

BLA

1030

6718

ADDITIONAL
PROVISION

Guru Nanāk Quincentenary Celebration Series

ISLAM

Contributors

ABDUL HAQ ANSARI, M. MUJEEB, K. A. NIZAMI
S. ABID HUSAIN, S. A. AKBARABADI



PUBLICATION BUREAU
PUNJABI UNIVERSITY, PATIALA

© COPYRIGHT

Guru Gobind Singh Department of Religious Studies
Punjabi University, Patiala

135275

1987
Second Edition
Rs. 25-00

Published by Sardar Devinder Singh Kang, Registrar, Punjabi University,
Patiala & printed at Ram Printograph, Okhla, New Delhi.

FOREWORD

Though man's religious consciousness has been, time and again, enshrined in song and scripture, in art and architecture, from the beginning there has always been a need for exegetical literature. For the saint and the lay man, the literature of prophecy is enough, but the advanced initiate and the rational thinker always seek doctrinal support. Each major religion, therefore, has gathered a huge mass of expository material which helps project its true image. Nevertheless, it continually requires fresh thought and application inasmuch as it has to meet the requirements of the changing imagination. That is indeed how a religion remains a living force. The effort of the Guru Gobind Singh Department of Religious Studies, Punjabi University—the first Department of its kind in Indian universities—to bring out up-to-date volumes on the five principal religions—Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, Islam and Sikhism—is accordingly a scholarly step of great value, particularly as it synchronises with the 500th birth anniversary of Guru Nanak. The release of the volumes on this occasion, therefore, is an apt and concrete tribute to the catholicity of the Founder's mind.

The primary aim of these publications is to give the reader an idea of the fundamentals of the religions in question. Thus, no comprehensive analysis or exposition has been attempted, though, I trust, the scholarship which has been commissioned, has made a good job of it. These skeletal studies are intended, in particular, to bring the younger people in our colleges and universities into contact with the various streams of religious experience, thought and practice. Religion, though frequently abused by the pundit and the padre, remains man's most

cherished heritage and hope. To open a window on to a long and beautiful vista is thus to invite the youth to unending pastures of pleasure. Literature of this kind has its own distinctive flavour and appeal. Once one has felt what Guru Nanak calls, "the touch of His Love," nothing else will quite satisfy.

Patiala
August 5, 1969

KIRPAL SINGH NARANG
Vice-Chancellor
Punjabi University, Patiala

INTRODUCTION

Islam is a major world-religion which has swayed the minds and hearts of a large section of mankind. The fascinating elements of Islam are : (i) the passionate belief in one God without a second and one who is the Creator of the Universe, full of power, mercy and goodness, and (ii) the utter subservience of the human will to the Divine Will.

Prophet Muhammad never claimed to be more than a man. He felt an urge to lift up people from the quagmires of idol worship and to devote themselves to the worship of one God. He exhorted the people that they must give up the worship of their numerous gods and follow the Will of God.' He preached simple but firm moral codes of kindness towards the poor and needy and loyalty to friends. He urged that they should devote their time in prayer and be sincere and faithful in their devotion to God.

The lofty character of Muhammad as a man of faith and action, has been a source of inspiration to the generations that followed. The Prophet of Islam directly dealt with social evils that stared him in face. He never separated political and spiritual aspects of life ; he saw life as one whole. Muhammad did not engage himself in vain metaphysics, but rigorously strove to improve the social conditions of his people by regulations concerning cleanliness, sobriety, fasting and prayer. He esteemed alms-giving and charity.

Revelations which Muhammad received have been preserved in the Qur'ān for the enlightenment of all succeeding generations. According to the Islamic tradition, Qur'ān reveals God's will to mankind. It is God's message to man. It contains the word of Allah. The *sunnah* and Hadith tell of actions and sayings

of Muhammad and of the customs of early Muslims. Qur'ān and *sunnah* define the limit of beliefs and actions of Muslims.

Qur'ān contains progressive social principles and admirable rules of personal integrity. Indeed, the laws of Qur'ān have revolutionized social relations. Theologically also they have exercised a liberating influence. Further, those who accepted the oneness of God and worshipped Him formed a community in which there were no distinctions of high and low, superior and inferior. For truly in God's eyes, no man is lowly. All are equal. Moreover, the brotherhood of Islam has not stopped at boundaries of nation, race or wealth. A unique spirit of brotherhood and comradeship pervades the teachings of Islam.

The rise of Islam and its phenomenal success have been due to its revolutionary principles and its ability to lead the masses out of hopeless situations created by stagnant civilizations. Priestly domination and religious confusion pervaded throughout Egypt, Syria, Persia, Mesopotamia, etc. God had disappeared in a crowd of angels and saints. Then came the new slogan of Islam: there is but one God. Islam was welcomed as a deliverer by the oppressed people in different parts of the world. Historically, Islam rose as a protection against religious persecution and as a refuge for the oppressed. It fought against priestly domination, rigid rites and hypocrisy.

Etymologically, Islam means peace—peace with God by recognizing and paying homage to His oneness and peace on earth with one's neighbours. The Qur'ān expresses in very clear terms: 'There is no compulsion in religion'. The Qur'ān also states explicitly that the prophets of other religions must be revered. It maintains that apostles of God who lived before prophet Muhammad are great and holy. The Qur'ān proclaims: 'And certainly we raised in every nation a messenger saying: Serve Allah and shun the devil.' Further, 'we sent no messenger but with the language of his people, so that he might explain to them clearly.'

Muhammad, with great foresight, granted to the followers of other religions freedom of worship and security of their person and property. This principle of toleration was strictly kept up not only by the immediate successors of the Prophet

but over the whole period of Arabic ascendancy. When Jerusalem was defeated by Caliph Umar, the inhabitants of the vanquished city were left in possession of their worldly goods and were allowed their freedom of worship. With great vision, Muhammad accepted in principle the salvation of men provided they were virtuous and good.

Islam also encouraged learning and the cultivation of intellect. The works of the sages of ancient Greece were rescued, collected and preserved by the early Muslims. They translated Greek classics and transmitted them to the West which led to the Renaissance. Islam spread fast in Arabia and the Persian Empire. It obtained tremendous fillip in Africa ; it has been and continues to be a great civilizing force in the history of man.

In India, the *Bhakti* movement which spearheaded a popular revolt against Brahmanical Orthodoxy was to some extent promoted by the social impact of Islam. It also imparted some of its monotheistic zest to Indian religions.

With the history of over a thousand years of Islam behind them, many Indians are yet to make a serious effort to understand Islam and the ideas and ideals that move the hearts and minds of Muslims. On the occasion of the birth quin-centenary of Guru Nanak, this book goes to the world as a humble effort to create understanding and appreciation of Islam—the religion of peace.

I take this opportunity to record my profound appreciation and thanks to my esteemed friends Dr K.R. Sundararajan and Dr Mushir-ul-Haq without whose assistance this volume could not have been published in time. My special thanks are due to the contributors to this Volume for their ready co-operation at every stage.

K. L. SESHAGIRI RAO

*Guru Gobind Singh Department of Religious Studies,
Punjabi University, Patiala*

CONTENTS

FOREWORD	— <i>Sardar Kirpal Singh Narang</i>	v
INTRODUCTION		vii
FAITH AND PRACTICE : THEOLOGY AND ETHICS	— <i>Dr. Abdul Haq Ansari</i>	1
MAN AND GOD IN ISLAM : FREEDOM AND OBLIGATION AS FOUND IN THE QUR'AN	— <i>Prof. M. Mujeeb</i>	30
MYSTICISM	— <i>Prof. Khaliq Ahmad Nizami</i>	50
MODERN TRENDS IN ISLAM	— <i>Dr. S. Abid Husain</i>	75
ISLAM AND OTHER RELIGIONS	— <i>Prof. Said Ahmad Akbarabadi</i>	103
OUR CONTRIBUTORS		117

I
ISLAM :
FAITH AND PRACTICE, THEOLOGY AND ETHICS

DR M. ABDUL HAQ ANSARI

THE CARDINAL idea of Islam is a principle, not a personality, country or community. Islam literally means submission. Accordingly, Islam is a religion based on the universal principle of submission to God. To call it Muhammadanism or to construe it as a Semitic religion is only to misunderstand its character. Islam is the universal religion of mankind. All prophets in this sense were the prophets of Islam because their call to people was identical: "Submit to God in worship and obedience, and associate nothing with Him."¹ Muhammad is, therefore, not the 'founder' of Islam. He is only the last stone in the edifice of prophecy.

This submission must be complete. Islam claims the whole of man, the individual and society. It is a *dīn*, a comprehensive system of living in submission to God. The division of life into sacred and profane is, therefore, a mistake. For the entire life is, as it were, dedicated to God, and nothing that is so dedicated can be profane.

Allah is the Islamic name for God. Allah is *Al-Ilāh*, meaning 'the one who is the object of worship, love and obedience, who rules over the universe, responds to prayers, protects from evil, provides for needs, and who is hidden from eyes and transcends comprehension.'² The other most common name used for God is *al-Rabb*. It means the Provident, the Guardian, the Lord and the Sovereign.³

The central idea of the Qur'ān is that Allah alone is *ilah* and *rabb*. He alone is the object of worship ; therefore, all worship should be addressed to Him. He rules over the universe ;

therefore, he alone should be prayed for securing the good or removing the evil. He is the Provident ; therefore, he alone should be approached for all needs of the body and the soul. He is the Lord and to him belongs the whole universe and all that is there. Man is not the real owner of his possessions or the master of his destiny. He is a humble servant ('*abd*'), and the object of his life is to fulfil the wishes of the Lord. Allah is the Sovereign, the law is His law and absolute submission is due to Him. Every other law, rule or authority is derived and subordinate. None should be feared save He, and every other love and devotion should be subservient to His love and devotion. He is above our comprehension ; submission to Him, therefore, is an act of faith, a self-commitment, not an assent to a demonstrable proposition.

Allah is the Creator of the heavens and the earth. He is the only self-existing being, all else exists by his *khalq*. *Khalq* means fashioning new forms from existing material ; it also means creation out of nothing—the summoning of a universe into existence when otherwise there was only Allah. The second sense of *khalq* is more clearly brought out by other words which the Qur'ān mentions among the attributes of God, such as *Al-Bari* (The Maker out of naught) and *al-Badī* (The Originator). There are three important corollaries of this doctrine of creation.

First, it entails an absolute distinction between the Creator and the creation, so much so that it is logically impossible for a creature to become God. Whatever is created will forever remain created. No being, human or otherwise, can at any point of its career become God, though he can, and is enjoined to cultivate in himself, as best as he can, the attributes of Allah.

The second corollary is that the whole universe is absolutely dependent upon God as its maker and as the source of its continued existence. Every thing in Nature with its properties and laws of behaviour, every event of history and every incident of life, good or bad, ultimately depends upon the creative will of God, and is always under His full control.

The third corollary of the doctrine of creation is that the

whole created realm belongs exclusively to the Creator. There is no lord and sovereign other than him "Lo ! to Him belongs the creation and the rule."⁴

Philosophers like Al-Fārābī (d. 950 A.D.) and Ibn Sīnā (d. 1036 A.D.) held that the idea of creation did not rule out the possibility that the created universe might be eternal. It is conceivable that God has been creative from all eternity, so that although the universe has a created and dependent status, it is nevertheless without a beginning. Al-Kindī (d. 873 A.D.) and Miskawaih (d. 1032 A.D.), on the other hand, believed with the theologians that creation did not take place in time.⁵ Time is itself an aspect of the created world. Among the sūfīs, both the views are represented by equally great personalities.

It has also been generally held that creation is an act of God's will. The Qur'ān uses both *irāda* (will) and *ikhtiyār* (choice) for God. "Thy Lord createth what He willeth and chooseth."⁶ Many of the theologians and mystics, therefore, believed that the creative action of God is a free choice. Others, finding choice incompatible with divine power, knowledge and goodness, interpreted divine *irāda* and *ikhtiyār* in terms of self-determined and good-oriented activity.

Creation is not incompatible with causality, and does not necessarily mean momentary creation. Some theologians did expound the view that God creates the whole world every moment *ex nihilo*. But the general trend of Muslim theology has been to understand causality and the concomitant phenomenon of the uniformity of nature as regular manifestations of God's creative will. It has aimed at denying the independence of causal nexus, but not the regularity of natural phenomena. The doctrine of momentary creation and its concomitant concept of atomism, are not integral parts of Muslim theology.

God is a personal being. At various places in the Qur'ān God speaks in personal terms. For instance ; "And I have chosen thee, so hearken unto that which is inspired. Lo ! I, even I, am Allah. There is no God save Me. So serve Me and establish worship for My remembrance. Lo ! the Hour is surely coming. But I will to keep it hidden, that every soul

may be rewarded for that which it striveth to achieve.”⁷ God has always been addressed in a personal language by the Prophet. For instance, “O God ! Thou art My Lord. There is no God save Thee. Thou hast created me, and I am Thy bondman. I abide by Thy covenant and promise as best as I can. I seek refuge in Thee from the evil of that which I have wrought. I acknowledge unto Thee Thy favour which Thou hast bestowed upon me. I also confess my inequity ; therefore, forgive Thou me ; for, behold, none forgiveth sins but Thou.”⁸

Muslim theology has been averse to an understanding of God as a pure being without attributes. It has also been suspicious of any efforts of interpreting God’s diverse attributes in terms of a single essence, intelligence, will or being. It has upheld the idea of God as one with whom personal relations are possible. The God of Islam is one who knows, chooses and wills ; who hears, sees and speaks ; who nourishes, feeds and provides ; who protects, helps and takes care of ; who guides and leads to perfection, rewards and punishes ; who is addressed, prayed to and supplicated, and who is feared, loved and trusted. In the current century the best philosophical exposition of God as the Supreme Person or the Infinite Ego is to be found in the lectures of Dr Muhammad Iqbal, published under the title, “Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam.”

The most characteristic of God’s personality is his love and beneficence. God is *Rahmān*. Derived from *Rahmat* which means mercy, love and beneficence, *Rahmān* is the perfect loving, merciful and beneficent being. It is significant to note that out of a hundred names that the Qur’ān uses as adjectives for Allah, the only one which is also used as a proper name is *Rahmān*. This shows that the essential nature of Allah is love and beneficence. The Qur’ān says : “Thou comprehendest all things in mercy and knowledge.”⁹ Every activity of God is an activity of *Rahmān*, whether it is creation (LXVII : 3) or governance (XX : 5), guidance (III : 8), protection (XII : 69) provision (XVI : 18), beneficence (XXII : 65), granting prayers (II : 37) or forgiving sins (XXIII : 109). Accordingly, God is *al-Wadūd* (the Loving), *al-Ra’ūf* (the Compassionate), *al-Rahīm*

(the Merciful), *al-Ghaffār* (the Forgiving), *al-Tawwāb* (the Relenting) *al-Hādi* (the Guide), *al-Rabb* (the Provident), *al-Momin* (the Protector), *al-Muhaimin* (the Succour) and *al-Salam* (the Peace).

God's love for his creatures is not rooted in their excellence, virtue or desert, but in the nature of God himself as essentially benevolent and merciful. This idea is a part of the meaning of *Rahmān* which is particularly brought out when *al-Rahmān* is associated with *al-Rahīm* (The Merciful) as in the opening part (*Surah Fātiha*) of the *Qur'ān*.¹⁰

A great manifestation of God's *rahmat* is revelation and sending of prophets with *al-Dīn* (the fundamental principles of religion) and a *Sharī'a* (a code and law of life), claiming absolute obedience of man. "Verily we have brought them a scripture which we expound with knowledge, a guidance and a mercy for people who believe."¹¹

The demand for complete surrender should, therefore, be viewed as an expression of the divine love seeking the best in man. God is Lord (*al-Rabb*) and sovereign (*al-Malik*) because he is *al-Rahmān*. "And your Lord is the Beneficent, so follow me (*i.e.* the prophet) and obey my order."¹²

Another form of God's *rahmat* is his justice ('adl), his reward for those who are reverent or devout and punishment for those who are wicked. "That day true sovereignty will belong to the Beneficent One, and it will be a hard day for disbelievers. On the day when the wrong-doer gnaweth his hands, he will say : Ah, would that I had chosen a way together with the messenger (of Allah) !" ¹³. Justice is a necessary consequence of sending prophets with guidance, and, therefore, it is the completion of God's *rahmat*. A God who rewards alike both the pious and the wicked, the obedient and the disobedient, the cruel and the gentle would not be a good God. Love, benevolence, justice and mercy all together constitute the goodness of God.

There have been two views in Muslim theology about the goodness of God. First, there is a moral standard external to God, in relation to which he can be said to be good. Second, God is good by definition. He is the final standard of goodness,

so that his nature, whatever it may be, is the source of goodness. The first view was taken by the Mu'tazilites, the second by the Ash'arites. Ibn Taimyya (d. 1328 A.D.) writes that generally learned Muslims in the early centuries and many theologians, such as the followers of Abu Hanīfa (d. 767 A.D.), the Maturidites and others, were of the first view. In fact, the second view emerged, he observes, as a reaction to some of the alleged implications of the first view.¹⁴

There can be a third position also. Good may be taken as a relational concept, referring to the fulfilment of a being's nature and basic desires. When human beings call God good, they mean that his existence and activity constitute the condition of man's highest good. God has made human nature in such a way that man's highest good is to be found in relation to God, in submitting to him in worship and obedience (*'ibādat*).

God's wrath (*ghadab Allah*) may be viewed on similar lines as a consequence of infringing the divinely appointed moral order, by taking a wrong course of action. The conditions of human life are such that for an individual or a group to infringe upon the structure of the Personal order is to court disaster. The disaster is the wrath of God.

The Qur'ān also describes God as *al-Kabīr* (The Great), *al-Jalīl* (The Majestic), *al-Majīd* (The Glorious), *al-Jabbār* (the Unapproachable), *al-ʿAlī* (The Sublime), *al-Quddus* (The Holy), *al-Samad* (The Perfect), *al-ʿAzīm* (The Magnificent). There are many passages in the Qur'ān which emphasize that God is immensely greater than man, greater than the whole universe; that he is an absolutely perfect being, above every imaginable defect and shortcoming, and that he is infinitely beyond the approach of everything, even beyond thought and imagination. While reading these passages one is overwhelmed by the reality of a divine being infinitely other and greater than man, and becomes intensely conscious of one's own comparative insignificance and virtual nothingness. For instance :

"God! There is no god save Him, the Living, the Eternal. Neither slumber nor sleep overtaketh Him. Unto Him belongeth whatsoever is in the Heavens and whatsoever is in the earth. Who can intercede with Him save by His own leave? He knoweth that which is in front of them and that which is behind

them ; whilst they encompass naught of His knowledge save what He will. His throne includeth the heavens and the earth, and the preservation thereof wearieth Him not. He is the sublime, the Magnificent,"¹⁵

"They esteem no Allah as He hath the right to be esteemed, when the whole earth is His handful on the Day of Resurrection, and the heavens are rolled in His right hand. Glorified is He and High Exalted from all that they ascribe as partner (unto Him)."¹⁶

The corresponding sense of man's extreme humility and submission to God's infinite greatness is brought out in many sayings of the Prophet such as :

"Glory be to the Lord of the Might, the Dominion, the Majesty, and the Magnificence."¹⁷

"O God ! Before thee do I bow myself. In thee do I believe. And unto thee do I surrender. Humbled before thee are mine hearing and my sight, my marrow, my bones and my nerves."¹⁸

There is no God save Allah. By uttering this *Kalimā* (faith-formula) Muslim declares his belief in the unity of God (*tawhīd*) on the one hand, and his determination to live by this belief on the other. *Tawhīd* is, therefore, not only a faith (*īmān*) but also a way of living (*Islām*). Similarly, the opposite of *tawhīd* *shirk* (association with God) is a matter of belief as well as practice.

A better method of understanding *tawhīd* is through the study of *shirk*. As expounded in the Qur'ān, *shirk* is of four kinds : *shirk* in being, in attributes, in powers and in the rights of God. *Shirk* in being is to believe that there are beings other than Allah who share in god head. The popular belief in the plurality of gods and goddesses, the belief of the pre-Islamic pagan Arabs that the angels are the daughters of Allah, or the Christian belief that Jesus is the son of God, are instances of *shirk* in being.

Shirk in attributes is to ascribe to any other being any attribute of God in the sense in which it is ascribed to God. To believe, for instance, that some one knows everything, or has infinite powers, or is holy and free from all imperfections, is to regard him as a God.

Shirk in the powers of God consists in attributing to some one else such powers as are distinctive of God in virtue of his godhead, as, for instance, the power of causing good or evil in a

supernatural way, of hearing prayers, of protecting, destroying, shaping destinies, or the power of making things lawful and unlawful, or of prescribing absolute rules and laws for governing the life of man.

Shirk in the rights of God is to render to others such acts as are the privileged rights of God. For instance, when people bow down or prostrate before some one, or offer sacrifices in His name, or love Him above everything else, or fear Him as they fear God, or surrender to Him without question, they treat him as God, no matter whether they call him by the name of God or not.¹⁹

Contrarily, the Qur'ānic *tawhīd* is to believe that there is no god other than Allah, that no one else shares in godhead or in any of His attributes in the sense in which God is qualified by them, and that the powers which Allah holds in virtue of His godhead and the privileges that He as such deserves, are exclusively His.

Later Muslim thought discussed the unity of God in the context of the then prevailing philosophical ideas. Its problem was to conceive the unity of God amid the plurality of his attributes. The problem emerged from a distinction between the essence (*dhāt*) and the attributes (*sifat*) of God. God's essence may be taken to be identical with his attributes, or different from his attributes. If the attributes are believed to be other than the essence, as the logical distinction between the essence and attributes requires, then there is not one God but many, the essence and the various attributes. But if the attributes of God are identified with His essence, then the unity of God might thereby be saved, but some inadmissible consequences are unavoidable. For instance, it follows that such attributes of God as his wisdom, power and speech are identical with each other, because all are identical with His essence.

Various solutions have been offered to this problem by theologians, philosophers and sūfis. Each one has its own difficulties. Probably the best solution lies in the re-examination of the nature of relation between essence (*dhāt*) and its attributes (*sifāt*). Ibn Taimyya has suggested that the relation of essence and attributes is a unique relation. It is, therefore, not correct

to regard the logical distinction between the essence and attributes as a real distinction between two entities. Consequently, it is not valid to infer the plurality of gods from the plurality of attributes. God's unity is not the pale unity of a mathematical entity, nor the abstract unity of a logical notion ; His unity resembles the higher unity of a personality which embraces and coordinates all the diversities and yet transcends them.

The Qur'ān begins with a declaration of the essential qualifications which are required in order to take full benefit of the book :

"This is the scripture whereof there is no doubt, a guidance unto those who ward off (evil), who believe in the Unseen, and establish worship, and spend of that we have bestowed upon them, and who believe in that which is revealed unto thee (Muhammad) and that which was revealed before thee, and who have faith in the Hereafter."²⁰

Of these, the foremost qualification is the belief in the Unseen. The Unseen has to be taken on faith, because it is not a provable proposition. Nor does it require to be proved, because it is a given reality. The Qur'ān never tries to prove the Unseen ; it assumes that the awareness of the Unseen is inseparably ingrained in man. "And (remember) when thy Lord brought forth from the children of Adam, from their reins, their seed, and made them testify of themselves (saying) : Am I not your Lord ? They said : Yea, verily. We testify. (That was) lest you should say at the Day of Resurrection, 'Lo ! of this we were unaware'."²¹

Arguments for the existence of God, for revelation and for a life hereafter—the Unseen—advanced in the Qur'ān are not, therefore, to be construed as proofs in the strict logical sense. They are *āyāt* or signs of the Unseen. Their function is to revive the idea of a known reality which has been forgotten by doubts created by sophisticated ignorance or shortsighted interests.

Theologians and philosophers, partly inspired by Qur'ānic references and partly encouraged by Greek rationalism have constructed elaborate proofs to establish the Unseen. They veered round the idea of a natural theology in a limited sense. In that they were not altogether mistaken. Their proofs had a

limited utility provided their assumptions were conceded. They, however, failed to see that their assumptions were neither demonstrable propositions nor self-evident truths, but ultimate convictions about the general nature of reality.

Revelation is the authentic way of knowing the general nature of the Unseen reality. Sūfīs have claimed that their intuition (*kashf*) is another means to the direct experience of reality. They believed that the prophetic revelation is only a form of mystic intuition. Muslims in general agree with al-Ghāzalī (d. 1111 A.D.) that there are ways of knowing other than reason ; and revelation and mystic intuition is one. But they have always regarded it both fallible and limited in its efficacy. The only infallible source of ultimate knowledge (*al-ʿIlm*) and of perfect guidance (*al-Hudā*) for life is revelation. In principle, this is the view to which most of the Sūfīs also subscribe, although in practice they might have their own reservations.

The content of revelation is a body of truths, expressed in statements and propositions. Revelation is the imparting to man of divinely authenticated truths. God, does not appear in the form of man or any other being. To Islam, a finite incarnation of God is an impossibility. The Creator cannot become the created. Revelation is the word of God, communicated to man by a divine voice, or through angelic messenger, or directly revealed on the heart. These ways have been described by the Qurʾān itself :

“It was not (vouchsafed) to any mortal that Allāh should speak to him unless (it be) by revelation or from behind a veil, or that (He) sendeth a messenger to reveal what He will by His leave.”²²

A prophet is, therefore, a man, neither a god nor an angel. His only distinction is that he is the recipient of a divine revelation. “Say : I am only a mortal like you. My lord inspirith in me that your God is only one God.”²³

Corresponding to this view of revelation, faith (*īmān*) is believing in propositions, upon insufficient evidence. Dorothy Emmet’s following analysis of faith is also a true characterization of Islamic faith.

" faith is distinguished from the entertainment of a probable proposition by the fact that the latter can be a completely theoretic affair. Faith is a 'yes' of self-commitment, it does not turn probabilities into certainties ; only a sufficient increase in the weight of evidence could do that. But it is a volitional response which takes us out of the theocratic attitude."²⁴

The Qur'ān is the book that was revealed to Muhammad. It was not revealed all at once, but part by part, large or small. The first revelation came to Muhammad when he was forty. This was the beginning of his prophetic mission. The last revelation came sometime before his death at the age of sixty-three. Whenever some verses were revealed the Prophet called his scribes and ordered them to write them down. The present order of the *sūras* (parts) and *āyāt* (verses) of the Qur'ān is not the order of their revelation. It is a new order which was fixed by the Prophet himself under the direct instructions of God. Therefore, the whole Qur'ān as it is now, is, in words and in the order of parts and verses, revealed by God.

The subject of the Qur'ān is of a man in his totality. It comprehends every aspect of man—his beliefs, his values, methods of worship, rules of conduct, laws of society, principles of government and regulations about economic activity. There are arguments and exhortations, moving descriptions of the blessings of paradise and horrifying pictures of the sufferings of Hell. There are accounts of prophets, their messages and activities, their trials and hardships and their final victory over their opponents who were annihilated or made to surrender. There are also discussions of different kinds of men : pious, wicked, sincere believers, arrogant rebels, ignorant opponents and timid hypocrites.

These various themes which are as complex as life itself have not been treated separately. All of them have been combined together in a flowing discourse like various colours in a spectrum. The Qur'ān is not a treatise nor a collection of treatises on different subjects. It is a message and programme of reconstruction of the entire life, body and soul, given to a people who were asked first to adopt it in their own lives and then to carry it to others, through a leader who was also given timely instructions to guide his people and lead the move-

ment to success. The Qur'ān is the enunciation of a mission as well as the record of its fulfilment in more than two decades. That is why we find that some fundamental ideas have been discussed again and again and their different aspects repeatedly stressed, whereas other themes have been mentioned not more than once.

A prophet is more than the bearer of a revelation. His function does not end but begins with the recitation of revelation. The Qur'ān has described the functions of Muhammad as follows :

“He it is who hath sent among the unlettered ones a messenger of their own, to recite unto them His revelation and to make them grow, and to teach them the scriptures and wisdom, though heretofore, they were indeed in error manifest.”²⁵

These lines set three tasks before the Prophet. His first task was *tilāwat* or to recite the revealed message and to explain its meaning and implications. The message comprised above all of a vision of the world and a set of fundamental values and norms of life. Consequently his first task involved the elaboration of a basic philosophy. He tried also to remove intellectual doubts and psychological inhibitions and persuaded people to accept his message.

The second task of the Prophet was *tazkiya*, or to urge people and to show them the way to give up their evil practices, to form good habits and develop virtues, and to infuse in them a spirit of piety, love and devotion, through sincere submission to God, worship and remembrance, and through sustained effort and continuous struggle. He prepared his followers to withstand every temptation, bear all hardships and offer any sacrifice that might be required. He taught them not to withdraw from the struggle, nor to bend to opposition, nor to make compromises. In this way he created a party of pious, reliable and strong men.

The third task of the Prophet was to organise a new society and build a new order with the cooperation of his party. In the light of his fundamental values he formed laws (*kitāb*) to govern society and rule the state. He fought all the enemies of the new order, internal and external, till they surrendered.

It is this task to which the Qur'ān refers in the following words:

"He it is who hath sent His messenger with guidance and religion of truth, that he make it conquer all religions, however much the idolators may be averse."²⁶

The Prophet's task did not end there. He taught *hikmat* (wisdom) that is, he created in his men an insight into the basic principles and values of the new order and an understanding of its working and growth so that they could maintain and develop the new order on correct lines by themselves when he would not be in their midst. He warned them against possible deviations from the right path, and informed them of the psychology of the people who at times caused deviations in perfect sincerity and honesty, and also taught them measures to correct deviations and put the order back on the right course.

The whole task was performed by the Prophet with the single motive of serving the Lord and fulfilling his will out of good will and love for the people. His struggle was actuated by a great sense of responsibility towards God and by trust in his guidance and help. In spite of his great success and achievement the Prophet never claimed that he was anything more than a mortal.

This is the image of Muhammad in the light of the Qur'ān and history. This image is different from the image of a saint teaching the secrets of an esoteric wisdom, or a recluse meditating upon God away from life and society, or an armchair philosopher, or an unscrupulous statesman, or a leader of a partial revolution. Muhammad was a messenger (*rasūl*) of God, a prophet (*nabī*) telling about things to come, a bearer of good tidings (*bashīr*) of victory and happiness for the righteous, and a warner (*nadhīr*) of evil consequences for the wicked, a teacher of truth (*mu'allim*), and educator of morals (*muzakkī*), a leader (*sayyed*), a commander (*qāid*), a ruler (*hākim*), a law giver (*shāre*), and a great revolutionist (*māhī*). Besides all, he was a loving husband, an affectionate father, a good neighbour and a lover (*nāsīh*) of humanity. To crown it all, he was, first and last, an humble servant (*'abd*) of God.

In all these various capacities what the Prophet said, did or approved of, was preserved by his companions, (*ashāb*) in their

minds, and communicated to the following generation orally. Thus there emerged a body of the traditions of the Prophet which, as recorded, was known as *ahādīth* (literally sayings) of the Prophet, and as an exemplary way of life, was known as *sunnah*. Although some of the companions of the Prophet had written a few traditions in their own note books, the systematic compilation and codification of the traditions of the Prophet was mainly done by scholars of the second and the third centuries of Hijra. The famous among them were Mālik b. Anas (d. 179 A.H.), Muhammad b. Ismā'il al-Bukhārī (d. 256 A.H.), Muslim b. al-Hajjāj al-Qushayrī (d. 261 A.H.), Abū Dāwūd al-Sijistānī (d. 275 A.H.), Abu 'Isā al-Tirmidhī (d. 279 A.H.), Abū 'Abd Al-Rahmān al-Nasa'ī (d. 303 A.H.) and Ibn Māja (d. 273 A.H.).

Along with the Qur'ān the traditions of the Prophet form the two main sources of Islamic *Shari'a*—the code of Laws and regulations that govern the entire life of a Muslim—religious, moral, social, political and economic. Further development of the *Shari'a* is the result of the *Ijtihād* (exercise of legal judgement) of individual legists or groups of jurists. This came to be known as *fiqh*. Gradually different schools of *fiqh* (jurisprudence) were formed and their *fiqh* (code of laws and rules) was compiled. Four schools of *fiqh* have been generally recognised and accepted by the majority of the Muslims. They have been named after their originators—Abū Hanīfa (d. 150 A.H.), Mālik b. Anas (d. 179 A.H.), Muhammad b. Idrīs al-Shāfi'ī (d. 204 A.H.) and Ahmad b. Hanbal (d. 241 A.H.)—as Hanafī, Mālikī, Shāfi'ī and Hanbalī respectively.

Prophecy is as old as man himself. The first man, Adam was a prophet. Whenever there was the need God sent a new prophet to different lands at different times. The need for a new prophet arose when the former revelation was lost or corrupted. Every new revelation was a reaffirmation of the basic principles of the former revelations, a revival of what was lost and a correction of what was distorted. At times it abrogated former provisions and introduced new laws and regulations to meet the demands of changed conditions of the time.

Muhammad is the last prophet. There shall be no prophet

after him. For God has taken special care to see that his revelation, the Qur'ān is preserved from changes and corruptions. "Lo ! We, even we, reveal the Remembrance (dhikr) i.e the Qur'ān, and lo ! We verily are its Guardian." ²⁷

Man consists of a body and a soul. That soul is different from the body and that it survives after death is a common idea underlying many statements of the Qur'ān. But to a specific question about the nature of the soul the Qur'ān replied :

"Say, the soul is a command (amr) of my Lord," and added, discouraging further questions, "and of knowledge ye have been vouchsafed but little." ²⁸

Philosophers of the Middle Ages developed a psychology in the light of Greek and Hellenic philosophy. The main idea of this psychology was that human soul or a part of it, the rational soul, was absolutely different from the body. Unlike the material body which was perishable, it was a spiritual entity, eternal and imperishable. Theologians too upheld the difference between the soul and the body. They also admitted the spirituality of the soul, but they denied its eternity. They regarded the soul as a contingent being created by God ; for them spirituality did not imply eternal existence. After death the soul did survive the body but its life thereafter was absolutely dependent on the will of God.

The reason why theologians departed from philosophers was their reluctance to affirm an eternal substance besides God. Another reason was that the dualistic psychology of the philosophers (particularly those who toed the neo-Platonic line) with its negative implications for the interests of the body and society, did not fit in the Islamic scheme of values. That is why the most acute minds of Islam have tried to go beyond the psycho-physical dualism and regard the body and the soul as two dimensions of a single reality. Iqbal is a case in point.

Man's spirituality has many dimensions. Intelligence is one. The Qur'ān regards human intelligence as practically infinite. Everything is within its reach, because "He (God) taught Adam all the names." ²⁹ In his infinite potentiality of the knowledge of things, lies the secret of man's greatness. Knowledge gives power; therefore unlimited knowledge means unlimited power.

Man is not only equipped with infinite powers to know things but also to use and manipulate them. "And He it is who hath constrained the night and the day and the sun and the moon to be of service unto you, and the stars are made subservient by His command. Lo ! herein indeed are portents for people who take heed. And He it is who hath constrained the sea to be of service that ye eat fresh meat from thence, and bring forth from thence ornaments which ye wear. And thou seest the ships ploughing it that ye (man-kind) may seek of His bounty and haply ye may give thanks."³⁰ By endowing man with potentialities for infinite knowledge and power, God has honoured him,³¹ and as a token of this honour he ordered the angels to bow down before Adam.

The second dimension of human spirituality is morality. Man is a moral being : he is free, responsible and conscious of values. Human freedom is, however, limited, because man is a created being. Only the Creator can have absolute freedom. Man is created but he is also free ; creation does not imply negation of freedom. Human³ action is human, though it occurs through the creative activity of God. It is human because it is chosen by man, and it is free because he is free to choose. The execution of choice, however, takes place through natural means and is governed by natural laws. Since nature and its laws are God's creation and absolutely dependent on his creative will, there is no contradiction in saying that human action is free, although it is created by God and absolutely dependent on his will.

Is man free to choose ? Yes, man is free to choose within limits ; infinite freedom is God's prerogative. Man's freedom is also derived from God's freedom, he is not free in his own right. His freedom is God-given, or created as theologians like to put it. Another way of expressing the same truth is to say that man is free because God has created him in his own image³² (as reported in a tradition of the Prophet) or because God has breathed his spirit in man³³ (as put in the Qur'ān). Does not man's exercise of his freedom limit God's power ? No, because the execution of action can always be intercepted by God or the choice itself may be influenced. Human will is

effective because and when God wills it. The limitation of God's power is, therefore, not caused by an independent will, but by self-limitation.

The second aspect of man's moral being is that he is value-conscious. Man has been endowed with a fundamental discrimination between the good and the evil. "And (God) inspired it (soul) with what is wrong for it and what is right for it."³⁴ Besides discrimination, man has also been given the desire for the good as well as the evil. "Verily, the soul enjoineth unto evil."³⁵

Although man desires both good and evil, he feels a responsibility for doing the right and avoiding the wrong. This sense of responsibility expressed itself in the feeling of shame, repentance and self-reproachment that follow wrong actions. It is so clear a proof of man's moral nature that God has sworn by it. "Nay, I swear by the accusing soul."³⁶

This moral dimension of man's spirituality corresponds to the aspect of God's being as the Provident and the Lord, the Just and the Merciful, the one whose bounties have to be accepted with gratitude, whose sovereignty has to be recognised and will to be carried out, whose justice has to be feared and mercy to be prayed for.

There is a third dimension of man's spirituality which corresponds to the aspect of God as Holy, as the Necessary Being, as the Supreme Ego and as Transcendent. Deep in the consciousness of man there is the realisation of his own contingency, limitation and dependence. This is the dimension of man which finds expression in praises, hymns and offerings, in prayers and supplications, and in worship and submission.

To sum up : Man is a multi-dimensional being. His intelligence, power and freedom, his sense of values and responsibility, his consciousness of the Holy and of his own dependence, are the ultimates of his spirituality. But this is not all. There is one more ultimate datum of man ; his corporeality. No account of man is complete unless his corporeality or animality is also taken into consideration. And no view of man is Islamic which is reluctant to take it as an ultimate along with other ultimates.

To admit these dimensions as ultimates of man is to regard personality as of the highest value. From the Islamic point of view, all dimensions of man are valuable. Certainly there is a gradation of values; some dimensions of personality are more valuable than the other, but none of them is devoid of value, or has a negative value. Nor is the case that one single dimension alone is valuable in itself and the rest have but a derivative value. Every dimension is valuable in itself, although they are not equally valuable.

That the whole personality is valuable is implied in the concept of *tazkiya* which has been referred earlier as one of the three objectives of the Prophet's mission. In a verse other than that quoted earlier³⁷ the Qur'ān mentions *tazkiya* as the last of the three objectives.³⁸ The implication is that the development and perfection of man's personality is the final end of the Prophet's activity. Unfortunately *tazkiya* has been interpreted in a limited and negative sense. It has been construed as a purification of the soul from vice. But *tazkiya* in the Qur'ān is not a matter of the soul (*ruh*) alone, but of the entire self (*nafs*) or the personality of man. *Tazkiya* literally means making something grow, develop and become perfect. It is essentially positive, the negative sense of purification is an implication, and a condition of growth and perfection.

Perfection of personality or *tazkiya* as the final end of religion is also borne out by a study of the *Shari'a*. Viewed as a whole the *Shari'a* is the procedure of perfection of man in society. The outlines of the structure of the *Shari'a* are as follows :

First, a minimum of values in all dimensions of life—religion, morality, art, social interests and biological needs, is determined and made obligatory (*fard*) for everyone to achieve. Corresponding to this minimum there is another minimum on the negative side which has to be necessarily avoided (*harām*). These minimum values are fixed with a view to ensuring all the basic needs of man and thus the foundations for the overall development of man are laid.

Beyond this circle of minimum values the *Shari'a* draws another circle of values passing through all the aspects of life; It

strongly recommends the positive values of this circle and forbids the negative ones. The values of this circle and those which lie beyond it are, however, left to the discretion of the individual and the society, with the provision that any of these values can be made incumbent should the conditions of society so demand. In regard to these values every individual is free to choose his own course of perfection (*tazkīya*) according to his abilities, aptitudes, conditions and needs of society at large and the requirements of his personal relations with God.

The overall attainment of the objectives of the *Sharī'a* may be viewed in the context of the relation of man with God, of the servant (*abd*) with the Lord (*al-Rabb* and *al-Ilāh*). Thus viewed it is the *'ibādat* of God, the end which has been declared in the Qur'ān as the goal of man's life. "I created the *jinn* and mankind only that they might worship Me."³⁹ The term used in the verse is *ibādat* which is partly rendered as worship. In its wider connotation *'ibādat* is worship, obedience and service. Literally *'ibādat* is *al-tāat ma 'al-khudu*; worshipful obedience. Every obedience to God's command and every fulfilment of His will is *'ibādat* provided it is inspired and accompanied by the sense of absolute humility and submission. Prayer (*sālāt*) fasting (*sawm*), pilgrimage (*hajj*), remembrance (*dhikr*), sacrifice, recitation of the Qur'ān are one kind of *ibādat*. *Zakāt* (obligatory alms), *sadaqut* (optional alms), service to mankind, good behaviour, justice, kindness, benevolence, proper discharge of duties, rendering what is due to parents, relatives, wife or husband and children, neighbours and the society at large, are another kind of *'ibādat*. The common element among all these diverse forms of *'ibādat* is that they are performed with a profound sense of humility to God, in submission to His will and only to please Him.

All this can be viewed from still another angle, the angle of man's place in the world. Man is the vicegerent (*Khalīfa*) of God on earth. Before the creation of man God addressed the angels and said :

"Lo ! I am about to place a viceroy on earth."⁴⁰

The resources of the universe which man can exploit, his own powers of mind and body which he can use, and the other

creatures of God, human or animal, over whom he has an authority and whose life and destiny he can influence in any way, have been entrusted to him by God. He is not their master but a trustee (*amīn*). He is responsible for them to God, the Lord, and is accountable to Him. His responsibility in respect of his own powers and the resources of the earth and the heavens, is to use them in serving the will of God, in fulfilling the objectives of the *Shariah*. His responsibility to his fellow beings is to help them and to cooperate with them in their task of self-perfection (*tazkīya*) and in their service (*‘ibādat*) to God. His responsibility to his own person is to protect, maintain and develop it. His responsibility to animal beings is to feed them, maintain them and use them in suitable ways with kindness. His responsibility to God is to admit his Lordship, bow down before Him in sincerity, love Him above everything and regard all his other responsibilities as a part of his responsibility to God.

The concept of *khilāfat* (vicegerency) particularly emphasizes man's responsibility to the total well-being—material, moral and spiritual—of society and makes it an integral part of his own final well-being. Social relations are no impediments in the progress of human spirit, but are indispensable for its perfect realization. The things of the world are not evil to be avoided or used only when it is absolutely necessary, but a means to complete well-being. To renounce the world or society is to fail in one's duty as the vicegerent of God, and to limit human dignity. That is why the Prophet prohibited monasticism saying : "There is no monasticism in Islam."⁴¹

The objectives of *‘ibādat* and *khilāfat* demand sacrifice, sacrifice of the lower for the higher, and the sacrifice of small ends of the self for the greater ends of society. It implies a deliberate forgoing of the fulfilment of some aspects of one's personality. Islam does not entertain the illusion that within the bounds of this world prudent egoism is consonant with altruism, nor does it admit that the objectives of genuine altruism can be attained without consciously depriving oneself of a part of one's rightful realization. The complete realization of man in this world is an unfulfilled dream. It is only possible in the next world.

Therefore, the objectives of *tazkīya*, *ibādat* and *khilāfat* should be pursued with the expectation that what remains to be realized in this world shall be realized in the next. It is in this sense that the element of other worldliness enters in the Islamic ideal. The struggle of man for his own perfection, or for the service of God or for the discharge of his duties as the vicegerent of God on earth in the true Islamic sense, can be carried on by individual men only with the courage to sacrifice whatever may be necessary, for the final and complete fulfilment in an unseen world to come.

The Islamic doctrine of the life hereafter (*Ākhira*) is a corollary of the ideal of life which we have outlined. The present life is for action, the next life is for retribution. It is the same life divided into two phases. The present world has been ordered with a view to enabling man to pursue any course of action which he may choose. It has never been made for the realization of the moral consequences of his actions. Consequently, the doctrine of repeated incarnations of the soul in this world, in order to bear the moral consequences of one's actions, is ruled out as an unrealizable hypothesis.

After death every soul passes into a state the details of which are little known. It shall remain in this intermediate state (*Barzakh*) till the dooms day when every human being, created from the beginning of humanity will be summoned into a new life again. The resurrected man will not be exactly the same man of this world, but identical with him to the extent necessary for the future life of retribution. The venue of that life will be a new world brought into being on the ruins of the present world, suitable for the new course of life.

The conception of life in paradise, as depicted in the Qur'ān, is one of a life complete in every respect—in knowledge, health, happiness, beauty and closest spiritual communion with God. It is the fulfilment of all the values of life—material, psychological and spiritual, minus the imperfection and evil caused by the conditions of this world. It is the perfection of the body and the soul or rather the body-soul, the full man. Later philosophers and mystics developed the idea of a spiritual paradise. The reason did not lie so much in their reading of the

Qur'ān, but in their dualistic psychology and their idealistic theory of reality which did not concede any reality to the material body.

Their conception of Hell was also spiritual. In the Qur'ān, however, Hell is the place of punishment and suffering of the body as well as the soul. The everlasting character (*khulud*) of Hell as well as paradise mentioned in the Qur'ān has been also understood in the light of a verse in *Sūra Hūd*,⁴² as continuing not till eternity but for a very very long time.

Religious life in Islam begins with the declaration of the *kalima*: *Lā ilāh illa-Allah Muhammad rasūl Allah*. There is no God except Allah and Muhammad is Allah's messenger. Unity of God and the prophethood of Muhammad are, therefore, the two fundamental and most important elements of faith (*īmān*.) *īmān* also includes belief in angels as the creatures and humble servants of God entrusted with various duties in the government of the universe and the affairs of human life and history; in heavenly scriptures such as Torah of Moses, Zabūr (Psalms) of David, and Injīl (Gospel) of Jesus Christ; in all prophets without exception who were sent to different parts of the world at different periods; in the life hereafter—resurrection, Day of Judgement, Paradise and Hell; and, according to some is that the good as well as what appears as evil is from God, created and governed by him.

Faith is essential for salvation (*najāt*) in the next world. It is also a necessary ingredient of a righteous life here. But faith is not enough, right action (*'amal-e-sāilih*) is also necessary for a good life here and happiness afterwards. Right action comprises duties, obligatory and non-obligatory, towards God, towards fellow human beings, towards one's own person and towards animals and other living beings.

There are five basic duties to God which are known as the pillars (*arkān*) of Islam. The first is *īmān* (faith). The second is *Salāt* (prayer). *Salāt* is the most important of all duties to God, next only to *īmān*, and in the words of the Prophet it is the point of distinction (*al-fariq*) between faith and disbelief (*kufr*). *Salāt* is offered five times a day, when in an assembly or individually. On Fridays there is a weekly prayer, *salāt al-juma*,

135275

offered in congregations in the big mosques of the city.

The third pillar of Islam is *zakāt*. It is giving of a fixed portion of the wealth for specified purposes. *Zakāt* on incomes, profits and movable capital is $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent per annum, and on the proceeds of the land $1/10$ or $1/20$ as the land is watered by rains or by irrigation. "The alms (*zakāt*) are only for the poor and the needy, and those who collect them, and those whose hearts are to be reconciled, and to free the captives and the debtors, and for the cause of Allah, and (for) the way-farer."⁴³ *Zakāt* is a duty imposed by God, and not a tax levied by the government. It is absolutely obligatory on those whose wealth exceeds a fixed amount. The Qur'ān has always associated *zakāt* with *salāt*. This implies that in the scale of importance *zakāt* comes next only to *salāt*.

The fourth pillar of Islam is *Sawm*. Fasting during the whole month of *Ramzān* every year is incumbent on every adult man and woman. Travellers and women during certain periods and the sick are exempted, but they have to complete the days later on. Old men or ladies are allowed to feed the poor in lieu of fasting. Fasting is abstinence from eating, drinking and sexual relation from early dawn to sun-set. Fasting is, however, not perfect unless one refrains from vices of the tongue, eyes, ears, and other organs of the body.

The fifth pillar of Islam is *Hajj*. It is a pilgrimage to the 'home of God', the *Ka'ba*, in Mecca. Every Muslim who has necessary means is required to perform *Hajj* once in his life. *Ka'ba* is the house which was built by Abraham and his son Ismā'il as the centre of worship of one God. All the rites of *Hajj* have been designed with a view to inspire love and devotion to God, to offer sacrifice and worship, and to strengthen a sense of brotherhood and unity among Muslims all over the world.

Another duty to God which, however, is not generally counted among the pillars of Islam, but which has been emphasized by the Qur'ān and the Prophet, is the protection and promotion of religion. Preaching and propagation of religion, bidding virtue and forbidding vice, defending the doctrines, traditions and rites of Islam and the life, honour and property

of the Muslims (*jihād*) is the duty of every Muslim man and woman, individually and collectively.

Duties to other fellow beings, or morals, are as important in Islam as religious duties. The Prophet described his mission as the "perfection of morals"⁴⁴ "The best among you," he said, "is the best in conduct."⁴⁵

A right action is that which conforms to Qur'ānic rules. Since many of the rules of the Qur'ān are the rules of common morality, it follows that actions which conform to common moral rules are also right in the view of the Qur'ān.

But all right actions are not *sālih*. A *sālih* action is that which merits reward by God in the life hereafter. There are two necessary conditions of a *sālih* action. First, it should conform to the rules laid down in the Qur'ān, or the traditions of the Prophet. Second, it should be done with a view to pleasing God. Faith is, therefore, an essential condition for a *sālih* act. Devoid of that, an act may be right but not *sālih*.

The motive to please God does not exclude other motives. All motives are fully compatible with the motive of seeking God's pleasure, provided they are good and provided also that the agent ultimately seeks God's pleasure by pursuing those motives. To take an example, suppose a person offers some money to one of his poor relatives from his rightful earnings with a view to pleasing a relative and to help a man in distress, and by so doing he ultimately wishes to carry out God's will which is expressed in this verse of the Qur'ān :

"Lo ! God enjoineeth justice and kindness and giving to kinsfolk and forbiddeth lewdness and abomination and wickedness."⁴⁶

This act is perfectly *sālih*, because the money that he is offering is his rightful earning ; the two motives, namely, the motive of pleasing a relative and the motive of helping a man in distress, are good, and that by offering the money and by pursuing those motives he ultimately wishes to fulfil God's will and thus please him. But the action will not be *sālih* if the person only wishes to please his relative and help him out of his difficulty, but has no intention thereby to fulfil God's will.

The presence of other motives in action, altruistic or egoistic, does not effect the purity of the ultimate motive of seeking

God's pleasure, if the motives are good and are pursued with a view to fulfilling God's will in the best possible way. Nor do they affect God's commendation and reward in the hereafter.

Motives influence the moral goodness of the doer's will and his inner disposition of which the will is an expression. If the motives are bad, the will which pursues those motives is also bad, even if the actions through which the motives are sought are right. Likewise, the inner disposition which finds its habitual expression in evil volitions is vicious. Similar is the relation among good motives, goodwill, and virtuous disposition. Moral approbation or disapprobation in this life is directed to the will or to the disposition of the doer. They are not primarily directed to actions, though they are often extended to them.

Motives do not affect the rightness or wrongness of actions which are solely determined by the conformity or non-conformity of actions to moral rules. There are right actions which are performed with bad motives and wrong actions which are performed with good motives. Conformity to rules is, however, viewed in the Qur'ān in a way somewhat different from that viewed by some modern deontologists. For, the Qur'ān does not exclude consideration of the consequences of an action in its final evaluation. The evaluation of an action depends upon both the nature of the action and its consequences.

Qur'ānic rules are incumbent in varying degrees. Pleasing the parents is more incumbent than pleasing the friends, and obedience to God is more incumbent than obedience to parents. To save life is a higher duty than to speak truth, and so on. And the variation in the obligatoriness of these actions is due more to the nature of these actions than to their consequences.

But consequences of actions are also relevant in deciding the correctness or otherwise, of actions. There are occasions on which consequences are decisive consideration, or the only consideration in choosing a course of action, either because the situation is too complex or too simple. An example of the former is planning on the State level, and an example of the latter is the choice of a menu for a friend's dinner. In both cases

the choice is guided mostly or exclusively by consequences. Examples in the Qur'ān of consequences determining the rightness or wrongness of actions are many, such as the prohibition of wine and the justification of war against persecution.

"They question thee (O Muhammad) about strong drink and games of chance. Say : In both is great sin, and some utility for men ; but the sin of them is greater than their usefulness."⁴⁷

And

"They question thee with regard to warfare in the sacred month. Say : Warfare therein is a great (transgression) but to turn (men) from the way of Allah, and to disbelieve in Him and in the Inviolable Place of worship, and to expel His people thence, is a greater (transgression) with Allah ; for persecution is worse than killing."⁴⁸

Consequences are taken into consideration not only when one has to decide between a right and a wrong action, but also when one has to choose the lesser of the two evils, or the better of the two rights. But all such cases are not decided on the basis of consequences only, differences in the nature of actions often influence choice. In fact, there are two principles to guide choice in complex situations—the nature of action and the consequences. It is only on the twin bases of nature and consequences of actions that the division of acts by Muslim moralists and jurists into five categories of *mubāh* (permissible), *mustahabb* (commendable), *fard* (obligatory) *makrūh* (undesirable) and *harām* (forbidden) can be explained and made intelligible. The Qur'ānic approach in this regard is a combination of the utilitarian and deontological methods.

The question of consequences is bound with the concept of good. Regarding the meaning of 'good' a reference has already been made. There have been two views on the question. The first view is that goodness is an objective quality independently cognisable by human reason. The second view is that good means nothing more than "approved of" by God. Consequently that which is approved of by God is good and that which is disapproved of by Him is bad. Naturally, therefore, there is no other way to know the good or the bad save revelation. There is an element of truth in both the views. There are good things whose goodness is generally accepted by huma-

nity at large, and is known independently of prophetic revelation. There are other things which are good or bad by revelation, such as the taking of some kinds of meat and avoiding others. The true Islamic view is most likely the one which is a combination of the truth in both the views.

The Islamic list of the things which are good is very comprehensive. Life, comfort, friendship, social intercourse, remembrance of Allah and his worship, pleasure and satisfaction, have been explicitly mentioned in the Qur'ān as good. Other goods are implied. If by a careful study of the Qur'ān and the traditions of the Prophet a list of good things mentioned or implied in their various statements and injunctions, is prepared, it will be a very big list, comprehending almost all good things which mankind has generally recognised. There will be good things of various kinds, of body and mind, of art and morality and of society and religion, private and public. These various good things are not equally valuable. There is a scale of preference among them. A detailed account of various good things or their values cannot, however, be attempted here.

This section may be concluded with a few observations on the moral code of Islam. Islamic morality takes up all the commonly known moral virtues, and, with a due sense of balance and proportion, it assigns a suitable place and function to each one of them in the total scheme of life. It widens the scope of their application to cover every aspect of man's individual and collective life—his domestic associations, his civic conduct, and his activities in the political, economic, legal, educational and social realms. It covers his whole life from home to society, from the dining-table to the battle-fields and peace conference, and literally from the cradle to the grave.

Islam stands for a unitary view of the body and soul. Consequently Islamic morality is the same for everyone—a religious divine and a common man. There is a place for healthy asceticism in Islamic ethic but Islam does not make renunciation of desires or reduction of material needs, ends in themselves. It never makes too much of anything ; the secret of righteous living lies in avoiding the extremes.

Islamic morality makes a distinction between ends and

means. But this distinction is used in order to allocate emphasis and direct preferences. It is never used as a plea for the view that ends justify the means. Islam invokes the people, not only to practise virtue, but also to establish virtue and eradicate vice. It wants that the verdict of conscience should prevail and virtue must not be subdued to play a second fiddle to evil. It urges that the righteous should organise themselves, and fight evil.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. *Qur'ān*, IV : 36.
2. Ibn Manzur, *Lisān al-'Arab*, root 'a l h
3. Ibid, root r b b
4. *Qur'ān*, VII : 54
5. *Rasāl il al-Kindī al-Falsafīyah*, ed. Dr. Abū Ridā (Qairo, 1450) Vol. I Introduction ; Miskawaih, *Al-Fauz al-Asghar*, Section I, Chapter 10.
6. *Qur'ān*, XXVIII : 68
7. Ibid, XX : 13-15
8. Al-Tabrezi, *Mishkāt al-Masābih*, *Kitāb al-Da'wāt*, 2335,
9. *Qur'ān*, XXIV : 7
10. Abd'Allāh al-Nasafī, *Madarik al-Tanzil*, Vol. I, p.5
11. *Qur'ān*, VIII : 52
12. Ibid, XX : 90
13. Ibid, XIX : 26-27
14. Ibn Taimyya, *Minhāj al-Sunnah*, Vol. I. pp. 124/125,
15. *Qur'ān*, II : 255
16. Ibid, XXIX : 67
17. *Mishkāt al-Masābih*, *Kitāb al-Salāt*, 882
18. A.H. Farid, *Prayers of Muhammad* (Karachi, 1959), p. 178.
19. Abū al-A'lā Mawdūdī, *Tafhīm al-Qur'ān* (Delhi, 1959) pp. 597-598
20. *Qur'an*, II : 2-4
21. Ibid, VII : 172
22. Ibid, XLI : 51
23. Ibid, XVIII : 11
24. Dorothy Emmet, *The Nature of Metaphysical Thinking* (London, Macmillan & Co., 1945), p. 140
25. *Qur'an*, LXII : 2
26. Ibid, LXI : 9
27. Ibid, XV : 9
28. Ibid, XVII : 85
29. Ibid, II : 31
30. Ibid, XII : 14

31. Ibid, XVII : 70
32. *Mishkāt al-Masābih, Kitāb al-Adāb*, 4628
33. Qur'an, XV : 29, XXXII : 9, XXXVIII : 72
34. Ibid, XC : 8
35. Ibid, XII - 53
36. Ibid, LXXV : 2
37. See p. 11 ref 26
38. *Qur'ān*, II : 129
39. Ibid, LI : 56
40. Ibid, II : 30
41. Al-Dāramī, *Musnad, Bāb al-Nikāh*
42. *Qur'ān*, XI, 107-108
43. Ibid, IX : 60
44. *Mishkāt al-Masābih, Kitāb. al-Adāb*, 5096
45. Ibid, *Kitāb al-Adāb*, 5075
46. *Qur'ān*, XVI : 90
47. Ibid, II ; 219
48. Ibid, II : 217,

II

MAN AND GOD IN ISLAM :

FREEDOM AND OBLIGATION AS FOUND IN QUR'ĀN

M. MUJEEB

FREEDOM AND OBLIGATION have legal implications for those who wish to avoid the embarrassment of thinking for themselves. It is enough for them to know what they must and what they must not do ; and freedom consists in doing what the law permits. But even those who follow it without question believe that the law has a spiritual basis, and expatiate on its underlying 'wisdom'. If we probe deeper, we discover that this 'wisdom' is in fact a way out of a controversy which agitated the minds of thoughtful Muslims for many generations, a controversy arising out of the question whether, in his acts of obedience or disobedience, man was really a free agent or, considering God's omnipotence and omniscience, *could* be a free agent when everything happened or was done by God's will alone. An attempt to answer this question, without placing limitations of any kind on the operation of God's will and without admitting the validity of any argument exonerating man from responsibility for his acts, led to considerable verbal quibbling.

There are four statements of Muslim authorities, embodied in a kind of catechism, which might be regarded as representing the orthodox or, to be more exact, the majority view on the question of free will and predestination, upon an answer to which the determination of the extent to which man is really free, depends. The first is found in the *Wasiya* or testament attributed to Abu Hanifa (d. 767), the founder of the Hanafi

school of jurisprudence :

"We confess that works are of three kinds, viz. obligatory, meritorious, sinful. The obligatory are by Allah's command and in accordance with His will, His liking, His good-pleasure, His decreeing, His predetermining, His creation, His judgement, His knowledge, His help and His writing on the Preserved Tablet¹. The meritorious are not by Allah's command—exalted be He—but are in accordance with His will, His liking, His good-pleasure, His decreeing, His predetermining, His judgment, His knowledge, His help, His creation, and His writing on the Preserved Tablet. The sinful are not by Allah's command but are in accordance with His will, not in accordance with His liking but by His will, not in accordance with his liking but by His decreeing and His predetermining, by His creation but not by His help, in accordance with His abandoning and His knowledge, but not with His recognition, and in accordance with His writing on the Preserved Tablet."

The second statement is from the credo of al-Ash'ari (d. 935), evolved as a result of controversy with the philosophical school :

"Nothing exists upon earth, be it good or bad, but that which God wills ; but all things are by God's will (*mashiya*). No one is able to do anything before God does it, neither is anyone independent of God, nor can he withdraw himself from God's knowledge. There is no Creator but God. The works (a'mal) of creatures are created and predestined by God, as He said (Qur. 37, 94) : "and God has created you and what ye do." Man is able to create nothing ; but they are created, as He has said, (Qur. 35, 31) : "Is there any Creator except God ?"

The third statement is that of Imam Ghazali :

"We witness that He is Willer of the things that are, a Director of the things that happen ; there does not come about in the world, seen or unseen, little or much, small or great, good or evil, advantage or disadvantage, faith or unbelief, knowledge or ignorance, success or loss, increase or diminution, obedience or rebellion, except by His will. What He wills is, and what He wills not is not. Not a glance of one who looks, or a slip of one who thinks, is outside of His will : He is the Creator, the Bringer-back, the Doer of that which He wills. There is no opponent of His command and no repeater of His destiny and no refuge for a creature for disobeying Him, except by His help and His mercy, and no strength to a creature to obey Him except by His will. Even though mankind and the Jinn and the Angels and the Sh'ataans were to unite to remove a single grain in the world or to bring it to

rest without His will, they would be too weak for that. His will subsists in His essence as one of His qualities; He hath not ceased to be described through it as a Willer, in His infinity, of the existence of things at their appointed times which He hath decreed. So they come into existence at their appointed times even as He has willed in His infinity without precedence or sequence. They happen according to the agreement of His knowledge and His will, without exchange or change in planning of things, nor with arranging of thoughts or awaiting of time, and therefore one thing does not distract Him from another."

The fourth statement is in the '*Aqāid* of al-Nasafi :

"And God Most High is the Creator of all action of His Creature, whether of unbelief or belief, of obedience or of rebellion; all of them are by the will of God and His sentence and His conclusion and His decreeing.

"And to His creature belong actions of choice (*ikhtiyar*), for which they are rewarded or punished, and the good in these is by the good pleasure of God (*rida*) and the vile in them is not by His good pleasure.

"And the ability to do the action (*istitā'a*) goes along with the action and is the essence of the power (*qudra*) by which the action takes place, and this word "ability" means the soundness of the causes and instruments of limbs. And the validity of the imposition of the task (*taklif*) is based upon this ability, and the creature has not a task imposed upon him what is not in his power."²

Sectarian views on this question, in particular the Shi'a creeds, are different. But it is clear in every case that there is difficulty in reconciling logically God's omnipotence with man's freedom of action, and God's justice with the punishment of evil-doers who could not have done what they did, and unbelievers who would not have rejected the true faith except by the will of God. It is not Muslims alone who have had to face this difficulty. It has existed and still exists for all who are aware of the subjection of individual human beings to forces outside their control. Their faults and offences raise the question as to how far they can be justly held responsible for their actions. Here we are concerned only with Islamic doctrines, but these, too, must be seen in the light of a common problem of all right-minded and thoughtful men.

The Qur'ān is the basic document of Islam, and no statement about the faith can be valid unless supported by the authority of the Qur'ān. The result, as seen in Muslim history, has been

that the Qur'ān has been quoted in support of the most diverse views. One of the earliest differences was on the question of free-will and predestination, the Qadaris emphasizing man's power (*qadar*) to choose without qualifying God's omnipotence and the Jabris³ holding man responsible for his actions while asserting that everything happens by the will of God. The Qadri point of view was developed by the Mu'tazila thinkers and the Shi'as, the Jabri standpoint had the wide support of those who firmly believed in God's omnipotence and did not wish to indulge in what they felt was unnecessary argument, and one that could lead to the weakening of their faith. But the reconciliation of free-will with predestination was not an isolated problem. Other issues, not strictly relevant, got involved. Most important was the question of the rightful ruler, a successor to the Prophet in political authority and, therefore, responsible for the maintenance of the true faith. This was not a matter for academic discussion. The rulers were naturally interested in maintaining their power, and those opposed to them in discovering reasons which made opposition to the rulers obligatory on religious grounds. Some verse or verses of the Qur'ān were the starting-point and mainstay of all argument.

Islam was preached in the seventh century to a people with unpredictable potentialities. The situation was dynamic from the beginning, and change and development are evident in the Qur'ān itself. However, only some one with personal experience of the spiritual occurrence which has been called revelation and with a complete knowledge of the relevant facts, could claim the competence to understand the actual relationship between the series of revelations which comprise the Qur'ān and their historical and circumstantial contexts. The Prophet's aim was to preach the faith and not to construct a philosophical system, and those who later on had to discover a system of thought in the Qur'ān, were forced to convert the living word into logical propositions. Their difficulties were enhanced by the changes in the connotation of words. The Arabic of the Pre-Islamic period, the Arabic of the Qur'ān and the Arabic of non-Arab scholars of Islamic theology is substantially the same language, but anyone who, like Professor Izutsu, dives deep into the

meaning of concepts, discovers shades and even varieties of meaning which baffle an average mind. And the possibility of a precise answer to the question as to which is true—the meaning which emerges from a philological discussion or the one that has been accepted for centuries—is as remote as ever.

The literary form of the Qur'ān is generally that of a dialogue. The language is rhetorical and powerful, and there is considerable repetition for the sake of emphasis. Sometimes the revelation seems to be obviously related to a particular fact or situation, and, therefore, different in type or character from that which has a general application. The Qur'ān itself has made a distinction between what is clear and direct (*muhkam*) and what is ambiguous and not clear (*mutashabih*). The question has also arisen as to whether some revelations have not been abrogated by subsequent revelations bearing on the same matter. The Qur'ān is not a systematic treatise; it is not a theological compendium. There was much that required explanation and exposition; there were blanks to be filled in. For this purpose, the sayings of the Prophet had to be collected and studied, and criteria of criticism and evaluation to be evolved. This was done continuously for generations, and the result was a mass of what are called Traditions, which were regarded as supplementing the teachings of the Qur'ān. These Traditions reflect changing needs and circumstances, and might contain ideas not found in the same form in the Qur'ān. Those who interpreted the Qur'ān and the Traditions were affected by the tensions within the Muslim community and by political and cultural tendencies. Defenders of the established order would have one approach, its opponents another. Christian, Hellenistic and Greek thought also influenced Muslim minds. If we regard Islam as inclusive of all Muslim thought, all ideas or beliefs, however contradictory, they will form part of it. But they all base themselves on the authority of the Qur'ān, and it is only by a study of the relevant statements of the Qur'ān that we can estimate the relationship of these ideas and beliefs with the original source.

The teachings of Islam in regard to free-will and predestination are governed by the concept of God. This is not defined or

defined clearly enough in the Qur'ān, and must be regarded as the sum-total of His attributes. These, according to tradition, are expressed in the 'Most Beautiful Names', a term that has been used but not explained in the Qur'ān. They are traditionally believed to be ninety-nine, but according to other calculations, they are five hundred to a thousand. In a recent study¹, it has been shown that these names have had a devotional purpose, and are not an enumeration of God's attributes. What the Qur'ān stresses is God's omnipotence and omniscience; His knowledge, will, decrees or commands, His measuring and apportioning (*qadar* or *taqdir*), which control everything. It is from the manner in which, according to the Qur'ān, God exercises his power that we can deduce the extent and nature of man's freedom of action.

The first point to note is that the Qur'ān denounces a predestinarian interpretation of God's absolute power as an argument for not accepting His guidance.

"Those who associate others with Allah will say, 'Had (Allah) willed it, we would not have associated others with Allah, nor would have our fathers, nor would we have had any taboos'. So did their ancestors argue falsely, till they tasted of our strictness. Say to them. 'Have you any knowledge? If so, bring it forth to us. You only follow your fancy; you only tell lies.'"

Say to them, "Allah's is the convincing proof, and if he had wished, He would have guided (*i.e.*, He had the power to guide) your will." (6:149-50)

When they are told, "Fear that which is before you and that which is after you,⁵ perhaps you may receive Mercy, (they turn back)."

And so you cannot bring them a sign from the signs of your Lord from which they will not turn away.

And when they are told, 'Spend out of that with which Allah has provided you,' the unbelievers say to the believers, "Shall we feed him whom Allah would have fed, had He so willed? You are certainly in manifest error." (36:45-47)

But if God has absolute knowledge and power, is not man helpless? The rhetorical style of the Qur'ān very often leads one to think that God knows everything, and can do and does what He likes, but there are also obvious indications that God's absolute knowledge and power is asserted against those who are

reluctant to believe, indifferent or defiant. According to Dr Rahbar, there is no evidence in the Qur'ān that God's knowledge predetermines human conduct, and the following verse (5:95) should be taken to represent the actual situation in the light of the statements of the Qur'ān :

"O believers ! God will try you.....that *He may know* who fears him in secret."

There are eight other passages of a similar import, and at least five others containing phrases like 'God does not yet know the patient', or 'God will eventually know the truthful'. For example:

"Do men then reckon that they will be left to themselves when they say, "We believe", and not be tried?

We did try those who were before them, and Allah will surely know who are truthful, and He will surely know the liars," (29 : 1-2)

The conclusion to be drawn from the verses asserting God's knowledge, and His seeing and hearing everything is, according to Dr Rahbar, that God is to be known as a vigilant, well-informed and wise sovereign.⁶

How does God's will (*mashiya*), His absolute power, operate ? The following typical passages, apparently indicating that believers and non-believers are what they are, by God's will, also indicate when the will is exercised:

"It is for Allah to show the path; from it some turn aside. Had He willed, He would have guided you one and all"—(16:9)

"For each one of you we have made a law and a pathway. And had Allah willed it, He would surely have made you one people, but He shall try you through that which he has given you.⁷ Be, therefore, emulous in good deeds. To Allah is your return in any case, and He will let you know concerning that wherein you disagree." (5:52-53)

"He leads astray many and guides many, but He leads astray only the evil-doers." (2 : 24)

"Nor will Allah lead a people astray after He has guided them until that is made manifest to them which they have to fear." (9 : 116)

Although it is stated in many verses that God's will governs man's beliefs and actions, a large number of verses also show that God's will is not arbitrary, but works in guiding men's dispositions in accordance with their willingness to be guided and only those are led into error who stubbornly defy His ordinances.

"If you are ungrateful, behold, Allah has no need of you ; and He finds no pleasure in the unbelief of his servants ; but if you are grateful, He is pleased with you. No bearer of burdens shall bear the burden of another. To your Lord is your return, and He will inform you in regard to what you have done." (39 : 9)

Though God judges, and judges strictly, His concern is not to sit in judgement only. A study of the uses of the word *qaddara*, from which *taqdir* is derived, shows that it means that God has created everything according to a measure.⁸ In his *Tarjuman al-Qur'ān*, Maulana Azad argues that the meaning of *Taqdir* is that the providence of God, the Father, (*rabb*) embraces everything. His power is exercised to enable growth and fulfilment in accordance with His will and purpose, and Islam or Faith (*din*) is an enterprise in righteous, purposeful living in which man must participate.⁹ Destiny, in the sense of an absolute determination beforehand of all that is to happen or to be done, is not the meaning of the term *taqdir* as used in the Qur'ān, and no statement in the Qur'ān can be quoted to prove that all human action is by an arbitrary decree of God.

There is reference in several passages of the Qur'ān of a 'Perspicuous Book' or a 'Preserved Tablet', as for instance.

"No misfortune befalls the earth or yourselves, but it was in the Book before we let it befall." (57 : 22)

"There is no beast that walks upon the earth but its provision is made, and He knows its settlement and resting place. All is in a Perspicuous Book." (11:8)

The first verse implies that there is order in the universe. But as to everything being in a Book, there are two obvious questions ; (a) how long is misfortune written down in advance, and (b) is it written down arbitrarily or with a righteous purpose? If we make allowance for the rhetoric, the verse means no more than that misfortunes and accidents are in God's control. It would be stretching the implication too far to make it mean that human actions or what happens to human beings, is written down ineffaceably in a Book. This idea has been introduced through Traditions whose validity is open to doubt. But the idea of a Book suggests the need of a macrocosmic view. This we shall discuss later.

As already stated, the Qur'ān itself makes a distinction between those of its statements and commands that are clear and of established meaning (*muhkam*) and those that are not clear or ambiguous :

"He it is who has revealed to the Book, of which there are some verses that are *muhkam*at ; they are the mother of the Book ; and others are *mutashabihat* ; but as for those in whose hearts is inclination to error, they follow what is *mutashabih* in the Book, and do crave for sedition, seeking their own interpretation of it ; [but none knows the interpretations of it] save Allah. And those firm in knowledge say, 'We believe in it ; it is all from our Lord'. But none will grasp it save those who possess understanding." (3 : 5)

The physician, mathematician and philosopher, al-Razi, in his commentary on the Qur'ān, maintains that when there is some decisive argument showing that the outward meaning of an expression is not intended, it is not proper to try to interpret that expression at all, for, he says, metaphorical meanings of an expression can always be many and preference of one over the other, is bound to be conjectural, as it is always based on linguistic arguments which should never be relied on in fundamental matters of religion.

In the following passage of his commentary Razi gives some examples of the *mutashabih* and the *muhkam* on one subject :

And an example of it (i.e. of the *mutashabih*) from the Qur'ān is the expression of the Exalted One :

"And when we desired to destroy a city we bade the opulent ones thereof ; and they wrought abomination therein ; and its due sentence was pronounced" (17 : 17)

The outward meaning of this verse is that they are bidden to act viciously, while the *muhkam* on the same subject is the expression of the Exalted One :

" . . . God bids (you) not to do abomination," (7 : 27) rebutting the speech of the misbelievers recorded (in the first half of the same verse) :

"And when they commit an abomination they say, 'We found our fathers at this, and God bade us do it' . . ." (7 : 27)

And likewise is the phrase of the Exalted One :

"They (i.e. the hypocrites) forget God and He forgets them." (9 : 68) The outward (meaning) of *nisyan* (forgetfulness) is that

which is opposite of awareness, while the outweighed (sense) of it is desertion. And the *muhkam* revelation of the Exalted One on the same subject is His phrase :

"... Thy Lord is never forgetful," (19 : 65) and the words of the Exalted One :

"... My Lord does not go astray nor forgets." (20 : 54)

Razi refers more than once as to how various sects apply the term *muhkamat* to the verses agreeing with their own persuasion, and the term *mutashabihat* to the verses disagreeing with their persuasion :

"And know that this is a very important passage. And we say that all the people of different persuasions assert that the verses agreeing with their own persuasions are the *muhkamat* and that the verses agreeing with what their adversaries say are the *mutashabihat*. The Mu'tazalite say that the verse

"... so let him who will, believe ; and let him who will, disbelieve..." (18 : 28)

is *muhkam*, while the verse

"But ye will not will, except God the Lord of the worlds should will," (81 : 29)

is *mutashibih*.

And the Sunnite reserves the position in the matter. A similar observation is made at a little distance from the above :

"And then we find the matter so that every one of (this or that) persuasion is clinging to it (*i.e.* the the Qur'ān) according to his own persuasion. The Jabari (*i.e.* Compulsionist or the Predestinarian) clings to the verses signifying Compulsion (*i.e.* Predestination), such as His phrase:

"We have placed a veil upon their hearts lest they could understand it, and in their ears dullness of hearing." (6:25:17:48:18:55)

And the Qadri (*i.e.* the Free-Willers) says, 'Nay! this is the belief of misbelievers,' arguing that He, the Exalted One, has said this regarding the misbelievers by way of censure in His (other) phrase :

"And they say, 'Our hearts are veiled from what thou dost call us to, and in our ears is a veil,' (41:4) and in another place (in the phrase) :

"They say, 'Our hearts are uncircumcised;'....." (2:82)

And he who affirms the doctrine of *ruya* (God's visibility) clings to His phrase :

"Faces on that day shall be bright, gazing on their Lord."
(75:22)

While he who negates it, clings to His phrase :

"Sights perceive Him not....." (6:103)

And he who affirms to doctrine of Jihar (*i.e.* God's location in space) clings to His phrase :

"They fear their Lord from above them....." (16:52) and His phrase :

"The Merciful settled on the throne," (20:4) while he who negates it clings to His phrase :

".....There is naught like Him....." (42:9)

And so everyone gives the name *muhkamat* to the verses that agree with his own persuasion and the name *mutashabihat* to the verses that oppose his own persuasion."¹⁰

What position does the Qur'ān assign to man? When God had created Adam he told the angles that Adam would be His khalifa, His representative or vice-regent on earth; He had breathed His spirit into Adam and commanded them to bow before him.¹¹ In another verse¹² men and jinns—that is, all creatures, are stated to have been created that they might serve (Him). The children of Adam are elsewhere declared to have been preferred to all creatures.¹³ What appears to be the most realistic statement from the point of view of actual human experience is the following :

"We formed man in the best fashion and then thrust away all to be the basest of the base, except those that believed and performed good works—for them there is unmeasured reward."¹⁴

The full implications of all the passages quoted above have not been explained in the Qur'ān itself, and they seem to be no more than *obiter dicta* in a context where God's omnipotence and the certainty of punishment for the evil-doer are constantly repeated and emphasized. But almost equally constant are references to peoples who refused to believe and obey, and who rejected and inflicted sufferings upon the prophets sent to them. Even with a full and unqualified acceptance of God's omnipotence, the impression cannot be repressed that man is capable of deliberately choosing unbelief and disobedience by implication, possessing a power of choice that God's omnipotence does not eliminate.

This is what a study of the Quran, uninhibited by traditional theology, would suggest. But even before theology and jurisprudence had been developed, its study was influenced by other factors. "Fatalism, the supreme negation of human free-will, was the most noticeable metaphysical concept embraced by pre-Islamic Arabs."¹⁵ An inclination to believe in predestination already existed when the Qur'ān was revealed, and it is reasonable to suppose that more importance would be attached to passages in the Qur'ān which implied predestination than those which made allowance for free-will. Still we find a group upholding man's power of choice, and the views of this group were elaborated by the Mu'tazila and the Shi'as. The first and the most outstanding among the Mu'tazila was Wasil Ibn 'Ata (d. 748).

He held that to regard the Qur'ān as uncreated was inconsistent with belief in one God, because it meant the association with God of someone other than God. He denied that God predestined human actions. Death and life and all the vicissitudes of life came out of God's *qadar* (power), but it was unthinkable that man should be punished for actions he had committed by the will of God and for which he was not responsible. We must assume that man has freedom of will and possesses power over his actions. Later adherents of this school established man's responsibility for his actions by showing that good and evil can be perceived and distinguished by the intellect. An-Nazzam (d. 845) taught that God could do nothing to a creature that was not for the creature's own good and in accordance with strict justice. Out of such ideas were evolved the Shi'a doctrines that God is apart from any evil actions and all His acts are in accord with wisdom and righteousness. God is all-powerful, but He does not necessarily do all the things he has the power to do. Man is a free agent, good and evil are matters of judgement by man's reason, and his actions must be judged by themselves without reference to any law which declares them good or bad.

The orthodox or the majority held and still holds the view that there can be no necessity upon God, even to do justice.

He is absolutely free and man must accept what He does. Man does not have the capability to distinguish between good and evil, and can know them only through God's teachings and commands.—Abu Hanifa (d. 767) and after him Maturidī (d. 944) do recognise that man possesses free-will, and is, therefore, rewarded or punished for his actions. No explanation is attempted of the nature of predestination and free-will. They are stated side by side as equal, if contradictory facts. Abu Hanifa admits that evil deeds are by the will (*irada*) of God—otherwise they could not happen—but he cannot bring himself to say that they are by the 'good pleasure' of God. It was not, however, the question of predestination and free-will that was the main concern of the generality of Muslims, nor were they much concerned with the logical and philosophical consistency of their beliefs. The omnipotence of God had to be maintained even if it meant denial of free-will to man even in a relative sense, and the Qur'ān, as the Word of God, was as sacrosanct as God Himself. The Mu'tazila, who differed from the majority, were not free thinkers in the modern sense of the term and they used their influence over al-Mamun (813-833) to have their views given an official semblance and their opponents persecuted. The test question was whether the Qur'ān was created or uncreated; in other words, whether even the Word of God could be associated with God or not. The "uncreated" Qur'ān has strong affinity with the Christian Logos—the Word that was with God, the Word that was God—and the 'created Qur'ān is a concept in harmony with the physical facts of revelation in a particular social and historical context. But ultimately the belief in the "uncreated" Qur'ān prevailed, and with it the tendency to give the Qur'ān the nature of an Absolute, and ignore its historical character.

When the orthodox were compelled to resort to dialectics, they used it as a means to defend the already occupied position. Al-Ash'ari, whose position represents a reaction from the Mu'tazila attempts to raise a purely rationalistic theology to the level of the Qur'ān, the Sunnah (or example of the Prophet) and the Companions. He adopted the middle course in the matter of predestination and free-will. In the language of his day, the

power to act was identical with the power to create; human actions were creations. Al-Ash'ari held that only God can create; man's power produces no effect at all on his actions. God creates in man power (*qudra*) and choice (*ikhtiyar*). Then he creates in him his actions, corresponding to the power and choice with which he has been endowed. So the action of man is created by God relating to initiative and production, but it is acquired by man. By such acquisition is meant that man's action corresponds to the power and choice already created in him, without his having the slightest effect on the action. This accounts for the free-will or the consciousness of it which tries to entail responsibility upon man.

Al-Ash'ari's reasoning is mere quibbling with words, and does not carry conviction. It received, however, the approval of the majority and was regarded as a decisive refutation of the Mu'tazila. But Al-Ash'ari did no more than use the weapon of dialectics in defence of orthodoxy. It was left to Imam Ghazali to employ the argument of personal experience. His primary conception is, *volo ergo sum*, I will, therefore I am. It is not thought that impresses him but volition. God, the creator wills; so does the soul of man. They are akin, therefore man can know and recognize God, or, as a Tradition says, 'He who knows his own soul, knows his Lord'. It is also recorded in a Tradition that the Prophet said, "God, the Most High, created Adam in His own form (or likeness)", which is confirmed by the Qur'ān (38:72). From this Imam Ghazali concludes that there is likeness between God and man in essence, quality and actions. The spirit of man rules the body as God rules the world. The human body is the microcosm as the universe is the macrocosm. But God is not simply the soul of the universe. He is the creator of all by His will, and he sustains and destroys all by His will.

Once the orthodox had come to a conclusion in regard to predestination and free will, no further speculation on this question was permissible and, therefore, none was permitted. It was the sūfis who then took the initiative. Muhiyuddin Ibn Arabi, or Shaikh-i-Akbar, the Great Shaikh (1165-1240), is regarded as the founder of sufi metaphysics, the basic doctrine of

which was the Unity of Existence, *Wahdah-al-Wujud*. But Ibn Arabi has little to say about predestination and free-will. His conception of Unity must have made this question appear irrelevant. The sūfis gradually accepted his doctrines, and they find poetic expression in the works of Jalaluddin Rumi. But one of his followers, Shaikh Abdur Razzaq Kashani (d. 1329), who was also an independent thinker, has discussed predestination in some detail.

We are not concerned here with his metaphysics, except that he establishes a correspondence between the universe and man as between a macrocosm and microcosm. His exposition of predestination centres round the interpretation of three terms, *qada*, *qadar* and *inaya*. *Qadar*, which is usually taken to mean decree or command, Shaikh Abdur Razzaq explains, as the existence of universal types of all things in the world of Universal Reason. *Qadar*, the usual meaning of which is measuring or apportioning, is for him the arrival in the world of the Universal Soul of the types of existing things. After being individualised in order to be adapted to matter, these are joined to their causes, produced by them and appear at fixed times. *Inaya* is, broadly speaking, Providence, and covers both *qada* and *qadar*, just as these two comprehend everything that is actual. In other words, *Inaya* is the divine knowledge, embracing everything as it does, universally and absolutely. Further, while the essence of *qada* is part of the *Inaya* of God, its intellect (kamal) is in the world of Universal Reason. Shaikh Abdur Razzaq identifies the Preserved Tablet, referred to in the Qur'ān, with the Universal Soul, for on it are preserved unalterably, all the general conceptions which are on their way to the individual heavenly souls.

It is the world of *qadar*, of the Soul, which sets everything in motion.

The relationship between the macrocosmic scheme and predestination and free-will is highly complicated, with a remote first cause and an infinity of intermingling secondary causes as we approach the physical plane. It is possible for man to look at these last only, and so to assign absolute creative and decisive power to his own will, or to look at the first cause and become

a fatalist. He must, therefore, preserve a balance and hold by both. The complete cause of anything into which human will can enter, must have an element, among others, of free-will, which sets all other elements in motion. Shaikh Abdur Razzaq seems to imply, though he does not clearly state, that man has in him an element of the divine deciding power. If there is freedom in the divine nature, there must be freedom also in man—one of its emanations.¹⁶

The mystics cultivated the belief that the true *wali*, the man of God, could rise to a position where, through his *du'a*, his prayer to God, he could become a participant in the governance of human affairs. It was faith in the potency of the *wali's du'a* which made people flock to him, and the number of legends about the miraculous powers of the *walis* effaced the distinction between the natural and the supernatural, the possible and the impossible, in people's mind. Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya is reported to have said that everything happened according to God's will, but this, rather fanciful statement, is attributed to him with the proviso that while God's command descended from above, prayer (*du'a*) went up from below, and if they clashed, the one with greater power would have things its own way. What deserves serious attention, however, is the view implied in Shaikh Abdur Razzaq's speculations, that in considering the question of free-will and predestination we must look at things from the microcosmic and the macrocosmic level. Putting things in our own terms (though without the explicit support of any traditional authority), we could say that the macrocosmic span of existence extends from Creation to the Day of Judgement. With reference to this span, God's will is absolute, its fulfilment immediate. Human existence is here a purpose within the Purpose of God's will. The microcosmic span of human life extends from birth to death. God's will is operative here too, but, as Shaikh Abdur Razzaq says, with an infinity of intermingling, secondary causes. We see it as law and justice, as moral command and obedience within the opposite poles of good and evil, which are necessary for meaningful existence at the microcosmic level. There is an essential harmony, an essential unity between the macrocosmic and the microcosmic, but the same

thought-processes, the same types of reasoning, would not apply to both, as the laws of macrophysics do not apply to microphysics, and *vice versa*. This interpretation of Islamic belief, like Islam itself, would be true only for those who believe. It can be rejected by those who doubt or deny it. Such persons, or groups, or societies who offend against God and His will both at the macrocosmic and the microcosmic level, who, to use the language of Muslim theology, deny God's unity, His omniscience, His omnipotence, and who associate others with God or deliberately adopt evil ways, ignoring the final Judgement, deserve to be punished. The duration of such punishment is indicated in macrocosmic terms as eternal, if the denial of God is deliberate and absolute or, in microcosmic terms, as depending on God's will and His mercy, if the offence against God and His commands is mitigated by awareness of sin and repentance.

A fresh study of Islam, uninhibited by previous thinking, began with Syed Ahmad Khan, the founder of the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College, which later became the Aligarh Muslim University. He held⁹ that any Muslim who possessed adequate knowledge could exercise the right of interpretation, and himself exercised this right in a manner that exasperated the *ulama*. But on the question of predestination and free-will he argued on the same lines as Imam Abu Hanifa or Imam Ghazali, though not without a modern touch.

"I think, and anyone who sets aside the principle of adherence to authentic opinion will most certainly agree, that the *ulama* have misconceived the nature of the Qur'ān. This has two aspects, one that it is the Qur'ān, revealed by God. It is my belief that the Qur'ān is, word for word, the revelation of God...The other aspect is the determination of its meaning, the eliciting of its purpose and intention. From this point of view the Qur'ān is like something composed by a man with full power and beauty of expression, and just as we examine what such a man says and decides and what he intends and means to say, in the same way we would literally interpret the Qur'ān, and for this purpose recognise no distinction between the language of the Qur'ān and the language of man. For, after all, the

Qur'ān was revealed in a human language, the tongue of the people of Arabia, and so, though it may be entitled to reverence on the ground of its being a divine revelation, it is, for purposes of understanding and interpretation, no different from something uttered by man."

Syed Ahmad Khan's views on predestination and free-will, which should have made it possible for the Muslims to be guided by his conscience and not by tradition, appear to be dialectical and essentially superficial.

"That First Cause which possesses true knowledge of all the conditions under which it acts is what we call *Taqdir*. That is to say, according to our thinking, *Taqdir* is God's knowledge. So if that First Cause, on the basis of true knowledge, says that such a one has been guided and such a one misguided, such a one has been created that he may go to heaven and such a one that he may go to hell, that is perfectly correct. Reference to this to itself is due to its being the First Cause, and statement of the results is based on its true knowledge. This does not mean that any agent (*i.e.* the person who was created for heaven or for hell) was necessarily acting under compulsion."¹⁷

Dr Iqbal's doctrine of Personality, of man fashioning himself into an assertive and creative power under God, held out great promise. He went so far as to say,

"Raise yourself to such heights that God, your Self beholding,
Should ask of you, Tell Me, what is your Will."

But this exaltation of man ends in what is no less than an intellectual collapse. For the Selflessness to which the Muslim should aspire, is nothing beyond the observance of—injunctions in regard to prayer, fasting, *zakat* and pilgrimage, an observance that has been a habit for centuries.

In one sense a Muslim has no freedom at all : he has been created only that he might serve God,¹⁸ and God has acquired him body and soul, with all else that he possesses.¹⁹ In another sense he enjoys the greatest freedom, for belonging as he does to God, it releases him from every form of bondage. This is the interpretation that has been put on these verses by the sufis generally. In practice, every Muslim who believes that he must live according to the *shari'a*, which comprises the creed as well as the law, follows the *shari'a* as defined by his sect or by one of the four schools of jurisprudence (Hanafi, Shafi'i, Maliki and

Hambali) which are recognised as orthodox. But the law has curious anomalies. The ruler is not bound by the *shari'a* in the sense that he is not answerable to the community, the *millat*, or the divines, but only to God, and he must be obeyed unless he forbids the religious practices enjoined by Islam and upholds *kufir*, or unbelief. The officers of the ruler who have to carry out his commands are answerable only to the ruler. A Muslim who holds, but does not propagate, heretical beliefs commits no cognisable offence. A Muslim who disregards traditional practices or taboos, is answerable only if he claims that he possesses theological status and maintains that his own views or practices are more correct than those prescribed by tradition. The Qur'an enjoins abstinence from intoxicating drinks, but the *shari'a* does not—in India, at least—forbid the smoking or eating of opium. A Shaikhul Islam of Turkey is alleged to have declared that a man who drank coffee was a *kafir*; nevertheless coffee became a favourite beverage. The flesh of the pig is among the things absolutely forbidden, and Muslims have abstained from it in all countries and all times, but no punishment has been prescribed for it, and drinking wine or liquor is a sin that can be atoned for by repentance, but not an offence punishable under the law. Adultery is a sin as well as a legal offence, but the evidence required to establish guilt, would make it almost impossible to prove the parties guilty unless they themselves, or one of them, made a voluntary confession. But the niceties of the law are based very largely on traditions whose validity is as often as not open to question, and interpretations which are valid only if recognised by the ruling authority as well as by the consensus of the majority. In India, the majority of Muslims followed and the state enforced the Hanafi system of law, except where rulers and their subjects were *Shi'a*; in Egypt, the Shafi'i system has been followed. According to the Qur'an, a Muslim should show gratitude to God by enjoying all that has been permitted: "Eat and drink and do not waste; indeed, God is not a friend of those who waste". This is modified by another passage: "You will not attain the good (or righteousness) unless you spend out of that which you love."²⁰ The intention of the Qur'an, if all such

statements and modifications were taken together, would appear to be that men should lead a clean, healthy life, requiring each one to do what is known to be good and avoid what is regarded as evil,²¹ on the understanding that God does not place on anyone a burden heavier than he can bear,²² a principle which would apply to religious observances, conduct and needs of physical life.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. There are references in the Qur'ān to a book or tablet, with meanings which differ according to the context.
2. These extracts have been taken from D.B. Macdonald, *Development of Muslim Theology, Jurisprudence and Constitutional Theory*, Lond, 1903. Appendix I
3. From 'jabr', meaning 'compulsion'
4. Dr Daud Rahbar. *The God of Justice*, E.J. Brill, Leiden, 1960
5. That is, punishment in this world and the next.
6. Rahbar, *op. cit.*, pp. 63-64
7. The reference here is to the prophets sent and the successive revelations.
8. Rahbar, *op. cit.*, pp. 112-113
9. Azad, *Tarjuman al-Quran*. Edited and translated into English by S. Abdul Latif, Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1966. Vol. 1
10. Rahbar, *op. cit.*, pp. 201-203
11. Qur'ān, 38:72 and 2 : 28
12. Qur'ān, 51:56
13. Qur'ān, 17:72
14. Qur'ān, 95:4-6
15. F. Rosenthal. *The Muslim Concept of Freedom*. E J. Brill, Leiden, 1960
16. *Encyclopaedia of Islam*. Art. 'Abd al-Razzaq
17. Tahzibul Akhlaq. Mujtabhai Press, Lahore, 1894. P—235-36
18. Qur'ān, 51:56
19. Qur'ān, 9:112
20. Qur'ān, 3:86
21. Qur'ān, 3:106
22. Qur'ān, 2:286

III MYSTICISM

KHALIQ AHMED NIZAMI

MYSTICISM, it is said, has no genealogy. It is the eternal yearning of the human soul to have direct experience of the Ultimate Reality. In this basic quest the mystical experience is common to all religions. The Prophet Muhammad explained *Ahsan* (the earliest term¹ used for mystic experience in the Traditions of the Prophet) as follows : "You pray God in a way that you have a feeling that you are looking at Him ; if that be not possible then you feel as if He is looking at you." This direct communion with the Infinite and the Eternal is the elan of the mystic movement in all religions, and the terms² used to express this spiritual experience are almost identical in connotation.

The birth and growth of the mystic ideal in Islam was due to several factors. First, the mystic sentiment grew out of the human aspiration for a personal, direct approach to, and a more intensive experience of the Supreme Being and the religious truth. When strong religious emotions could not be satisfied by orthodox or formal approach to the Ultimate Reality, the mystic ideals came to be cherished and cultivated. The orthodox theologians looked upon religion as a set of lifeless rituals and ceremonies. Intensely religious spirits, hungering after a deeper communion, naturally turned to mystic speculation and experience as the real source of religious progress and spiritual development. A consciousness of contradiction in the metaphysical and ethical aspects of popular theology further encouraged the mystic attitude which, in its ultimate analysis, is an attempt to transcend discord and reduce all contradictions into an absolute unity.

Secondly, Islamic mysticism was a reaction against over-intellectualism, formalism and hair-splitting theology. It was under the influence of Greek thought that Muslim scholars had adopted a sophisticated approach towards religion. Their attitude was characterised by artificialism (*wazi'at*) and they tried to represent the simple facts of faith in terms derived mainly from Greek logic and metaphysics. Hair-splitting controversies which started in Theology—particularly amongst the Ash'arites and the Mu'tazalites—froze the heat of spiritual life. Naturally, people who yearned for a direct and natural approach towards religion, turned towards the spiritual aspects of religion. They developed cosmic emotions as an antidote to over-intellectualism. "The germs of scepticism latent in Rationalism", observes Dr Mohd. Iqbal, "ultimately necessitated an appeal to a super-intellectual source of knowledge which asserted itself in the *Risala* of Al-Qushairi (ob. 968 A.D.)."³

Thirdly, the rigidity and formalism of the various schools of Muslim jurisprudence found its reaction in the development of mystic thought. It became the exponent of the higher religious values and attracted to its fold all those who were not satisfied with formal and static aspects of religion. Mysticism is, at its higher level, a form of free-thinking. The following couplet very neatly expresses the mystic challenge to the jurists :

You cannot see God in *Kanz* or *Hidayah*⁴, Look into the mirror of your heart, for there is no book better than this.

Lastly, the mystic call in Islam was the result of an inner rebellion of conscience against the social injustices of the age. The rise of the Umayyads gave a rude shock to the religious sentiments of those Musalmans who thought that Islam had not come simply to establish empires. They looked with dismay at the spectacle of the Musalmans drifting away from the ideals of Islam and wallowing in sordid materialism. The impious ways of the Muslim governing classes provoked disgust in sensitive minds. If in the field of politics the Umayyad Imperialism gave birth to the Mawali movement, it gave rise

to the Shu'ubiyyah⁵ movement in the cultural and the mystic ideology in the religious sphere.

The two bed-rocks on which the entire structure of mystic ideology in Islam rests are—'Love of God' and 'personal contact with Him' (*Ma'rifat* or Gnosis). The Qur'ān repeatedly exhorts people to develop 'love' with God.⁶ It emphasizes the fact that faith in God means love of His creatures. "Devotion of God," remarked Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya, "is of two kinds : *lazmi* (intransitive) and *muta'addi* (transitive). In the *lazmi* devotion, the benefit which accrues is confined to the devotee alone. This type of devotion includes prayers, fasting, pilgrimage to Mecca, recitation of religious formulae, turning over the beads of the rosary etc. The *muta'addi* devotion, on the contrary, brings advantage and comfort to others ; it is performed by spending money on others, showing affection to people and by other means through which a man strives to help his fellow human beings. The reward of *muta'addi* devotion is endless and limitless'.⁷ This concept of 'salvation through service, brought the sufis into close touch with the masses whom they strove to help, to educate and to reform. It was believed that a mystic became dangerously ego-centric if the overflow of divine love in him did not enrich the sources of his humanism. It was on this account that, barring a brief initial period, the mystic ideal in Islam was never confined to the 'personal salvation' of the devotee alone. It very soon assumed the form of a movement for the spiritual culture of mankind. Consequently, it is difficult to follow the main developments of Muslim life and thought during the Middle Ages without a reference to the mystics and their activities. Sir Hamilton Gibb has very correctly remarked that the movement of popular religion in Islam is very closely connected with the history of Islamic mysticism.⁸

QUR'ANIC BASIS OF MYSTIC IDEOLOGY

Different views have been expressed by scholars about the genesis of the mystical movement in Islam. Christianity, Hellenism, Manicheism, Buddhism, Hinduism and Perseeism

have all been suggested as its main sources. But it is now fairly well-established that the beginnings of this attitude may be traced back to the *Qur'ān* and that the Prophet himself was the teacher of all the three paths – the *shari'at* (external law), the *tariqat* (mystic path) and the *haqiqat* (gnosis). This, however, does not mean that extraneous elements did not enter the Muslim mystical life or thought as the movement spread into regions with different mental and emotional climates. It is not difficult, therefore, to find the traces of Christian, Hindu and Buddhist influences in some of the practices and ideas of Muslim mystics.

(1) *The Qur'ān* contains a number of verses in which the sufis have found justification for many of their ideas and institutions ; some sufi scholars have even attempted commentaries on the *Qur'ān* from a purely mystical point of view.⁹ For some of the basic concepts of mysticism the following verses of the *Qur'ān* are often cited :

Divine Love : (mahabbat)

"He loveth them and they love Him."¹⁰

Unity of Being : (wahdat-ul wujud)

"He is the first and the Last, the Appearance and Reality and He is knower of all things."¹¹

Gnosis : (ma'rifat)

"Indeed, He is nearer to him than his own jugular vein."¹²

"If my servants enquire of thee concerning Me, lo ! I am near."¹³

"Whithersoever ye turn, there is the Face of God."¹⁴

Remembrance : (zikr)

"Then do ye remember Me, I will remember you."¹⁵

Need of a Spiritual guide : (pīr)

"O ye who believe ! be careful of (your duty to) Allah and seek means (*wasilat*) to Him and strive hard in His way that you may be successful."¹⁶

Spiritual allegiance : (ba'yt)

"Certainly Allah was well pleased with the believers when they swore allegiance to you under the tree."¹⁷

(2) The Prophet has always occupied a central and pivotal place in the ideology of Islamic mysticism. His vigils, his meditation at Hira and his direct relationship with the Lord has inspired travellers on the mystic path. Some seventy persons—known as *Ahl-i Suffa*—lived in his mosque and prayed day and night during his life time. They had no earthly attachments and no worldly engagements. Some of the Qur'ānic verses, according to many exegesists, refer to their piety. This small group of intensely devoted religious men constitutes the earliest batch of mystics in Islam.

“The manner in which the Koran was revealed to Muhammad”, writes Professor Arberry, “is naturally of great interest to the Sufi, for is it not a visible proof that God speaks to man? And since it is his ardent desire himself to hear the Voice of God, he must be concerned to know how it came about that the Founder of his faith was so privileged as to be throughout his prophethood in constant touch with his Creator. Therefore, the Sufi is bound to study the life of Muhammad (*sira*) to comprehend the code of conduct (*sunna*), and to be intimate with the Traditions (*hadith*), handed down from generation to generation, first by word of mouth and later in writing, which are the unique and abundant source upon which he may draw for enlightenment. The *hadith* is the second pillar after the Koran upon which he, like all Muslims, rests the fabric of his faith and life.¹⁸ Thus the Muslim mystics have not only shown profound respect to the Prophet but have tried to imitate him in every detail of their daily life. “Whoever would deviate from the path of the Prophet,” remarks Sa’di, “would never reach his goal.” Similarly the view which relegated *shari’at* to a secondary position or minimised its importance as the regulator of Muslim conscience, was rejected as basically erroneous. *Tariqat* and *Haqiqat*, they said, were elaborations not negations, of *shari’at*.¹⁹

As a necessary corollary to meticulous adherence to the *sunna*, a question was sometimes raised : was it possible for a *sufi* to attain to prophetic consciousness? Majority of the mystics held that it was not. “The final state of a mystic’s

spiritual experience", runs an oft-quoted mystic saying, "is the beginning of a Prophet's spiritual experience." But Ibn-i Arabi thought that it was possible for a *sufi* to attain, in his spiritual evolution, to the kind of experience characteristic of prophetic consciousness. Commenting on this view Dr Muhammad Iqbal remarks: "I personally believe this view of the Shaikh Muhy-u'd-din Ibn-i Arabi to be psychologically unsound; but assuming it to be correct, the Shaikh regards it as a purely private achievement which does not, and in the nature of things cannot, entitle such a saint to declare that all those who do not believe in him are outside the *pale* of Islam. Indeed, from the Shaikh's point of view, there may be more than one saint, living in the same age or country, who may attain to prophetic consciousness. The point to be seized is that while it is psychologically possible for a saint to attain to prophetic experience, his experience will have no socio-political significance making him the Centre of a new organisation."²⁰ The psychological difference between the prophetic and the mystic types of consciousness is best illustrated in the following remark made by Shaikh Abdul Quddus Ganguhi (ob. 1537): "Muhammad of Arabia ascended the highest Heaven and returned. I swear by God that if I had reached that point, I should never have returned."²¹

Nevertheless *Mi'raj* (ascension of the Prophet) has greatly fascinated the sufis and they have sometimes enjoyed narrating their adventures in the realm of spirit more or less on the lines of the Prophet's experience. Shaikh Bayazid Bistami (ob. 875) was probably the first distinguished saint who took the *Mir'aj* as a theme for expressing his own mystical experience. In India Sayyid Muhammad Ghaus Gwaliyari's *Mir'aj Namah* and Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi's eleventh letter in his epistolary collection *Maktubat-i-Imam-i-Rabbani* are attempts of the same nature.

GROWTH OF MYSTIC IDEOLOGY

The different phases through which the mystical movement passed were largely conditioned by the challenges to which Muslim society was exposed at different times and the compelling circumstances of political life. The history of the first phase

of Islamic mysticism designated as the "Period of the Quietists" by Professor Nicholson, centres round persons like Imam Hasan Basri (ob. 728), Ibrahim b. Adham (ob. 777), Abu Hashim Usman (ob. 776) and Rabi's Basri (ob. 901), who represented a reaction against the disregard of the traditions of the *Khilafat-i-Rashida* by the Umayyads. The rapid transformation of Muslim political life and the rise of monarchical institutions in Islam during the Umayyad period, gave a rude shock to their religious consciousness and the first centres of mysticism appeared at places like Kufa and Basra, which had more direct experience of the Umayyad methods of government.

The 'Quietists' concentrated on the purification and discipline of their individual souls. According to legends which are fairly early, many of them were redeemed and reformed sinners. This enabled them to enunciate both the starting-point and the objective of the mystic path. The starting point is the *Doctrine of Repentance*, interpreted as a complete change of human personality. 'Repentance', says a mystic proverb, 'means that you forget repentance.' The object of the path is God—the kingdom of Heaven that is 'within you and not without.' Fear of God, rather than His love, determined the tenor of their lives during this phase.

As years rolled on, their attitude towards life began to assume a distinct form. This necessitated an enunciation of their metaphysical and philosophical positions. In the 9th and the 10th centuries A.D., a number of treatises were written in Arabic on different aspects of mystical thought. Muhasibi (ob. 837) wrote his famous *al-Ri'aya li-huquq Allah*²² and *Kitab al-Twahhun*²³ and discussed such problems as self-examination, death, final judgement and cosmic emotion. The *Ri'aya* provided material for Ghazali's monumental work, the *Ihya al-Ulum al-Din*. Kharraz (ob. 899) produced his *Kitab-al-Sidq*²⁴ and sought to establish that the sufis really imitated the ways of the Prophets. The *Kitab al-Tawasin*²⁵ of Hallaj was another significant addition to mystic literature of the period. In the 10th century A.D. appeared the works of Abu Nasr Sarraj²⁶ (ob. 988), Abu Talib Makki²⁷ (ob. 996) and Abu Bakr Kalabazi²⁸ (ob. 1,000).

Each one of these books established some mystic idea or institution in the face of orthodox opposition.

By the middle of the 11th century a number of mystic-groups (*garoh*) had been organised. Shaikh Al Hajweri (ob. 1072) refers to 12 schools—the *Hululis*, the *Hallajis*, the *Taifuris*, the *Muhasibis*, the *Tustaris*, the *Hakimis*, the *Nuris*, and the *Junaidis*—which, it appears, were fairly well-known in his day.²⁹ Each one of these groups laid emphasis on a particular doctrine. The Taifuris considered rapture (*sukr*) superior to sobriety (*sahv*); the *Qussaris* put forward doctrine of blame (*malamat*); the *Kharrazis* propounded the doctrine of *fana* (annihilation) and *baqa* (subsistence); the *Khufaisis* introduced the doctrine of *huzur* (presence) and *ghaib* (absence); the *Sayyais* enunciated the doctrine of *shauq* (joy) and *alam* (gloom); the *Muhasibis* laid down precepts for taking stock of one's spiritual progress (*muhasaba*) and categorized them under *maqam* and *hal* (permanent and temporary states); the *Tustaris* drew attention to the necessity of controlling the lower soul (*nafs*); the *Hakimis* affirmed the doctrine of sainthood (*walayat*) and marked out territories within a mystic's jurisdiction; the *Nuris* preferred *suhbat* (society) to 'uzlat (seclusion) and the *Junaidis* emphasized the superiority of sobriety (*sukr*) over rapture (*sahv*). Of these twelve schools Shaikh 'Ali Hajweri condemned the *Hululis* (the transmigrationists) and the *Hallajis* (pantheists). With so many new terms and concepts entering the texture of mystic thought, it became an urgent necessity to fix their connotation and explain their implications. The literature produced during the following century and a half in fact seeks to define the concepts and categories of thought which found currency during this period. Abdur Rehman Sulami (ob. 1021) and Abu Nu'aim Isbahani (ob. 1038) produced biographies of earlier mystics³⁰ which served as models for the generations that followed.

MYSTIC PHILOSOPHERS

Then appeared the great mystic philosophers who consolidated the isolated and uncoordinated mystic concepts of the earlier generations into a well-knit system of thought. Imam Qushairi (ob. 1074 A.D.) and after him Imam Ghazali (ob. 1111 A.D.)

wrote systematic accounts of mysticism. The latter raised mysticism to the status of a systematic discipline.³¹ He defined the various mystic terms, fixed their connotation and made a clear distinction between *'ulama-i zahir* (the externalist scholars) and the *'ulama-i batin* (the mystics and saints). The former, he said, emphasized the form, the latter the spirit of religion; the one proceeded from *knowledge to action* and the other from *action to knowledge*. The *'ulama-i zahir* established contact with the state; the latter abjured it completely. Though Imam Ghazali was keen on bridging the gulf between the various conflicting religious approaches, yet his own categorization of *'ulama* into *zahiri* and *batini*, in a way accentuated the differences.

The thirteenth century was a step forward in the integration and consolidation of the mystical movement in Islam. Imam Ghazali and Imam Qushairi had given form and coherence to the mystical concepts; Shaikh Shihab-u'd-din Suhrawardi (ob. 1234) enunciated the principles of *Khanqah* life and organization in his *'Awarif-ul-Ma'arif*.³² Two great mystic thinkers of the thirteenth century—Shaikh Muhi-u'd-din Ibn 'Arabi (ob. 1248) and Maulana Jala-u'd-din Rumi (ob. 1273 A.D.) gave to the sufi movement a warm fund of emotions and an *elan* to appeal to and attract all higher religious sentiments.

Ibn-i Arabi was a powerful exponent of the doctrine of *wahdat al-wujud* (Unity of Being) and though his works—*Futuh al-Makkiya* and *Fusus al-Hikam*—were initially condemned, he subsequently came to be recognized as the greatest mystic thinker in Islam. Rumi used the medium of anecdotal poetry for communicating his concepts and presented what Gibb very aptly calls a 'picture gallery.'

RISE OF THE SILSILAHs

The last and by far the most important phase in the development of Islamic mysticism was the rise of *silsilahs* in the 12th century. The utter ruin of Muslim social life—the degeneration of Muslim morals and the disintegration of Muslim soul—during the period preceding and following the irruption of the Mongols, came as a challenge to mystic thought. The Muslim saints of this period concentrated all their energies on the regeneration

of Muslim society. At a time when Muslim political power was at its lowest ebb and anarchy and indiscipline reigned supreme,³³ they divided the universe into spiritual territories (*walayats*)³⁴ and with clearly marked out spheres of jurisdiction set out to rivitalize the spiritual life of the Muslims. The spiritual orders (*silsilahs*) and *Khanqahs* were effectively organized and established on an extensive scale to meet the situation which henceforth became an integral part of the mystic discipline. A very dynamic figure of this period whose role in the history of the *silsilahs* has not been properly evaluated as yet, was Khwaja Yusuf Hamadani.³⁵ He exercised tremendous influence on the lives of the founders of the Qadiriya and the Khawajgan orders, and later saints, like Ibn-i Arabi, respectfully refer to his views.

The earliest mystic order in Islam was the Qadiriya, founded by Shaikh Abdul Qadir Gilani (ob. 1166),³⁶ one of the most outstanding figures in the annals of Islamic mysticism. He was an erudite scholar, a powerful speaker and a saint with rare intuitive intelligence (*nafs-i gira*). His sermons, in which "he figures as an earnest, sincere and eloquent preacher" had tremendous effect on the masses. One such collection of his sermons, known as (*Al-faṭḥ ar-Rabbani*),³⁷ contains, according to Margoliouth, "some of the very best in Moslem literature: the spirit which they breathe is one of charity and philanthropy."³⁸ His book *al-Ghunya li-talibi tariq al haqq*³⁹ was included in the mystic syllabus for generations.

It was in 1127 A.D. that, on the advice of Shaikh Yusuf Hamadani (ob. 1140), he began to preach in public. His audience was small at first but it increased gradually; and he started delivering sermons at the Halba gate of Baghdad. His fame travelled far and wide and scholars and mystics thronged round him from all over the Islamic world. Owing to the constant increase of his hearers⁴⁰ he found it necessary to go outside the gate. His sermons are said to have affected the conversion of a very large number of Jews and Christians to Islam.⁴¹ Even after his death his *madrassa* and his *ribat* continued to attract people from distant lands. His order found adherents in Yaman, Syria, Egypt and many other regions. Le Chatelier says that during his lifetime his sons were active in propagating

his teachings in Morocco, Egypt, Turkestan and India.⁴² This, however, is not confirmed by the *Bahjat al-Asrar*.

Next in point of time is the *silsilah-i Khawajgan*. It was organized on an effective and elaborate basis by Khawaja Ahmad,⁴³ popularly known as Ata Yasawi⁴⁴ (ob. 1166), one of the most celebrated saints of Central Asia. Khawaja Farid-u'd-din 'Attar reverentially refers to him as *Pir-i Turkistan*.⁴⁵ Even to this day he is held in the highest esteem by the Turks and it is generally believed that it was he who effected the conversion of the Turks to Islam.⁴⁶ Ahmad Yasawi was born at Sayram (Isfijab) sometime in the second half of the 11th century. His father died when he was seven and his family migrated to Yasi. Later he went to Bukhara and joined the discipline of Shaik Yusuf Hamadani. He died at Yasi in 1166 A.D., in the same year in which Shaikh Abdul Qadir Gilani breathed his last. His tomb became a place of pilgrimage for both kings and sufis.

Ahmad Yaswai wrote in vernacular Turkish verse⁴⁷ which provided him with an effective medium to approach and influence the masses of Central Asia. His poetry gave rise to mystic folk literature in Turkistan and his *silsilah* spread wherever the Turkish language was understood, in Eastern Turkistan, Mawara-un Nahr, Khwarizm, Khurasan, Persia and Anatolia. Timur had great faith in Khwaja Ahmad and the personal interest that he took in the construction of an imposing structure over his grave, has been described in detail by Sharaf-u'd-din Yezdi.⁴⁸

Amongst the spiritual successors of Ata Yasawi, the names of Arsalan Baba's son, Mansur Ata (ob. 1197), Sa'id Ata (ob. 1218) and Hakim Ata (ob. 1188) are particularly noteworthy.⁴⁹ One of his spiritual descendants, Haji Bektash Wali, became the founder of an independent mystic order, the Bektashiya,⁵⁰ which adopted many Christian elements and disregarded some of the Islamic rituals and practices.⁵¹

It was, however, Khwaja Abdul Khaliq Ghujduwani⁵² (ob. 1220)⁵³ who gave a distinct spiritual philosophy to the *silsilah-i Khawajgan*. The eight maxims⁵⁴ which embody the teachings of the *silsilah* and have since been accepted as the basis of the Khwajgan discipline, were formulated by him.

Nearly a century and half later there appeared Khwaja Baha-u'd-din Naqshband⁵⁵ (ob. 1389) on the scene of the *silsilah-i Khwajagan*. His contribution towards the consolidation and expansion of the *silsilah* was so great that after his death the order came to be known as the *Naqshbandi silsilah*. Amongst his disciples Khwaja Muhammad Parsa (ob. 822/1420) was a very notable figure both on account of his spiritual eminence and erudite scholarship.⁵⁶ Amongst his spiritual descendants, Khwaja Ubaid Ullah Ahrar⁵⁷ (ob. 1490), was a saint of great eminence and wielded immense influence over the Timurid princes.⁵⁸ He had a unique distinction of possessing enormous wealth, vast erudition and unrivalled prestige. It was through his discourses that Maulana Jami got an insight into the works of Ibn-i Arabi. During his time Naqshbandi *silsilah* reached its highest watermark in Central Asia and its centres came to be established far and near.

The other important mystic order was the Chishtiya. It was founded at Chist (in the Hari-Rud valley of Afghanistan, near Firuz Koh, the capital of the Shansbani rulers of Ghur) by Khwaja Abu Ishaq of Syria⁵⁹ (ob. 940 A.D.) and it produced saints like Abi Ahmad b. Farashafa, Abi Muhammad b. Ahmad, Abi Yusuf, Khwaja Mawdud Chishti, Haji Sharif Zindani and Khwaja Usman Harwani. But the pre-Indian history of the *silsilah* cannot be accurately constructed. It was probably on this account that Shah Wali Ullah, who traced the history of the Naqshbandi and the Qadiri orders, to their founders outside India, began an account of the Chishti *silsilah* with Khawaja Mu'in-u'd-din Hasan Sijzi.⁶⁰ The Chishti order is, in fact, essentially Indian.

Khawaja Mu'in-u'd-din arrived in India during the reign of Prithvi Rai and set up a Chishti mystic centre at Ajmer⁶¹ in the heart of Rajputana. Little is known about his life and teachings at Ajmer, but whatever has survived shows that he had a very dynamic concept of religion and was thoroughly humanitarian in his outlook. He interpreted religion in terms of human service and exhorted his disciples, "to develop river-like generosity, sun-like affection and earth-like hospitality." The highest form of devotion, according to him, was "to

redress the misery of those in distress ; to fulfil the needs of the helpless and to feed the hungry".⁶² The contemporary records say nothing about his impact on the life of the people of Rajputana, but Akbar's historian, Abul Fazl, says that multitudes of people came under the influence of his teachings.⁶³ His two disciples—Shaikh Hamid-u'd-din Bakhtiyar Kaki (ob. 1236)—played a prominent part in the expansion of the *silsilah*. The former worked out the Chishti mystic principles at Suwal, a far-off village in Rajputana.

The Suharawardi⁶⁴ *silsilah* was founded by Shaikh Abu Najib Abdul Qahir Suhrawardi⁶⁵ (ob. 1168), a distinguished sufi, jurist and reformer⁶⁶ of the 12th century. He was well-versed in almost all branches of Muslim learning *Tafsir*, *Hadis*, *Fiqh*, *Usul-i Fiqh* and *Usul-i Din*⁶⁷ and was ranked among the most celebrated Ash'arites of the period. For two years (1150-1152) he served as Principal of the famous Nizamiya madrasa but resigned his post as a protest against the high-handedness of the authorities in escheating the property of a boarder, Shaikh Yaqub al-Katib.⁶⁸ He wrote on many religious themes but with the exception of *Adab-ul Muridin*⁶⁹ and *Sharh-i Asm-n-i Husana*,⁷⁰ all his works have perished. While many of his spiritual descendants became founders of new *silsilahs*—e.g. Kubrawiya, Shattariya and Firdausiya—his nephew, Shaikh Shihab-u'd-din Suhrawardi (ob. 1234) who succeeded him at Baghdad, stuck to the main line of the *silsilah* and devoted all his energies to its expansion and popularization. At a time when moral inertia and spiritual paralysis had rendered the Muslim society invertebrate, he applied himself with great zeal to the work of reform and regeneration. His *Awarif-ul Ma'arif*⁷¹ was accepted by the medieval Muslim mystics as an excellent manual for the guidance of the organizers of *silsilahs*.

The Firdausi *silsilah* was founded by Shaikh Saif-u'd-din,⁷² a native of Bakharz,⁷³ a town between Nishapur and Harat. In his early years he was a bitter critic of *tasawwuf* and the mystics but when he came into contact with Shaikh Najm-u'd-din Kubra⁷⁴ (ob. 1226)—one of the most striking personalities among the sufis of the 12th-13th centuries—he was completely

transformed. He developed faith in mystics and settled at Bukhara at the instance of Shaikh Najm-u'd-din Kubra whose spiritual order he popularised with great zeal. It was a disciple of Shaikh Saif-u'd-din Bhakarzi who introduced the Firdausi order in India.

Shaikh Najm-u'd-din Kubra had to live under extremely distressing circumstances on account of irruption of the Mongols. In July 1226, the Mongols attacked Khawarizm. The Shaikh went out to meet the invader in the open field and died fighting the Mongol forces.⁷⁵ Circumstances, however, forced on Shaikh Saif-u'd din Bakharzi an entirely different type of relationship with the Mongols. Mangu Khan's mother, Sirkuytay Bibi, built a madrasa at Bukhara at a cost of 1,000 *balish* of silver and entrusted its administration to him.⁷⁶ It appears that recognition of Shaikh Bakharzi's eminence by the Mongols enhanced his prestige, and princes and nobles began to visit him in very large number. According to Jami, rulers walked on foot holding the stirrup of his horse.⁷⁷

The Shattari⁷⁸ *silsilah* is traced back to Shaikh Bayazid Taifur Bistami (ob. 845), but its early history is completely unknown. It is said that since Shaikh Bistami believed in the superiority of *sukr* (intoxication) over *sahv* (sobriety) and emphasized the cult of *ishq* (love), this *silsilah* had come to be known as *Tariq-i 'Ishqiya* in Iran. Some preferred to call it *Taifuriya* or *Bistamiya* after the name of Shaikh Bayazid Taifur Bistami. In fact the Shattari *silsilah* has no pre-Indian history and it was Shah Abdulla, a disciple and Khalifa of Shaikh Muhammad Arif Taifuri, who gave it the name Shattari,⁷⁹ probably after his arrival in India.

Since Shah Abdulla was a descendant of Shaikh Shihab-u'd-din Suhrawardi, some writers⁸⁰ have attempted spiritual affiliation of the Shattari *silsilah* with the Suhrawardi order. This, however, does not seem to be correct. Shah Abdulla was, no doubt, connected with Shaikh Shihab-u'd-din Suhrawardi by ties of blood, but was not spiritually related to him.⁸¹ He had, however, benefitted from the society of two eminent Suhrawardi saints—Shaikh Muzaffar of Nishapur and Sayyid Ali Muwahid of Azerbaijan.⁸²

Apart from these, there were many other *silsilahs* like the *Rifa'iya*, the *Bedawiya*, the *Bayyumi*, the *Dasuqi*, the *Shaziliya*, the *Isawiya*, etc., which appeared in different regions of Asia and Africa and played a very important role in the religious and cultural history of Islam. A reference to all these *silsilahs* is not feasible in the limited space here.

With the rise of these *silsilahs*, large scale establishment of *khanqahs*,⁸³ for inculcating community spirit among mystics and for the moral and spiritual culture of the people, became almost imperative. Though the first *khanqah* was constructed early in the second century A.H. by Abu Hashim sufi⁸⁴, these early *khanqahs* could not develop into centres of the mystic movement. They remained private in character. From the 12th and 13th centuries onwards *khanqahs*, *jama'at khanahs* and *zawiyahs*⁸⁵ became the nuclei for the expanding mystic movement.

The establishment of *khanqahs* was based on the conviction that a life of solitary, self-sufficient contemplation was incompatible with the highest mystic ideal of salvation through service of mankind. "In constructing *khanqahs*," writes Shaikh 'Izzuddin Mahmud, "there are several advantages . . . First it provides shelter for mystics who do not possess any house of their own. . . Secondly, by gathering at a place and mixing with each other, the mystics get an opportunity of regulating their lives and developing uniform inward and outward ways. . . Thirdly, in this way they get an opportunity of criticising and mending each other's ways."⁸⁶ In fact, when men of different temperaments and attitudes assembled in these *khanqahs*, all tensions, conflicts and complexes in their character were resolved and their personalities were moulded in consonance with the spirit of the *silsilah*. Common penitences and sufferings drew out the noblest qualities of their souls and made them understand what Carlyle calls the 'divine significance of life.'

Shaikh Shihab-ud-din Suhrawardi found sanction for the establishment of *khanqahs* in the Qur'anic verses s—xxiv, 36-37,⁸⁷ and laid down the following fundamental principles for the mystics entrusted with the task of organizing *khanqahs*.⁸⁸

- (i) The people of the *khanqahs* should establish cordial relations with all men (*khalq*).

- (ii) They should concern themselves with God, through prayers, meditation, etc.
- (iii) They should abandon all efforts at earning a livelihood and should resign themselves to the will of God.
- (iv) They should strive for the purification of their inner life.
- (v) They should abstain from things that produce evil effects.
- (vi) They should learn the value of time.
- (vii) They should completely shake off indolence and lethargy.

The *Ahl-i-Khanqah* (people of a *khanqah*) were divided into two categories : permanent residents (*muqimin*) and travellers (*musafirin*). A traveller desiring to stay in a *khanqah* was expected to arrive there before the 'asr prayers. If he arrived late, he was advised to pass the night in some mosque and join the *khanqah* the next day. As soon as a guest arrived he was expected to offer two genuflections of prayer and then greet the residents of the *khanqah*. If the visitor decided to stay on after the third day, he had to undertake duties in the *khanqah* and help the inmates in their day-to-day work. The servants of the *khanqah* were instructed to show extreme hospitality to all guests and were strictly warned against ridiculing those who were ignorant of the mystic customs and conventions.⁸⁹

The permanent residents of the *khanqah* were divided into three grades: *Ahl-i-Khidmat*, *Ahl-i-Suhbat* and *Ahl-i-Khalwat*, according to their standing and the nature of duties assigned to them.⁹⁰

Strict discipline was maintained in the *khanqans* and elaborate rules were laid down for the guidance of the inmates : How to talk to the Shaikh ; how to deal with visitors ; how to sit in the *khanqah* ; how to walk ; how and when to sleep ; what dress to wear—on these and similar other topics minute instructions were given to the people of a *khanqah*.⁹¹ The Shaikh sternly dealt with those inmates who were found guilty of the slightest irregularity.⁹²

If a *khanqah* had no endowment (*waqf*) for its maintenance, the Shaikh could either instruct his disciples to earn their liveli-

hood or permit them to beg or ask them to sit in the *khanqah* resigned to His will. If a *khanqah* had no Shaikh but was run by a group of men of equal spiritual status (*ikhwan*), the same three courses were open to them.⁹³

SPIRITUAL MECHANICS

Ma'rifat (gnosis) being the *summum bonum* of a mystic's life, methods were explored through which *wasl* (union) was possible. Heart (*qalb*) was considered the only medium which could set the Finite in tune with the Infinite. Every *silsilah* consequently developed its own methods for training the heart. Shah Wali-ullah points out that in prescribing these methods, the saints of the various schools took into consideration the temperament of the people living in a particular region.

When a person desired to be initiated into a *silsilah* he gave his hand in the hands of the Shaikh and repented for his past sins (*tauba*) and promised to lead a chaste and pure life in future. Sometimes the head of the new entrant was shaved. Sometimes a cap was placed on his head.

The following were the methods adopted in order to harness all feelings and emotions to establishing communion with Allah :

1. *Zikr-i Jihri* reciting the names of Allah loudly, sitting in the prescribed posture at prescribed times.
2. *Zikr-i Khafi* reciting the names of Allah silently.
3. *Pas-i Anfas* regulating the breath
4. *Muraqabah* absorption in mystic contemplation
5. *Chillah* Forty days during which a mystic confines himself to a lonely corner or cell and devotes himself to contemplation.

Some mystics emphasized the efficacy of audition parties (*sama*) in the development of one's spiritual personality. Music, they said, not only relieved the strain on a man's emotions, but quickened his emotional response and attuned his heart to the Infinite and the Eternal. *Sama* or *qawwali*, consequently, became one of the popular institutions of medieval mysticism and the common man, incapable of comprehending the mystic

principles at a higher level, readily accepted its ceremonial aspect. If its metaphysics attracted the higher intellects, the mystic ceremonial—*sama*, *urs*, *langar*, etc.—drew to its fold the common man who looked upon the mystic more as a blessed miracle worker than a teacher of a higher morality. Considered in the broad perspective of Islamic history, a significant contribution of the sufis was that they removed the contradictions between static theology and the rapidly changing conditions of life. In fact, it was through the mystic channel that dynamic and progressive elements entered the social structure of Islam.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. The terms *sufi* and *tasawwuf* came into vogue later. The etymological origin of the word *sufi* is a moot point. Some of the suggestions being as follows :
 - (i) *suf*, meaning 'wool', to denote the mystic practice of wearing woollen robe (*labas al-suf*);
 - (ii) *ahl-i suffa*, devotees who spent their times in prayers at the mosque of the Prophet under the care of the Prophet himself;
 - (iii) *saff-i awwal*, first row in prayer;
 - (iv) *banu Sufa*, a Beduin tribe;
 - (v) *sawfana*, a kind of vegetable;
 - (vi) *safwat-ul-qifa*, lock of hair on the nape of the neck; etc, etc.

The first Muslim saint who came to be known as *sufi* was Jabir ibn Haiyan, a Shi'a alchemist of Kufa, who flourished in the second half of the 8th century. For details, see Nizami, *Tarikh-i Mashaikh-i Chisht*, Delhi 1953, p. 16 *et seq.*
2. The Greek term *mystic* is derived from a verb *mueo*, which literally means 'joining together the edges of a wound'. Thus originally a medical term, it came to mean uniting something which originally formed a unity and only accidentally got split up into a diversity. The word *Bhakti*, derived from the root *bhai* (to share, to participate) presupposes the existence of a personal God with Whom the devotee seeks to establish direct communion.
3. *The Development of Metaphysics in Persia*, p. 100.
4. *Kanz* and *Hidayah* are two very well-known law books.
5. For details about the Shu'ubhiyah movement see, *Essays Indian and Islamic*, Khuda Baksh, pp. 56-126.
6. 2 : 160 ; 3 : 29;
See also, Mir Valiuddin, *Love of God*, (Da'irat-ul-Ma'arif Press, Hyderabad, 1968).
7. *Fawa'id-ul Fu'ad*, pp. 13-14. The opposition between *lazmi* and *muta'addi* is adapted from grammatical terminology, the *muta'addi*

verb being transitive / *e.* its action exercising an effect upon an object, the *lazmi* being intransitive. *i.e.* its action confined to the subject. Regarding the use of these terms by the Shaikh, Professor H.A.R. Gibb once wrote to me: "The transference of these terms to mystical devotion is, in fact, remarkably apt."

Shaikh Mu'in-ud-din Chishti, the founder of the Chishti order in India, was once asked about the highest form of religious devotion. He replied that it was nothing but helping the poor, the hungry and the downtrodden. *Siyar-ul Auliya*, p. 46.

8. *Mohammadanism*, p. 128.
 9. *e.g.* amongst the Indian scholars, the *Tabsir al-Rahman wa-Taysir al-Mannan* (published by the Da'irat-ul-Ma'arif of Hyderabad) of Maulana 'Ala-ud-din b. Ahmad Maha'imi (ob. 1431) and the *Tarjamat at-Kitab* (MS, India Office 1369) of Shah Muhibbullah Ilahabadi (ob. 1648).
 10. 5:59
 11. 57:3
 12. 50:15
 13. 2:182
 14. 2:109
 15. 2:152
 16. 5:35
 17. 48:18
- This refers to the allegiance at Hudaibiya.
18. Arberry, *Sufism*, p. 13. See also, *Khair-ul-Majalis* pp. 26-27, where Shaikh Nasir-ud-din Chiragh remarks that a *sufi* can achieve nothing without emulating and following the Prophet in all details.
 19. Note, for instance, Shaikh Farid Ganj-i Shakar's statement: "*zakat* is of three kinds: *zakat-i shari'at*, *zakat-i tariqat* and *zakat-i haqiqat*. *Zakat-i shari'at* is that one gives 5 *dirhams* out of 20; *zakat-i tariqat* means that one keeps 5 *dirhams* and gives 15, while the *zakat-i haqiqat* means that all is given away and nothing is retained." *Fawa'id-ul Fu'ad*, p. 103.
 20. *Islam and Ahmadism*, Lahore 1936, p. 17.
 21. *Lata'if-i Quddusi*: Iqbal remarks about this observation that in the whole range of Sufi literature it will be difficult to find words which so clearly bring out the distinction between the prophetic and saintly types of religious experience. *Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, p. 124.
'See Kashf al-Mahjub, tr. p. 238.
 22. Ed. by Margaret Smith (Gibb Memorial New Series, 15), 1940.
 23. Ed. by A.J. Arberry. Cairo, 1937.
 24. Ed. by A.J. Arberry.
 25. Ed. by L. Massignon. Paris, 1913.

26. His *Kitab al-luma* (ed. by R.A. Nicholson, Gibb Memorial Series, 1914. Supplement by A.I. Arberry, 1947) is one of the outstanding works in Islamic mysticism.
27. His *Qut al-Qulub* is one of the mystic classics.
28. His *al-Ta'arruf li mazhab ahl al-Tasawwuf* (ed. by Arberry, Cairo, 1934; trans. as *The Doctrine of the Sufis*, 1936) is a very popular work on mysticism.
29. *Kashf al-Mahjub*, Eng. tr. by Nicholson, p. 150 *et. seq.*
30. *Tabaqat al-Sufiyyin* and *Hilyat al Auliya* respectively.
31. Ibn Kha'dun, *The Maqaddimah*, tr. Rosenthal, Vol. 3, p. 80.
32. 'Awarif was brought to India very early, probably by the disciples of the Shaikh himself. Shaikh Farid-ud-din Mas'ud Ganji Shakar used to teach it to his elder disciples and a later mystic *tazkira* the *Gulzar-i-Abrar*, attributes a summary of this work to him.
33. See Ata Malik Juwaini, *Tarikh-i Jahan Kusha* (Gibb Memorial Series), pp. 33-35.
34. According to Hujweri it was Abu Abdulla Muhammad b. Hakim al-Tirmizi who propounded the doctrine of *walayat*. "God has saints (*walis*).," writes Shaikh Ali Hajweri, whom he has distinguished by his friendship and who are the rulers of his dominion. As to the saintly officers of the Divine court who are in charge of affairs there are three hundred, known as *Akhyar*, forty others known as *Abdal*, seven others known as *Abrar*, four more known as *Autad*, three others known as *Nuqaba*, and one other known as *Qutb* or *Ghauth*. These saints know each other and co-operate in their work." *Kashf-ul Mahjub* pp. 213-214. See also, *Maktubat-i Shaikh Sharaf-ud-din Yahya*, Newal Kishore 1915, p. 24 *et seq.*; *Maktubat-i Ashrafi* (MS), letter No. 73; Abdul Ghaffar Danapuri, *Nusah-ul Ibad fi-Wujud-ul Qutb wa'l Abdal*, Nami Press, Lucknow, 1307; Nizami, *Religion and Politics in India during the 13th century*, pp. 175-177.
35. See Jami, *Nafahat-ul Uns*, Newal Kishore, 1915, pp. 337-339; Kashifi, *Rashahat*, Newal Kishore, 1912, pp. 6-7.
36. For biographical details, see *al-Shattanawfi*, *Bahajat al-Asrar*, Cairo, 1304; Muhammad b. Yahya al-Tadafi *Qala'id al-Jawahir*, Cairo, 1303. See also D.S. Margoliouth, *Contributions to the biography of 'Abd al-Kadir*, JRAS, 1907, pp. 267-310; Brockelmann, I, p. 56, S I p. 777.
37. Published in Cairo, 1332 A.H.
38. *Ency. of Islam*, First Edition, Vol. I, p. 41.
39. Published in Cairo, 1304 A.H.
40. Shaikh Abdul Haqq Muhaddis writes: "In his sermon meetings four hundred persons used to sit with pen and inkpot and they put into black and white whatever they heard from him." *Akhar-*

ul Akhyar, p. 12. It means that his sermons which have reached us constitute only a fraction of his oratorical contribution.

41. *Akhbar-ul Akhyar*
42. *Confreries musulmanes du Hedjaz*, p. 35 as cited by Margoliouth in his article on *Kadiriya* in the *Ency. of Islam*, first edition.
43. For biographical notices, see *Islam Ansiklopedisi* (Vol. I, pp. 210-215) which contains a detailed article on the saint from M. Fuad Koprulu. See also, F. Gordlevskiy, *Hodja Ahmad Yesewi* in *Festschrift Georg Jakob*, Leipzig 1932, pp. 57-67; the *Ency. of Islam*, new ed. pp. 298-99; *Bulletin de l'Academie Imperiale des Sciences de St. Petersbourg*, 1898 September, IX, No. 2; Barthold. *Histoire-des Turce d'Asie Centrale*. p. 111-112.
44. *Ata* means father in the Turkish language (*Rashahat*, p. 8). *Yasi* is a city in Turkistan. Later it became known as *Mamlakat-i Ata*. See Yezdi, *Zafar Nama*, Bib. Indica, ed. Vol. II, p. 9; Mirza Haider Dughlat, *Tarikh-i Rashidi*, tr. Elias and Ross, p. 63.
45. *Mantiq-ut Tayr*, Bombay 1297, pp. 182-183.
46. Barthold's article on Turkistan on *Ency. of Islam*, Vol. IV, p. 896.
47. The *Diwan-i Hikmet* has been printed several times at Kazan. Since no MS of this *diwan* earlier than the 17th century is found, its authenticity is doubted by some scholars. See also E.J. Gibb, *A history of Ottoman Poetry* (Gibb Memorial Series) 1968, Vol. I, p. 71 *et seq.*
48. *Zafar Nama*, Bib. Indica edition pp. 9-10. Timur also built a big mosque there which is referred to as "the mosque of Hazrat." Abdulla Khan Uzbek, repaired it in the 16th century. See *Tarikh-i Rashidi*, Elias note on *Yasawi Shaikhs*, p. 369 n. 3.
49. See *Rashahat*, pp. 9-10,
50. For details of this order see, John Kingsley Birge, *The Bektashi order of Dervishes*, Luzac & Co., 1937; *Ency. of Islam*, new edition, p. 1162.
51. See R. Tschudi's article on Bektashiya in *Ency. of Islam*, new ed. Vol. I, p. 1161-1163.
52. For his biographical details see the *Ency. of Islam*, revised ed. Vol. II, p. 1077-78. See also *Nafahat-ul Uns*, pp. 242-243; *Rashahat*, pp. 18-27. Ghujduwan (now known as Gizduvan) is a larger village in the north eastern part of the Oasis of Bukhara, about 30 miles from Bukhara.
53. According to S. Naficy's calculation, *Ency. of Islam*, new edition, Vol. II, p. 1078.
54. For discussion of these maxims, see *Sharh Yazdah Kalimat-i Naqshband* by an anonymous author (Delhi Persian collection No. 1145 b); Waliullah, *Qual-ul Jamil*, Kanpur 1291, pp. 61-68; idem, *Intibah fi-Salasil-i Auliya Allah*, Delhi 1311. pp. 42-46.

55. For biographical details, see *Nafahat-ul Uns*, pp. 345- 349; *Rashahat*, pp. 53-57; Abdul Qasim b. Muhammad, *Risala Baha'iya fi-Maqamat-i Hazrat Khwaja Baha-ud-din*, MS in Aligarh Muslim University Library; Brockelmann II, p. 305; Vambéry, *Travels in Central Asia*, 1864. His conversations were recorded in *Anis-ut Talibin* (Newal Kishore, Lahore 1323 A.H.) by Salih b. Mubarak Bukhari.
56. His two works—*Fasl al-Kitab* (for MSS, *Der Islam* XIII, p. 106, XIV p. 112; Ivanow 1218; Ette 1855; Brockelmann XIII, 282) and *Tafsir-i-Muhammad Parsa* (for MSS *Daftar-i Kutubkhanah-i Damad Zadah Qazi Askar Muhammad Murad*, Constantinople 1311, No. 72) are well known. For biographical references, See *Nafahat-ul-Uns*. pp. 352-357; *Rashahat*, pp. 57-60.
57. For his biographical and other details see, *Nafahat-ul Uns*, pp. 364-373; *Reshahat*, p. 207 *et seq*; *Habib-us Siyar*, Vol. III, pp. 3,200-1. He wrote a small brochure *Risala-i Walidiya* (for text *Milli Tettebbu 'ler Medjmu 'asi*, Vol. I, pp. 113-124) at the instance of his father.
58. *Rashahat*, p. 289 *et seq*.
59. For brief notices, see *Siyar-ul Auliya*, pp. 39-40; *Nafahat-ul Uns*. p. 246.
60. *Qaul-ul Jamil*, p. 46.
61. *Siyar-ul-Auliya*, p. 45.
62. *Siyar-ul-Auliya*, p. 46.
63. *A'in-i Akbari*, Sir Syid ed. p. 207.
64. The *silsilah* derives its name from Suhraward, a town in Jibal, the ancient Media, where its founder was born. Its site cannot be located with certainty. According to the Muslim geographers the town lay on the road from Hamadan to Zanjan to the south of Sultaniya. This road was, according to Istakhari, used in times of peace as the shortest route to Azarbaijan. In the 10th century the town was in the hands of the Kurds; "the inhabitants were mainly heretics, who migrated, with exception of such as stayed in their native town out of lack of courage or love of their home." It was destroyed by the Mongols. Mustawfi describes it as a little village with many Mongol villages around it. See *Ency. of Islam*, IV p. 506.
65. For his life see, Subki, *Tabaqat-i Kubra*, IV, p. 256; Ibn Khallikan, *Wafayat-ul A'yan*, Cairo 1310 Vol. I, p. 299; Sam'ani, *Kitab-ul Ansab*, Jami, *Nafahat-ul Uns*, pp. 3 73-4; Brockelmann, I, p. 346 Spl. I p. 780.
66. Ibn Asir. *Tarikh-i Kamil*, Vol. XI, p. 149.
67. Subki, *Tabaqat*, Vol. IV p. 256.
68. Ibn Asir, *Tarikh-i-Kamil*, XI, p. 69.
69. MSS are available in Indian and European libraries. Two com-

mentaries, (a) by Shaikh Sharaf-ud-din Yahya Maneri in Persian and (b) by Ali Qari (ob. 1014/1606) in Arabic, are well known. An Urdu translation of *Adab-ul Muridin* was published from Delhi in 1319 A.H.

70. Only one copy is noticed in Wien, No. 1660/11.
71. *Awarif-ul Ma'arif* is not a book of mystic lucubrations, miracles or ecstatic visions. It is a treatise on ethics and practical mysticism. It has fixed the connotation of mystic terms, explained the aims and ideals of the sufis and has formulated principles for their 'group organization'. The contemporaries, in their eagerness to organize their *silsilahs*, accepted it as their guide book. Its influence in India may be estimated from the fact that for a long time it was prescribed for higher studies in religion and mysticism. The best known commentary on the '*Awarif*' from the pen of an Indian scholar is the *Zawarif ul-Lata'if fi Sharh 'Awarif-ul Ma'arif* by Shaikh 'Ali b. Ahmad al-Maha'imi (ob. 1431). MSS in Rampur and Bankipur libraries.
72. For biographical notices, see *Tarikh-i Guzida* (Gibb Memorial Series), p. 791; *Nafahat-ul Uns*, pp. 385-387; *Habib-us Siyar*. Bombay 1957, pp. 36; also Ibn Battuta, *Rihla*, Vol. I.
73. Le Strange, *Lands of the Eastern Caliphate*, Cambridge 1905, p. 357.
74. He was an eminent mystic and a prolific writer. Among his disciples one comes across such names as Majid-ud-din Baghdadi and Sa'd-ud-din Hamavi. For biographical accounts see *Nafahat-ul Uns*, pp. 375-379. *Tarikh-i Guzida*, p. 789; Raverty's translation of *Tabaqat-i Nasiri*, p. 1100; *Ency. of Islam*, Vol. 3, p. 822-23.
75. The Institute for Oriental Research at Leningrad possesses a manuscript in Eastern Turki entitled *Shaikh Najm-ud-din Kubra nij Shahid Kilip Shahr-i Khawarizm-i Kharab Kilghani-nin Bayani* (How Shaikh Najm-ud-din was martyred and the town of Khawarizm destroyed).
76. Howorth, *History of the Mongols*, London 1876, Vol. I, p. 188; See also Amin Razi, *Haft Iqlim*.
77. *Nafahat-ul Uns*, p. 386; Azar, *Atashkada*.
78. The word *Shattari* is derived from the Arabic root *shatr* which means to move in certain direction. *Shattar*, therefore, would mean "one who moves quickly". The Shattaris take it to mean "one is too quick and too eager to behold the vision of God." In the parlance of the *silsilah Ilm-i Shattara* means "the working and the aspirations of the soul." Shah Abdulla writes in his *Lata'f-i Ghaibiya* that there are three different methods of spiritual training; that of *Akhyar*, *Abrar* and *Shattar*. The last is the shortest and the quickest and hence it is called *Suluk-i Shattari*.

79. The suffix *Shattari* for the first time appears with his name. See *Ma'arij-ul Walyat*, MS Vol. I.
80. *Lata'if-i Ashrafi*, (MS).
81. Mu'in-ud-din Abdullah (*Ma'araj-ul Walayat*, (MS) and Muhammad Ghausi (*Gulzar-i Abrar*, MS) have given his spiritual genealogy which shows that he was connected with Shaikh Bayazid in the eighth line and was not a spiritual successor of Shaikh Shihab-ud-din Suhrawardi.
82. *Gulzar-i Abrar* (MS).
83. The origin of the word *Khanqah* is a moot point. Some scholars consider it to be a word of Turkish origin; others believe it to be a compound of *Khana* (house) and *qah* (prayer).
84. *Nafahat-ul Uns*, pp. 31-32. Maqrizi thinks that the origin of the separate houses of worship may be traced back to the days of the Caliph Usman (Vol. IV, p. 271). Ibn Taimiya writes on the authority of *Akhbar-us Sufiya* that the first house for mystics was constructed at Basra (*Fatawa Ibn Taimiya* II, pp. 460); but he thinks that the popularity of *Khanqahs* and *ribats* started with the Seljuq period (IV, p. 459).
85. Though broadly used in the sense of hospices, these terms differ in their connotation. The *Khanqah* was a specious building, providing separate accommodation for every visitor and inmate. The *Jama'at Khanah* was a large room where all disciples slept, prayed and studied, sitting on the floor. The Chishti saints built *Jama'at Khanahs*; the Suhrawardis constructed *khunqahs*. Common people, unable to appreciate the distinction, used the word *khanqah* even for the Chishti *jama'at khanahas*, and now the term is used for all centres of spiritual activity without distinction. The *zawiyahs* were smaller places where mystics lived and prayed but, unlike the inmates of *khanqahs* and *jama'at khanahas*, did not aim at establishing any vital contact with the world outside. In the 17th and the 18th centuries another type of *khanqahs*, the *daerahs*, came into existence. The primary aim of the *daerahs* was to provide place for the men of one affiliation to devote their time to religious meditation. They were smaller than the *zawiyahs*.
86. *Misbah-ul Hidayah* (Lucknow edition. 1322 A.H.) pp. 118-19.
87. *'Awarif-ul-Ma'arif* (Urdu translation, Lucknow 1926) p. 123.
88. *Ibid.* pp. 126-127.
89. *Misbah-ul-Hidayah*, p. 119.
90. *Ibid.* pp. 120-121.
91. vid Shaikh Najibu'd-din 'Abd al-Qahir Suhrawardi, *Adab-ul-Muridin*; *'Awarif-ul-Ma'arif*, part I. chapters XIII, XIV, XV, XVIII, XX, Part II, first ten chapters; *Misbah-ul-Hidayah*, Chapters V, VI, VIII. There is hardly any aspect of *Khanqah* life on which elaborate instructions are not found in these works.

92. Only one instance. Shaikh Burhan-ud-din Gharib, a senior disciple of Shaikh Nizam-ud-din Auliya, was in charge of the kitchen in the *khanqah* of the Shaikh. On account of pain in his leg (he was 70 at that time), he folded a blanket and sat leaning on it in front of his visitors. When the Shaikh came to know of it he was deeply annoyed. When Burhan-ud-din, as usual, came to pay his respects to the Shaikh, the latter did not talk to him. Burhan-ud-din kissed his master's feet and came down to the *jama'at khanah*. He had hardly taken his seat when the personal attendant of the Shaikh conveyed to him the Shaikh's order that he was to leave the *khanqah* at once. Overwhelmed with grief, he went to the house of a disciple of the Shaikh but after two days he requested him to leave his house. A person in disfavour with the Shaikh would not be entertained by anyone else. Burhan-ud-din went back to his own house, dejected, grief-stricken and morose. Friends tried to console him but the shock of being expelled from the *jama'at khanah* was too severe for him. Amir Khusrau represented his case to the Shaikh but failed to secure his pardon. At last Amir Khusrau appeared before the Shaikh, wrapping his turban round his neck as criminals do when they give themselves up to justice. The Shaikh was touched by this sight. He asked Khusrau what he wanted. Khusrau requested the Shaikh to forgive Burhan-ud-din. The Shaikh consented and it was only then that Shaikh Burhan-ud-din could re-enter the *khanqah*, see *Siyar-ul-Auliya*. pp. 278-282.
93. *Misbah-ul-Hidayah*. pp. 121-122.

IV MODERN TRENDS IN ISLAM

S. ABID HUSAIN

INTRODUCTION

It could perhaps be said about all great religions in history that they become, sooner or later, the nuclei of new cultural or social organizations of a local or global scope. But of Islam it can be stated with confidence that it tried to establish itself consciously and deliberately as the guiding principle of a new way of life, the focal point of a new society and a new culture, universal in their sweep. The universal character of Islam showed itself, on the one hand, in the fact that it addressed its message to the whole mankind and received a ready response not only from the tribal people of South Arabia, but from a considerable part of the civilized world of those days and, on the other, in the catholicity of its spiritual and intellectual outlook. On the spiritual plane it believed in the unity of all religious faiths as a necessary corollary of the unity of God, and paid homage to all divine messengers sent from time to time in the various parts of the world. On the intellectual plane, it believed in the unity of human mind and the community of human knowledge, and established contacts with all peoples and all cultures of the world which it found to be within its reach, assimilating such elements of the learning and the wisdom of the Hellenistic, the Persian, the Buddhist and the Hindu cultures as were compatible with its fundamental religious and moral principles.

From the middle of the 7th century and up to the end of the 12th century the development of Islam as an integral, cultural complex is a unique fact of history. For the first few decades the

world of Islam, extending from Spain to Central Asia, presented a remarkable spectacle of political, social and cultural unity. But even later, when it was politically divided into a number of states, it preserved its social and cultural integrity as well as a great deal of its intellectual vigour and its economic affluence.

The 13th century heralded what could, on the whole, be called a period of decline. The sack of Baghdad by Mongol invaders marked the end of the Khilafat of Banu Abbas and the vast structure of Islamic society, overreaching three continents. It was deprived of its keystone and fell apart into regional societies that had now much less contact with one another. This was bound to have a narrowing effect on their mental outlook.

Later, the discovery of the sea-route round the Cape of Good Hope, diverted trade between Europe and Asia to the new route ; and the Arabian Peninsula, the hub of the Islamic world, through which all this trade had hitherto passed, was cut off from the Western world and began to suffer not only from economic depression but also from intellectual isolation. This happened at a time when Italy and subsequently the countries of Western Europe were being deeply stirred by a new cultural and intellectual spirit imparted as a result of the westward migration of Greek scholars with their rich heritage of art and culture, the learning and wisdom of ancient Greek, after the conquest and occupation of Constantinople by the Osmanli Turks. The Renaissance, as this important cultural movement was called, made the European mind independent of the Arab-Islamic influence which had dominated it throughout the Middle Ages and placed Western Europe on a course of intellectual and material progress, specially in the fields of science and technology. It left the Islamic world far behind. As the Muslim countries which had played a leading role in the intellectual and cultural life of the civilized world in the Middle Ages, had lost all contact with the now rapidly developing West, they could have no share in the vast amount of scientific knowledge and the rich treasure of technological skill that the West acquired during the course of centuries after Renaissance. So in every country, except in India where cross-fertilization of the Hindu and the Muslim

cultures had, for a time, released fresh creative energies of both the communities, the Muslim mind suffered from what can be called cultural inbreeding, leading to intellectual stagnation inevitably followed by decay. During the eighteenth century owing to utter political chaos in India with its consequent social, moral and mental degeneration, Indian Muslims, too, began to give way to the same narrow-mindedness and obscurantism that had already characterized other Muslim societies.

Another important cause of the intellectual stagnation and decay of Muslim societies was that the rulers of the various Muslim countries, who had in the earlier history of Islam, been constitutional monarchs in the sense that they acknowledged in theory, and to a certain extent in practice, the supremacy of the law in the form of Islamic Shari'a, had in later centuries, become absolute autocrats and imposed crippling restrictions on the rights of the individual, including considerable freedom of thought and expression that Islam had allowed to its followers. This had a general debilitating effect on the intellectual development of Muslims.

The spell of mental inertia that lay on the Muslim mind during the period constituting the Modern age of European history, was broken by the impact of political and cultural invasion of the Islamic world by the West during the 16th and 19th centuries. The effects of this cultural impact were both positive as well as negative. On the one side, the response to the challenge posed by the modern West took the form of modernist movements in Islam and on the other, that of revivalist movements. In the present study we are not concerned with the latter but only with the former.

The modernist responses of the Islamic societies to the challenge of the West can be divided into four kinds :

1. The rationalist-reformist movement
2. The romantic-apologist movement
3. The nationalist-secularist movement
4. The neo-reformist trend

We shall discuss them one by one hereafter.

THE RATIONALIST-REFORMIST MOVEMENT

The first impulse that stirred the stagnant life and thought of Muslims in the whole of Middle East, to political, religious and social activity of a partly modernist and a partly revivalist nature, came from one of the most dynamic and versatile personalities in the modern history of Islam—Sayyid Jamaluddin Afghani. The Sayyid who was born in 1839 in Afghanistan and died in 1897 at Istanbul played, during his chequered life of fifty-eight years, a leading part in inspiring revolutionary rationalist movements in Egypt, Persia and Turkey—the revivalist pan-Islamist movement that Sultan Abd-al-Hamid of Turkey exploited in an unsuccessful attempt to consolidate and extend his autocratic rule, and which gave a fillip to the modernist movement of religious reform that his distinguished pupil Mufti Muhammad 'Abduh of Egypt carried on with signal success.

Mufti Muhammad 'Abduh, the real founder of the liberal reformist movement in Islam, was born, according to the most plausible of conflicting reports, in an Egyptian village in 1849. After going through traditional course of school education he joined the Al-Azhar University in 1866 and studied there up to 1877. What distinguished him from the common run of students at Al-Azhar was, firstly, his ardent passion for the study of Tasawwuf and his conformation to the rigorous discipline prescribed for a Sufi, and secondly, his dissatisfaction with the traditional learning imparted at Al-Azhar and his thirst for the knowledge of what he called 'true sciences', that is, logic, philosophy and mathematics. The turning point in his intellectual as well as his spiritual life came, when he met Sayyid Jamaluddin in 1869. The Sayyid encouraged him in his quest for rational knowledge and cured him of his excessive devotion to Tasawwuf. From March, 1871, the young Muhammad 'Abduh began to study regularly with the Sayyid who not only taught him traditional disciplines in a new and meaningful way but opened before him the new world of modern Western sciences, through Arabic translations of works written in European languages. What was more, he imparted to him something of his dynamic spirit and his zeal for reform.

After completing his education at Al-Azhar, 'Abduh became a teacher in the same institution as well as in the Dar-ul-Ulum, and the Khdeivial School of Languages. But his liberal and modernist views, though very moderate, could not be tolerated by the powerful orthodox sections of society. At a time when his liberal patron, Riaz Pasha, the former Prime Minister of Egypt, was absent from the country, he was removed from service in 1879 and virtually interned in his native village. On his return, Riaz Pasha appointed him as one of the editors of an official journal. The literary excellence of Muhammad 'Abduh's writing greatly enlarged the circle of readers of the journal and he used this vehicle for influencing public opinion not only by criticizing the shortcomings in the working of the various Government departments—specially of the Department of Education—but by giving expression to his views on education and social and religious reforms. He also advocated the establishment of representative government as something urgently needed from a political point of view and permissible from the religious point of view. On account of his association with the nationalist revolution of 'Arabi Pasha, which was ruthlessly put down by the British, Muhammad 'Abduh was dismissed from service in 1882 and exiled from Egypt. After a year's stay at Beirut, he joined his teacher Sayyid Jamaluddin in Paris and they founded a secret organisation "Al-'Urwah-al-Wuthqa" and edited a journal of that name to promote the Pan-Islamist movement. When the journal was suppressed towards the end of 1884, he wandered about in European and Muslim countries in connection with his secret mission. But his revolutionary activities, which were not an expression of his own proclivities but inspired by the powerful personality of his teacher, Sayyid Jamaluddin Afghani, soon came to an end, and he returned to Beirut. Here he was engaged in teaching and writing up to 1888, when he was pardoned by the Khedive, allowed to return to Egypt, and appointed a Qazi. He served in the Judicial Department with distinction and was finally promoted in 1899 to the high office of Grand Mufti which he occupied up to his death in 1905 A.D.

In the later part of his life, especially since 1892 when he

succeeded in winning the favour of the young Khedive Abbas Hilmi Pasha, he wielded great influence over the life of the country. This he used not only to propagate his liberal reformist ideas but to effect practical reforms at Al-Azhar, the nerve-centre of national education in Egypt. Owing, however, to very strong opposition from the orthodox 'ulama of Al-Azhar, he could not succeed in modernizing the institution, as he wanted to do, and making it a spearhead of a general reform in Islam. But the birth of fresh ideas in the minds of many traditionally educated people as well as amongst those educated on modern lines resulted in thorough going modernist reforms at Al-Azhar as well as in the general life of Egypt and beyond. This helped to inspire liberal reformist movement in other Muslim countries.

Among all the leaders of eminence in the modern age who have attempted liberal reform in the thought and life of Muslims in various countries, Mufti Muhammad 'Abduh was the most competent for this difficult task. "His attainment in learning placed him in the forefront of Muslim scholars of his day and won him wide recognition in the world of Islam. He was deeply versed in all the fields of Muslim learning, philosophy, theology, Qur'ān interpretation, jurisprudence, traditions . . . His acquaintance with the works of European scholars in various fields was also not inconsiderable. His introduction to them was acquired through translated works. But already when past forty years of age, he learnt French that he might read such works at first hand and thereafter he read them persistently."¹ He had personally met some European scholars like Herbert Spencer and carried on correspondence with others like Tolstoi. The following quotation from an eminent Islamist gives a good idea of his views. "The indispensable essentials of Islam are held to be 'that which is in the Book (i.e., Qur'ān) and a small part of the Sunnah (usage of the Prophet) relating to matters of practice . . . Matters of belief and practice are to be determined by reference to these sources' . . . By following this method of returning to the simplest and most essential parts of Islam, a basis would be found upon which all Muslims could unite, and which, at the time, would prove acceptable

and sufficient as the one religion for all mankind. It would then appear that the present regulations of Islam regarding divorce, polygamy, slavery and the like do not belong to the essentials of Islam, but are subject to modifications according to circumstances. The real nature of Islam would then be manifested, as the final expression of the religion of God which is the same in all ages, which in its spirit and the essentials it requires of all men by the mouth of all prophets and apostles, does not change."² By making this distinction between the essentials and non-essentials of Islam and conceding that the non-essentials including laws for regulating the social, political and economic life of Muslims, are subject to 'modification according to circumstances,' Muhammad 'Abduh left the door wide open for modern reforms in all spheres of life. But he imposed the condition that all modifications are to be made by the Ulama in the light of reason and science and they have to conform to the Qur'ān and the Sunnah.

In his commentary on the Qur'ān and other writings Mufti Muhammad 'Abduh has laid great stress on the importance of reason and science and the need for the study of modern science and philosophy. But his own approach to the interpretation of the Qur'ān and the tradition of the Prophet is by no means scientific. It could be called rational in the pre-Kantian sense of the word, in which all judgements of a pure speculative character, including those relating to the phenomenal world of nature, were held to be valid without being based on any perceptive experience. The most prominent example of the scholastic rationalization in which he sometimes indulged, is found in his attempt to show that some verses of the Qur'ān refer to modern biological theories of struggle for existence and survival of the fittest. But it must be said to his credit that he did not claim what others after him did, that all that is mentioned in the Qur'ān about natural phenomena, is a scientific truth and is corroborated by modern cosmology, astronomy and other natural sciences. In his view references in the Qur'ān to the phenomena of nature or laws of nature are not meant to be scientific statements but only as directions or exhortations to the study of science.

"The truth about lightning and thunder and the storm cloud and the reasons for their occurrence, is not among the subjects investigated by Koran, because this belongs to the science of nature and happening of the atmosphere, which it is possible for men to know by their own exertions and does not depend upon inspiration. The external phenomena only are mentioned in the Koran, to incite consideration and supply proofs and direct the reason to the study by which the understanding and the reason will be strengthened."³

Muhammad 'Abduh was essentially a religious man, and the main trend of his thought and activity, which we may call rationalist reformist was towards rekindling in the minds of Muslims, a fresh living faith and a moral fervour, a rational and realistic attitude towards life, that had blessed the early followers of Islam with spiritual health and vigour, as well as with material power and prosperity. His response to the challenge of the modern Western culture, was a reasonable one. He advocated the study of modern science and philosophy and the assimilation of modern social and political ideas, as far as they were compatible with the inner spirit of Islam. But he was opposed to the aping of Western people in outward manners and mode of living that was regarded by many of the Western educated in his country as the hallmark of modernism. His ideas and his personality exercised great influence over a considerable section of people with modern education as well as those with traditional education not only in Egypt but throughout the world of Islam. The movement launched on by him gathered strength as it was carried on by Rashid Riza and the Al-Manar group, who made the weekly journal 'Al-Manar' (started by Rashid Riza in Cairo in 1898), the vehicle for expressing and disseminating their ideas and inspired other modernist trends which modified to a considerable extent but retained the essential features.

THE ROMANTIC-APOLOGIST MOVEMENT

Another modernist movement in the world of Islam that was somewhat similar to the Egyptian movement initiated by Muhammad 'Abduh, but essentially different from it, was the

135275

one that was started by Sir Syed Ahmad Khan in India. Syed Ahmad Khan was born in Delhi in 1817. Belonging to a family that had served the Moghul Empire and held high offices under it, he transferred his loyalty to the British Government which had succeeded the Moghuls as the rulers of India. He had a deep admiration for the British people and Western culture and was convinced that the country would make great intellectual and material progress under British rule. So he stood by the British Government during the holocaust of 1857 and saved the lives of many English men and women. This won him the gratitude and confidence of the Government and he rose to a higher position in the judicial service and was honoured with a Knighthood which was a rare distinction for Indians in those days. The title was so frequently used with his name by his friends and admirers that it became a part of his name and he was commonly called Sir Syed.

Sir Syed loved India and the Indian people and wanted to serve them to the best of his ability. But he was particularly concerned with his own Muslim community because the Muslims were in grave danger. They hated the British rulers and were hated by them as the real originators and instigators of the revolt of 1857 against them. He, therefore, drew up a comprehensive plan to pull the Muslim community out of "The Slough of Despondency" into which it had fallen and to put them on a course of intellectual and material progress. The main objectives of his plan were :

(1) To protect the Muslim religion from the onslaught of Christian missionaries and to prove that it was a true religion and was in every way compatible with the principles of Reason and the laws of Nature.

(2) To remove the bitter enmity which had arisen between the Muslims and the British for political and religious reasons and to establish friendly relations between them.

(3) To re-interpret the teaching of Islam so as to bring them in harmony with modern science and civilization.

(4) To persuade Muslims to learn the English language and Western sciences so that they might meet Englishmen on equal terms and have a substantial share in the administration of the

country which they had dominated for more than six centuries before the British ousted them.

To understand the true character of the modernist movement launched by Sir Syed, it is necessary to bear in mind firstly, that it was inspired not so much by any direct interest in the spiritual and moral regeneration of Muslims as in their intellectual and material progress and secondly, that his idea of modern science and modern civilization was a highly romantic one. He seemed to share the undue optimism of many scientists of the later nineteenth century that science could answer the fundamental questions about the Ultimate Reality and the Ultimate Purpose and could serve as an infallible moral guide for us in our practical life. He had equally romantic notions of modern Western civilization which he called "the most perfect civilization." So, in his mission of modernization he accepted the scientist's conception of Nature as the Absolute Truth and to which the verses of the Qur'ān, referring to natural phenomena, were to be reconciled through ingenious and sometimes quite native and forced interpretations. Similarly he placed before his mind, not only the inner values but also the outward trappings of the modern civilization as a model in which the original teaching of Islam about practical life were to be fitted in by a skilful or even a clumsy artifice. The whole tone, therefore, of his commentary on the Qur'ān and of other religious writings is apologetic, attempting to prove that Islam revealed the same pattern of the universe as modern scientists have been able to construct after centuries of intellectual endeavour, and prescribed the same way of life as civilized Western people are following today.

As far as his general principles of religious reform (which he shared with many old and some new rationalist thinkers) are concerned they seem to be quite sound.

"He had seen that the new age was one of reason and science in which only those people could get on, whose religious beliefs and cultural and social life were in keeping with a rational and scientific outlook. He was convinced that true Islamic teaching and Islamic life were in harmony with reason and 'Nature' and could meet the demands of every age. Accord-

ing to him, Muslims had, however, in the course of centuries, deviated from true Islam, and their faith and practice had become encumbered with a number of accretions which had nothing to do with Islamic teachings. It was necessary to get rid of these accretions and go back to the essence of the religion, which could be in its authentic form only in the Qur'ān. He believed in genuine traditions of the Prophet (*Hadith*) as clarification of the Qur'ānic injunctions, but did not accept the opinion of any single jurist (*faqih*) or the consensus of juristic opinion (*ijma'*) as binding and in questions that have not been specifically dealt with in the Qur'ān or (*Hadith*) he allowed every Muslim the right of personal interpretation in the light of the Qur'ān. According to these principles he wrote thought-provoking articles in his journal *Tahzib-ul-Akhlaq* on a number of major and minor religious matters and he started a commentary on the Qur'ān but could not complete it. He published the commentary on about one half of the Qur'ān in lifetime and left some miscellaneous manuscripts. In his commentary and generally in his religious writings, he was influenced by the ideas of the rationalist Mu'tazila school, by the famous philosopher Ibn-i-Rushd (Averroes) and by some distinguished Ulama with liberal and broad outlook like Imam Ghazali."⁴

But in writing his commentary on the Qur'ān in the light of the general principles he adopted, what we have called the "romantic-apologist" approach that could neither be justified from the orthodox traditionalist nor from the modernist scientific points of view. The fundamental principle which he followed in his commentary is that the Word of God (the Qur'ān) must be in harmony with the Work of God (Nature). The Qur'ān consists of two kinds of verses, *muhkamat* which have a clear, precise meaning and *mutashabihat* which convey the idea in metaphorical language. The verses of the latter kind can have no definite and final interpretation valid for all times. As the knowledge and experience of man increase and he gets a clearer perception of the world of nature, deeper meanings of these verses will be revealed to him and he will give new interpretations."⁵

Sir Syed's doctrine of the correspondence of the Qur'ān and (the laws of) Nature involves the idea that the Qur'ān is mainly or at least partly revealed knowledge about the physical world and should, as such, conform to the empirical knowledge acquired by man. This assumes two things. Firstly, that scientific knowledge is ultimate and eternal truth—a position which no scientist, would today claim or even entertain, and secondly, that in order to discover the upto-date interpretation of those verses of the Qur'ān which Sir Syed calls *mutashabihat* we must be guided by the latest scientific theories—a dictum which no religious Muslim or for the matter of that no religious man of any other confession, would accept. Apart from this, Sir Syed was, in order to prove his doctrine of the correspondence of the Work of God obliged to have recourse to far-fetched and unpalatable interpretations of the text of the Qur'ān which discredited him as an expositor of Islam so that even the valid and valuable contribution he had made as a modernist was rejected by the generality of Muslims. His contribution consisted in impressing, as Mufti Muhammad 'Abduh did, upon all sensible Muslims that :

1. The real teachings of Islam, like those of any other religion, are apt to be obscured by innumerable accretions that have grown round them in the course of centuries. We have to cut through these accretions to arrive at the true and pure Islam.

2. The only instrument which we can use in this process is reason, tempered with science.

Sir Syed's real interest was centred not in reforming the religious belief and practice of the Muslims, but in creating in their minds a desire for learning the English language and modern sciences, assimilating what he called "the perfect civilization." But he wanted them to assimilate only those elements of modern civilization which were in keeping with the cultural ideals of his own class, i.e., the aristocracy of North India. "He made no distinction between Western and modern culture and accepted many things which were not modern but were merely Western, that is, the product of the special physical and social climates and the special traditions of the West

such as English dress, food and the general way of living, with the same reverence that he showed towards the most important features of Western culture. Of the two basic values of the modern age—the scientific attitude of the mind and the democratic way of life—he accepted the former but not the latter . . . His idea of emancipation of women and their rights was that they were to acquire education while living in *purdah* . . . They had to keep the management of the household in their hands and to bring up their daughters to be like themselves. The best way to restore their rights that their religion had sanctioned for them, and which ‘they have now lost through incapacity and ignorance of their menfolk,’ was to educate boys. When boys have been educated, women would get their rights ‘automatically’ without asking.”⁶ The romantic-apologist movement of modernist reform initiated by Sir Syed was continued by Syed Amir Ali, Maulvi Chiragh Ali and the great poet, Muhammad Iqbal. The works of the first two, though important as more systematic presentations of the teachings of Islam, did not have much impact on the Muslim community as they were written in the English language and could be read only by a small percentage of Muslims. It is not feasible to comment on their work in the limited space available. But poet Iqbal exercised great influence on Muslim mind, not only in the Indian sub-continent but also in the Persian speaking areas, and to some extent in the Arabic-speaking Muslim countries, and has naturally to be dealt with at some length.

Muhammad Iqbal (1873-1938) “one of the greatest minds that Muslim India produced” was in early life a poet and a teacher, but later on he became a lawyer and politician. He had his school education at Sialkot and higher education at Lahore where he got his M.A. from the University of the Punjab and was appointed a Lecturer in Philosophy in a local college. Before he went to Europe for advanced studies in 1905 he acquired fame as a poet who, in the best tradition of Indian poets sang of beauty of man and nature, and of love,—secular and divine. “During his stay in Europe while writing his Ph.D. thesis on ‘The Development of Metaphysics in Persia’ he studied the ideas of Muslim Sufis and came to the

conclusion that the doctrine of unitism (*Wahdat-ul-Wujud*) was definitely un-Islamic and largely responsible for the decline of Muslim society because, by inculcating a desire for the negation of the self, it sapped its will, aspiration and energy. At the same time his observations on the life and culture of the people of Europe made a mixed impression on his mind. On the one hand he was full of admiration for their scientific attitude of mind, their dynamic way of life, their indomitable will and untiring energy . . . on the other hand, he bitterly hated the materialism and the selfishness of industrial capitalism . . . and the hypocrisy of imperialistic politics . . . In the course of his study of Western philosophy, he was deeply impressed with German ideas about 'the will to power, specially as expressed by Nietzsche.'"

On his return to India he started legal practice at Lahore and later turned to politics, guiding Muslim political thought into a separatist channel that ultimately led to the partition of the country. But his main interest lay in poetry and philosophy.

The philosophical influence he had imbibed in Europe, gave a new dimension to his poetry and he became a prophet-'poet' whose messages to people of Asia in general and to the Muslims in particular was that they should choose from the East and the West the best cultural values and make them the foundations of a new society.

Iqbal combined the profundity and freshness of his ideas with an intensity of feeling and extravagance of imagination, characteristic of the romantic poets of Asia . . . In his concept of the development of the Self into an integrated dynamic personality which was the central point of his philosophy, he emphasized the element of power so much that it began to look like aggressive individualism. In the same way he overstressed the superiority of Love which for him was the key to the intuitive realization of Truth over reason, the faculty of intellectual perception so that he gave the conservative opponents of the rational and scientific outlook a handle to defend their obscurantism. His criticism of nationalism and patriotism "did not stop at censuring their extreme and undesirable forms

but went on to an absolute and outright condemnation of these noble sentiments". Owing to this lack of balance, his poetry which shook Indian Muslims out of their paralyzing apathy, could not give a moral and spiritual direction to the new zest for life and action which it had aroused in them.

When we turn from his poetry to his philosophy, that is, his interpretation of religious thought in Islam we find a more systematic and modernistic approach. But here also it is the imaginative mind of a romantic and not the critical-analytical mind of a scientific thinker that is at work. While he seems to be elaborating the meaning of a verse of the Qur'ān, he is really using it as a peg to hang his own ideas on. He himself unconsciously admits this by calling his main writing on the subject 'Lectures on the *Reconstruction* (not re-interpretation) of Religious Thought in Islam.'

Still his ideas in themselves are important enough to deserve our serious attention.

Iqbal's philosophy consists in a rational and vitalistic concept of Reality which he claims to be authentic Islamic concept. Islam, according to him thinks of God as a Person not in an anthropomorphic but in an entirely different sense :

"The ultimate Reality is a rationally directed, creative life. To interpret this life as an ego, is not to fashion God after the image of man. It is only to accept the simple fact of experience that life is not a formless fluid, but an organizing principle of unity, a synthetic activity which holds together and focalizes the dispersing disposition of the living organism for a constructive purpose."⁸

From the idea of developing Reality, which according to Iqbal, is the central point of Islamic teachings, he derives not only the idea of a free and dynamic human personality but also that of a changing and evolving culture and society. The first main characteristic which distinguishes man from other creatures of God is that he has been endowed with a dynamic personality capable of actively participating in the universal process of evolution :

"It is the lot of man to share in the deeper aspirations of the universe around him and to share his own destiny as well

as that of the universe, now by adjusting himself to its forces, now by putting the whole of his energy to mould its forces to his own end and purpose."⁹

A society believing in what Iqbal claims to be the Islamic concepts of developing Reality and of a dynamic human personality, must try to live in a balanced way preserving the essential core of its identity and at the same time adapt itself to the changing environment :

"The ultimate spiritual basis of all life, as conceived by Islam, reveals itself in variety and change. A society based on such a concept of Reality must reconcile, in its life, the categories of permanence and change."¹⁰

So in theory, Iqbal believes in keeping a balance between liberalism and conservatism. On the one side, he gives a challenge to the conservatives and revivalists that "a false reverence for past history and its artificial resurrection constitute no remedy for a people's decay"¹¹ and on the other side, warns the liberal modernists "Life is not change, pure and simple. It has within it elements of conservation also."¹² He who wants to reform Islamic institutions "must, therefore, try to secure, before he undertakes to handle them, a clear insight into the ultimate significance of the social experiments embodied in Islam. He must look at their structure not from the standpoint of social advantage or disadvantage to this country or that country, but from the point of view of larger purpose which is being gradually worked out in the life of mankind as a whole."¹³

With this safeguard Iqbal gives the liberal modernist the right to "re-interpret the foundational legal principles, in the light of their own experience and the altered conditions of life."¹⁴

But when it comes to the question of practice the apologist and conservative in Iqbal overpowers the liberal in him so that he finds an explanation and an excuse for the static state in which Muslim religious thought and cultural life has been for centuries. During a period of mental decay and disintegration, according to Iqbal, the orthodox religious leaders, in order to keep society intact, devoted all their efforts to follow strictly

the interpretation of the *Shari'ah* given by the 'Ulama in the earlier phases of Islam so that a uniformity of social life could be maintained. The same consideration makes him apprehensive lest the liberal movements arising in Muslim countries disturb the faith and disintegrate the social life of the Muslims. Therefore, what he aspires to do in practice is :

"We too, one day, like the Turks will have to re-interpret our intellectual inheritance and, if we cannot make any original contribution to the general thought of Islam, we may, by healthy conservative criticism serve, at least, as a check on the rapid movement of liberalism in the world of Islam."¹⁵

As we have said above Iqbal's poetic thought made a great impact on the Muslim community in the Indian sub-continent but his philosophical thought went almost unnoticed even by the modern educated class of Muslims. Even the few intellectuals who studied it, were not inspired by any liberal or reformist sentiments. All that it could achieve was to initiate a more modern form or romantic-apologist movement that no doubt fired the imagination, stirred the emotions and raised the spirit of the Muslims but did not help them in finding their way out of the intellectual *impasse* into which they have been driven by the stress of the modern age.

THE NATIONALIST-SECULARIST MOVEMENT

The first Muslim country to be exposed to the influence of modern Western culture was Turkey. But this influence was, for more than a century, confined to the modernization of the army and the introduction of democratic reforms. The initial step towards introducing local self-government was taken by Sultan Selim III soon after the French Revolution which had made a great impression on his mind. His successor Mahmud (1809-1839) continued this policy. The reforms introduced by these two Sultans and some new measures of reform in the political and cultural fields were consolidated and given legal sanction through a code called *Tanzimat* under Sultan Abdul Mejid, who had enlightened advisers like Mustafa Reshid. "The *Tanzimat* introduced the idea of individual freedom and created in the minds of the people a desire to have a voice in the

Government . . . In the political domain, a movement for constitutional Government developed within a nucleus of writers and statesmen called the Young Turks."¹⁶ Sultan Abdul Aziz made a bid to restore autocratic rule, but was dethroned and Abdul Hamid II who succeeded him, gave the people their first constitution in 1876.

According to Halide Edib (Khalida Khanum) "The conflict of the East and West in Turkey in this reform period (1774-1876) may be summed up in this way. The new West had entered the Ottoman Empire as a method in thought. Institutions were changing but in accordance with the spirit of the old traditions."¹⁷

But it soon appeared that Abdul Hamid II had only posed as a liberal monarch in order to come to the throne with the help of the Young Turks and their great leader Midhat Pasha. He soon imprisoned Midhat Pasha and later had him murdered and did all he could do, to crush the Young Turks ruthlessly, until he was deposed by them in 1908. The constitution was restored and the Young Turks became the real rulers of Turkey. The new Sultan was now merely a nominal religious head as the Caliph.

The Revolution of 1908 was brought about by a new group of Young Turks organized in "the Union and Progress Party" who in their political and cultural ideas differed fundamentally from the older generation of the sponsors of the *Tanzimat*. While the former had their inspiration from the great poet and political thinker, Namik Kemal, who combined reverence for the Islamic religion and traditions, with the love of the country (which to him meant the Ottoman Empire) and a great passion for democracy and specially the freedom of the individual, the latter were inspired by the philosophy of Ziya Gok Alp who believed in "Turkification, Islamization and Modernization." His famous motto "I am of Turkish race, my civilization is Western, my religion is Islam" was the creed of the Union and Progress Party, and contained in theory most of the ideas that the radical nationalist-secularist group, headed by Mustafa Kemal, later put into practice. So he can be called the intellectual pioneer who prepared the minds of the modern educated

Turks for the Kemalist reforms. But the radical and ruthless way in which these reforms were carried out, was due to the personal reactions of Mustafa Kemal and his lieutenants to the horrors of hell let loose on the Turkish people in 1919 by the armies of Britain and her allies, with the active cooperation of Sultan and Khalifa Wahiduddin and the Sheikh-ul-Islam. Kemal himself and other nationalist leaders were sentenced to death by a Special Court appointed by the Sultan and would have been hanged like thousands of other patriots, if they had fallen into the hands of the Sultan and his Western masters. This act of betrayal of the country by those who called themselves secular and religious heads of Islam must have embittered Mustafa Kemal against religion itself and led him to carry his nationalist-secularist policy to the extreme.

In this brief study of the modern trends in Islam we can give only a few salient points of the modernist changes effected by Ata-Turk Mustafa Kemal after he had defeated the foreign intruders, abolished the Sultanate in 1922 and proclaimed Turkey a Republic in 1923.

In 1924 the Ata-Turk, as the President of the Turkish Republic, persuaded the Parliament to abolish the institution of the Khilafat and the Ministry of Seriat (Shari'a) and Evkaf (Auqaf). The religious Medrasas were closed and replaced in time by secular state schools. Some special schools were started for the training of religious leaders and a Faculty of Theology was set up at the University of Istanbul but they were all closed in 1933.

Another radical step was the abolition of the dervish orders. After a revolt by the Kurds led by Naqshbandi Sheikh, against the secular policy of the Government "all the dervish orders were outlawed, their premises and their apparatus were confiscated, and all magico-religious practices and all rites and titles connected with them were made illegal".¹⁸

But the most momentous change which affected the life of the whole people was the replacement of the Islamic Law by the Swiss Civil Code. "By this move organized religion lost its last stronghold of secular power. From now on training

for law had nothing to do with Islam, and no Islamic prescriptions had the backing of the power of the state."¹⁹

The nationalist-secularist policy of the Republic did not stop at making religion a personal matter with no relation to social life. It went on to nationalize or Turkify Islam. Though the scheme of the ultra-nationalists to conduct prayers in the Turkish language, and more or less in the way in which they are conducted in the Christian churches was rejected by the Government, yet the Arabic form of call to prayers was legally prohibited and use of Turkish translation was made obligatory.

In his zeal for Westernization Kemal promulgated two measures which were even more bitterly resented by the people than the laws interfering with religious practices. The compulsory replacement of the Turkish *fez* by the European hat as the national head-gear and that of the old Turco-Arabic script by the Latin script.

Soon after the death of Mustafa Kemal in 1938 Turkey was involved in the Second World War. The hold of religion on the minds of the common people, specially of the villagers in Turkey, which neither the personal influence of Mustafa Kemal nor his radical secularist policies had been able to shake off, began to show itself in the success of the movement for the repair of mosques, the encouragement of prayers and the movement of religious education started by a number of prominent citizens. During the elections of 1945 many candidates appealed to the religious sentiments of the people to secure their votes and in 1948 the Millat (Nation) Party was founded among others by Marshall Fevzi Chalmak the most popular hero, next only to Mustafa Kemal as a hero of the war of liberation. It included conservatives, "who sought a revitalized traditional Islam in Turkey. Other parties specially the Democratic Party made religious appeal to the peasants the main plank of their political platform."

In response to the resurgent religious feelings of the people, the Government had to take a number of measures in 1950 to considerably modify, if not to reverse, the radical secularist policy initiated by Mustafa Kemal. Restrictions that had been

imposed on giving the prayer call in Arabic were removed. The state radio net-work began to broadcast the readings of selections from the Qur'ān as a regular feature of its programme. Religious education was made compulsory for all children in the primary schools except those whose parents had any conscientious objection to it. Institutes for the training of Imams (prayer-leaders) and preachers were set up at all provincial centres, a Faculty of Ilahiyat (Divinity) was established at the University of Ankara.

But special care was taken to modernize religious education in content and spirit. In the training institutes for religious leaders fifty-five per cent of the curriculum was devoted to the study of secular subjects and they were placed under principals who were modern educated scholars without any formal religious training. In the Faculty of Divinity comparative religion and history of religion were taught in addition to other religious subjects.

The official policy of encouraging the development of an enlightened liberal religious outlook in Turkey initiated in 1950 has been, on the whole, maintained to the present day. But since a whole generation of the people was deprived of religious training and brought up in an anti-religious atmosphere, at least in the urban areas, the radical secularist-nationalist movement associated with Mustafa Kemal, is still strong in the intellectual class. On the other hand, the restoration of democratic freedom has made it possible for the conservative and even for reactionary forces to assert themselves. So there is a constant struggle going on between the traditionalism and radical modernism in the field of religion and culture. The ruling party is trying to keep a balance between the two. But the real synthesis between two conflicting trends is not a political or administrative problem which any Government could tackle but an intellectual and spiritual crisis which can only be resolved by the best minds among the religious and secular leaders of thought, acting in concert.

THE NEO-REFORMIST TREND

The brief survey of the modernist movements in Islam has

shown us that the only person among those who tried to re-interpret Islam or re-shape Muslim society in response to the demands of the modern age whom we could regard as fully competent for the task by virtue of his learning and piety, was Mufti Muhammad 'Abduh and the only movement which could be called a truly reformist one in the sense that it sought to preserve the essentials of the Islamic faith and ethos while trying to adapt the non-essentials to the exigencies of the age, was the movement initiated by him. His interpretation of Islamic teachings would have been completely acceptable and satisfying to all reasonable persons among modern educated Muslims but for his uncritical attitude in presenting some of his assumptions as serious propositions, for instance his assertion that some verses of the Qur'ān refer to the biological theories of natural selection and survival of the fittest.

The intellectual and religious situation in the world of Islam, as it appears to us today, is that the orthodox majority in every country, consisting of religious leaders with traditional education and the uneducated masses who blindly follow them, are vehemently opposed to any change in the existing way of thinking or living, of course, with the exception of those who want a change in the sense of going back to romantically imagined Golden Age. As for the modern educated class, some persons in India and more in Pakistan are still under the influence of the romantic-apologist ideas of Sir Syed and Iqbal. Many in Turkey are still convinced that the nationalist-secularist policy of Mustafa Kemal is the best course for Muslims, at least for the Turkish Muslims to follow. In the Arab countries many of the modernists have their own version of the secularist-nationalist doctrine, but the number of those who believe in the reformist ideas of the school of thought founded by Mufti Muhammad 'Abduh is by no means small.

But in every country there are people who are not fully satisfied with any of these three modernist philosophies and want to strike a new line. Leaving aside some amateur scholars who pursue the subject of religious reform as a hobby or at best as an intellectual exercise, and whose study of Islam is confined to the perusal of the writings of Western Islamists,

there are in this category many serious-minded and knowledgeable practising Muslims to whom a re-interpretation of the teachings of Islam from a modern liberal point of view is of vital importance. It is the latter group of people with which we are concerned here. They have carefully studied all the three movements of modernist reforms which we have briefly discussed and found that each of them has played a useful role in helping Muslims in a particular region to grapple with the most serious problems which they faced at a particular time. The rationalist-reformist movement of Mufti Muhammad 'Abduh, in the second half of the nineteenth century, enabled Muslims in Egypt and the countries of the fertile crescent to bring about a working understanding between the highly conservative Ulama and the ultra-modernist Westernized group of people, to meet the threat of their cultural as well as political domination by European powers. The romantic-apologist movement led by Sir Syed in its first phase helped Indian Muslims to recover from the state of utter dejection and frustration into which they had fallen after the holocaust of 1857 and in its second phase made them, under the inspiration of the poet Iqbal, conscious, perhaps overconscious, of their cultural identity and their great destiny. The nationalist-secularist movement sponsored by Mustafa Kemal cured Turkey of the malignant growth of its empire, relieved it of the encumbrance of its nominal religious leadership and turned it into a healthy, united, strong nation. But they feel that none of the three movements is calculated to meet even the total need of the region within its own sphere of influence, much less the general need of the whole world of Islam, to understand the true spirit of Islamic teachings and to apply them to the problems facing them in the latter half of the twentieth century.

Their views have not yet found a clear and precise expression but there are vague indications of what they think and feel. Their idea of a modernist reform in Islam seems to be that first of all an objective study, without any pre-conceived notions, should be made of the fundamental, spiritual and moral principles of Islam and their application to the social and cultural life of its followers through the ages, in accordance with the

changing needs of time and place. They would like the study to be carried on not by the method of speculative rationalization or by the apologetic method but through the scientific-historical method, first outlined by the mediaeval Muslim historian Ibn Khaldun and later developed by modern Western thinkers. The next step they would like to be taken is a critical but unprejudiced examination of the theoretical basis and the practical institutions of the modern Western civilization in order to distinguish as to what is of positive, permanent and universal value, as against what is negative or destructive or of mere local or ephemeral significance. Only after this comparative study has been completed, could it be possible, they feel, to re-interpret the legal, social and cultural doctrines of Islam so as to relate them to the problems of the present age.

No thinker of the calibre required to accomplish this gigantic task has yet appeared in any Muslim country. The only scholar who attempted the first step was the late Maulana Abul Kalam Azad. Owing to his political preoccupation he could not carry his translation of the Qur'ān beyond the eighteenth part, and his commentary on the Holy Book beyond the exegesis of *Surah-i-Fatiha*, but his work, as far as it could go, proved to be of considerable interest to the class of modernist Muslims to which we have referred above.

Mohiuddin Ahmad later known as Maulana Abul Kalam Azad (1888-1958) was one of the most prominent figures among religious leaders of Indian Muslims and political leaders of the Indian nation. He had pursued his religious studies in the traditional style of the Muslim *Ulama* but was enlightened enough to acquire a working knowledge of English and had read considerable number of the works of modern Western scholars on a variety of subjects. He started his life as a revered religious leader, journalist and writer of a high order but was soon involved in the movement of political freedom until he became a whole-time politician and later Education Minister in the first Cabinet of independent India.

He expressed his religious and political views through various journals and books but his *magnum opus* is *Tarjuman-ul-Qur'ān* (the translation of the Holy Qur'ān) which unfortu-

nately he could not complete. "The keystone of Maulana Azad's religious thought is the concept of the nature of religious consciousness which, according to him, is neither blind faith that consists in the unquestioning acceptance of a dogma, nor pure intellectual conviction that can be induced by argument or discussion. It is a particular state of mind which is experienced when man, through a combined act of intuitive insight and rational perception finds that in the world there is purpose, order and proportion; that it is governed by a Providence. This consciousness of beneficent Providence is necessarily accompanied by that of the existence of the Lord of Providence, a Being possessing Reason, Power, Will and Compassion. The Qur'ān cites innumerable instances from the world of nature and from history that make us feel the presence of this Universal Providence and the Almighty Lord of Providence, and thus induce in our mind that peculiar state of humility, reverence and faith which we call religious experience."²⁰

The Maulana does not agree with those old commentators of the Qur'ān "who complicate its simple and direct teachings by indulging into hair-splitting about points of grammar and rhetoric, or forcing it into the incompatible moulds of Greek logic and philosophy."²¹ Nor does he approve of the commentators "who are trying, in the name of the re-interpretation of the Qur'ān, to squeeze it into the alien framework of modern science."²² The right approach, according to him, is "to keep in view the Qur'ānic concept of religious experience and study the Qur'ān in its own light and not in that of any old or new philosophy."²³ By following this principle in his study of the Qur'ānic text the Maulana arrived at the following important conclusions:

1. The presence of a beneficent Providence in the universe indicates not only the unity of God but also the necessity of prophethood and Resurrection. Providence necessarily implies that prophets should be sent for the guidance of God's creation and this life, all too brief and limited, should be followed by a broader and deeper life, so that man...may attain spiritual perfection.

2. Another necessary implication of the concept of Providence is the doctrine of the unity of religion. Surely if a way of guidance

is prescribed by God, who is the Lord of all, it should be for all His creation and must be shown to all.

“Thus the Qur’ān says that Divine Revelation is the universal guidance which has existed from the beginning of the world and is meant for all mankind without any discrimination . . . thus it is revealed in the same way in every age and every land. The Qur’ān says: there is not a nook or corner inhabited by man where a messenger of God has not been sent . . . The way of all the prophets in every age and every part of the world was the same and all taught the same Divine Law of happiness or bliss. What was this Divine Law? The Law of True faith and good works; that is of worshipping one God and leading a virtuous life.²⁴

“In spite of the essential unity of faith, circumstances of time and place led to difference in the way of worshipping and living and the development of diverse religions. Thus far the harm done was not very great. However, when the followers of these religions wandered far away from their own original creeds, the unity of faith was completely lost. The Qur’ān enjoins that it should be restored. It says to every religious group:

‘If you follow really and truly the original teachings of your respective religions, which you have distorted by all sorts of alterations and assertions, then my work is done; because as soon as you come back to the original teachings of your own religions, you will find yourself face to face with the same truth towards which I am calling you.’²⁵

3. The belief in the unity of God was inherent in the original teachings of all religions. On the question of Divine attributes, however, they went to one of the two extremes. Some conceived of these attributes as similar to human qualities. Others regarded God as free from all attributes. In the former case people were led to the concept of an anthropomorphic God; in the latter case it was not possible to have any concept of Him at all. The Islamic doctrine of unity which has been presented in the Qur’ān has found the true mean between the two extremes.²⁶ The gist of the Qur’ānic conception of the Divine attributes as explained by the Maulana is that they are the perfect archetypes of all the good attributes which can possibly be conceived and do not have the slightest real resemblance to corresponding human qualities but only a notional one.

4. Like belief in the unity of God, the practice of virtue is also an essential part of Faith and a necessary condition for salvation. Salvation is in fact a natural sequence of the practice of virtue throughout life. The Qur’ān . . . regards reward and punishment not as an act of God, isolated from the general law of the universe, but natural corollary.

'It says that every state has a characteristic property . . . Just as God has endowed material objects with properties and effects, so there are properties and effects, inherent in all actions . . . To these natural properties and effects of human action, the name of reward and punishment has been given.'²⁷

"The way in which Maulana Azad interpreted the fundamental trends of Islam . . . generally impressed the Indian Muslims, specially the modern educated class, as rational and liberal and at the same time as sound and satisfactory with regard to its being a probable, but not forced or far-fetched interpretation of the Qur'anic text.'²⁸

We have given Maulana Azad's religious views in some detail because they give a fairly good idea of the contemporary reformist trend in Islam. They are to a considerable extent influenced by the liberal thought of Mufti Muhammad 'Abduh and the Al-Manar school. But there is some difference between Maulana Azad's approach to the interpretation of the Islamic teachings and that of Mufti Muhammad 'Abduh. While 'Abduh generally relies on deductive reasoning in the manner of the mediaeval scholastic thinkers, Azad seems to have a sense of the importance of the inductive method of modern science and occasionally discusses historical allusions in the Qur'ān, like the story of *Ashab-i-Kahaf* (the people of the Cave) or that of *Zulqarnain*, in the light of the latest historical research or archaeological findings.

But as we had said above, Maulana Azad made an attempt, and that too an incomplete one, to take only one of the three steps which the latest trend of modernism regards to be necessary for the desired reforms in the religious thought and life of the Muslims. This trend, which we shall, for want of a more specific name, call the neo-reformist trend, has not yet acquired the character of an organized movement. Still it is a fairly widespread trend which can be perceived, in slightly different forms, in many Muslim countries and is likely to grow into a powerful movement as soon as it finds the individual or collective leadership to give it definite shape and direction.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Charles C. Adams, *Islam and Modernism in Egypt*. London, Oxford University Press, 1933, pp. 94-95.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 175.

3. *Al Manar*, Vol. IV, p. 334; quoted by Adams in *Islam and Modernism in Egypt*, p. 137.
4. S. Abid Husain, *The Destiny of Indian Muslims*. Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1965, p. 27.
5. S. Abid Husain, op. cit., pp. 27-28.
6. S. Abid Husain, op. cit., pp. 38-39.
7. S. Abid Husain, op. cit., pp. 59-60.
8. Sir Muhammad Iqbal, *Six Lectures on the Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*. Published by Shaikh Mubarak Ali. Lahore 1930, p. 82.
9. Ibid., p. 16
10. Ibid., p. 207
11. Sir Muhammad Iqbal, op. cit., p. 212.
12. Ibid., p. 232
13. Ibid., p. 233
14. Ibid., p. 234
15. Sir Muhammad Iqbal, op. cit., pp. 214-215
16. Halide Edib, *Conflict of East and West in Turkey*, 2nd edition, M. Ashraf, Lahore, p. 72.
17. Halide Edib, op. cit., p. 72.
18. Paul Stunding, Religious Change in Republic of Turkey. *The Middle-East Journal*, Vol. 12, No. 4, p. 396
19. Ibid., p. 897.
20. S. Abid Husain, op. cit., p. 94
21. S. Abid Husain, op. cit., p. 94
22. Ibid
23. Ibid
24. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, *Tarjuman-ul-Qur'an*, Vol. I Published by Zamzam Co. Lahore, 1947, p. 183.
25. Ibid., p. 183.
26. S. Abid Husain, op. cit., pp. 94-96.
27. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, op. cit., p. 115
28. S. Abid Husain, op. cit., p. 96.

V

ISLAM AND OTHER RELIGIONS

S. A. AKBARABADI

Among the scriptures of religions the Qur'ān is perhaps the only book which has spoken of other religions, their Prophets and Books so extensively and generously. According to the Qur'ān, religions of the world—as they were at the time of Muhammad's advent—are of two kinds :

(1) Those which advocated idol worship or polytheism in exclusion to the idea of the unity of God and (2) those which believed in the unity of God and were based on scriptures revealed to their founders. The former, in the realm of Islamic thought, are not only true religions, but in the strict sense of the word no religions at all.

Islam can have no truck with those religions and creeds which subscribe to polytheism or permit idolatry. People who belong to these types of religion are called *Mushrikin*—Polytheists—in the language of the Qur'ān which declares in unequivocal terms : “Indeed, God will not forgive that partners should be set up with Him. And He would forgive anything else. And those who set up partners with Him commit the most heinous sin indeed.” (IV : 48)

In sharp contrast to the former, the latter kind of religions are such as have been spoken of in the Qur'ān with awe and respect. They are true religions of God, given to various people of the world through the Messengers of God, sent down from time to time with the purpose of leading men to the path of righteousness.

People who belong to this particular type of religion, are called in the Qur'ān by the epithet of *Ahl-i-kitab* (people of Divine Books). There are the religions which have not only been

referred to in the Qur'ān sympathetically and approvingly but Islam as embodied in the Qur'ān and as taught by Muhammad, has been conclusively identified with the same religions.

The scriptures of these religions have been given the same position which has been assigned to Qu'rān; while the prophets concerned as well as Muhammad—as messengers of God—belong to the same rank. This explains the fact that in order to become a Muslim one has to declare his belief in the Prophets and their Divine Books, gone before the advent of Muhammad, along with belief in God, the prophethood of Muhammad, and the Qur'ān itself.

It need not be over-emphasized that as far as Muslim faith is concerned belief in the unity of God is the pivotal point round which all doctrines and teachings of Islam revolve. Take out this article of Muslim faith and the whole structure of the Religion would collapse.

UNITY OF MANKIND

The doctrine of the unity of God presupposes the concept of the Unity of human race. Apart from the fact that the main attributes of God, as mentioned in the Qur'ān, *Rabbul-alamīn* and *Rahman* which implicitly show that all people and all nations of the world are one and the same in the eyes of God who takes equal care of and is merciful to all of them, there are certain verses in the Qur'ān which unequivocally establish the unity of mankind. The fourth chapter of the Book begins with the verse: "O mankind! Be careful of your duty to your Lord who created you from a single soul and from it created its mate and from them twain hath spread abroad a multitude of men and women." (IV : 1) Another verse runs as follows: "Mankind were one community, and Allah sent (unto them) Prophets as bearers of good tiding and warners." (II : 213).

The point is further stressed in still plainer words that "Mankind was but one nation but differed (later). (10 : 19) In consonance with this spirit of the Qur'ān the Prophet is also reported to have declared: "All creatures of God are members of the family of God, and he is the best loved of God who loveth best His creatures." Further, he once exclaimed: "O Lord ! O Lord

of my life and of everything in the Universe ! I affirm that all human beings are brothers unto one another" (Ahmad; Abu Daud). On the occasion of his last pilgrimage to Mecca, when the Prophet made very important announcement, he declared inter alia : "No Arab is superior to a non-Arab and vice versa, and neither white is superior to black nor black to white; you all are the children of Adam and Adam was created of clay:"

UNIVERSALITY OF REVELATION

Since God, according to the Qur'ān, is one and Guardian and Lord of and merciful to all, and since the whole of mankind is one, the Divine revelation which has been coming down from time to time to guide the people on to the path of piety and righteousness, must also be universal and one. The Qur'ān is not silent or vague on this point and has asserted at so many places that Divine revelation, which is sometimes designated by the term, *Al-Huda* (The Divine guidance) can never be the monopoly of any particular community or nation. It declares : "There is not a people but a warner has gone among them." (XXXV : 24) Again, addressing to Muhammad it says : Thou art a warner only, and for every folk there is a guide." (XIII : 7) "And for every nation there is a messenger. And when their messenger cometh (on the day of judgement) it will be judged between them fairly and they will not be wronged." (X : 48) The Qur'ān further elaborates the point making reference to some nations: "Hath not the history of those before you reached you; the Folk of Noah and the tribes of 'Ād and Thamud, and those after them? None save Allah knoweth them. Their messengers came unto them with clear proofs, but they thrust their hands into their mouths." (XIV : 9) The children of Israel, as referred to in the Qur'ān extensively felt proud of their lineage to such an extent that they looked upon themselves as "the children and friends of God" having the exclusive privilege of the apostles of God raised from within their community. Having described this arrogant attitude of the children of Israel, the Qur'ān repudiates such a fantastic idea and exclaims: "This (Prophethood) is the Bounty of God, which He bestows on whom He will." (LXII : 4) In refutation of such an

arrogant claim by the children of Israel (very often called in the Qur'ān, "The people of the Book") God again asks Muhammad to declare that all bounties are in the hand of God. He giveth them to whom He pleaseth." (III : 73) It is not possible to cover in this short article all that the Qur'ān has said concerning the Universality of Divine revelation. I, therefore, give in the following a very beautiful passage written by Mr Abdullah Yusuf Ali, the well-known English Translator of the Qur'ān, which brings out in bold relief the Qur'ān's stand and views in respect of the matter concerned :

God's care for His creatures is Universal.
His Revelation is for all—ignorant
And lowly as well as learned and high placed.
Now and for ever, None can arrogantly
claim exclusive possession of God's gifts.
(English Translation P : 1544)

THE UNITY OF REVELATION

The Divine Revelation or Message is not only Universal but one and the same also. "But the vagaries of history are so strange," as pointed out by Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, "that the greater the emphasis that the Qur'ān lays on this truth, the stronger has been the inclination on the part of world to relegate it to the background. In fact no other truth of Qur'ān has been kept so deliberately out of sight. Should one study the Qur'ān with an open mind and look into its numerous clear assertions in this respect, and then take a survey of what has actually happened, despite such assertions, one will not fail to notice that the faith of the Qur'ān also has, in the course of history, been given the character of an exclusive concern even as other faiths."¹

Long before Maulana Azad, Shah Waliullah of Delhi (1702-1763)—one of the most eminent authorities on Islam—referred to the same effect when he wrote: "All religions, despite different forms and shapes, agree upon the basic articles of faith and the fundamentals of virtue. For example, every religion that has come down from God prescribes purity, prayer, alms-giving and pilgrimage. It is, however, a different matter, if the methods of the observation of these duties be dissimilar.

To seek nearness to God, through prayer and worship, is the teaching of every religion. The remembrance of God in the morning and in the evening for which the word "Dhikr" has come, reading of the divine scriptures and reckoning it as a means of a goodly reward, are enshrined in every religion. Similarly in all the Shariats, marriage is made lawful and adultery is forbidden. It is the teaching of all the prophets that whatever Government be in existence, it should follow the path of justice and equity, and safeguard the interests of the weak and give a proper punishment to the criminal and wrong-doer. These are the fundamental principles of religion common among all the systems of faith."²

The Unity of revelation is identical with the Unity of religion. The Qur'ān, therefore, uses sometimes the word "Maanzalna" or "Wahy" and sometimes "ad-Din." Now let us see what the Qur'ān itself has got to say in this respect. Since, according to the Qur'ān, all Prophets are equal to one another in rank and position, it is an article of faith for a Muslim to accept all of them as such, drawing no line of distinction between the one and the other. The Qur'ān declares: "To those who believe in God and His apostles and make no distinction between any of the apostles, God will soon give them (due) rewards." (iv : 152) On the contrary, those who make distinction between believing in some and rejecting others are not better than those who deny God and His apostles and are, therefore, truly Unbelievers." (iv : 150) The Prophet is reported to have been in the habit of reciting a prayer, after his prayer in the last part of night, which contained a sentence meaning that "all prophets are true ones and Muhammad is a true prophet."³

This equality of the prophets was based on the fact that they brought the same message and did the same work. Muhammad has repeatedly reminded that the message given to him is by no means different from that given to the foregoing prophets. "Lo! We inspire thee as We inspired Noah and the prophets after him; as We inspired Abraham and Ishmael and Issac and Jacob and the tribes, and Jesus and Job and Jonah and Aaron and Soloman, and as are imparted unto David the Psalms." (iv : 163). Some of the apostles sent down by God

have been mentioned by name in the Qur'ān and some not. This, however, makes no difference for, the Qur'ān asserts "They all were the messengers of good cheer and warning, in order that mankind might have no argument against Allah after the messengers." (iv : 165).

The prophet is also repeatedly asked to declare, along with the faithful and believers, that "We believe in Allah and that which is revealed unto us and that which was revealed unto Abraham and Ishmael and Issac and Jacob and the tribes, and that which was vouchsafed unto Moses and Jesus and the prophets from their Lord. We make no distinction between any of them, and unto Him we have surrendered." (iii : 84).

In another verse those who believe in God are demanded to "believe in God and His apostles and the scriptures which He hath sent to His Apostle and the scriptures which He sent to those before (him)." Further, in order to strengthen the inevitability and importance of this demand the verse in question ends with the warning. "And those who deny God, His Angels, His Books, His Apostles, and the Day of Judgement have gone far, far astray" (iv : 136). To emphasize the point further, the Qur'ān also makes it quite clear that "those who reject the Book and the revelations with which we sent our apostles soon shall they know when the Yokes shall be round their necks and they will be dragged in chains. (xl : 70.71)

Now one may ask what is the Divine message or revelation which was given to all apostles and which is the basis of the unity of religions. The Qur'ān has not left this question unanswered. The Prophet has been asked to say, "O People of the scripture! Come to the Word common between us and you: that we shall worship none but Allah, and that we shall ascribe no partner unto Him, and that none of us shall take others for Lords beside Allah. And if they turn away, then say: Bear witness that we are Muslims (those who have surrendered themselves to God)." (iii : 64) The same Message is repeated in another verse, "And we assuredly sent amongst every people an apostle (with the Message): Serve Allah and shun off false gods. Then some of the people to whom the message was delivered were those who were guided by God (accepted

the Message) and some of them were those who were doomed to go astray (did not accept the message)" (xvi : 36). Again, God proclaims: "And we inspired him, (saying) there is no God save Me (Allah). So worship Me." (xxi : 25)

The Qur'ān has left no stone unturned to see that the unity of religion is established firmly and permanently. In this connection the prophets and the books of other religions have been profusely admired by name in the Qur'ān. With regard to "Torah" (the Scripture of Jews) God says: "It was we who revealed the Law (to Moses) therein was guidance and light. This was the Law by which standard the prophets, who bowed before God and the religious leaders and the Doctors of Law delivered their judgement for the Jews, for to them was entrusted the protection of God's Book." (v : 47) The Jews of Medina used to bring their disputes to the Prophet, probably motivated and overawed by his commanding personality; There upon God said in the Qur'ān: "And why do (the Jews) come to thee (O! Muhammad) for the settlement of their disputes, when they have their own Law before them." (v : 46) Similarly the Book of Jews has been described as a book containing the Divine guidance and bring light and an admonition to those who fear God." (v : 49) Just as in case of the Jews, the Christians have also been asked to decide their matters in the light of their own book. (v : 50) The Jews and the Christians of Medina were at loggerheads with each other in respect of religion; each one claimed God's love and the supremacy of his community over the other. On the other hand both of them claimed, as mentioned in the Qur'ān, that "none shall enter paradise unless he is a Jew or a Christian." (ii : iii) The Qur'ān further reports: The Jews say: 'The Christians have nothing to stand upon', and the Christians say: 'The Jews have nothing to stand upon' then both of them are taken to task for their indulgence in such futile claims and counter claims even when they profess to study the Book." (ii : 113) Moreover, the Qur'ān clarifies that "whether one (by birth) is a Jew or a Christian or either of them, it is not to be taken into account; the only important and significant thing is submission to God and doing of good deeds." (ii : 111)

As the Message communicated by the apostles of God is identical, and all the prophets are members of a single family, Prophet Muhammad took care to see that no prophet, including himself, was preferred to another. He promptly decried whenever such an occasion arose. Once a man addressed the Prophet by calling him "The best of the world." The Prophet lost no time to point out that prophet Abraham was really the best of all.⁴ One day a man asked the Prophet, as to which one of the prophets was the highest in respect of birth and family. The Prophet replied "The Prophet Joseph, son of a Prophet who also was a son of a Prophet Abraham."⁵ On another occasion when a Jew complained against a Muslim who had slapped him, the Prophet solemnly asked the people to refrain from making distinction between one prophet and another.⁶

ISLAM IS THE NAME OF THE MESSAGE

It should be clear now that "Islam" is not the name of any particular system or way of life; it is rather the name of the message or religion given to mankind, through the messengers of God who have been coming down throughout the history of the world. Therefore, to call the message of Muhammad by the name of Muhammadanism, which early writers of the West were mostly apt to do, is absolutely wrong and nothing but perversion of facts. Islam which literally means "submission" connotes the essence of the Religion of which it is the name.

It is important to note that the term 'Islam' which has been declared to be the true religion of Allah (iii : 18) and the word "Muslim" has frequently been used in the Qur'ān, for the message brought by the Prophets and the followers of those Prophets respectively. (See xxii : 78, vi : 163, ii : 132, and v : 44) This firmly establishes the fact that Islam as introduced and taught by Muhammad is for all intents and purposes, identical with the religion or religions preached by other prophets.

It should also be borne in mind that as Arabs were the first recipients of the Qur'ān which was revealed in their language it was but natural that only those people should have been dealt with

at length with whom the Arabs were familiar; and such people were only Jews and Christians living in Medina and its suburbs. The Qur'ān also concedes that only some of the prophets sent by God in every nation and in every part of the world, have been mentioned. But the general criterion mentioned in the Qur'ān for the recognition of prophets and their message and their work, can safely be extended to prophets of other nations whose names are not to be found in the Qur'ān. No less an author than Mulana Syed Sulaiman Nadwi writes in his monumental work :

“Such prophets whose names are not given in the Qur'ān, but they have gone before the advent of Muhammad and they are accepted as prophets by their followers, the Qur'ān has laid down a principle for their recognition as such. And that principle is only this that the prophet concerned should have taught and preached monotheism.”⁷

As we have already seen, the Qur'ān speaks exhaustively of Jews and Christians; but other religious communities have not been completely ignored. There is a verse which runs as follows : “From amongst those who believe (in the Qur'ān) and those follow the Jewish scriptures and the Christians and the Sabians, those who believe in God and the Last Day, and work righteousness shall have their reward with their Lord. They will neither be afraid nor grieved.” (II : 62) Though the Sabians mentioned here were a particular sect living in Arabia, yet it is significant to note that Mr Abdullah Yusuf Ali is of the view that “in this matter the term can be extended by analogy to cover earnest followers of Zoroaster, the Vedas, Buddha, Confucius and other teachers of the moral law.”⁸

It is quite clear from what I have said in the foregoing pages that Islam identifies itself with other religions, respects their prophets and the books given to them and looks upon all prophets as equal to one another. It is nothing short of “disbelief” to make distinction between one prophet and the other. It is an article of faith for a Muslim to affirm his belief in the prophets and their scriptures. One may well ask: What more a religion could be expected to do towards maintenance of harmony and peace, with other religions? Then *Why this difference?* Now a ques-

tion arises : If all religions are one and the same then why they are so different from each other; and what was the need of so many prophets, their books, and religions founded by them. This question has also been answered properly in the Qur'ān. As a matter of fact a religion consists of two parts which according to the Qur'ān are (1) Al-Din and (2) Shariah. The former is always concerned with fundamental principles while later is the way of implementing those principles. This Din admits of no variation. It is to be the same at all times and for all people. In the language of Law, Din may be compared with the preamble of a constitution which lays down the aims and objectives of a government, while Shariat is comparable with the second part of the constitution which covers laws and bye-laws according to which the Government concerned will have to act. The Preamble remains intact while the laws and bye-laws undergo changes and alterations to suit the requirements of the time and society. Similarly the social attitudes and conditions of life vary from time to time and country and make it necessary to amend the Divine law to suit the people, without contravening the basic rules (Din). "To every people have we appointed rites and ceremonies which they must follow. Let them not then dispute with thee (O! Muhammad) on the matter, but bid them to thy Lord! (xxii : 67) "To every people have we prescribed a law and an open way.⁹ If God had so willed, He would have made a single people." (v : 51).

When the Prophet, under an order of God, turned his face in prayer from the sacred city of Jerusalem to Kaba in Mecca the opponents made a hue and cry. Whereupon the Qur'ān said; "And for every one there is a side to turn to (in prayer). It is, therefore, better to vie with one another in good works." (ii : 148). The above verses bring out clearly that *Din* which is devotion to God by worship and good living has always been the same while the Laws (Shariat) vary. That is why when Jesus came after Moses he declared : "I have come down to confirm Torah which was given to you through Moses on the one hand, and to make lawful some of the things which were forbidden to you on the other." (iii : 50)

There is another point which is very severely criticised and

condemned by the Qur'ān : the deadening formalism of a people which keeps them away from accepting truth when it is revealed to a Prophet other than their own. What is the essence of religion and what is a mere formality ? This has been summed up very beautifully in the following passage of the Qur'ān : "There is no righteousness in turning your face towards the East or the West, but he is righteous who believeth in God, and the Last Day, and the angels, and the Scriptures, and the Prophets; who for the love of God disburseth his wealth to his kindred, and to the orphans, and the needy, and the wayfarer, and those who ask, and for ransoming, who observeth prayer, and payeth the poor-tax, and who is of those who are faithful to their engagements when they are engaged in them, and is patient under ills and hardships, and in time of trouble; these are they who are just and these are they who fear the Lord." (II : 177)

Again a question arises : This being so, what was the need for the Qur'ān ? The answer is that the Qur'ān has come to us with a two-fold purpose. The first is that although all religions were based on the genuine message of God, their followers on account of historical reasons had deviated from the original truth and so there was the need to bring them back to it. This was the main task of the Qur'ān. It is this pristine quality of the Qur'ān on account of which, God, after speaking of the Torah and the Gospel, says about the Qur'ān : "And we have revealed to thee (O ! Muhammad) the Book with truth, verifying that which is before it of the book and a guardian over it." (v : 48). On another occasion God again says : "And we have not sent down the Book to thee (O ! Mohammad) but for the express purpose that thou shouldst make clear to them those things in which they differ, and that it should be a guide and a mercy to those who believe." (xvi : 64)

The second purpose was, that social aptitudes and conditions of life at that time were quite different from those during the time of earlier prophets. And, then, there was the need of a new Law (*Shariat*) which should have been so adaptable and flexible as to be practised conveniently by people of all climes and times : God referred to this particular aspect of the Qur'ān

when he said: "This day have I perfected your religion for you, completed my favour upon you, and have chosen for you Islam as your religion." (v : 4).

So far we have discussed the subject from a particular angle of Muslim faith. It is now proposed to say a few words in this regard from the point of view of Islamic morality only. As I have pointed out in the beginning, idol-worship is the most despicable thing in Islam. However, as far as social life is concerned no discrimination is allowed to be made by Muslims against idol-worshippers. Qur'ān says : "And if any one of the idolaterers seeketh thy protection (O! Muhammad), thou protect him so that he may hear the word of Allah, and afterwards convey him to his place of safety. That is because they are a folk who know not" (ix : 6). Religion is a matter of choice. Compulsion is incompatible with it: "Let there be no compulsion in religion. Truth stands out clear from error" (ii : 256). Indecent language is not allowed to be used even regarding idols : "Revile not those unto whom they pray beside Allah lest they wrongfully revile Allah through ignorance" (vi : 109). There is a verse which may serve as a beacon light of morality for all times to come in our international and inter-communal dealings and our daily social life : "O ye who believe ! Let not a folk deride a folk who may be better than they are, nor let women deride women who may be better than they are ; neither defame one another nor insult one another by nicknames. Bad is the name of lewdness after faith. And whosoever turneth not in repentance, such are evil doers" (xlix : 11).

In the end I will quote Dr Mohd Hamidullah, a great scholar of world reputation. He writes : "Let us see what do even the most religious and the most orthodox of Muslim authors on international law, during the height of their worldly might, say in this respect. They are all unanimous on a basic role of law regarding international relations, and every compendium of Muslim law repeats that, 'In sufferings of this world Muslims and non-Muslims are equal and alike.' One cannot transgress law and justice and good conscience on the pretext that the other party is non-Muslim; one cannot violate pledge given to them on any account."¹⁰

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. *Tarjuman-ul-Qur'an*, Vol. I, Sahitya Akademi Edition. p. 351
2. *Teachings of Shah Waliullah of Delhi* by Prof G. N. Jalbani, p. 100
3. Bukhari: Chapter on *Tahajjud*
4. Musnad of Ahmad ibn-i Hambal Vol. I, p. 153
5. Bukhari: *Book on Prophet*, P. 479
6. Bukhari: *Book on Prophet*, P. 484
7. *Sirat-ul-Nabi*, Vol. IV. P. 590
8. English Translation of the Qur'an Vol. I, Page 33
9. The Qur'an has used three words for the manner and way of implementing Din; Shariat=rules of practical conduct, Minhaj=open way, and Shariat=Code of conduct.
10. *The Muslim Conduct of State*, P. 71

OUR CONTRIBUTORS

DR ABDUL HAQ ANSARI is a Ph.D from Aligarh Muslim University. He is the Head of the Department of Arabic, Persian and Islamic Studies at Visvabharati University, Santiniketan. He is the author of several books in English and Urdu.

PROFESSOR M. MUJEEB is the Vice-Chancellor of Jamia Milla Islamia, Delhi. A well known scholar and historian, Prof. Mujeeb has written several book in English and Urdu.

PROFESSOR KHALIQ AHMAD NIZAMI is Professor of History at Aligarh Muslim University. He is the author of several books in English and Urdu.

DR S. ABID HUSSAIN is a retired Professor of Philosophy and Urdu Literature, Jamia Milia Islamia, Delhi. He is now the Secretary of 'Islam and Modern Age Society', Delhi and the Chief Editor of an Urdu quarterly 'Islam aur Asr-i-jadid'. Dr Abid Husain is the author of several books in English and Urdu.

PROFESSOR SAID AHMAD AKBARABADI is the Head of the Department of Sunni Theology, Alig Muslim University. He is also the Editor of the Urdu monthly *Burhan*, published from Delhi. Professor Akbarabadi is the author of several books mostly in Urdu.

