeen, 1987: 46, 68, 99–102, 133]. This pre-existential cosmic entity, older than the universe, is according to Sufis to be found embodied in saints and prophets (and has been argued to parallel Neoplatonic or Gnostic ideas [e.g. Goldziher, 1909]). Such embodiment is in mystical Islam most typically related to the notion of the Perfect Man, *al-insān al-kāmil* (lit. 'the complete person'). It is this very being which we saw Muhaiyaddeen identify in ostensibly Hindu terms as

enlightened *gnāni*. It is as a process of moral and spiritual improvement towards such a state that his nonviolence is best understood.

This Perfect Man is moreover seen as an archetype not only for mankind but for the entire universe – both of which Muhaiyaddeen conceived of as harmoniously nonviolent. That conception of the microcosmic man derives most famously from the teaching of medieval Sufis following ʿAbd al-Karīm al-Jīlī [d. 1424; esp. his *al-Insān al-Kāmil* or *The Perfect Man*] and Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn al-ʿArabī [d. 1240; esp. his *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam* or *The Bezels of Wisdom*]. This same notion litters Bawa Muhaiyaddeen's speeches [Bawa Muhaiyaddeen, 1987: 47, 48, 51, 77, 120]. Indeed, many of his followers – and apparently he himself – regarded Muhaiyaddeen himself as the foremost such cosmically perfected being of his day. To them, he was the world's spiritual 'pole' or 'axis' [*quṭb*] [Webb, 2006: 93–94] around which all else turned. This 'supreme figure' of an 'invisible hierarchy' is sometimes also 'known as the saviour or *ghawth* ... Although the most comprehensive formulation of this hierarchy was given by [Muḥyī al-Dīn] Ibn 'Arabi, the basic ideas is archaic' [Ernst, 1997: 60].

Such a mystical perspective does not concern itself solely with the created world, and Bawa Muhaiyaddeen's approach to describing the divine will also immediately identify him as Sufi to many Muslims. This is nowhere more evident than in the decidedly panentheistic fashion in which he speaks of God. His is a God who transcends the world while also embracing and permeating its every aspect. Though not unique to Sufi Muslims alone (compare for instance the cosmological views of the Nizārī Isma'īlī Shīʿah [e.g. Daftary, 1990]), this is a view for which Sufis have often been singled out for both praise and censure by their co-religionists [see for instance Karamustafa, 2006]. It is readily perceived in Muhaiyaddeen's near-ecstatic exhortations such as the following:

> My brothers and sisters, even though you have not seen God, there is no place where He does not exist. He is within every life. He is in the trees, the flowers, the fruits, and in the plants and shrubs and vines ... All of creation is within Islam. God created everything as Islam, as light ... Everyone created is within Islam. [Bawa Muhaiyaddeen, 1987: 129–130]

The influence of Sufi approaches to the Islamic faith are also in evidence in Bawa Muhaiyaddeen's characteristic rhetorical and exegetical approaches. In terms of exposition, he often chose to express his ideas by means of allegory. That is, through stories or images which are not to be taken at face value but which one is instead invited to consider in terms of their indirect implications or metaphorical correspondence. Hidden

meaning – a common Sufi preoccupation – is a recurring theme, and one which is explicitly acknowledged. 'Differences exist between the outside and the inside of everything. Therefore, we must look at both in order to understand the meaning' [Bawa Muhaiyaddeen, 1987: 33]. Concern for this distinction between meaning and form is furthermore reflected in his approach to scripture. He thus approaches the text as having both outward and evident [*ẓāhir*] and hidden inner [*bāṭin*] aspects which must be accepted – a common Muslim hermeneutic particularly pronounced among Sufi (and *mutatis mutandis* Shia) Muslims. This entails of a form of interpretation sometimes called *ta'wīl* (as distinct from conventionally more 'scripturalist' *tafsīr*) and ranges all the way to letter mysticism – wherein individual letters are assigned mysterious significances [e.g. Bawa Muhaiyaddeen, 1987: 129, 134, 136]. The esoteric result is sometimes somewhat opaque to the outside observer.

The method of exposition chosen by Bawa Muhaiyaddeen is not that which one might expect from a logician or from a moral philosopher trained in the conventions of contemporary scholarly debate. Not only its explicitly religious frame of reference but also its allusive, allegorical, and sometimes piecemeal presentation poses challenges to interpretation. Yet these challenges are not insurmountable. While a good deal of his experience of religion – perhaps even its most crucial elements – depends upon his own experiential 'tasting' [*dhawq*] of ineffable spiritual states, this does not mean that he did not discuss and describe it at great length. This is in fact a common trait among mystics: whereof one cannot speak thereof they are rarely silent. Such speech is certainly worthy of attention and analysis. We may here recall the words of the late Bernd Radtke, who wisely warned against the unhelpful view 'that since the object of mysticism is mystical, it is acceptable to mystify it' [Radtke, 1992: 71]. On the contrary, it is in fact possible to gather a great deal about Bawa Muhaiyaddeen's attitudes not only to religion in general but more specifically to pacifism and nonviolence in Islam. Both the positions which he takes and the manner in which he contextualises and justifies them are quite particular to his own approach. They are neither readily simplified nor necessarily always consistent. It will be useful here to distinguish his views on nonviolence towards human and non-human animals, on the one hand, and his views as they relate to Muslims and non-Muslims, on the other. In each instance, both the behaviour which he advocates and the forms of violence which he does and does not consider must be dealt with in turn.

Bawa Muhaiyaddeen's teachings address themselves in the first instance to his own historical context. In stark contradistinction to the

likes of Ramin Jahanbegloo [see Introduction] or Wahiduddin Khan [d. 2021; see Chapter 5], who frame pacifist activism in terms of what they see as an especially pacific modern 'spirit of the age' [e.g. Khan, 2004: 165, 187; Jahanbegloo, 2013], Bawa Muhaiyaddeen paints a picture of contemporary time which is almost unremittingly bleak. The great scholar of modernity Schmuel Eisenstadt reminds us that recent history has brought us not only scientific and artistic breakthroughs but also the genocidally mechanised horrors of the Holocaust, which occurred 'at the very centre of modernity' [Eisenstadt, 2000: 12]. Bawa Muhaiyaddeen is preoccupied with these darker developments. He laments that '[i]n this present century, man has discarded God, truth, peacefulness, conscience, honesty, justice, and compassion ... Never has destruction been so much in evidence as in this present century!' [Bawa Muhaiyaddeen, 1987: 7]. It is worth underlining that this descent into wickedness is not in his teaching identified with a specific 'outside' group such as Europeans or Christians, industrialists or imperialists, capitalists or communists. Rather, he is at pains to make clear that the Muslims of the world as very much part of this general decline:

> [O]ver the last hundred years some people of Islam and of other religions have changed. Faith has decreased to the point where many say that God does not exist. The darkness and torpor of desire for earth, gold, and sensual pleasures have entered our hearts and changed us. [Bawa Muhaiyaddeen, 1987: 66]

It is notable here not only that the current age is cast in a damning light, but also that Bawa Muhaiyaddeen also makes an implicit critique which offers some hope of arresting this general decline. Faith and a rejection of greed for worldly goods, it is implied, are the means to avoiding still worse fates; like the gamut of Muslim pacifists discussed in this book, he regards the connection between moral orientation and material outcome as indissoluble. That worse fates may nonetheless await us is however something he takes seriously and expresses in fairly apocalyptic terms: 'We are approaching a third world war. Groups have emerged which represent the antichrist [*dajjāl*] ... They rule by force and soak the earth with blood. Such is the state of the world in this century' [Bawa Muhaiyaddeen, 1987: 20]. The contrast with the likes of Wahiduddin Khan's glitteringly optimistic assessment of the state of modernity is only heightened by these prognostications. Whereas Jawdat Said [Chapter 6] and Ali Shariati [Chapter 4] project the conflict between violent and nonviolent tendencies in human affairs backward into sacred history and the first sons of Adam, here we see a more eschatological form of Manichaeism at work. It is not at

the dawn of history, that is, where the archetypical struggle between peace and war take place – but at its end.

As might be expected from a proponent of the correspondence of microcosm and macrocosm embodied in the idea of the Perfect Man [*al-insān al-kāmil*], Bawa Muhaiyaddeen sees the contest between peacefulness and violence as having a fundamentally internal and spiritual dimension. Indeed, he often insists that peace in the outside world is impossible without but will naturally follow from victory in this internal contest [e.g. Bawa Muhaiyaddeen, 1987: 8, 9, 29, 41, 52, 70, 77]. The ostensibly scriptural basis of this view is expressed in his teaching through frequent recourse [e.g. Bawa Muhaiyaddeen, 1987: 47, 48, 51, 77, 120, 125] to the distinction between 'The Greater Jihad' [*al-jihād al-akbar*] and 'The Lesser Jihad' [*al-jihād al-aṣghar*] which we have already seen in Chapters 1 and 2 of this study. The former is 'the most important *jihād*, the holy war that each one of us must fight . . . [against t]hose evil qualities of jealousy and vengeance' [Bawa Muhaiyaddeen, 1987: 47]. One often finds him extolling the importance of internal struggle against one's own worst inclinations in dramatic yet also thoroughly conventional terms:

> [W]e have to wage a holy war within ourselves . . . This battle within should be fought with faith, certitude, and determination, with the *kalimah* [the profession of faith: *there is no god but God and Muhammad is the messenger of God*], and with the Qur'an. No blood is shed in this war. Holding the sword of wisdom, faith, certitude, and justice, we must cut away the evil forces that keep charging at us in different forms. This is the inner *jihād*. [Bawa Muhaiyaddeen, 1987: 51]

It has already been recognised that asserting the validity of the Prophetic narrations upon which this discourse relies need not necessitate any specific normative stance with respect to violence and warfare in the world. The foremost leaders of nineteenth-century armed resistance to European colonialism in the majority-Muslim world were after all Sufis who saw no conflict between this commitment and the waging of armed conflict. The likes of Shamyl of the Caucuses [d. 1871], the Mahdi of Sudan [d. 1885], and Algerian national hero Abd el-Kader [d. 1883], for instance, saw spiritual struggle more as a prerequisite for righteous warfare than as an obstacle to it [see Woerner-Powell, 2017]. Even this is to say nothing of the classical military *jihād* tradition which constructed itself as an ascetic practice parallel to Christian monasticism [Sizgorich, 2009]. It is this sense of dispositional priority [*niyyah*] which is most usually understood in the celebrated tale of ʿAlī bin Abī Ṭālib's refusal to kill a warrior whom he had bested on account of the latter's having infuriated him during their combat. To strike the enemy down in a state

of rage would have amounted to murder, as Bawa Muhaiyaddeen agrees when approvingly recounting the same story [Bawa Muhaiyaddeen, 1987: 83]. Yet many Muslims would point out that the same great Caliph and Imām ʿAlī, wielder of the fabled forked blade Zulfiqar [*dhū al-faqār*], was quite prepared to take lives in serenity. This inference is pointedly not drawn in *Islam and World Peace*.

Bawa Muhaiyaddeen takes a more radical position. Not only is a priority between internal struggle and struggle in the world recognised, but struggle in the world is then explicitly defined as excluding warfare and killing. 'My brothers, the holy wars that the children of Adam are waging today are not true holy wars. Taking other lives is not true *jihād* ... True *jihād* is to praise God and cut away the inner satanic enemies' [Bawa Muhaiyaddeen, 1987: 48]. The phrasing here is somewhat ambiguous, in that it may imply the possibility of true holy wars involving the taking of lives taking place at times other than the present. On the basis of such a reading, we are presented by Bawa Muhaiyaddeen with a case for sceptical contingent pacifism and nonviolence: war and killing are theoretically justifiable but only under conditions which presently do not and possibly cannot actually obtain.

COSMIC NONVIOLENCE

Yet Bawa Muhaiyaddeen, once again, goes further. Shifting the basis of his argument from the nonpareils of early Islam (Muḥammad and Ali), he argues against violence through reference to the nature of God. 'God has no need to wage wars' [Bawa Muhaiyaddeen, 1987: 129], he reminds us. This is not intended as a platitude or tautology, it would appear, but as an exemplar – God does not fight, and so neither should we:

> That is the way God is. And just as God does not kill His children because they have evil qualities, we must not murder others or cut them down ... He is the Compassionate One [*al-raḥmān*], He is the Merciful One [*al-raḥīm*]. He creates and sustains all lives, He does not cut them down. Once we realise this, we will stop the fighting, the spilling of blood, the murder. [Bawa Muhaiyaddeen, 1987: 49, 52]

Muhaiyaddeen's nonviolent programme of self-improvement is not a call for apotheosis, for man's becoming (a) God. Rather it urges one to become *like* God: 'Man must acquire the qualities of God and live in that state. Only then can he speak of peace' [Bawa Muhaiyaddeen, 1987: 7]. Bawa Muhaiyaddeen's panentheistic understanding of God as encompassing creation combined with his conception of the ideal human being as

microcosmic mirror of the world leads him to see divine nature not only as an elevated ideal but as the underlying ground of being. The Divine Names *al-raḥmān* and *al-raḥīm* are by far the most regularly occurring predicates of God in the Quranic text, the most salient descriptors of that basis of all things. They open all but one chapter of that scripture and are repeated frequently throughout the text. Mercy and compassion, Muhaiyaddeen maintains, are fundamental to the nature of God. As God's nature is in turn fundamental to creation and the human species which reflects it, it follows for him that humanity at its most authentic must harmoniously manifest divine mercy and compassion. 'The sun, the moon, the stars, and the wind all perform their duty in harmony. Only man, who lives on this earth, has lost that peace' [Bawa Muhaiyaddeen, 1987: 7]. More than this, we have already seen him connect the Perfect Man (traditionally identified with the archetypes of Adam or Muḥammad) to the *nūr muḥammadī*, the Muḥammadan Light which pre-existed manifest creation (and which one might in more Neoplatonist terms regard as a prior emanation of God). To be merciful and compassionate, then, is not to strive for a rarefied goal, nor even to choose one among several equal options. Rather, it is the fundamental default condition out of which we arose and to which we are invited to return. 'Our true state is peace; our true state is inner patience, contentment, trust in God, and praise of God' [Bawa Muhaiyaddeen, 1987: 70–71].

This being said, panentheistic as opposed to pantheistic approaches to God do not simply equate Creator and Creation (as a Spinozan 'God or Nature'), but rather see the divine as extending beyond and in some fashion acting upon the manifest universe. As a Muslim, Bawa Muhaiyaddeen speaks less of an impersonal Neoplatonic One or Idea of the Good nor of an abstracted Godhead than of a personal God who wills and who speaks to us through revelation. It is not only on the basis of God's nature that Muhaiyaddeen argues for what he characteristically calls 'peacefulness'. It is also through God's intentions in communicating with and guiding His creatures: 'before we speak of peace, let us try to acquire God's words within ourselves' [Bawa Muhaiyaddeen, 1987: 7]. His view as to the nature of God's goals in sending down revelations to His human messengers is expressed in passages such as the following:

> There can be no benefit from killing a man in the name of God. Allah has no thought of killing or going to war. Why would Allah have sent His prophets if He had such thoughts? It was not to destroy men that Muhammad came; he was sent down as the wisdom that could show man how to destroy his own evil. [Bawa Muhaiyaddeen, 1987: 51]

The assertion that God sent Muḥammad to spread wisdom rather than to fight need not necessarily entail viewing the Prophet as an imperfect or rebellious messenger, even though we know that he not only taught but also did battle. Bawa Muhaiyaddeen does sometimes recognise that physical combats (principally those of Uhud, Badr, and The Trench [see Introduction]) indeed featured in the life of the Prophet Muḥammad. He, however, presents these as unavoidably forced upon the believers rather than as freely chosen by them. He places the blame for this squarely upon the aggression of oppressive Meccan polytheists such as Abū Jahl. What is more, he does not even describe the Prophet as acting in self-defence but rather as embodying a spiritual struggle of moral self-improvement. He maintains that '[t]hose battles were not fought to conquer other nations. They were fought to conquer the qualities of satan which refused to accept Allah. They were battles between the truth of Allah and falsehood' [Bawa Muhaiyaddeen, 1987: 62]. This may also elucidate our earlier discussion of his idiosyncratic reading of Ali's sparing of the infuriating adversary. 'The Prophet had no warlike qualities', Muhaiyaddeen insists [1987: 72]; Ali's restraint might therefore be seen as *imitatio muhammadi*. Ali's battle was not with his opponent but with his own warlike qualities. In both allegorised interpretations, Muhaiyaddeen shows a marked preference for the internal, spiritual realm of meaning and intention [*niyyah*] over their physical manifestations in the world. He thereby maintains that '[t]rue Islam brings only peace; it contains no enmity' [Bawa Muhaiyaddeen, 1987: 66] while also refraining from judging the pious ancestors of sacred history who did fight armed battles as un-Islamic. Indeed, in such argumentation he also parallels justifications *for* religiously licit violence in classical Islamic thought [see Conclusion].

This fundamentally theological position leads Bawa Muhaiyaddeen to appear to take two separate approaches to the theoretical justifiability of warfare *in extremis*. On some occasions, his rejection of warfare seems absolute and unequivocal: 'Islam is not war, it is not murder, it is not battles. This is not what we must engage in. Peace is Islam, patience is Islam, contentment is Islam, trust in God is Islam, the praise of God is Islam. Love is Islam' [Bawa Muhaiyaddeen, 1987: 70]. On other occasions, however, he not only concedes that true Muslims (such as Muḥammad and Ali) have indeed fought battles but also recognises that the Islamic revelation sets stringent limits on the permissibility and the practice of even such Prophetic warfare. Echoing mainstream Islamic jurisprudence, he observes that the Prophet permitted his followers only

to fight defensively and never to target non-combatants, crops, or wells [Bawa Muhaiyaddeen, 1987: 117]. 'But even so, Muhammad did not take part in these battles. Instead, he spent the entire time praying for the fighting to stop' [Bawa Muhaiyaddeen, 1987: 117]. However much God's Messenger himself may have abhorred violence, Bawa Muhaiyaddeen says, he was prepared to allow the believers to fight under some circumstances. This is again at the same time that he insists that '[t]he Prophet also taught us that one who is in Islam must never attack another who is in Islam' [Bawa Muhaiyaddeen, 1987: 117]. The result might justifiably be regarded as either a contradiction or an ethical double standard: contingent pacifism with respect to one group of human beings (non-Muslims), absolute pacifism with respect to another (Muslims). It may also recall a similar quandary in our earlier discussion of Amadou Bamba [see Chapter 1], though each resolves it differently.

One explanation for this apparent ethical inconsistency might simply be that Bawa Muhaiyaddeen cannot square his own inclination towards absolute pacifism with a scriptural tradition which he cannot avoid reading as warranting only contingent pacifism. Another explanation is possible, however, and is furthermore congruent with the account of his teaching developed in this chapter. We have seen him advance the views both that enmity is a precondition for the initiation of war and that Islam rules out enmity. It follows syllogistically from these premises that intra-Muslim pacifism is not so much a prescriptive norm as a tautological statement of fact: all war arises from enmity; no Muslim entertains enmity ∴ no Muslim makes war.

It is notable, however, that this focus on 'Muslim' status need not necessarily entail either tribalism or an understanding of Islamic ethics predicated on the othering exclusion of an out-group. Muhaiyaddeen's conception of Islam is explicitly cosmic in scope and universal to all humankind. All human beings are at least potential Muslims. This is a conventional view for any believer in a proselytising religion, let alone in Islam which traditionally sees itself as reflecting humankind's innate spiritual inclination [*fiṭrah*]. We may therefore infer that Muhaiyaddeen's commitment in principle is indeed to absolute pacifism: the ethical universality of nonviolence is a consequence of his belief in the moral universality of Islam. All humanity should be absolutely pacifist as and because all humanity should be Muslim, that is. He nonetheless regards this state of affairs as unachievable until such time as a sufficient number of people embrace Islam and the peacefulness it (for him) inherently entails. His acceptance of contingent pacifism in relation to dealings with

non-Muslims (or Muslims-to-be) is therefore fundamentally a pragmatic one rather than evidence of an absolute double standard. It is therefore his warism [Cady, 1989] rather than his pacifism which is contingent. This reading of his positions would furthermore clarify passages such as the following, which may be read as supporting it:

> Allah belongs equally to everyone. Every tongue that has recited the *kalimah* [profession of faith] with certitude belongs to the same family and dwells within Islam . . . Therefore, anyone who has truly accepted Prophet Muhammad and has faith in the *kalimah* will never harm or kill another who has also affirmed these words, no matter what fault that person may have committed. A tongue that has recited the *kalimah*, a tongue that has accepted Allah and His Messenger, should never attack another person in any way. [Bawa Muhaiyaddeen, 1987: 114]

Ethical pragmatism is also reflected in Bawa Muhaiyaddeen's account of the Prophet's attitude towards non-human animals. Bawa Muhaiyaddeen himself followed a vegetarian diet and actively recommended it to his followers – many of whom continue to observe it to this day [BMF.org, n.d.]. Though many present and historical Muslims are vegetarian, vegetarianism is nowhere explicitly mandated by scripture – neither by Quran nor by Hadith, nor by the various schools of jurisprudence [*fiqh*] which normatively elaborated upon them. While numerous scriptural sources in Islam urge kindness and forbid cruelty to animals, it is widely recorded that the Prophet and his Companions did habitually eat meat. In the course of his argument in favour of the non-killing of human beings, Bawa Muhaiyaddeen recounts the following story about the Prophet, however:

> The traditional stories [*aḥādīth*] also tell of the Prophet saying to 'Ali, 'Meat is one of the few foods available in our country, but if you eat the meat of any animal for forty days in a row, the qualities of that animal will come into you. 'Ali, never eat meat for forty days in a row. We should reduce our consumption of meat.' . . . People could not simply kill as they pleased; they could take only what was needed. Now, if the Prophet tried to reduce even the random killing of animals, should we increase the slaughter of men? [Bawa Muhaiyaddeen, 1987: 119]

This passage is informative in a number of respects. It explicitly advances the view that the Prophet discouraged the eating of animals and forbade their killing for any other reason. It furthermore assumes that harm done to animals and harm done to human beings are in some sense morally comparable. Finally, it implies that the speaker (and/or the intended audience) regard human life as of greater inherent value than that of non-human animal life. But more can be inferred by comparing this passage to the conventional *ḥadīth* corpus. The reported conversation

in question is not entirely alien to the scriptural tradition, though it is unclear how Baha Muhaiyaddeen came to hear of it. A similar discussion is for instance recounted by Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, albeit attributed to the Prophet's first cousin and son-in-law ʿAlī bin Abī Ṭālib: 'He who abstains from meat for forty days will worsen his constitution; and he who persists in meat eating for forty days will harden his heart; and it is said that meat has the same addictive quality' [*ḍarāwah*] as wine' [al-Ghazālī, *iḥyā' ʿulūm al-dīn*: 3/95].

What al-Ghazālī's version has in common with other Sunni and indeed Shia recensions [e.g. Ibn Abī Dunyā's *kitāb iṣlāḥ al-māl* 2:69 and al-Majlisī's *biḥār al-anwār* 62:294, respectively] is what is different from Bawa Muhaiyaddeen's account. Other than the latter's omission of the warning regarding one's good health (and with it the recommendation of moderation rather than total abstention from meat-eating), only Bawa Muhaiyaddeen presents the venerated speaker as giving a pragmatic justification by reference to the lack of alternative foods in seventh century Arabia. Only he presents the Prophet as explaining meat's consumption as the result of its being 'one of the few foods available in our country' [Bawa Muhaiyaddeen, 1987: 119]. The permission to kill animals for food is transformed by that addition from an universal and absolute into a conspicuously contingent one. After all, even a scrupulously conscientious vegetarian might resort to eating meat if their very life depended upon it. The argument could charitably be made that Bawa Muhaiyaddeen's allusion to scarce food resources is a plausible elaboration on the otherwise medically incorrect assertion of a biological need for meat to be found in more canonical recensions. It is nevertheless difficult to avoid the suspicion that his own moral inclinations have in this instance overridden a scrupulous faithfulness to the scriptural tradition.

Irrespective of the origin of Bawa Muhaiyaddeen's understanding of Islamic ethics governing violence towards non-human animals, we may observe their continuity with his attitudes towards the harming of humans. In both instances one finds a sustained commitment to absolute pacifism and physical nonviolence presented as an at least theoretically achievable ideal. In both cases, however, one also finds pragmatic acceptance of contingent forms of pacifism and nonviolence on the basis of necessity and within a broadly scriptural ethico-legal framework. One would therefore find justification for describing Bawa Muhaiyaddeen as an equivocal advocate either of absolute pacifism and of a form of so-called just war pacifism. It is, however, argued in this book's Conclusion

that cases such as this present an opportunity for the development of new and different analytical approaches which do not require such an ethical double standard.

AGAINST VIOLENCE IN THE ABSTRACT

It is also worth remarking on some issues which interest Bawa Muhaiyaddeen less than they do others discussed in this study. He is clearly concerned with political oppression – and in fact attempted several interventions on the world stage, notably voicing concern over destructive actions by Israel and the Islamic Republic of Iran. Yet he does not address oppression as a structural phenomenon. Justice for him appears more as an after-effect or epiphenomenon of personal enlightenment than an element of a more holistic struggle. He shares with the gamut of other advocates of nonviolence analysed here a concern for moral status and intention [*niyyah*], but he goes beyond any of them in his emphasising of it over and above any other constituent of an action. While he is highly sensitive to certain kinds of spiritual harm, moreover, his identification of material harm is relatively restricted. While he does on rare occasions suggest that true peace would banish poverty, he offers neither a critique of any particular economic model nor suggestions as to its improvement or replacement. Killing is of more concern to him than exploitation and disenfranchisement – in contradistinction to some others surveyed here [e.g. Chapters 4 and 6], and arguably to the Quran's own suggestion to the contrary. Arberry, for instance, translates the line *al-fitnatu ashhaddu min al-qatli* [Quran 2:191] as 'persecution is worse than killing'. In terms of the spiritual aspect of Bawa Muhaiyaddeen's calls for peacefulness, in fact, his focus is almost exclusively upon the internal life and development of the individual. He is not obviously concerned with cultural or epistemological forms of violence which others see directed against subaltern groups the world over. On the contrary, the reading presented here of his cultural hybridity and pedagogical use of non-Muslim language may even strike some as disrespectfully appropriative in emptying them of so much of their traditional meanings. Indeed, the depth of his interest in the views of non-Muslims seems limited even when they most emphatically agree with him. Neither Leo Tolstoy, nor Mahatma Gandhi, nor Albert Einstein, nor Bertrand Russell, nor Martin Luther King are mentioned even in passing in the pages of Muhaiyaddeen's *Islam and World Peace*.

Cultural context is a salient concern when comparing Bawa Muhaiyaddeen with other advocates of principled pacifism and

nonviolence in contemporary Islam. The most important context when describing his popularity, and arguably his rhetorical strategies, is not the Sri Lanka of his birth but the United States of America in which he lies buried. Both the substantive content and the notable lacunae in his approach to nonviolence find clear resonances with the utopian individualism of many mid to late twentieth-century American counter-cultures. It is this fact which leads Gisela Webb [2006] to locate him within the 'third wave' of Sufi movements in the USA. This she describes as the most deliberately and conventionally Islamic stage of a continuity whose precursors were animated by fascination with 'Oriental wisdom' as a path towards a 'perennial' personal enlightenment [Webb 2006: 87–88]. Many of the same factors which endeared him to Americans may in turn lead to still wider resonance on an globalised international stage which American culture and industry has done so much to shape:

> Bawa made a compelling case for pursuing world peace. He promoted a form of Islam that aspired to a transformative level of spiritual understanding, a level sufficiently comprehensive to transcend even Islam itself. He promoted a meta-discourse of non-violence based on Islamic precepts but one capable of showing how these could be transformed. In so doing he promoted a meta-discourse with the potential to transform every attempt to understand global conflict. [Pettman, 2010: 208]