

# ULAMA

The boon and bane  
of  
Islamic Society

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Al-Haj Moinuddin Ahmed  
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This work is a study of the salient features of vitality and frailties of the Islamic society. Its lucid style and bold analysis illustrates on one hand, the simple life, moral grit and burning zeal of great Saints and Saviours of Islam and on the other hand, it fearlessly breaks new grounds by exposing the hypocrisy, greed and selfishness of evil-minded scholars who worked as Prophets of Decadence, and created rift, dissention and degeneration in the Islamic society.

In portraying the process of unhappy transition of Muslim Intellectualism from the role of "Torch-bearers of Civilisation" at one time, to the ignominy of "sickman" of the world today, the Author impressively assigns the reasons to the unholy disregard of Quranic Wisdom, and invokes transformation of the Heritage of yesterday into the Herald of tomorrow, by combining observance of Religion with the simultaneous study and culture of Science and Technology. He observes :

"The time to take to study of Science has not only come, but is already past. Either the Muslims now must take to a crash Programme of Scientific Education, or they must sink into oblivion for lack of adaptability in the avalanche of irresistible changes coming with the advent of the 21st Century."

Persons seeking enlightenment of mind and favour of heart from vivid accounts of Saints of Islam, must read this book in order to glean rapturous delight and to draw inspiration for ennobling their own life and performance.



**ULAMĀ**  
THE BOON AND BANE OF ISLAMIC  
SOCIETY

AL-HAJ MOINUDDIN AHMED  
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Produced under the auspices of  
The Urdu Education Foundation,  
Cuttack - 753001 (INDIA)

**KITAB BHAVAN**  
New Delhi-110002

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1784, Kalan Mahal, Daryaganj

New Delhi-110 002. (Ind

Phones 3274686, 26338

Telex No 31-63106 ALI

FAX 91-11-3274686



Library IAS, Shimla

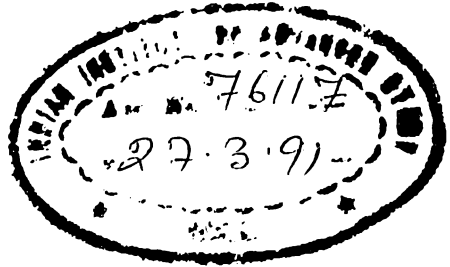


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*Published by:*

Nusrat Ali Nasri for Kitab Bhavan

1784, Kalar Mahal, Daryaganj,

New Delhi - 110 002

*Printed in India*

Nazia Printers

2172, Rodgran

Lal Kuan

Delhi - 110 006

Leserset at: READ & WRITE  
Daryaganj, New Delhi - 110 002

*"Seek Knowledge, even unto China".*

Prophet Hazrat Muhammad (PBUH)



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## PREFACE

Muslim backwardness is proverbial. But that is so only from the 13th Century onwards. Prior to that, for a span of six hundred years, the Muslims were at the top of the World stage in matters of Culture and Civilisation. They showed the right path to the Kingdom of God. Moreover, they elevated themselves to the eminence of World Leadership in the fields of Science, Exploration, Navigation, Mathematics, Medicine and creation of Universities and International Libraries. They thus rightly earned the fame of being "The Torch-bearers of Civilisation."

But now, the Muslims stand at the lowest rung of the ladder of Nations. They have acquired a bad image as terrorist, destructive, lawless, reckless, fanatic and fundamentalist, and are prone to be treated as objects of hatred and contempt everywhere. Today, the *Muslim World* is known for its inner strife, division, self-contradiction, as well as for its wars between Muslims and Muslims, its threat to *World Peace*, its excessive wealth some where and excessive poverty else where. On political front, the Muslims are divided; on economic front, they are under-developed and on religio-cultural front, illiteracy, ignorance and lack of earnestness have driven them into a blind alley. Steeped in superstition, mentally imprisoned by dogmas, governed in daily life by customs and usages prescribed over a thousand years back, the Muslim is considered to be the "sick-man" of the World today.

All these deplorable factors have be-devilled the Muslim Nations of the World because of their

forgetfulness of the *Quranic Wisdom*. The Teachers of such wisdom, the Ulamā, are themselves on 'sick-bed', and are unable to cure the ailments of others. There are two sides of the coin. On the one side, there are a countless number of Ulamā, whose life-long sacrifice and devotion helped the rapid emergence of Islam as a World Religion. They also fought against heresy, depravity and unethical innovations among the erring mass, and thus preserved the purity and integrity of the Religion all these long Centuries. On the other side, there is the evil genius of another category of a vast multitude of Ulamā, noted for their hypocrisy, perversity and impiety, whose faulty convictions and conflicting preachings led to narrow sectarianism and irrational dogmatism, hastening the process of decadence of morals and weakening of Faith all over the Muslim World.

On the above consideration, the whole gamut of Ulamā may be placed under two broad categories, namely, the rightly-guided Ulamā (*Ulamā-e-Rāshid*), and the misguided Ulamā (*Ulamā-e-Fāsiq*). The benefits from the services of Ulamā-e-Rāshid were so immense and fruitful that they may be regarded as the BOON for Islamic Society. On the other hand, the dis-services rendered by Ulamā-e-Fāsiq have proved to be so harmful and ruinous, that they may be considered to be the BANE of Islamic Society. The vivid picture of the life and activities of these two opposite types of Ulamā has been depicted in pages ahead in order to enable the reader to make his own critical evaluation of the contribution or the derogation, as the case may be, made by different personalities.

The present Publication breaks new grounds in the sense that emphasis has been laid on a vital matter hitherto overlooked. It has now been pointed out that

according to the *Injunctions of the Holy Quran*, it is essential for every Muslim to perform the dual function, first, to worship God and observe concomitant obligatory duties, and second, to study Science. This two-fold aspect of compulsory Islamic Faith has unfortunately escaped the attention of the Ulamā, who enforced only one aspect, namely, Prayer to God and omitted to prescribe the second aspect. Such omission has been the main reason of the downfall of Muslims. The relevant Quranic Injunctions have been explicitly mentioned in Chapter 2, to which the attention of all serious readers is drawn. By compliance with these directions, man's inherent potentialities will be re-vitalised by combining the practice of Religion with the cultivation of Scientific Knowledge.

The time to take to study of Science has not only come, but is already past. Either the Muslims now must take to a crash programme of Scientific Education, or they must sink into oblivion for lack of adaptability in the avalanche of irresistible changes coming with the advent of the 21st Century. The liability of yesterday has to be transformed into the asset of tomorrow. The choice rests with the immediate present generation. Let there be no ambiguity.



## Chapter I

# THE PERSPECTIVE

### CONFLICTS WITHIN RELIGIONS

The great Religions of the world today are at loggerheads with each other as never before. Within each Religion again, there are groups in conflict one against the other. The followers of each such group are eager to show that their group alone is the true representative of the original form of Religion, and that the rest are corrupt and misguided.

As in the case of all major Religions, Islam has a plentiful of Thinkers, Philosophers, Devotees and Reformers, known variously as *Auliā*, *Mashāikh*, *Fuqahā*, *Fuzalā*, *Hukamā* and *Ulamā*, many of them thinking and preaching differently, one from the other. An average Muslim unthinkingly follows the family creed, but in the case of men of contemplative or critical disposition, there is always the risk of confusion arising out of a plethora of contradictory preachings and precepts. To set at rest such possible confusion, and to help a sincere Believer to acquire correct perspective in Islamic Faith and Practice, some outstanding Personalities of the Religion of Islam have been selected, studied and evaluated—all of them under one common category, **the *Ulamā***.

### CRITERIA OF EVALUATING ULAMĀ

‘Ulamā’ is a commonly used word, broadly meaning

persons having high education and wide knowledge of Islamic Theology. Few people however, have correct idea as to what type of education and knowledge makes a man fit for the appellation. Should Islamic education alone, without any education whatsoever in Comparative Religion, Secular Subjects, Scientific awareness or general knowledge of the fast-moving world events, be considered enough to elevate a man to the rank of Ulamā? If however, it is to be narrowed down to Islamic education alone, should it relate to all or either of *Sunni, Shi'a, Wahhabi, Hanafi, Hanbali, Shafe'i, Maliki, Khariji, Mu'tazili* and several other sectarian branches of *Islamic Theology*? Muslims in general have no clear thinking on the subject. They are ignorant or prejudiced.

Due to such ignorance or prejudice, the high title of Ulamā hangs heavily on their minds, so that they feel no need of further thinking, and take it for granted that any body who claims to be one among the Ulamā, is eminent in erudition and piety, is a paragon of virtues, is a person who earns the pleasure of God by whatever act he chooses to do, and therefore deserves unqualified reverence and esteem of one and all in the Society. In fact, such thinking amounts to mere blind faith and irresponsible estimation. It induces self-deception.

The Ulamā, like any other category of intelligentsia, are the products of their own education, culture, environment, political influence and personal factors of name, fame and fortune. As such, each individual turns out to be different from the other. Correct assessment of such Ulamā can not be done by one's knowledge of Islamic Theology alone. Simultaneous knowledge of Islamic history, culture and politics is essential. The unspeculative piety of the Sahaba of Hejaz, the *Kharijite*

*psychology* of the Beduines of Arabian Desert, the influence of *Hellenistic Thoughts* pervading the culture of Syria, the *Sufistic discipline* of Persia, the *Rationalistic Movements* during the *Umayyad Era*, the materialism of *Abbaside Caliphate* and a host of such other historical, geographical and sociological bearings have directly influenced the mental make up of the *Ulamā* of any particular age and clime. A critical study of Islamic history, culture and society in addition to Islamic Theology is therefore indispensable for proper evaluation of those who are acclaimed as the Doctors of Islamic Religion, the *Ulamā*.

### **CATEGORIES OF ULAMĀ: RĀSHID AND FĀSIQ**

Human nature is highly variegated. Members of the same family or of the same stock are seen often to display opposite character or conflicting temperament. Among sons of the same parents, one may be kind-hearted, and the other cruel. Similarly, Monarchs may be benevolent or tyrant, Philosophers may be rational or eccentric, and Teachers may be proficient or incompetent. Just as all Kings or all Teachers or all friends do not happen to be good, so also all the *Ulamā* can not be deemed to be good. Some of them are right-minded and some evil-minded. In order to judge which of them is what, a sound knowledge of *Islamic history* combined with some insight into *Islamic Theology* is considered necessary. On application of these criteria, the *Ulamā* may be broadly classified into two categories, namely, *Ulamā-e Rāshid* or the rightly-guided scholar, and *Ulamā-e Fāsiq* or the misguided Scholar.

A rapid survey shows that there was preponderance of *Ulamā-e Rāshid* in earlier days of Islam, but the trend was reversed in later days, when the Muslim Society was infested with swarms of *Ulamā-e Fāsiq*, marking the



beginnings of unproductive era of Islamic intellectual history. The Ulamā-e Rāshid were scholars of impeccable worth and ability. The vast treasure of Islamic spiritual and ethical concepts possessed by these eminent luminaries served as the beacon light of Faith and Piety, capable of resisting the onslaught of heresy and atheism. With the gradual decrease in their number in later days, the reservoir of Islam's vitality and dynamic energy began to dry up under social and political forces of profanation. The Ulamā-e Fāsiq added fuel to the fire through misleading interpretations of the Holy Books, and their self-centred preachings. They dehumanised a religion which was divinely blessed for the good of humanity by its teachings of Universalism, Compassion and Social Justice. The position became worse because in the later days of Islam, there were rare occasions of birth of eminent personalities capable of reconciling the gross materialism of the younger generation with the mis-represented Fundamentalism of the Ulamā-e Fāsiq.

*Imam Ghazali*, who is revered as a devout *Mujaddid* on account of his indefatigable efforts in purging all evils creeping into Islam, held the Ulamā of his time responsible for the moral and religious degradation of the Muslim society. He observed in his famous Treatise '*Thya Uloom id-Din*' thus: "The Ulamā are the Physicians, but these days they are themselves confined to sick-bed, and are unable to cure others."

Imam Ghazali, *Hafiz Ibn Taimiyah* and some other Ulamā-e Rāshid elevated themselves to the level of *Mujaddid*, and by their noble services in the cause of Islam, proved themselves to be the Boon for the Islamic society. On the other hand, the multitude of self-seeking Ulamā-e Fāsiq down-graded themselves morally and

spiritually, caused rifts and dissensions among the Ummah and hastened the process of decadence in education and social outlook, and thus proved themselves to be the bane of the Islamic society. Their unwise guidance and misrepresented preachings killed the innate vitality of Islam and created a sense of despondency and a state of backwardness among the Muslims, so that it has become a difficult, though not impossible, task to retrieve them and re-vitalise them with Faith and Action.

### **MESSAGE OF HOPE**

These baneful Ulamā, who are virtually the Agents of Doom for the community, can not help the Muslims to come out of the Past, live in the Present, and face the Future. There is however, a silver-lining, because Islam has the potential to renovate the moral and spiritual degeneration by infusing a wholesome spirit of earnestness and righteousness. Islam is a Faith which is grounded in eternal values. It teaches that Life is progressive, ever-changing and ever-evolving. It is capable of helping humanity to devise new ways at every difficult turn. Islam's Message is HOPE, not Despondency.

## Chapter 2

# QURAN, SCIENCE AND SOCIETY

### GLEANNING WISDOM FROM QURAN

The 'Masnavi', a classic work of undying fame written by *Maulana Jalaluddin Rumi*, is a manifestation of his intense Divine Love and Spiritual fervour. One of the Couplets says:

من ز قرآن مغز را برداشتم  
استخوان پیش سگان انداختم

*Man ze Qurān Maghz rā Bardāsh tam  
Ustukhān Pesh-e Sagān Andākhtam*

meaning, "I have drawn the marrow from the Qurān,  
And have thrown the dry bones for dogs."

The Maulana had firm conviction that men gifted with deep insight and discerning faculty are capable of getting at the inner core of Divine Wisdom, while men with shallow intellect and inadequate learning vainly run after insignificant and superficial matters.

The importance of the present study relating to the vitalities and frailties of the Islamic Society makes it imperative for us to draw lessons from the most relevant Injunctions of the Holy Quran.

### RELEVANT QURANIC INJUNCTIONS

The Holy Quran ordains observance of regular religious

practice, and frequent remembrance of Almighty the Creator, together with intelligent comprehension of Natural phenomena. Out of a total of 6,347 Verses in the Holy Book, the obligation of Namaz has been stressed in about 200 Verses. But in as many as 750 Verses, the Believers have been exhorted to study Nature, to reflect on the mystery of the creation of the Heavens and the Earth, and to make the best use of Reason in their search for the Ultimate. There is emphasis on acquiring Knowledge and Scientific competence as a part of a Muslim's obligations. A few relevant Verses are cited below:

(A) - *Surah Al-Jasiah* reads (45:3).

إِن فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ لَآيَاتٍ لِّلْمُؤْمِنِينَ

meaning, "Lo' in the Heavens and in the Earth are convincing proofs for true Believers."

Herein lies the clear Quranic hint for all true Believers to study Sciences pertaining to all the creations from the Cosmos down to the inner core of the Earth. Allah has bestowed upon man the overlordship of all that is in Heaven and on Earth. So unless man devotes himself to the study of such Sciences as Cosmology, Astronomy, Meteorology, Minerology, Oceanography and all allied and relevant Sciences, he can not render himself fit to comprehend the mysteries of God's Creations, and be truly grateful to Him. The study and Research of Science are as much obligatory for a good Muslim as the worship and remembrance of the Almighty God.

(B) - *Surah Al-Ghashiyah* reads (88:18 to 21)

وَإِلَى السَّمَاءِ كَيْفَ رُفِعَتْ ۝ وَإِلَى الْجِبَالِ كَيْفَ نُصِبَتْ ۝ وَإِلَى الْأَرْضِ كَيْفَ سُطِحَتْ ۝ فَذَكِّرْ إِنَّمَا أَنْتَ مُذَكِّرٌ ۝

meaning, "Will they not appreciate how the Skies are upraised, how the Mountains are rooted and how the Earth is outspread? Remind them, for thou art the Remembrancer."

Herein Allah majestically invokes *Prophet Hazrat Muhammad* to remind Mankind about the Creator's marvellous technique and scientific skill in the causation of Natural phenomena behind the Skies, the Earth, the Mountains etc. It is clear that Allah desires Mankind to acquire technological and scientific knowledge in order to comprehend and admire the sublimity of His creation.

(C) - Surah Āl-e Imran reads (3; 190-191) -

إِنَّ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَاخْتِلَافِ اللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ لَآيَاتٍ لِّأُولِي  
الْأَلْبَابِ ۝ الَّذِينَ يَذْكُرُونَ اللَّهَ قِيَامًا وَقُعُودًا وَعَلَىٰ جُنُوبِهِمْ وَيَتَفَكَّرُونَ  
فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ رَبَّنَا مَا خَلَقْتَ هَذَا بَاطِلًا ۝

meaning, "Lo! in the creation of the Heavens and the Earth, and in the alteration of Night and Day, are signs for men of Wisdom; they who perform the worship of Allah, standing, sitting and reclining, and contemplate on the creation of the Heavens and the Earth, saying, O' our Lord! Thou hath not created this in vain."

This sacred Ayat is highly significant, and is specially addressed to "Men of Wisdom" (*Ool-il Albāb*). Herein are combined two obligatory duties for Muslims in one single sentence, directing them to "perform the

worship of Allah,” and to “contemplate on the creation of the Heavens and the Earth.” If any body chooses to break this holy Injunction into half, and to carry out only the worship of Allah, and to neglect the other half relating to Scientific education about creation of the Earth and the Skies, he becomes sinful in the same manner as he would be if he breaks Allah’s Commandment of *Salāt* and *Zākāt* (*O Aqama Salāta O Ataz Zākāt*) into two halves, and carries out only the first half, namely, *Salāt* and neglects the other half by not paying *Zakāt*. Allah has firmly addressed this sacred Ayat to “Men of Wisdom” to obey and put the instruction into practice. Therefore, study and practice of Religion is as much necessary in Islam, as the study and culture of Science by the true Believers.

### PRECEPTS OF HADITH

In addition to the *Injunctions of the Quran*, the Holy Prophet laid unequivocal emphasis on acquisition of Learning and Scientific Knowledge. He urged:

أَطْبُوا الْعِلْمَ لَوْ كَانَ بِالصِّينِ

“*Utloob-ul-ilmā Law Kānā Bis Seen*”;

meaning ‘You should insist on acquiring Knowledge even if you have to travel upto China.’

In this well-known Hadith, the Prophet implied acquisition of scientific competence, and not religious education, because no body was expected to study Quran or Hadith at China, but could be expected to acquire Chinese technology and skill by proceeding to that country for training.

Thus the under-lying principle contained in the Prophet’s words of wisdom signifies that men should be

keen to acquire scientific knowledge and technical skill from which ever country this may be available. The Prophet mentioned China by way of example, because at that time China had earned a fair name in Arts and Crafts, just as in the present times, countries like Japan, West Germany and USA have distinguished themselves in the realm of Science and Technology. Correctly interpreted for implementation at the present time, the purport of the Hadith cited above urges Muslims of the present Age to proceed to Western Countries or Japan for acquisition of latest knowledge and learning.

### IEWS OF LEARNED SCHOLARS

In this connection it may be relevant to note the views of some learned Muslim scholars of International repute. *Nobel Laureate Professor Abdus Salam* delivered an Address in *Bahrain* in May, 1983 on the subject of 'Future Outlook of the Gulf University', wherein he observed:

“In keeping with the obligations laid down on us by the Holy Quran and the Holy Prophet, our society must develop a passionate commitment towards bringing about a Renaissance of Scientific Studies. We must impart hard scientific training to half of our man power. This was done in the *USSR*. This was done in *Japan* after the 19th Century Meiji Revolution. And this is what is being undertaken today in a planned and frantic manner by the People’s Republic of China, with defined targets in Space Sciences, Genetics, Micro-electronics, High Energy Physics, Thermo-nuclear Energy and Agriculture. These nations have realised that the only path to gain ascendancy is to master Science. They do not feel that acquiring of science and technology will destroy their cultural traditions, because they believe

that their traditions are not so weak and fragile.”

Similarly, Islam has nothing to fear about the weakening of its religious base or cultural values through acquisition of Scientific Knowledge. *Maulana Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi*, an Arabic Scholar of International fame, observes in his renowned book *‘Saviours of Islamic Spirit, Vol. I*, “God has endowed His Religion with the capacity to turn over a new leaf with the changes ringing the world, and thus provide human beings with uninterrupted guidance in every phase of their life. It can help humanity to find its way at every turn and pass”.

These wise words of erudite scholars are intended to infuse in the heart of Muslims enough confidence and strength of mind so that they may realise that their religion and culture will not be threatened by acquisition of Scientific Knowledge. They should therefore boldly take to study of modern Science with courage and conviction.

### **SCIENTIFIC TALENT AMONG EARLY MUSLIMS**

The Injunctions of the Holy Quran and the precepts of sacred Hadith were taken by the early Muslims quite seriously. They started acquisition of learning and knowledge in all earnestness, producing admirable results. Perhaps, the first initiative in Scientific advancement came from a batch of Rationalists among early Muslims, who distinguished themselves by relying on Rationalism and Reason in the field of Education and material progress. By and by, talented individuals and scholars of the orthodox school were drawn, being influenced by the *Quranic exhortations* for studying and understanding the mysteries of divine signs behind natural phenomena. Within a Century of the Prophet’s



demise, the Arabs had vigorously studied all available Scientific treatises of non-Arab origin, and had translated them into Arabic. They founded Institutes for advanced study (*Baitul Hikma*), and wrote and produced authoritative books on many new branches of Science and Arts, and thus acquired ascendancy in the field of learning and scientific advancement which lasted for over 350 years thereafter.

### **THE GOLDEN AGE OF SCIENCE IN ISLAM**

The Era of Arabian supremacy, particularly the period of 350 years from 750 to 1100 A.D. was a brilliant epoch when new avenues of knowledge in Science and Philosophy were opened by renowned master-minds born in the Commonwealth of Islam. This period saw birth of eminent Chemists, Algebraists, Physicians, Clinicians, Mathematicians, Physicists, Chronologists, Astronomers and Geographers among different Muslim nations, particularly among the Arabs, the Persians, the Turks and the Afghans, who as a well-knit team commanded the world stage of Science and Technology. Noted among these scientists are *Jabir*, *Khwarizmi*, *Razi*, *Masudi*, *Abul Wafa*, *Ibn-e Sina*, *Ibn-al Haitham*, *Al-Biruni* and *Umar Khayyam*. Only after 1100 A.D., the names of some Western Scientists begin to appear, though they share the honours for another 250 years with Muslim Scientists like *Ibn Rushd*, *Nasiruddin Tusi* and *Ibn Nafis*.

The 10th and 11th Centuries A.D. constitute the 'Golden Age' of Science in Islam. That was the age of the great savants like Ibn-e Sina (980-1037), the illustrious Medical Scientist, who provided the base of Western Medical System, and of Ibn-al Haitham (965-1039), the greatest of Physicists who enunciated the *Law of Inertia* and the *Theory of Refraction* for the first time, and of

Al-Biruni (973-1048), the greatest versatile genius ever born at any time any where in the *World*.

The foundation of modern Science is indeed the Greco-Islamic heritage, the Islamic part playing the major role. *George Sarton*, the Author of *History of Science* observes, "The achievement of the Middle Ages was the creation of the experimental spirit, and this was primarily due to Muslims down to the 12th Century". Sarton's views are strongly corroborated by *Briffault*, the noted Author of *Making of Humanity*, who says, "The Greeks systematised, generalised and theorised, but the patient ways of investigation, the accumulation of positive Knowledge, the minute methods of Science, detailed and prolonged observation and experimental enquiry were altogether alien to the Greek temperament. That spirit and those methods were introduced into the European World by the Arabs, 'Modern Science' is the most momentous contribution of the *Islamic Civilisation*".

### **DECLINE OF SCIENCE IN ISLAM**

It is a tragedy of history that the progress of Modern Science came to a halt some time after the era of *Al-Biruni* and *Avicenna* was over. The creative Science in Islam thereafter died out, never to be revived till today. Mankind had to wait for full 500 years after the 12th Century in a state of stagnation and without any intellectual advancement till the dawning of the age of *Galileo* and his contemporaries.

Students of Cultural History may be interested in finding out the cause of the sad decline of Science in Islam. The causes may be more of internal rather than external character, arising out of the deteriorating polity and socio-religious atmosphere that came to prevail upon the *Islamic Commonwealth* since the 13th

Century. Some extent of external factors were also responsible for this declining trend, the principal among which was the stark devastation caused by the maddening frenzy of *Mongol* invaders. Islam in its total career of over 1400 years had never been subjected to such carnage and havoc as wrought by the ghastly barbarism of ferocious *Tartar* races of *Mongolian Steppes*.

### CRACK OF DEVASTATION BY MONGOLS

The immediate cause of the ruthless and savage invasion by the Mongolians is attributed to a grievous mistake of *Alauddin Mohammad*, Shah of the largest and most prosperous Muslim Kingdom of *Khwarism* (modern Uzbekistan). A caravan of traders arriving from Mongolia, being suspected as spies, was put to death, and when the *Mongol Overlord Chengiz Khan* sent an envoy to enquire into the reason, the Shah put the envoy also to death. Uncontrollably infuriated, the *Mongol Khakan* then banged a whirlwind of savagery upon the entire World of Islam. His blood-thirsty armies swooped down upon *Iran*, *Turkistan* and other Muslim territories in a crazy wave of invasion. *Bokhara* was razed to the ground, *Samarkand* was reduced to ashes, the entire population of these prosperous cities being put to sword. Other large Cities such as *Hamdan*, *Zarjan*, *Qazwin*, *Merv*, *Naishapur* and many other populous areas met the same fate. The armies of *Khwarism Shah* were swept away by the irresistible storm of Mongol arms. The marauding hordes then proceeded to *Baghdad*, the Metropolis of Islamic Commonwealth, ravaging, exterminating, annihilating and blotting out of existence every thing they came across, and killing every body including the last *Abbaside Caliph al-Musta'sim* and his entire family. All the Institutions of Learning, places of

Worship, Centres of Arts and Crafts—in fact every semblance of civilised existence was wiped out. The horrors of rapine and slaughter lasted 40 days, leaving 18 lakhs of dead bodies strewn all over the rubble remains of the most magnificent city of the world.

### **SOCIAL AND MORAL DECADENCE**

The unprecedented calamity of the crazy *Mongol* invasion, howsoever shocking and devastating it might be, was not the prime cause of the decline of Scientific progress in the Muslim World. The deeper and more significant reasons for this unfortunate setback are to be seen in the deterioration of religious, moral, social and political conditions that had crept into the contemporary Muslim Society since a Century before the Mongol invasion.

After the death of the undaunted Crusader *Sultan Salahuddin Ayyubi*, his vast Empire split into several small principalities held by weak successors. In many Muslim countries such as *Egypt* and *Mecca*, *fratricidal wars became prolonged and ruinous for the ruling Dynasties. There were prolonged Wars between Afghanistan and Khwarism.* In the social level, there were frequent clashes and violence between the *Shi'as* and the *Sunnis*. All these Wars and sectarian disturbances made the Rulers and the Nobility callous and unmindful of the affairs of the State. Growing political weakness and prevailing administrative chaos were the consequent result. At the same time in *Baghdad*, the Metropolis of Islam, magnificence and splendour of the Court and of the Nobility became more lavish and extravagant than what had been seen in the palaces of Byzantine and Persian Empires. Love of Music, Dance, Sports, Pastimes and novel types of entertainment became a craze of the society, and such

a society fell into the grip of moral disintegration. The affluent and those in authority became corrupt, greedy and tyrant. Religion was seen to go astray in the path of heresy.

### MONGOL ATONEMENT

Muslim countries thus suffered pathetic decline and breakdown in all spheres of life—religious, moral, social and political, for which they rightly deserved to be chastised. The Mongols therefore came as a scourge of God, as a manifestation of divine wrath. In a sense, the contact of Islam with Mongol barbarians proved to be a boon in disguise for Islam in the long run, for these savage people became fairly sensible in course of time, got themselves converted into Islam in mass scale, proved themselves ultimately to be the bulwark of Islam against the onslaughts of *Christianity* and *Buddhism*. They not only became the defenders of Faith, but also Patrons of Art and Literature. *Chengiz Khan's* grand son, *Halaku*, built an Observatory at Maragha, where Scholars like *Nasiruddin Tusi* worked.

Islam was to rise again from the ashes of its desolate ruins by the winning over of the savage enemies to the fold of Islamic Faith. Some common citizens, pure in spirit and righteous in conduct, who had managed to survive the great devastation, engaged themselves in teaching and preaching, while a handful of pious Theologians keeping aloof from official entanglements, served as the beacon light of Islamic spirit. The missionary efforts of these conscientious men in the midst of barbarian fanatics were uncertain and hazardous, particularly as there were two other competitors, *Christianity* and *Buddhism*, each trying to gain by the conversion of the Heathens. The noted

Muslim Theologians and Spiritual Leaders had either been massacred or carried in captivity, when the cities that had been the rallying points of Islamic enlightenment were reduced to ashes. The efforts of the few survivors to proselytise the barbarians under heavy odds were not the less daring, and their achievements no less significant than those of the soldiers of Islam in battle fields. As regards the missionary services of common Muslim citizens, *T.W. Arnold*, the Author of *The Preaching of Islam* says, "Scattered up and down through the length and breadth of the Mongol Empire, there must have been many of the followers of the Prophet who laboured successfully and unknown, to win the Unbelievers to the Faith. In the reign of *Ogotay* (1229-1241), there was a certain Buddhist Governor of Persia, named *Kurguz*, who in later years of his life abjured Buddhism and became a Musalman."

In this way, Islam won over in a short time its most inveterate enemy, the barbarian Mongols, who had a few years ago trampled the entire Islamic World under their crushing feet. After accepting the Faith of Islam, this wild but ebullient Race produced a large number of Scholars, Theologians as well as those who fought for Islam in bloody battle fields and won brilliant victories.

### **HARMFUL EFFECTS OF TAQLID AND SUFISM**

If the *Mongols* disrupted the *Islamic Civilisation* at one stage, they also helped to rebuild it a short time later. The decline of living Science in Islam was not so much due to the devastations of the Mongols as to the internal causes. The later 11th and the earlier 12th Centuries were periods of intense political intrigue, made worse by sectarian and religious strife. In this great confusion, arose three distinct trends, namely:

- (i) Discouragement of progressive ideas including Scientific advancement;
- (ii) Reliance on Fundamentalism (*Taqlid*), together with closure of the door of *Ijtihad*; and
- (iii) Growth of *Sufism* with its spirit of other-worldliness and dislike of secularism.

*Imam Ghazali* (1058-1110) deplored at this retrograde tendency, and observed in his famous book, *Al-Munqidh min ad-Dalal* thus, "A grievous crime indeed against Religion has been committed by a man who imagines that Islam is defended by the denial of the Mathematical Sciences, seeing that there is nothing in the revealed Truth opposed to these Sciences by way either of negation or affirmation, and nothing in these Sciences opposed to the Truth of Religion."

### **IBN KHALDUN DEPRECATES SCIENCE**

The temper of the age had turned away from Science, and no body cared for the lamentations of great Muslim sages of the stature of *Imam Ghazali* and *Hafiz Taimiyah*. *Taqlid* and *Sufism* now directed the declining path of Muslim *Ulamā* hence forward. *Ibn Khaldun* (1332- 1406), one of the greatest Muslim Historians held in high esteem among the *Ulamā* of the 14th Century and thereafter, deprecated the study of Science in his renowned Treatise *Muqaddimāh*. He observes, "It is clear that the problems of Physics are of no importance for us in our religious affairs. Therefore, we must leave them alone."

*Ibn Khaldun* was highly respected in the Islamic World as a learned person of his times. His words of apathy against Science led to discouragement of Scientific studies. Little did he realise that isolation from

Science was going to spell intellectual death of Muslims.

### INTELLECTUAL STAGNATION

In their great days in the 9th and 10th Centuries A.D., the Muslims had founded in *Baghdad* and *Cairo* International Institutes of Advanced Studies, called *Baitul Hikmā*, and ran International Concourses of Scholars there. But this was to be no more from 1300 A.D. onwards. Thereafter all studies were concentrated on Religious Tradition only, which was valued more than Science. The Faculty of criticism by which a young Researcher questions whenever he had doubts, or re-examines the problems he is taught, or brings forth newer concepts, was no longer tolerated. The student was simply to accept, memorise and propagate what was taught, and had no right to question.

This kind of adverse attitude of *Ulamā* since after *Ibn Khaldun's* days, caused intellectual stagnation and spelt the virtual death of scientific urge in Muslim talent. The Faculty of criticism, investigation and examination which used to bring forth new initiatives and fresh concepts, was no longer allowed to operate. All learning relating to Religious Precepts, Dogmas or Traditions were to flourish hence forward. Establishment of new Madrasahs began with thanks giving services for the demise of scientific studies.

Intellectual indifference continued from *Ibn Khaldun's* days onwards, even during the high days of great Islamic Empires of *Ottoman Turks*, of *Iranian Safvis* and of the great *Indian Moghuls*. The *Shahinshāhs* of these resplendent Empires were cognizant of the technological advancement in the Ship-building and Navigational skills of the Portuguese, and of the methods of Gun-founding of the Genoese, and of the discovery



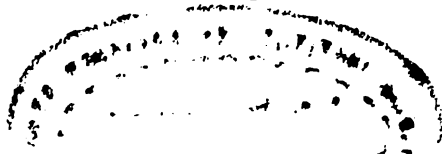
by the Europeans of the Ocean routes for expansion of World trade and commerce. But the Ulamā of Imperial courts diverted the attention of the Rulers and Noble men from the futility of worldly pursuits to the excellence of Religious and Spiritual attainments.

### **THE BOON AND BANE OF ISLAMIC SOCIETY**

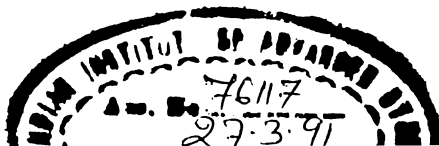
The entire course of Islamic history is chequered with currents and cross-currents of two dissimilar, if not antagonistic, ideals of Faith and Practice. In the first category, there were the indefatigable crusaders of unflinching determination and ardent zeal, working as Pioneers and Standard-bearers of Islam, who saved millions of Muslims from being swept away by the floods of heresy and materialism through their lectures and exhortations, sermons and discourses, teachings and discipline.

In the second category, there were the Schools of Rationalists, Dilecticians, Philosophers, Free-thinkers and Dissenters, who innovated novel ways of explaining the attributes of God, the tenets of Religion and mysteries of Creation. Some of them even transgressed into the arena of atheism. There were also some short-sighted Theologians who refused to see signs of changing times, or to study Science. Guided mostly by self-seeking motives, these Theologians propagated mis-interpretations of the Quran and Hadith, thereby distorting the purity of Islam.

The Islamic Society was thus confronted with two types of personalities in the field of Religion. The first category comprising great Savants and Scholars of impeccable virtue and uncommon talent, whose selfless service and sincere devotion kept alive the true spirit



of Islam. They may be broadly classified as '*Ulamā-e Rāshid*', or the rightly-guided *Ulamā*. The second category of Scholars imbued with evil genius, who created fissiparous trends within the fabric of Islam, or who raised the banner of revolt against the true Quranic authority, may be broadly classified as *Ulamā-e Fāsiq*, or the misguided *Ulamā*. The *Ulamā-e Rāshid* proved to be the **Boon** for the Islamic Society, while the *Ulamā-e Fāsiq* were virtually the **Bane** of the Islamic Society. The relevant particulars of these two categories of *Ulamā* form the subject matter of the Chapters that follow.



### Chapter 3

## ULAMĀ-E RĀSHID (*THE ANGELS OF BOON*)

### **THE GREAT LUMINARIES OF ISLAM**

The Islamic Religious Movement, in its career of a thousand and four hundred years, often vigorously surged ahead, though facing hurdles and obstacles at times. Its rapid growth and expansion was the result of the devotion and zeal of great savants, who left indelible marks in the History of Islam.

These savants, who were men of vast learning and piety, relentlessly fought against forces of schism, heresy and irreligion, and defended the Doctrines and Tenets of Islam with a view to maintain purity of Faith. Besides they made valuable contribution in the field of spiritual enlightenment and intellectual development of the Ummah. Their approach and method differed occasionally according to the needs and circumstances of the times, but all of them had the common object of propagation or restoration of correct Islamic Faith and Practice.

At times, Islam suffered from evil effects of mis-interpretation of the Holy Quran and Sunnah, speculative thoughts, materialism and innovations, but on every such occasion, a man of God appeared and counteracted the impious deviations from the true spirit of Faith, propounded the teachings of the Prophet correctly, succeeded in removing heresy and alien influences, and restoring the unalloyed precepts of Islam.

This was the task of great luminaries of Islam, the rightly-guided Ulamā otherwise called the *Ulamā-e Rashid*. They provided a new driving force, a new lease of life to the Religion of God, whenever there was the emergence of evil forces, ignorance or heresy. In the deteriorating social conditions resulting from decadence of morals and shrinkage of Faith, the rank and file as well as the elite were lost in stark materialism, keeping themselves drowned in all sorts of mundane vices. On such occasions some savants appeared, who on account of their burning Faith in Islam, as well as on account of their heart-felt distress at the degeneration of the Ummah, rose in action to save the Religion from being swept away in the storm of godlessness. These inspired souls often detached themselves from worldly fascinations, and worked for the propagation of true Faith by expounding and preaching the teachings of the Quran and the Sunnah. History is replete with instances how these men of God were able to hold their own against powerful Emperors' unreasonable demands, antagonism of men of alien creeds, and even wars and deprivations. In these circumstances, the contribution of Theologians, Reformers and Scientists in the matter of protecting the purity and integrity of Faith against heresies and innovations was not the less in any way than the sacrifice of Soldiers fighting in Battle fields in defence of Islamic Commonwealth.

The number of such eminent luminaries who came to the rescue of Islam in times of need, is beyond count. Out of such a vast number of saviours and savants, a panel of 15 great personalities has been chosen for study of their noble services in the cause of Islam. The panel comprises some of the most notable Ulamā, divided into three groups, namely, (A) Scientists, (B) Theologians and Divines, and (C) Reformers and Scholars. In view of the

vastness of the field of study and the limitation of the scope of the present undertaking, there can not be any pretence of making the work comprehensive. To an extent however, it is representative of different categories of savants, and is fairly informative.

## (A) SCIENTISTS

### 1. *Al-Biruni* (973-1048)

Abu Raihan Muhammad bin Ahmed Al-Biruni was born in 973 A.D. in *Khiva, Uzbekistan*, now in *USSR*. He is Arab by origin. George Sarton, Author of the monumental *History of Science* describes him as 'one of the greatest Scientists of all times'. Equipped with a scientific bent of mind, creative thinking, keen observation and deep insight, he wrote books on Chronology, Astronomy, Optics, Minerology, Geography, History, Medicine, Anatomy, Physics, Chemistry, Mathematics and Philosophy, and came to India where he learnt Sanskrit, studied and wrote on Gita, Upanishads and the Vedas. He also translated Classic Works from Sanskrit to Arabic and from Arabic to Sanskrit. Combining brilliance of mind with vastness of knowledge, he is considered as the most versatile intellectual that ever lived and breathed on the earth.

Apart from sharp intellect and memory, Al-Biruni's keen observation was amazing. By such observation, he was able to conclude that India at one time was an extensive bed of Ocean. In his book on India *Tahqiq-e Hind*, which is considered the most authoritative Treatise on India of the 11th Century, he observes:

"... But if you see the soil of India with your own eyes and meditate on its nature, if you consider the rounded stones found in earth however deeply you dig, stones

that are huge near the mountains and where the rivers have a violent current, stones that are of smaller size at a greater distance from the mountains and where the streams flow more slowly, stones that appear pulverised in the shape of sand where the streams begin to stagnate near their mouths and near the sea—if you consider all this, you can scarcely help thinking that India was once a sea, which by degrees has been filled up by the alluvium of the streams."

Al-Biruni is regarded as the first serious Indologist, who created an urge in Foreign Countries for the study of Indian Science. He was also a great Sanskritologist making a deep study of Gita and Upanishads, and translating many authoritative Works into Arabic, namely, *Sankhya* by *Kapila*, *Brahmasiddhanta* by *Brahmagupta*, *Brihatsamhita* by *Varahamira*, and also translated from Arabic into Sanskrit the Works of Euclid, Ptolemy and Greek Astronomers.

Al-Biruni is the Author of 150 works noted for originality and authority. His discoveries and inventions excite the wonder and admiration of modern Scholars and Scientists. He calculated the circumference of the Earth, employed Geodesic methods and Trigonometry in determining Latitudes and Longitudes, and discussed the possibility of the Earth's rotation round its own axis nearly 600 years before Galileo. He also investigated into the relative speed of Light and Sound, and determined the specific gravity of 18 precious stones and minerals. As a Surgeon, he performed delicate Caesarian Operation in delayed cases of delivery by women.

Al-Biruni sought wisdom in India, and in return gave Arabian and Greek wisdom to India. He opened the eyes of Muslims to the Cultural and Spiritual heritage

of the Hindus, explaining Indian terms in Arabic words that have their own connotations in Islamic Philosophy.

## 2. **Abu Ibn-e Sina (980-1037)**

Abu Ibn-e Sina, known to the Western World as *Avicenna*, was born in Bokhara in 980 A.D. Professor Philip Hitti writes about him as an eminent Physician, Philosopher, Philologist and Poet, in whom the Arab Science was incarnated. *Professor Browne* ranks him as equal to *Aristotle*.

Ibne-e Sina became Hafiz-e Quran at the age of ten years, and was appointed as the Court Physician at the age of 18. He was the author of nearly 45 books on different subjects, such as Literature, Philosophy, Science and Medicine, some comprising as many as 20 volumes. On results of Research, he established that Light is an emission by the luminous sources of particles travelling at finite speed, and he explained the nature of Heat, Force and Motion.

But Ibne-Sina's contribution of undying fame relates to Medicine. His famous book on Medicine, *al-Qanun fi al-Tibb*, comprising 5 volumes, is an Encyclopaedia of Medicine and Surgery. *Dr. Max Mayerhof* says of this book, "Probably, no Medical Work ever written has been so much studied, and is still in current use in Orient. Its influence on Western Medical System was overwhelming." The book was translated into Latin in the 12th Century, and went through 15 Latin Editions and one Hebrew Edition by the 15th Century. There were untold number of Arabic Editions.

## 3. **Ibn-al Haitham (965-1039) and Other Scientists**

Al-Biruni and Ibn-e Sina's contemporary, Ibn-al Haitham, known to the West as Alhazen, is regarded as

the greatest Physicist of all times. His contribution is of the highest order in Optics. He enunciated that a ray of light, in passing through a medium, takes the path which is the easier and quicker. He also enunciated the *Law of Inertia*, later to become *Newton's first Law of Motion*, and described the process of refraction in mechanical terms, later elaborated by Newton.

There were scores of other Muslim Scientists of repute in the Middle Ages. *Al-Khazini* of Merv (12th Century) in his Treatise *The Book of Balance of Wisdom* worked out a theory of universal gravity directed towards the Centre of the Earth. He also assumed that air has weight.

Another Scientist, *Qutbuddin al-Shirazi* (1236-1311) gave the first explanation of Rainbow, and theorised that the speed of light is in inverse ratio to the optical density of the medium, and that hyperboloidal lenses avoid spherical aberration.

*Al-Hajjaj Ibn Yusuf* translated into Arabic Euclid's famous book *The Elements*. Euclid's many other books were translated by several Arab Authors, namely, *Ishaq Ibn Hunain*, *Abu Usman Al-Damashqi*, *Al-Nayrizi*, *Al-Karabizi*, and *Al-Jawhari*. There were many Scientists who wrote commentaries on Euclid's Theories, namely, *Abu Ja'far al-Khazin al-Khurasani*, *Abul Wafa* and *Abu Yusuf al-Razi*.

## (B) THEOLOGIAN AND DIVINES

### 1. **Abul Hasan Al-Ash'ari (873-935)**

Abul Hasan Al-Ash'ari was born in *Basra* in 873 A.D. in the line of one of the reputed companions of the Prophet. He was precociously intelligent and sagacious.



and had inherent capabilities for debates and polemics. From his childhood, he was brought up in the circle of *Mu'tazili Scholars*, and was considerably influenced by their Philosophy. But after advanced education, he began to contemplate, and ultimately developed a dislike for the Rationalist School when he was 40 years old. He realised that the intellectual sophistry of *Mu'tazili Thought* appeared good reasonings on rationalist yardstick, but it failed to satisfy the inner urge, as well as the search for Truth, which could only be found in Revealed Books.

In his matured stage, he adopted a middle course between the *Mu'tazilis* and the Traditionalists. He neither accepted the claim of Reason to get at Metaphysical realities as held by the *Mu'tazilis*, nor did he agree with the Hanbalite Traditionalists in totally rejecting Reason for comprehension of Religion. He agreed with the orthodox thinking that the revelation of the Holy Book and the teachings of the Prophet were the ultimate basis of Faith. On the other hand, he dismissed the rigid dogmatism of the Orthodox School that the issues pertaining to Intellect and Perception should be avoided. With these views, Al-Ash'ari became the Founder of the Islamic Scholasticism known as *Kalam*.

Al-Ash'ari is said to have written about 250 Treatises, including the *Commentary on the Quran*, which ran into 30 volumes. Another Treatise produced by him is titled *Kitab-ul Fusul* comprising 12 volumes, which refutes the Philosophy of Rationalists, Atheists, Naturalists and all other principal Religions of the world, such as *Hinduism, Judaism, Christianity* and *Fire-worship*.

With his prolific writings, sweeping lectures and the skill of a gifted Dilectician, he was able to stem the rising tide of Rationalism advanced by *'Itizal Philosophy*. He was unrivalled in moral excellence and spiritual eminence, and used to spend whole nights in vigil and Prayers. His disciples contributed to the development of the Ash'arite School of Thought, and exerted an immense influence to enable the Orthodox School to gain supremacy in the Islamic World. Al-Ash'ari died in 935 A.D., and was burried in Baghdad.

## **2. *Abu Hamid Muhammad Al-Ghazali (1058-1110)***

Abu Hamid Muhammad Al-Ghazali was born in 1058 A.D. at Tus, near *Tabran*. He was a man of lofty ideals, had precocious intellectual gift and was known for his encyclopaedic knowledge.

Al-Ghazali began his studies in his home town on the subject of Shafe'i Jurisprudence, and then went to *Naishapur* for Higher Education. His outstanding intellectual attainments were soon recognised, and he was appointed as a Lecturer in Naishapur College at an early age. After a few years, he left Naishapur. *Nizam-ul Mulk*, the Prime Minister of the Abbaside Empire, appointed him as a Professor of the Nizamiyah University at *Baghdad*. *This was a coveted academic position, previously held by old and senior erudite Scholars, and now held by a young man in his early thirties.*

*Being a man of deep introspection and inner discipline, Al-Ghazali's heart became restless under an urge to forsake all worldly possessions and position. He decided to quit his teaching vocation, and to withdraw into a life of asceticism and solitary contemplation. Leading such a life, he came to realise that Mystics were*

truly godly, their life most beautiful, their rules of conduct most sensible, and their morality the purest.

But the closest associates and spiritual friends of Al-Ghazali felt that he had a more important role to play. On their persistent solicitations, Al-Ghazali had to return from seclusion to public life. Simultaneously, he made a critical evaluation of the perils faced by Islam due to spread of Atheism and Batanite heresy. Being a brilliant Dilectician and prolific writer, he took up the challenge on finding that there was contamination of Morals and Religion all round, and that a vicious atmosphere had degraded the laity and the elite, the savants and the illiterate alike. He began a counter-attack on irreligious movements by widespread Lectures, and by writing volumes of books on Islamic Literature and Ethics. He was thus able to stem the tide of heretical thoughts.

Imam Ghazali's spiritual eminence, intellectual zeal and powerful pen enabled him to produce scores of authoritative Literature in defence of Islam. Of all his literary products, the most celebrated one is '*Ihya Uloom id-Din*', which has left lasting effects in moulding the moral, ethical and spiritual character of the Islamic World. The *Ihya* is a brilliant testimony to the tremendous zeal and ardent desire of the Author to revivify the true Faith of Islam. This great treatise and also other writings provided a penetrating insight into the mysteries of eternal beauty of Life. They have left an indelible mark on the contemporary and later Thoughts on Islamic Philosophy and Theology.

Imam Ghazali held the view that the study of Theology had debased itself, as the Ulamā of his age had "developed an extremism in the cultivation and practice

of their different branches of learning, which had obscured from their view the essence of the true Faith. Jurists were stretching their legal quibblings too far to include all sorts of futile juristic issues; Dilecticians deemed it worth while to engage in specious reasoning and irrelevant polemics; Traditionists busied themselves with unnecessary Researches into the terms and phrases used in the Traditions and their Derivatives."

He vigorously criticised the Theologians and said, "The Secular Sciences pertaining to Mathematics, Medicine and other useful Arts do not produce so much self-deception among their students, as is born out of Religious Sciences". He divided the Secular Sciences into six branches, namely, Mathematics, Logic, Politics, Ethics, Physics and Metaphysics, and held that the first five should not be discarded suspecting them to be opposed to Religion; on the other hand, the study of these Sciences is necessary for the development of Islamic Society, and is '*Farz-e Kefaya*', which is an obligation for the Community as a whole, and which if not acquired by at least some Members of the Community, the entire Community was liable to be considered sinful. He was however opposed to the study and propagation of Metaphysics.

Imam Ghazali was bitter against the Ruling Monarchs. He says that the Caliphs succeeding the Prophet were Scholars and Jurists, competent to give spiritual guidance to the people, as well as to administer the State. But the Caliphs of his days were undeserving and incompetent persons presiding over the Islamic Commonwealth. They remained indifferent to the degradation of Religion, the Society and the Mass. He says, "The people have become depraved because of their Rulers, and the Rulers because of the Ulamā, who have

been demoralised on account of their love for wealth, power and honour." He further observed that the "Ulamā were supposed to be the Physicians, but they were themselves confined to sick-bed, and were unable to cure others."

Imam Ghazali died at Tabran in 1110 A.D. at the age of 55 years. There may be only a few Personalities in the World comparable to Imam Ghazali in brilliance of mind, and in totality of knowledge he possessed. His epoch-making writings were the natural products of his high intellectual and spiritual attainments, which served as the harbinger of a vigorous inspiration for the purification of Soul, and for mystic communion with God. His writings are held in high esteem and are profitably read by Scholars and Writers even in the present times.

### **3. Sayyid Shah Abdul Qadir Jilani (1077-1166)**

Born in 1077 in Jilan, a Province of Iran, Muhiuddin Sayyid Shah Abdul Qadir Jilani was the eleventh descendant of *Hazrat Ali*, the Fourth among *Khulafa-e Rashideen*. At the age of 18 years, he came to *Baghdad* to receive education under renowned Teachers such as *Abul Wafa Ibn 'Aqueel* and others. Thereafter, he practised Mysticism under reputed Sufi Teachers, *Shaikh Abul Khair Hammad* and *Qazi Abu Sa'eed Makhrami*. Finally, he received the authority of his mentors to initiate others into Sufistic Order.

After his education and Mystic schooling was over, Abdul Qadir started his career as a Teacher in the Seminary of his Preceptor *Qazi Makhrami*. His lectures and sermons were so inspiring that the rush of students and the over-crowding by general audience compelled the Institution to plan extension to the Building. The

fame of Abdul Qadir's piety and the depth of his erudition spread far beyond the bounds of Baghdad, and attracted the Ruler, the Nobility and the rank and file from near and distant places to come and attend his sermons. A large number of Scholars, Jurists and Ulamā also benefited by listening to his learned discourses.

Abdul Qadir was widely known for his piety, devotion and moral excellence as well as for his modesty, hospitality and generosity. The people cherished implicit reverence for his virtuous mind and pious acts in daily life. He often left his studies or personal engagements in order to attend first to the needs of a child, a destitute or a slave. He was close as much to the poor as to the rich, provided the person concerned was good and sincere.

Glowing tributes have been paid by contemporary writers to the spiritual attainments of Abdul Qadir. He was found very often deeply immersed in meditation and remembrance of God. He would burst into tears in course of his Prayers, and there was the general conviction that his Prayers were readily answered. He never sought revenge, never cursed any body but only expressed displeasure when Divine Commandments were infringed. He took pleasure in feeding the poor and in spending for the needy. At times, if he had nothing to give, he would part with the upper clothes on his body. He is remembered in the Muslim World by the reverential epithet of "*Ghaus-ul Āzam*."

He was a follower of the *Harbalite School of Sunni Theology*, and on this basis he endeavoured to root out innovations and deviations from the orthodox norms. Whenever religious or legal questions were referred to

him, he would formulate answers or give *Fatwā* if called for, by following the Shafe'ite or Hanbalite Schools of Jurisprudence.

Among the Treatises produced by him, '*Futuh-ul Ghaib*' and '*Al-Falah Al-Rabbari*' are noted for their inspiring message of Divine Sublimity, Mercy and Benevolence. His penetrating vision of Divine attributes and his sturdy faith in *Tawheed* or Unity of God are symptomatic of his close affinity with the successors of the Prophet of Islam. The dissemination of Theological knowledge through his books, the efficacy of his sermons, the moral and spiritual excellence inherent in his character and the inspiring influence exercised by him over men of his times and subsequent times, have elevated him as one of the most venerated men of God ever born in the realm of Islam. He died in 1166 A.D. at the age of 90 years, leaving quite a large number of his pious and devout disciples to carry on his teachings of purification of the Soul and of the love of God.

#### **4. *Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti (1135-1235)***

Sayyid Moinuddin, son of *Sayyid Gyasuddin Hassan* of Sanjar, a town in Khorasan, was born in 1135 A.D. He lost his father and mother at the age of 15 years before his early education was complete. Thereafter, he left his home Town, and proceeded to well-known Centres of Learning for higher education. He reached Samarkand and then Bokhara, and spent 17 years in these Cities acquiring enlightenment and knowledge under distinguished Teachers. After completion of his final education, he was considered well-qualified for high and honourable ranks, such as Grand Qazi or Sheikh-ul Islam of the State, but he was averse to acceptance of any Worldly dignity.

Sayyid Moinuddin acquired the appellations of 'Khwaja' and 'Chishty' owing to his being the eighth successor of the Founder of the Spiritual School established by *Khwaja Abu Ishaq* of Chisht, who died in 954 A.D. All the disciples of this great Teacher were distinguished by the prefix of Khwaja and suffix of Chishty. Thereafter, Sayyid Moinuddin used to be named and remembered reverentially as Khwaja Moinuddin Chishty.

From his youth, the Khwaja used to remain absorbed in contemplation over the transient nature of Worldly life, and in seeking God through Piety and Prayers. In his quest of God, he moved to places of eminent Saints and Sufis. At the age of 32, he left *Bokhara* for *Harwan*, and got initiated into the discipline of *Khwaja Usman Harwani*. For 20 years, he received spiritual guidance, until he became a full-fledged *Dervish*, and was named as the successor of his eminent mentor. At this stage, he could have built a Khanquah (Monastery), and initiated the King, the Noble men and pious Citizens as his disciples, but his heart was set for other obligations of higher level. He took leave of his Preceptor, and went on a Pilgrimage to *Mecca* and *Medina*. At this time, he was 52 years old.

In one prayerful night at Medina, the Khwaja was blessed with a vision of the Prophet in a dream, wherein the Prophet directed him to proceed to *Hindustan* on a Mission. The Khwaja left Medina, proceeded to Baghdad, where his maternal Uncle, *Abdul Qadir Jilani* lies buried, and then started on his long and arduous journey to Hindustan, passing through important Centres of Culture, namely, *Hamadan*, *Tabreiz*, *Aspahan*, *Herat*, *Balkh* and other cities of importance. On the way, the magnetic personality and spiritual halo of the Khwaja



easily attracted many of the Nobility and Citizens into the circle of his disciples. Thereafter, he passed through *Lahore* and reached *Delhi*, where he stayed for a while, and then proceeded to his final destination, the City of *Ajmer* along with 40 companions. The number of persons who accepted his spiritual leadership and became his disciples during the course of journey from *Baghdad* to *Ajmer* is estimated at 700 by *T.W. Arnold*, Author of '*Preaching of Islam*'.

That was the time when the Rajput King *Prithvi Raj Chauhan* was ruling over *Delhi* and *Ajmer*. He was obsessed with a prejudice that the arrival of the Dervish at *Ajmer* did not augur well for the Hindu Kingdom. The King took stern measures to drive out the Khwaja from *Ajmer*, but the Khwaja held firm, for he knew that the days of *Prithvi Raj* were numbered. In the mean while, *Prithvi Raj* forcibly carried away the daughter of *Jai Chand*, the Rathor King of *Kanauj*, resulting in disunity among the Hindu Kings of Northern India. *Sultan Muhammad Ghori* of *Ghazni* took advantage of the situation, attacked the Kingdom of *Delhi* and *Ajmer* in 1192 A.D., defeated and killed *Prithvi Raj*, and laid the foundation of the Sultanate of *Delhi*.

The inimical atmosphere of *Ajmer* at the time of arrival of the Khwaja changed into favourable times due to spiritual grace and blissful influence resulting from the Khwaja's presence in that City. Year after year, the City developed into a place of pilgrimage, not only for the Muslims but also for men of other Faiths. Princes and Noble men, Kings and Emperors, the poor and the destitute, and men and women of all classes and creeds began to pay homage to the Khwaja in his life time, and to visit his Shrine after his demise. *Emperor Akbar* walked on foot from *Agra* to *Ajmer*, a distance of 250

miles, in fulfilment of a '*minnat*' (humble vow). Emperors *Jahangir*, *Shah Jahan* and *Aurangzeb* also visited the Shrine to pay their personal homage to the Saint.

The Khwaja breathed his last in Ajmer in the year 1235 A.D. at the age of 100 years. His death anniversary is celebrated with solemnity every year from the 1st to the 6th of the month of Rajab. Thousands of devotees of all classes and from distant places participate on this solemn occasion.

### **5. *Maulana Jalaluddin Rumi (1207-1273)***

Muhammad Jalaluddin was born in 1207 A.D. in Balkh, a City of *Khorasan*. He descended, on father's side from *Hazrat Abu Bakr*, and on mother's side from *Hazrat Ali*. He is thus linked by ties of blood with the Khulafa-e Rashideen. His father, *Muhammad Bahauddin* was an outstanding Sufi Teacher, having an extensive circle of disciples. Impressed with Bahauddin's high erudition, the Sultan of Balkh appointed him as the Head of the renowned Madrasah at Konya (Galatia).

Jalaluddin received systematic education in *Islamic Theology*, and was initiated into Sufi discipline. Due to his high talent and education, combined with exemplary piety, he succeeded his father as the Head of the Konya Madrasah. As he was the most learned man of his time in the Kingdom of Rum (Anatolia in modern Turkey), he used to be reverentially called as Maulana Rumi.

Rumi wanted to enhance the level of his learning. So at the age of 26, he proceeded to *Haleb* and *Damascus*, which were great Centres of Learning and Culture in those days. After a stay of 5 years, he returned to Konya to resume his teaching work in the Madrasah. He used to spend his spare time in preaching

the essentials of Islam and in receiving questions on Law and Justice, and replying them by his authoritative *Fatwas*.

A change in his life came at the age of 35, when he met *Shams Tabrez*, a mysterious Sufi Saint, who won the adoration of Rumi. Shams Tabrez helped Rumi to develop inner vision in order to grasp the mysteries of the Heavens and the Earth through Spiritual illumination. Rumi was overwhelmed with the new insight into Divine Love and raptures, and became so closely pre-occupied with the companionship of Shams Tabrez that he neglected contact with his own disciples. The disciples became antagonistic to Shams Tabrez, who ultimately disappeared from Konya, so that he might no more stand as an obstruction between Rumi and the multitude of his disciples. Rumi's distress knew no bounds. He became restless and moved from place to place in search of Shams Tabrez, but in vain.

Rumi's utter disappointment on failure to trace out Shams Tabrez was divinely counterpoised by the effulgence of fresh spiritual illumination within his own self. He selected Sayyid Hisamuddin Turk as his Spiritual Vice-regent particularly because this disciple had the occasion to attend the esoteric teachings of Shams Tabrez. Hisamuddin fully justified the selection on the basis of his own spiritual attainments and personal piety. Seeing that the disciples of Rumi were studying the esoteric literature of various other Authors, Hisamuddin requested Rumi to compose mystical odes which his disciples would like to recite. Rumi at once agreed, and produced rapturous lores which came to be known as the famous *Mathnavi* of Maulana Rumi.

The *Mathnavi* is a manifestation of the Maulana's

tremendous spiritual vitality and fervour of Love inherent in his self. The fire of Divine Love was lying dormant under cover of his piety and Prayers. As soon as Shams Tabrez cast his spell upon him, and Hisamuddin awakened the inner yearnings, Rumi's hidden spirituality was animated, and he produced enchanting lyrics unfolding the mysteries of Divine Love, and describing the supreme ecstasies and raptures attained in course of Sufistic meditations. The Mathnavi explains how the fire of Love provides spiritual food and energy to the Seekers of Truth. In style and diction, the Mathnavi is a supreme literary creation. It is also distinguished for its value of ecstasy and love, its sublimity of thoughts and originality of presentation, its devotional themes and spiritual illumination.

Maulana Rumi died in 1273 A.D. at the age of 68 years. His funeral procession was thronged by an uncontrollable number of weeping citizens, disciples and admirers, including a large number of Christians and Jews. During the last seven hundred years since he departed, the Muslim World has been drawing solace, inspiration and guidance from the Life and Works of this great savant of Islam.

## **6. Sheikh-ul Islam Hafiz Ibn Taimiyah (1263-1328)**

*Ahmed Taqi ud-Din Ibn Taimiyah* was born in Northern Iraq in 1263 A.D. in a family of renowned Scholars. His father, *Shahab ud-Din Ibn Taimiyah* was a Professor of Hadith in the Damascus University, and Grand father, *Sheikh Abul Barkat Ibn Taimiyah* was an eminent man of letters, Author and Teacher. Taqi ud-Din was seven years old when the Mongols invaded and devastated Iraq and neighbouring Countries, resulting in destruction of Centres of Learning and Culture.

followed by Political anarchy.

Ibn Taimiyah received sound education in Religious and Secular Sciences. He had ardent desire for acquisition and comprehension of underlying Truths in Quranic Literature. So he studied about a hundred Commentaries of the Holy Scripture, including those of Hanbalite and Ash'arite Scholars. At the age of 23 years, he succeeded his father as the Professor of Damascus University, a high Post reserved only for the most eminent Theologian. His first Lecture in the University created sensational reaction among the learned divines of the city, who were overwhelmed with admiration and astonishment at the exceptional erudition of the young man.

During the later period of *Abbaside Rule*, the social and intellectual life of the people had suffered degradation, particularly as a result of devastation in the wake of *Mongol invasion*. Most of the Ulamā and Sufis were stipendiaries of the State, and were known to be perverted and corrupt. When Ibn Taimiyah began necessary Reforms movement, they raised hue and cry against him, vilified and slandered him, pronounced him a renegade and a bitter enemy of the Sufis and Ulamā. On these charges, they persuaded people not to offer Prayers behind him, and declared that his writings are fit to be destroyed by fire.

But Ibn Taimiyah was a determined fighter and Social Reformer, having unmatched erudition not attained by any Ulamā of his times. In planning his Reforms movement, he drew inspiration from the Quran and the Sunnah, and from the lives and teachings of Prophet's Companions and early Imams. With a probing intellect and critical mind, he was able to set at rest

many of the deviations initiated or encouraged by the Ulamā, and freshly established true tenets of Islam. After sober and judicious study on the subject of *Ijtihad*, he declared the '*Gate of Ijtihad*' open, and defined how to use one's knowledge and ability in that field.

The Reforms movement of Ibn Taimiyah may be broadly classified into four heads, namely:

(a) He put Greek Philosophy to a more searching and critical test than had been done by Imam Ghazali, and successfully exposed its falacies and inconsistencies so that its importance in Rationalist circle was lost to a great extent.

(b) His method of preaching Islamic Faith and Tenets was simple and convincing. It was done strictly in conformity with the *Quran* and *Sunnah*.

(c) He raised a strong voice against '*Taqlid*' (unthoughtful obedience to old practices). He also propounded the principles of opening the '*Gate of Ijtihad*', laying down the correct procedure of exercising the authority.

(d) He declared it an act of '*Shirk*' to worship Saints, or to seek favours from departed Souls. Visit to Shrines and Tombs was discouraged.

Ibn Taimiyah ruthlessly condemned the wrong customs and practices that had crept into Islam for Centuries, even though the Ulamā had sanctioned them under influence of the State or on account of their own personal considerations. He cleansed Islam of all prevailing impurities, and purged all shades of impious innovations and evils, and presented to the World the *Quranic* Religion in its original pure form. He did not spare any body howsoever high from his out-spoken criticism. Even those who enjoyed unqualified

reverence and respect from the masses, were not immune from his cogent deliberations. Some of the Ulamā and Theologians who felt offended by such blunt criticism, got him tried for heresy, and sent him to prison several times. Eventually, he breathed his last in the Jail.

Ibn Taimiyah's literary pursuits and his devotion to God were so engaging that he never undertook the responsibilities of married life. His Commentaries on the Quran show that he had reached the core of the Holy Book, and his eloquence succeeded in disseminating the abiding Truths right into the heart of men around. Whether he wrote on Speculative Sciences or on Religion, Jurisprudence or Ethics, his treatment was strikingly comprehensive because of his encyclopaedic knowledge. His orations had the magic effect of awakening strong religious fervour among the spell-bound audience. But his intellectual brilliance combined with inspiring personality which overshadowed his contemporaries was a constant source of trouble through out his saintly life.

Ibn Taimiyah died in 1328, while undergoing a sentence of imprisonment. His funeral was attended by over half a lakh of weeping admirers, men and women.

### (C) REFORMERS AND SCHOLARS

#### 1. **Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan (1817-1898)**

Sayyid Ahmad Khan, a dynamic and resplendent personality of the 19th Century India, came of an aristocratic and highly respectable family, tracing its geneology to *Hazrat Imam Hussain*, and owning spiritual allegiance to noted Saints of Naqshbandi Sufi Order. Migrating originally from *Herat*, the family settled down

in India, and remained closely attached to Moghul Emperors for Centuries. Sayyid Ahmad's paternal grand father, *Sayyid Hadi*, was a Senior Mansabdar and Qazi-e Lashkar, while his maternal grand father *Khwaja Fariduddin*, was the Wazir of Emperor Akbar Shah II.

In this family of high pedigree, Sayyid Ahmad was born in 1817 in Delhi. His father, *Sayyid Muttaqi*, was a man of versatile talent, who declined high Political assignments, being a Sufi recluse. His mother, *Aziz-un Nisa*, was noted for fervent piety and exceptional ability and gave early lessons in Quran and Islamics to her son.

Sayyid Ahmad received education in Arabic, Elementary Persian, Mathematics and Tibb, which ended at the age of 18. He did not learn English, even though the Delhi English College had come into existence then, as some Ulamā described it as an "Abode of Ignorance". Later, he picked up working knowledge in English. Thus his formal education was limited, but he compensated it by private studies and by keeping company with learned men like *Hali*, *Ghalib* and others.

He turned out to be a prolific writer, producing '*Risā lās*' and books one after the other, such as, *The Survey of Delhi's Monuments*, a *Version of Abul Fazal's Ain-e Akbari*, Translations of many Persian Classical Works, *Ashab-i Baghawat-i Hind*, a Biography of the Prophet, four Volumes of Commentary of the Holy Quran and a host of other Publications. His literary productions became so large that he had to own and run a Printing Press at Ghazipur.

With a view to introduce Western Literature and Science to Indians, he established the Scientific Society at Ghazipur. The Society translated over 40 books of



Classical Literature and Science into Urdu, in addition to the publication of several Journals and Literary Papers.

When he lost his father at the age of 22, he got into the service of *East India Company* in various ranks, such as Apprentice, Sarishtadar, Naib Munshi, and finally as a Munsif. Earning good name from rank to rank, he was promoted as a Judge of the Small Cause Court at Benares. He continued in Government Service for 38 years, but devoted most of his time in literary pursuits and in social services. He lost his wife when he was 44 years old, and never married for the second time till his death at the age of 81 years in 1898.

Sayyid Ahmad's visit to *England* in 1869 was a landmark in the formulation of his educational programmes. That year, his son *Sayyid Mahmood* won a State Scholarship for higher studies in Cambridge University. He accompanied his son. His main object was to make a first hand study of the system of Education in Oxford and Cambridge. Secondly, as he had been hurt by *Sir William Muir's* book '*Life of Mahomet*', he wanted to produce a Rejoinder, after collecting necessary materials from Libraries in England. Moreover, he wanted to study whatever was good in Foreign Countries to enable him to carry on Reform in India.

He spent 17 months in England, and utilised the opportunity to visit famous Institutions, Museums, Engineering Concerns, Ship-building Yards, Gun Foundries and Vessels of War. He attended meetings of several Societies, dined at Clubs and private houses, saw Carlyle, met *Queen Victoria* and received the Star of India from the Secretary of State. Upon such rich experience, he was convinced that if Indians are to

become a great Nation, they must be acquainted with the Arts and Sciences available to the British Citizens. Education, for Muslims particularly, was the panacea for all their evils in life, Society, Economy and in Political field. These evils will disappear with Education, or the Muslims will themselves disappear without Education.

Within three months of Sir Sayyid's return from England, a Committee started working for the establishment of a College for Muslims. He wanted to propagate the ideas through a Journal, '*Tahzib-e Akhlaq*'. The Journal was intended to persuade the Muslim Community to come out of its prison of ignorance, and face the challenge of the time. But the Muslims had not forgotten the loss of their 'Empire', and the Ulamā had the notion that Arabic was the Language of the Believers and English, the Language of infidels.

A storm of opposition was raised with the publication of the Journal. Some Ulamā called Sir Sayyid a *Kafir*, others called him a '*Shaitān*'. But there were many admirers also, including *Altāf Hussain Hali*, *Nawab Mohsin-ul Mulk* and others. In spite of some such support, Sir Sayyid faced terrific difficulties. With weeping eyes and sleepless nights, he stuck to his resolve and planned the foundation of what came to be known as *Mahomedan Anglo-Oriental College at Aligarh*. He sacrificed his personal comforts, took no notice of physical strain, lectured, toured and spoke to audiences far and distant, collected money through donations, lotteries, sale of books and pamphlets, and finally moved with a begging bag slung from his shoulder for collection of small charity. Generous contributions also came from large-hearted persons. The Rajas of Benares, Vizianagram and Patiala gave substantial donations. *Lord Northbrook*, the Viceroy, gave Rs 10,000 from his

personal fund. *Sir William Muir*, the Governor, released 75 acres of land allotted to the Military Department for construction of the College Campus.

The College was at long last established in May, 1875. Lord Lytton, the Viceroy of India laid the Foundation Stone of the Building in January, 1877. The College ultimately acquired the status of a University in 1920. *H.A.R. Gibb*, the Author of *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, calls it "the first Modernist Organisation in Islam". *Poet Iqbal* says that Sir Sayyid was the first Indian Muslim who reacted to the Modern age.

Though Islam as a Religion, is relevant to secular as well as to religious affairs, it was Sir Sayyid who gave it the necessary modern orientation. He will be remembered for good as the moderniser of Islam in India.

## **2. Sayyid Jamaluddin Afghani (1839-1897) and His Disciples**

Jamaluddin was educated from his childhood in Arabic and Islamic Theology. Later, he acquired depth of knowledge in Sufi Philosophy, and combined it with Sunni Orthodoxy. Finally, he preached reconciliation between the two Schools of Thought.

Jamaluddin travelled extensively in all the Middle East Countries, and contacted revered Scholars of *Iran, Arab, India and Turkey*. He also spent some time in *London and Paris*, and got acquainted with modern thoughts of Western Countries. He realised that the entire Muslim World was threatened by the powerful and dynamic West, and that being confronted with the penetrating power of Western influence, the Muslim Nations should not ignore them any longer. Jamaluddin

was dejected at the sorry plight of Muslim Nations, and wanted with unflinching zeal to awaken a keen consciousness of their weakness.

Two ways of meeting the challenge of the West appeared feasible to him. On the religious side, he laid emphasis on purification of Islamic Faith and Practice, as well as modernisation of Education. On the Political side, he endeavoured to remove the causes of conflict among the Muslim Nations, and to unite them into one single Authority charged with the defence of Faith.

By his inspiring speeches, Jamaluddin fired audience in all Muslim Countries to regain consciousness of how the Muslims had been mighty one day, but were weak now. He insisted that the resurgence of Islam was the responsibility of the Muslims themselves, and that their future would be great if they tried to make it so. This they can do if they developed reason, adopted intellectualism, and studied Western Science. He observed that the West was a dangerous *Evil* and must be resisted, because it was an enemy of Islam. But in order to resist the enemy, some amount of imitation of his strong points was necessary. The Muslims must therefore take to Western Science and Technology.

Jamaluddin's untiring campaigns through out the Middle East powerfully stirred Islamic fervour, and even contributed to the Political uprising in *Egypt* and *Persia*. He was the inspiration behind the concept of *Pan-Islamism*, which sought to unite all Muslim Nations under the banner of Ottoman Caliphate.

Jamaluddin chose to become a Political activist only for the sake of strengthening Islamic Regimes. He took

effective part in the internal Political affairs of Iran, as the Shah handed over the Nation's resources to the "enemies of Islam". In other countries also his vigorous activities stirred discontent for achieving social and religious Reforms. He was also responsible for Egyptian uprising against internal misrule.

While Jamaluddin combined Religion with Political activity, his disciple *Shaikh Muhammad Abduh* of Egypt (1849-1905), had the fore-sight to separate the political from the religious reforms. As a young Teacher of Theology in *Al-Azhar University*, he introduced a broader and more Scientific concept of Religious Education. He worked against strong opposition from conservative Ulamā and Political opponents, which he tried to neutralise by expounding his thoughts in the form of a Commentary of the *Quran*. He was a sincere Modernist and he fearlessly urged the pursuit of modern thought with the conviction that such thoughts in the long run will tend to confirm religious Truth of Islam, rather than undermine it in any way. He re-stated the relevance of Reason in Religious Thoughts, thereby restoring some amount of flexibility to a rigid and obsolete system.

*Muhammad Abduh's* contribution may be seen in two forms, namely spread of a type of Modernism which while holding to the basic tenets of Islam, is strongly influenced by Western ideas. Secondly, formation of a new Religious Party called '*Salafiya*' of which the principal Protagonist was Muhammad Abduh's disciple, *Shaikh Rashid Rida* of Syria (1865-1935). The Salafis uphold the Traditions of the early Muslim Leaders, and reject the authority of the Medieval Ulamā. They regard themselves as '*Neo-Hanbalites*', and hold that the '*Gate of Ijtihad*' is open, and that the individual has the right of interpreting matters of Theology and Law.

### 3. **Dr Sir Muhammad Iqbal (1876-1938)**

Dr Muhammad Iqbal of Kashmiri Brahmin origin, was born at Sialkot (Punjab) in 1876. His grand father, *Shaikh Rafiq*, was a pedlar of shawls, father *Nur Muhammad* was a Tailor, and elder brother *Atta Muhammad*, older by 16 years, was a Mechanical Overseer in the Army.

Atta Muhammad sent Iqbal to School and then to College. At 16, Iqbal entered Murray College at Sialkot and at 19, he moved to the Government College at Lahore, where he was a student of *Thomas Arnold*, the famous Author of '*Preaching of Islam*'. Iqbal left for *England* in 1905. For three years, he studied Philosophy at Cambridge and Law at London's Lincoln Inn. Finally, he proceeded to Munich University in Germany, where he wrote a Dissertation on Persian Metaphysics and was awarded a Doctorate. In 1922, he was honoured by conferment of Knighthood by the British India Government.

Recognition of Iqbal's Poetic talent came early in life. He first earned the fame of an extraordinary Poet in a Moshaira at *Lahore*, and started producing Works of Urdu Poetry one after the other. But he switched over while in England from Urdu to Persian when he felt that for gaining a wider audience, Persian was better suited being the lingua franca of the Muslim World. Moreover, it was a more suitable vehicle for expression of loftier thoughts.

Great Poetry is always the product of great vision of life. Iqbal's long Philosophical Poem '*Asrar-e Khudi*' is an eloquent expression of the concept of 'Man is the Centre of the Universe and the Final Cause'. In this respect, he compares favourably with Poets Dante and

Eliot, with both of whom he shares a cosmic vision, as well as moral and metaphysical notions. As regards the Philosophy behind the concept of '*Khudi*', Iqbal clarifies that *Khudi* is not vanity or arrogance, but really is self-realisation and self-assertion. It is a deep impulse within man, "a silent force anxious to come into action". Iqbal was an admirer of the German Philosopher Nietzsche, but was more appreciative of the Sufi concept of 'Perfect Man' rather than the Nietzschean idol of 'Superman'.

Iqbal was impressed with Europe's vitality. He mentions in the Foreword to '*Asrar-e Khudi*' (1915 Edition), "The Western Nations are pre-eminent among the Nations of the World. For this reason, and in order to appreciate the secrets of life, their Literature and ideas are the best guides for the Nations of the East". Iqbal however, did not like Europe's spirit of atheism. "Love is dead in the West", he wrote, "because thought has become irreligious."

Iqbal's mind demanded a final solution of man's problems. Such a solution could not be found in the West in spite of all its greatness, but it is possible to derive it from Islam. Against a vibrant Europe, there was the proud Traditions of Islam's Past. Western Thought is after all a direct descendant of the glorious Medieval intellectual culture of Islam.

Iqbal's Faith was deeply rooted in '*Pure Islam*', and not in the corrupt form of it that most Muslims usually practice. According to Iqbal, there is no room in pure Islam for reverence of tombs or for Sufistic thoughts. In his Research Work at Munich on Persia's Metaphysics, Iqbal pointed out that '*Tasawwuf*' was an alien and unhealthy growth, and had no solid historical foundation in original Islam. He held that the Sufis, like

the Buddhists and some Hindus, cherish the goal of the Self's annihilation in the Supreme Being, using the simile of a drop losing itself in the Ocean. But Iqbal boldly wanted man to be a pearl, not a drop of water. He wanted man to serve God and not merge in God. He sought conquest for man and not effacement of man, and held that '*wisal*' (union with God) was neither possible, nor desirable.

Iqbal wanted strong personalities to build the ideal society for the future, and despised the static ascetic, praised the restless worker, looked upon tension as dynamic and relaxation as death. Man must brave dangers, he must be a stone and not a glass, must be a diamond and not a dewdrop, must be a tiger and not a lamb. Iqbal attacked passivity in sweeping language and with the fire and brilliance that he commanded. Iqbal's laudation of man, and his concept of God and man being co-workers, represent a Theological Revolution, which was characterised by *Cartwell Smith* as "the most important and most necessary Revolution of Modern Islam."

In '*Shikwah*' the Poet is baffled and angry at God's ways, complaining that although the Muslims are the only people to practice the Faith of one God, the other who detest God or who admit plurality of Godhead, are blessed with Divine Grace, while the Muslims are left with nothing but 'lightning striking their head'.

In 'The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam', Iqbal attempts at reformation of Muslim Religious Philosophy on the basis of Rationality running through the true spirit of Islam, blended with modern acquisition of vast human knowledge. He defends the right of the present generation of Muslims to reinterpret the



Fundamental Legal Principles in the light of their own experience and the altered conditions of modern life. He says, "Each generation, guided but unhampered by the opinion of its predecessors, should be permitted to solve its own problems". This view of Iqbal, in fact, amounts to opening "the door of Ijtihad".

Iqbal's earnest devotion to the cause of Islamic Revival and Resurgence lent a unique warmth and colour to his Poems. No Poet has captured the imagination of his generation so powerfully as did Iqbal.

Philosopher, Poet and Linguist, Iqbal's was a towering personality, an embodiment of humanistic culture evolved out of impact of Western Thought upon Eastern Mysticism and Metaphysics. The Pakistani scholar *Fazlur Rahman*, in his book '*Islam*' published by the Chicago University Press, mentions about Iqbal as "the most daring intellectual modernist the Muslim World has ever produced."

#### **4. *Maulana Abul Kalam Azad (1888-1958)***

Mohiuddin Ahmad, known later in life as Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, was born in Mecca in 1888. His father *Maulana Khairuddin* of Delhi, was a Scholar of eminence, a Mystic and divine. His mother belonged to a family of Scholars of Mecca. Maulana Khairuddin migrated to Mecca, married and lived there till a multitude of his disciples in India clamoured for his return to India.

Azad received his early education at *Mecca*, but completed his '*Dars-e Nizami*' Course in Theology and Divinity at *Calcutta*. At the age of 16, he visited *Egypt*, *Syria*, *Iraq* and *Palestine*, and was deeply influenced by the Revolutionary agitations launched by *Sayyid*

Jamaluddin Afghani. The Ulamā of Mecca vested on him the honorific title of 'Abul Kalam', meaning, the Father of Learning, when he was only 18 years old, on account of his remarkable proficiency in Arabic Poetry and Literature. He received no education in English, as his father was implacably opposed to the 'Language of infidels'. As in the case of Sir Sayyid Ahmad's elders, Azad's father betrayed lack of political insight and wisdom, and did not allow him to benefit by education in English.

Azad was a Journalist, Scholar and Author of exceptional erudition and enlightenment. He founded a number of literary Journals such as *Nairang-e Alam*, *Us-Sabah* and *Lisan-us Sidq*. Maulana Hali, Maulana Shibli and many other notable litterateur were astounded and amazed at the high erudition and scholarship of the writer, particularly because the writer Azad was merely a boy of 15 at that time. This distinguished boy took over Editorship of many well-circulated Journals, such as *Maulana Shibli's 'An-Nadwa'* and '*Vakil*' of Amritsar.

Azad was endowed with profound learning and rare intellect, and had the gift of creativity in all fields of Literature. He was able to converse and discourse fluently and faultlessly in Arabic, Persian and Urdu. The range of his studies was wide and his memory was phenomenal. He was deeply influenced by great Thinkers like *Imam Ghazali*, *Hafiz Ibn-e Taimiyah* and *Shah Waliullah*.

Among Azad's literary productions, '*Tarjuman-ul Quran*' holds the pride of place. It is a unique Commentary of the Holy Quran, distinguished for its penetrating and rational interpretation. Azad had

devoted 23 years of his life in studying the Quran with a probing mind. Its study became a passion with him and its Translation was done with genuine fervour and devotion. As a result, the reader is able to derive correct religious perspective, and is induced to fresh thinking on Divine Benevolence, personal piety and Social Ethics. Earlier in his life, a Conference of Ulamā at Lahore attended by a thousand divines conferred on him the title of '*Imam-ul Hind*'.

Next to *Tarjuman-ul Quran*, Azad's '*Tazkirah*' is important. Though written as a Biography, the book discusses Religion, Philosophy, History, Life of Prophets and various other topics. Like *Sir Sayyid*, Azad was opposed to Fundamentalist *Mullas*, and endeavoured to promote a progressive outlook among Muslims. In his last book, '*Ghubar-e Khatir*', Azad observes: "I do not know what is Sunnism or Shi'aism. I have full Faith in Allah and His Book, and I acclaim the Prophet. I have also been bestowed with reason, and I go after established facts. What is white, remains white. What is black, remains black. No white cloth can become black if it is worn by a certain group, and no Truth can become false, just because it is attributed to a certain person."

As the Government did not like the anti-British views expressed in *al-Hilal*, Azad was ordered to leave Bengal and was interned at Ranchi. He well-utilised the period of internment in writing the precocious *Tarjuman-ul Quran* and *Tazkirah*.

Azad was impressed with Sir Sayyid's rationalism, and at one time regarded him as a Mujaddid, though he changed his opinion later. Azad was opposed to Partition of India, and held that the creation of Pakistan was harmful not only for India but also for Muslims in

general, as it would create more problems than solve them. In 1921, Azad began his extensive tours and stirred audiences by his powerful speeches on non-violent Non-cooperation. He was arrested, prosecuted and sent to jail many a time. On release each time, he would carry on devastating propaganda against the British. He boycotted the Simon Commission, conducted negotiations with Cripps, worked as the Steersman in the Parliamentary Committee and eminently served India in his capacity as the Union Minister for Education and Scientific Research from 1947 to 1958. Earlier in his career, he was chosen as the President of the Indian National Congress in 1929 and for subsequent terms.

The Maulana died in February, 1958. He is remembered as the outspoken champion of India's unity and integrity, as well as the most erudite Scholar in Islamic Religious Literature and Thought.

### **5. *Maulana Dr Abdul Majid Daryabadi (1892-1977)***

Abdul Majid was born in 1892 in Qidwai family of Daryabad Town in Barabanki District of Uttar Pradesh. The geneology of the family displays an interesting Biblical line of ancestry, descending from Prophet Haroon (Aaron). A contemporary of *Sultan Mahmood of Ghazni*, named *Qazi Mā'zuddin*, popularly called *Qazi Qidwa*, migrated from Israel to India, and settled in Oudh. His descendants adopted the family surname of Qidwai, indicating their geneological tie with *Qazi Qidwa*. As the Qidwai family grew in course of Centuries, one branch moved to Daryabad Town.

*Hakim Nur Karim* and *Mufti Mazhar Karim* were two brothers in a Qidwai family of Daryabad. *Mazhar Karim* happened to be the *Dada* (father's father) and *Nur Karim* the *Nana* (mother's father) of *Abdul Majid*. *Mazhar Karim*

was the Sarishtadar of Faizabad Collectorate, and was suspected to have played anti-British role during the 1857 Rebellion, and was transported to Andamans by the British Government. He was released in 1865, and he spent the rest of his life in religious activities. Mazhar Karim's son, *Abdul Qadir*, was appointed as a Deputy Collector. Abdul Majid is one of the sons of Abdul Qadir.

Starting from lessons in Quran at home, Abdul Majid was admitted into Sitapur High School in due course. He was reported to be doing exceptionally good in Arabic, and equally poor in Mathematics. In 1908, he was admitted into Canning College of Lucknow, wherefrom he graduated in 1912. He was then admitted into St. Stephen College of Delhi for M.A. studies in Philosophy. Two sorrowful events happened about this time, namely, death of his father and complete loss of the family savings deposited in a Bank, which was involved in a Bank robbery. Abdul Majid was compelled to leave his studies before completion of the M.A. course. Late in his life, the Aligarh Muslim University honoured him by conferring the Honorary Degree of Doctor of Letters in 1976.

Amidst disappointments, he started searching for means of livelihood after he was obliged to leave studies. *Moulvi Abdul Huq*, Baba-e Urdu, provided a job of translating English books into Urdu. Maulana Shibli also wanted him to translate '*Sirat-un Nabi*' into English. *Sahebzada Aftab Ahmad Khan* requisitioned his services to work as a Library Assistant in Conferences. All these engagements were however, temporary. So Abdul Majid shifted himself to the job of a Translator of Philosophy Section in Aligarh College. This job also ended after a duration of eleven months. He then got a more substantial job as a Co-ordinator of Asafiyah System of

book-keeping under the Deccan Government on a life-pension varying from Rs. 125 to Rs. 300 per month. These emoluments were cancelled during the Police Action in Hyderabad in 1948, but were restored later on a reduced scale.

Obsessed with a passion for writing literary pieces from his early days in School, he wrote and sent his Articles to '*Oudh Times*', and thereafter to '*Al-Akhbar*' of Gorakhpur and '*Al-Islam*' of Amritsar. The subjects dealt with were the burning topics of the day. He also began reading voraciously in different Libraries in order to gather materials for his writings. His critical Review of Maulana Shibli's '*Al-Kalam*', which appeared in '*An-Nazir*' of Lucknow, took him to the pinnacle of fame as a literary Critic. He was invited to take up the Editorship of many Journals, beginning with '*Ma'rif*' of Lucknow and '*Hamdard*' sponsored by Maulana Muhammad Ali. He then launched his own Weekly, '*Sach*' from Lucknow. Simultaneously, he started writing books one after the other in quick succession.

At one stage, the frustrations and disappointments in life turned him a Sceptic or even an Agnostic. He registered himself as a Member of the Rationalist Association of London. But his close contact with the most sensible Thinkers of the time such as *Akbar Allahabadi* and *Maulana Muhammad Ali* reversed the tendency of his temporary apostasy. Above all, the enlightened counsels and spiritual influence of *Hazrat Ashraf Ali Thanavi* (R.A.) brought him back from the realm of Darkness to the resplendence of Islamic Faith. He woke up, as if from a slumber, and started critical study of the Holy Book and all other Islamic Literature with assiduous fervour, eyes open and conscience clear. His Faith was then doubly re-inforced and strengthened.

and he realised as if he had thoroughly vanquished the Satan, who wanted to steal a march over him.

As a result of intensive study and the spiritual guidance he received, he started writing on Islamic Theology and on scores of other subjects. The most celebrated Works produced by his pen are the Translations of the Holy Quran and the elaborate Commentaries, known as '*Tafseer-e Majidi*' in two Languages, Urdu and English. The Tafseers are marvels of erudition and unparalleled scholarship, bearing high testimony to the writer's encyclopaedic knowledge of Secular Sciences, Philosophy, History, Culture and Religions of the World. They eclipsed all other Commentaries of the Quran in consummate diction, lucid style of presentation, depth of probe into the Divine attributes, analysis of the worldly life and the Hereafter, and clarification of abstract concepts and Metaphysics. The rationality behind the Quranic Philosophy and Ethics were clarified in eloquent language. As a result of these precious features, the Copy-rights of Daryabadi's Translations and Tafseers were readily purchased by renowned Publishers of Islamic Literature in India and abroad. Besides the Translations and the Commentaries of the Quran, Maulana Daryabadi has to his credit scores of books on a wide range of Hadith Literature, Islamic Faith and Practice, Philosophy, Religion, Sufism, Travels, Biography, Several Compendia of Prose Literature and other topics.

Maulana Dr Daryabadi's Commentaries have provided a new line of vision to serve as a Beacon Light in the present age of crass materialism. They are meant to restore equilibrium for the bewildered human society, deplorably splintered through sectarian dissensions caused by misinterpretations of Divine Injunctions.

They will help seekers of Truth to grasp the inner meanings of Faith and Righteousness, and to inculcate obeisance and reverence of God.

The Maulana breathed his last at Daryabad in 1977 at the age of 84 years.

### **6. Hakeem Abdul Hamid (born 1908)**

Hakeem Abdul Hamid was born in Delhi in 1908. His father Hakeem Hafiz Abdul Majid was a renowned Physician of the City, who founded the *Hamdard Unani Dawakhana* in 1906. Abdul Hamid received early education in *Islamic Theology*, and thereafter took to education in Tibb, graduating from the Delhi Tibbia College.

Abdul Hamid is recognised as the top-ranking Unani Physician today, having treated above 4 million patients during his practice of over 40 years. Taking over the Hamdard Organisation from his father, he developed it with rare foresight and wisdom into the World's largest Unani Medical Establishment, manufacturing and supplying efficacious medicinal preparations all over India and abroad. As this growing Organisation began to yield income in Crores of Rupees, Abdul Hamid converted it into a Registered Wakf (Endowment) property in 1948, diverting the net profits for extension of Medical Education and Research, Relief Operations, Charity, Cultural undertakings and other Humanitarian Services.

Abdul Hamid shared the deep anguish and despondency experienced by eminent Muslim Thinkers such as *Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan*, *Allama Shibli No'mani*, *Sayyid Amir Ali*, *Sir Muhammad Iqbal*, *Sir Shah Sulaiman*, *Sayyid Sulaiman Nadwi* and others on



account of the deplorable backwardness of Muslim Community in intellectual and economic spheres. Personally, Abdul Hamid was of the view that Muslims have advertently or inadvertently cast themselves in a mould which does not permit them to work on rational lines or in an organised manner. His soul began to agitate for redemption of this helpless Community, and he decided to embark upon a life-long venture to wash off the stigma.

Abdul Hamid set upon a mission to achieve the desired goal. With prolonged efforts and monumental patience, he succeeded in acquiring 90 acres of land at Tughlaqabad, a place of great historical importance near Qutub Minar, about 12 miles distant from Delhi City. The whole area was cleared and levelled. Roads were built and trees planted. One Block of 30 acres was earmarked for the Campus of the Indian Institute of Islamic Studies, and the remaining 60 acres were utilised for construction of the Institute of History of Medicine and Medical Research. Some time earlier, Abdul Hamid had purchased two plots of land close to the Mausoleum of the immortal Poet Ghalib in the important locality of Hazrat Nizamuddin of New Delhi. This was done with a view to establish a well-equipped Research Library, a Museum and an Auditorium—all forming a part of one composite Institution styled *'The Ghalib Academy'*.

After acquisition of land, Abdul Hamid prepared schemes of respective Institutions that were in his mind. These schemes were forwarded to some 200 Scholars, Orientalists and Experts in Islamics, living in different Countries of the World for their opinion and suggestions, which were received and placed before a series of International Seminars, and were revised in the light of discussions in the Seminars, and were finalised with

the best of constructive, analytical and Scientific approach available from World Experts.

Abdul Hamid's Indian Institute of Islamic Studies is a composite Institution of far-reaching importance, not limited only to a huge Central Library and well-stocked Museum. It has several departments for undertaking basic Research in respective fields, and a number of Colleges at post-Graduate level, offering teaching on special Subjects not available in any Indian University. Abdul Hamid's another Institution, the Institute of History of Medicine and Medical Research, fills up a gap in the curriculum of Medical Education in India by providing a significant missing link. It was intended to create facilities for the study of and Research into the History of different systems of Medicines existing in India. The third Institution, the Ghalib Academy is a nerve-centre for the whole gamut of cultural activities concerning Ghalib. It is also intended for perpetuating the memory of the Poet in India and abroad, by readily providing all source materials in one central place for study and Research. Each of the three above Institutions has been provided with an elaborate Library of International standard, intended for total accommodation of 30 lakh Volumes of books in ultimate stage. The classification and cataloguing of such enormous number of books in 14 International and Islamic Languages posed a complicated problem and necessitated contact with Library Experts all over the World for evolving and adopting a comprehensive system.

Abdul Hamid is the Founder of the above Institutions of undying fame. In addition, there are about a dozen other note-worthy Institutions which were also founded by him. Principal among them are

Hamdard College of Pharmacy, Hamdard Tibbi College, Hamdard Nursing Home, Hamdard Educational Society, Hamdard Public School, Rabea Girls School and Majidia Hospital.

Apart from his direct involvement in providing the technical expertise, exercising the top administrative control over one of the largest Unani Medical Establishments in the World, and creating and founding scores of Multicrore Educational and Cultural projects, Abdul Hamid devoted his time and energy to write and publish monumental works of authoritative Technical Literature and Treatises, many of which run into several bulky volumes. His illustrious book on Studies in History of Medicine covers the Medical Science prevalent in the entire civilised World of the Medieval age, including the Treatises of Avicenna. Drugs of herbal and animal origin were studied and analysed. He also published Articles on the result of a series of Research Work. Apart from Medical Science, Islamic Religion and Society also formed a favourite field of his study and publication.

Abdul Hamid's services rendered for the development of Medical Science were recognised by the Government of India awarding him the title of *Padmashri* in 1965, and by the Government of USSR vesting on him the prestigious *Avicenna Award* in the year 1983. Abdul Hamid is indeed a prolific Writer, Scholar and Physician. Now an octogenarian, he barely sleeps for four hours a day, spending every minute of his indefatigable busy life for accomplishment of the multi-headed tasks undertaken.

## Chapter 4

# ULAMĀ-E FĀSIQ (THE AGENTS OF DOOM)

## FĀSIQ DEFINED

Allama Iqbal said: “*Aālīman az ilm-e Qurān be-niyāz*”, meaning, the Ulamā are incapable of grasping the inner meaning of the Qurān. That was said of *Ulamā-e Fāsiq*, of course.

The word ‘*Fāsiq*’ denotes the qualities of a person who is a transgressor, wrong-doer or is sinful. The expression ‘*Ulamā-e Fāsiq*’ plainly speaking, means the sinful Ulamā or the mis-guided Ulamā, as opposed to the expression ‘*Ulamā-e Rāshid*’, meaning the rightly-guided Ulamā.

## FACTORS LEADING TO DEPRAVITY OF ULAMĀ

Most of the Ulamā, whether classified as Rāshid or Fāsiq, began to work with good intentions to abide by the true Teachings of the Qurān and the Hadith. But several factors were responsible for moulding their personal temperament and attitude, with the result that each of them became a personality different from the other. Consequently, their convictions and preachings differed.

Apart from personal choice and inclinations, environment exerted influence in varying degrees in the process of their thought and action. In the Cities of *Hejaz*, the unspeculative piety of the *Sahaba* (the first generation of Muslims who had the felicity of seeing the Prophet in his life time) tempered the life and activity

of the people. In Syria, the influence of *Hellenistic Christian Thoughts* began to work. In Iraq, the Faith became infected with various Gnostic Doctrines. Among the nomadic Arab tribes, the Khariji sectarian feelings developed, refusing to accept the authority of Caliphs and becoming prone to fanaticism and plunder. In Persia, the discipline of Sufism effectively transformed the orthodoxy of original Islam.

In such a kaleidoscopic Geographical background, Religious Tradition and individualised preachings, there was the inevitability of conflict and confusion occurring. Each group or School of Thought claimed itself to be the true follower of Quranic Islam. The Ulamā of one school began to condemn those of the other. As the process drifted further, some Ulamā crossed the limits of legitimate Faith consciously or unconsciously, and were responsible for creation of schisms and heresies in Islam. Many of these Ulamā therefore, may be regarded as wrong-doers, and eventually as the *Bane of Islamic Society*.

### UMAYYAD ARABISM

The *Dynasty of Umayyads* comprising 14 Caliphs ruled over Islamic Commonwealth for 90 years, from 661 to 750 A.D. During this period, the afflicted political conditions and faulty administrative policies were quite often responsible for encouraging wrong preachings and teachings by the Ulamā, which in turn resulted in moral decadence and religious profanation. The *Umayyad Empire*, which immediately succeeded the rule of the four eminent *Khulafā-e Rāshideen*, was more Arab in character than Islamic. Pagan customs and practices which had been discredited under the Prophet's teachings, now reappeared. During the rule of Umayyad

Caliph *Yazid II* (720-724) and his successors, the State was callous to Islamic ways of life, indirectly encouraging departure from strictly religious norms. The result was at once seen in the rise of *Khariji* and *Murjia* sects in Central Arab.

### 1. ***Abu Hamza Khariji (7th Century A.D.)***

*Abu Hamza* was a learned Scholar of the 1st Century Hijri, preaching the *Khariji Doctrines*, and delivering sermons in Medina frequently. The *Kharijis* are the earliest sect of Islam, originating from nomadic tribes of Mesopotemia and borders of Iraq. They acknowledged the authority of the first two Caliphs, *Abu Bakr* and *Omar* only, and denounced *Caliphs Usman* and *Ali*. Extremely puritanical in principle, they refrained from tobacco, games, music and luxury, and are opposed to the discipline of sufism. They stick to uncompromising righteousness exemplified by Semitic Prophets, holding that men must do good and refrain from evil in all circumstances without exception. According to them, sinners are condemned to Hell for eternal torture without any hope of retrieval. Most of the Members of the sect are extremists, terrorists and fanatic.

### 2. ***Ghailan Abu Marwan al-Dimaskki (7th Century A.D.)***

*Ghailan Abu Marwan*, a learned 'Alim', was the Leader of *Murjia Sect*, which was an extreme opponent of the *Khariji Sect*. The *Murjias* gave high value to pristine Faith, and did not believe in Free Will or even Pre-destination. According to them, a Muslim does not lose Faith by committing a sin, as Faith had indelible character. *Imam Abu Hanifa* was some what favourably inclined towards the *Murjias*.

### 3. ***Wasil bin Aata (699-749)***

*Wasil bin Aata* was the founder of *Mu'tazila School*

of Philosophy. The adherents of this Faith were a group of religious Philosophers who were regarded as Rationalists and Dilecticians. They endeavoured to reconcile Religion with Philosophy, and Faith with Reason. They differed from the Sunni Orthodoxy which was based on Tradition of the Prophet.

Wasil bin Aata propounded the principles of his Doctrine called 'Itizal' as follows:

- (i) The Quran is created by man;
- (ii) Prayers of a sinful person are not acceptable by God;
- (iii) Evil actions are not ordained by God;
- (iv) Alms-giving and Prayers do not benefit the dead;
- (v) There would be no 'Mizan' or 'Kitab' on the day of *Qiyamat* (No 'Balance' and no 'Holy Book' on the Day of Resurrection).

The *Doctrine of Mu'tazilism* was a Philosophical speculation which served to shake true Faith in the Divine origin of Quran. It was sought to be enforced by authority of the State. The Caliphs held supreme powers, both spiritual and temporal, in their capacity as the Imam of the Ummah, and as the Amir-ul Mu'menin or the Commander-in-Chief of the Army. Many of the Caliphs were misguided by the self-seeking Ulamā who wanted royal favour and material gain. At least two of the Umayyad Caliphs, *Yazid III* and *Marwan II*, reigning from 744 to 750 A.D. were believers in *Mu'tazila Doctrine*. Similarly, three of the Abbaside Caliphs, *Al-Mamun* (813-833), *Al-Mu'tasim* (833-842) and *Al-Wathiq* (842-847) were supporters of the same Doctrine.

### **ABBASIDE MATERIALISM**

The Abbaside Caliphate comprising 37 Caliphs reigned

for over five Centuries from 750 to 1258 A.D., with Capital at *Baghdad*. They are descendants of Prophet's uncle al-Abbas. They succeeded the House of Umayyads and extended their Empire over an extensive territory stretching from North Africa to the Indus, and from the Red Sea to the Caspian Sea.

The Abbaside Era was marked by height of prosperity in Literature, Arts, Science and Culture, in addition to the affluence of wealth earned through expansion of trade and commerce. But the sense of Islamic values had gone down. Gross materialism had captured the heart and soul of the Ruling Class. Pursuit of pleasure and gay abandon were the characteristic pre-occupation of the rank and file, while the nobility became wasteful, lavish and libertine. The lightning success of Muslim conquests brought the conquered people into the fold of Islam in quick growth without allowing them time-lag to imbibe the correct practice of Religion. During the later Abbaside Era, there was a marked decrease in the number of religious teachers who could guide the erring populace to the genuine teachings of the Prophet.

During the reign of Caliph *Harun-al Rashid* (786-809), the Dogma of 'Itizal began to take root. His son Caliph *Al-Mamun* (813-833) was a great admirer of Greek Thoughts, and vigorously helped the Mu'tazilites to spread their Doctrine through out the Abbaside Empire. *Mu'tazilism* endeavours to reconcile Religion with Philosophy, and Faith with Reason. Moreover, as this School of Thought does not uphold the Quran as a Book of Divine Revelation, the effect of the preaching was very baneful for the Islamic Society. As this heresy was supported by the Ruling Caliphs, *Imam Ghazali* bewailed on the sad state of affairs, and observed—



“People have become depraved because of their Rulers, and the Rulers, because of the Ulamā, who have been demoralised on account of their love for wealth, power and honour. One who has been infected by Worldly temptations, can not admonish even the lowly and the poor, much less the elites and Kings.”

### 1. ***Qazil Qazat Ibn Abi Duwad (813-842 approx)***

Ibn Abi Duwad was the *Qazil Qazat* (Chief Justice) of the Abbaside Empire during the reign of the seventh Caliph *Al-Mamun*. He was an ardent propagator of the Doctrine of '*Itizal*'. He contrived to get full support of the Caliph, and then utilised his Official position to make *Mu'tazilism* the State Religion. Caliph *Mamun* himself was a zealous exponent of this Faith, the seeds of which had been sown a little earlier than the time of his father, the famous *Harun-al Rashid*. *Al-Mamun* almost became a fanatic, and went to the extent of declaring *Hazrat Ali's* pre-eminence over the first three *Khalifas*. He also declared the validity of Muslim marriages contracted for a limited period. In all these acts of the Ruler or of the State, the *Qazil Qazat* furnished the necessary *Fatwā* in full co-operation of all the *Ulamā* of *Mamun's* Court, even though such unauthorised and anti-Islamic actions were vehemently opposed by *Imam Ahmad Ibn Hanbal* and a number of his disciples.

During the reign of *Al-Mamun*, acceptance of the *Mu'tazila Doctrine* was made a criterion for judging one's loyalty to the Caliph, as well as to the Faith. This was done by issue of a Mandate that any deviation from the Doctrine amounted to treason, and was liable to be punished. Accordingly, *Mamun* issued a *Farman* to the Governor of *Baghdad* to send seven top *Ulamā* of the City to the Royal Court. In the presence of the *Qazil Qazat*, these *Ulamā* were questioned about the Doctrine

of the creation of the Quran. All the seven top Ulamā expressed their agreement with the Doctrine, either out of their own conviction, or as a matter of expediency to save their lives and material interests. They were also asked to express their views in public meetings, which they did. They were then set free.

Al-Mamun also asked another Governor to send for all those Ulamā of his jurisdiction, who refused to accept the new Doctrine. The Governor asked about thirty Ulamā to appear. All of them agreed about the theory of the creation of Quran by man, except four namely, *Imam Hanbal*, *Sajjadah*, *Qwariri* and *Ibn Nuh*. As they remained adamant, they were thrown into Prison. Sajjadah retracted on the second day, and Qwariri on the third, and both of them were released. The other two were despatched to Baghdad. Ibn Nuh died on the way, while Imam Hanbal was brought under chains to be produced before the Caliph. In the mean while, Mamun had been succeeded by Caliph Mu'tasim. Imam Hanbal was produced before the new Caliph. The Chief Justice *Ibn Abi Duwad* and all the Court Ulamā including *Abu Abdur Rahman al-Shafe'i* were present. Imam Hanbal was questioned about the new Doctrine, but he declined to uphold it, and said that the Quran was a Divine Revelation. The Imam was thrown into a Prison and was tortured, till he was released from imprisonment after 28 months.

## **2. Shaikh-ul Ishrāq Shahābuddin Suharwardi (1155-1190)**

With the rapid territorial expansion of Islamic Empire, early Muslim intellectuals came in contact with Hellenistic Culture, and were greatly influenced by the Works of Greek Philosophers, particularly of *Plato* and *Aristotle*. The impact of Aristotlian Philosophy on Islamic

Thoughts produced a new Discipline, which came to be known as the Philosophy of *Ishrāq*. It covered matters relating to the process of introspection, spiritualism and metaphysics, and expounded Aristotlian idealism in the light of Muslim Mysticism.

There were many learned men who subscribed to the Doctrine of *Ishrāq*, but the chief exponent of the School was Shaikh Shahā-buddin Suharwardi, better known as Shaikh-ul *Ishrāq* (1155-1190). Born in the City of Suharward in Iran, he was a person of precocious intellect. He received education in *Islamic Theology*, Jurisprudence and Philosophy, and developed esoteric thoughts in company with well-known Sufis of his time. Finally he succeeded in blending Islamic Sufism with Greek Philosophy with the erudition of an uncommon Scholar.

At the age of 30 years, he started searching for a talent alike him, but in vain. He moved from *Persia* to *Baghdad* and neighbouring territories in order to propound his thoughts among Jurists and Ulamā. At Haleb, many leading Ulamā were defeated by him in Manazarah (polemical discourse). The nobility were greatly influenced by his lectures and debates. But within a short time thereafter, he started claiming 'Nabuwat' (Prophethood) for himself, holding that he was the Vice-regent of God on Earth, and the Master of every thing in the World.

There was then a general consensus that he posed danger to *Islamic Society*. Some held that he was a *Kafir*. He was then sent to Damuscus for trial and was held guilty of apostasy. By order of *Sultan Salahuddin*, he was put to death.

The Shaikh-ul Ishrāq was an unrivalled Dilectician, a prolific Writer and Poet. He left a large number of authoritative Works on Theology and Philosophy. A least 47 of his Treatises in Persian and Arabic were handed over to posterity. It was in full-fledged youth, at the age of 35 years when this mis-guided genius, a great Soul among *Ulamā-e Fāsiq* lost his life by the Executioner's sword.

### 3. ***Khwaja Nasiruddin Tusi (1210-1273)***

Nasiruddin Tusi, an outstanding Medieval Philosopher, Astronomer and Mathematician, was one of the senior Ulamā during the reign of *Abbaside Caliph Al-Musta'sim* (1242-1258). He was the Author of a number of authoritative Treatises on Mathematics, Engineering Science and Astronomy.

Tusi was disloyal to the Caliph. When *Halaku Khan*, the ruthless *Mongol Khakan* reached the vicinity of *Baghdad*, Tusi encouraged him to put an end to the Caliphate. Halaku consulted a few Ulamā if the time was opportune for mounting an attack. One of the Ulamā, *Hisamuddin the Astrologer*, predicted that it was an inauspicious time for an offensive, which if made, will lead to greivous loss and defeat for the invader and widespread calamity for the whole country. Halaku was dismayed, but he asked Tusi, "What would happen if I attack Baghdad now?". Tusi confidently replied, "The Khakan will become the Monarch of Baghdad". Thus encouraged, Halaku sent myriads of his savage troops to swoop down upon Baghdad. They started killing every body, setting fire to every habitation and trampling to dust and obliterating all signs of prosperity and civilisation. The horrors of rapine and slaughter lasted forty days. When the carnage was over, the most populous and beautiful city of the world was devastated

beyond recognition, and every semblance of civilised existence was wiped out.

Halaku then sent for the Caliph and his Noblemen. The Noblemen were called one by one in a Tent, and were beheaded, until none but the Caliph was left alive. Halaku had been told about a superstition that if the blood of the Ruling Caliph was spilled on the ground, a great calamity would sweep the World. Halaku hesitated to kill the Caliph. Tusi gave him the wisdom by saying, "Thousands of Companions of the Prophet were massacred in the past and nothing happened. Three of the *Khulafa-e Rashideen*, *Hazrat Umar*, *Hazrat Usman* and *Hazrat Ali* were murdered in cold blood and nothing happened. *Caliph Al-Amin* was murdered at the instance of *Al-Mamun*, and *Caliph Mutawakkil* was done to death by his sons and slaves, and *Caliph Al-Muntasir* was chopped to pieces by his Chiefs and Guards. There was no calamity then. There can be no calamity if *Caliph Al-Musta'sim* is now finished under your Orders. If however, you are afraid of not spilling the blood of the Caliph on the ground, bring him here, roll him inside a thick carpet and smash him to death by heavy boulders, so that no blood touches the ground"

Now, so aptly advised by the top of the Caliph's Ulamā, Amir-ul Mu'menin Khalifa Al-Musta'sim was brutally crumpled to ghastly death by order of the barbarous Mongol Chief. There could not have been a more abominable instance of betrayal and perfidy in the History of Islamic Commonwealth!

Tusi was however not without virtues. His great contribution lies in persuading Halaku to build an Observatory at Maragha, and to attach a vast Library of four lakhs of rare books, which had been looted by Halaku's troops from different cities ravaged by them.

In building this Observatory and the Library, Tusi demanded and received immense amount of money beyond count from Halaku, apart from his personal annual emoluments of 60 thousand Dinars (Gold coins of Arabia) of those fabulous days.

#### 4. **Depravity in Abbaside Regime (750-1258)**

The Abbaside Monarchs enjoyed their long reign for over five Centuries from 750 to 1258 A.D. This was an era of blossoming of intellectual faculties, growth of wealth and advancement of material prosperity. The splendour of the Royal Court and the luxury of the Nobility induced parasites to flock to the Capital and to imitate all that was glittering but was really not gold. Crass materialism captured the heart and soul of the entire Society from top to bottom. Love of pomp and glory of mundane activities had replaced the respect for moral and spiritual values. *Imam Ghazali*, on seeing these deplorable signs of the times, observed in *'Thya Uloom. id-Din'* that the Ulamā are responsible for the all-round degeneration of the Muslims. He noticed the existence of ailments and the presence of patients in the Society, but found no trace of Physicians and observed, "Ulamā are the Physicians, but these days they are themselves confined to sick-bed, and are unable to cure others."

Many wrong customs and practices had crept into the Society by virtue of sanctions accorded by Ulamā under the influence of the State, or on account of their personal gains. Impious innovations introduced by certain Ulamā were adding to the evils of the Society from time to time. Most of the Ulamā and even Sufis were stipend-holders of the State, and consequently had become subservient, pervert and corrupt. The general population had lost so much of correct religious sense that they considered it an act of sufficient piety to attend

beyond recognition, and every semblance of civilised existence was wiped out.

Halaku then sent for the Caliph and his Noblemen. The Noblemen were called one by one in a Tent, and were beheaded, until none but the Caliph was left alive. Halaku had been told about a superstition that if the blood of the Ruling Caliph was spilled on the ground, a great calamity would sweep the World. Halaku hesitated to kill the Caliph. Tusi gave him the wisdom by saying, "Thousands of Companions of the Prophet were massacred in the past and nothing happened. Three of the *Khulafa-e Rashideen*, *Hazrat Umar*, *Hazrat Usman* and *Hazrat Ali* were murdered in cold blood and nothing happened. *Caliph Al-Amin* was murdered at the instance of *Al-Mamun*, and *Caliph Mutawakkil* was done to death by his sons and slaves, and *Caliph Al-Muntasir* was chopped to pieces by his Chiefs and Guards. There was no calamity then. There can be no calamity if *Caliph Al-Musta'sim* is now finished under your Orders. If however, you are afraid of not spilling the blood of the Caliph on the ground, bring him here, roll him inside a thick carpet and smash him to death by heavy boulders, so that no blood touches the ground"

Now, so aptly advised by the top of the Caliph's Ulamā, Amir-ul Mu'menin Khalifa Al-Musta'sim was brutally crumpled to ghastly death by order of the barbarous Mongol Chief. There could not have been a more abominable instance of betrayal and perfidy in the History of Islamic Commonwealth!

Tusi was however not without virtues. His great contribution lies in persuading Halaku to build an Observatory at Maragha, and to attach a vast Library of four lakhs of rare books, which had been looted by Halaku's troops from different cities ravaged by them.

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some religious discourses and sermons, without thinking of putting the precepts into practice.

Middle class people had an idea that the study of *Islamic Theology* was the easiest way to acquire wealth and honour, as well as to get an access into the camp of the Nobility. These people applied for salaried jobs under the Government. Some of them succeeded, while the rest licked the dust. But even those who succeeded, had to humble themselves by descending from the exalted level of Scholars to the level of petty camp-followers of Noblemen or mere 'yes-men' of the Royal Court. *Hafiz Ibn Taimiyah* also condemned the servility of the Ulamā and the general public who used to pay lowly obeisance to undeserving Courtiers and Kings.

### **HERETIC FATIMIDE ULAMĀ (911-1171)**

The Fatimides were a Shi'a Dynasty of 13 Caliphs ruling over North Africa and Egypt from 911 to 1171 A.D. There were many learned Ulamā and renowned warriors in their Court. They promoted Culture and Civilization in their territory, but their Rule was disastrous for Islam in many ways. The Teachings of the Prophet were considered to be an impious blasphemy, and the collection of Hadith was proscribed. Their Ulamā held that Reason should be given preference over Revelation and Hadith. These heretic principles spread over a great part of North Africa, *Egypt, Syria, Hijaz*, and to some extent in *Iraq*.

Among the Fatimide Ulamā, many were licentious, dissenters and non-conformists, who introduced heretic cults in the Islamic Faith by changing the Fundamental Doctrines and Tenets. Some of their harmful innovations and practices are noted below:

- (a) Visibility of the new Moon for the beginning of the months of Ramadhan or 'Id was not necessary. The Official Calendar was considered to be sufficient authority.
- (b) Namaz Tarawih was banned through out Egypt.
- (c) Disrespect was shown to the first three *Khulafa-e-Rashideen* and to Umayyad Caliphs.
- (d) Punishment was prescribed for any body found in possession of the Hadith of *Imam Malik* known as '*Muwatta*'.

Degradation was thus caused to Islam in various ways by the Fatimide Ulamā, who had the full backing of the Caliphs, holding the authority of Imam of the Muslim World. The waywardness of these Ulamā came to an end when great religious and moral revival took place under *Sultan Salahuddin Ayyubi* (1099-1174), who was a strict Hanafi by Faith and practice.

### **DEMORALISED ULAMĀ OF MOGHUL ERA (1526-1857)**

As in the case of Ulamā of Abbaside Empire, many of Indian Ulamā during the reign of Moghul Emperors became subservient, lowly and irreligious. The splendour and magnificence of Moghuls overawed the Ulamā into abject submission.

The character of debased Ulamā during the reign of *Emperor Akbar* has been graphically described by *Maulanā Abul Alā Maududi* in his book, '*A Short History of the Revivalist Movement in Islam*'. He observes; "The World-seeking Ulamā gave up the practice of using words of adoration and reverence for the Holy Prophet in their sermons and writings". These Ulamā "tried to prove that Akbar was the promised *Mehdi*, the 'temporal

Sovereign', and above all, an Imam-e Mujtahid. One renowned Mystic from among the Courtiers came out to proclaim Akbar as the 'Perfect Man', the 'Caliph of the times', and the Reflection of God on Earth'."

*Abul Faizi*, a learned 'Ālim of the Court of Emperor Akbar prescribed the Article of Faith as "*Lā ilāhā illul Lāhu, Akbar Khalifa-tu Allāh*", meaning, there is no one worthy of worship except Allah, and Akbar is the Vice-regent of Allah. King-worship was one of the basic Injunctions, which was practically carried out in the early morning hours by securing a glimpse of the Emperor's appearance. Maulana Maududi further observes, "Even the so-called Ulamā and Sufis would prostrate themselves before the Emperor, as if he was the Granter of their prayers and Appeals. They would try to hide this clear heresy of theirs under cover of words like '*Sajdah-i Tahiyah*', meaning, prostration to express reverence, and '*Zameen bosee*', meaning, kissing the ground. These were in fact, the same accursed artifices and tricks which has been clearly mentioned by the Prophet in his prophecies, saying that a time would come when people would change the names of unlawful things to make them lawful."

The Urdu book '*Hindustan Ke Salāteen, Ulamā aur Mashāikh*' written by *Syed S. Abdur Rahman* (Azamgarh: 1970) contains a pertinent description of the Ulamā of Moghul Darbar as being lowly, despicable self-seekers. The relevant paragraphs are translated as follows:

"The Ulamā of the Moghul Darbar used to address the reigning Monarch by way of reverence as:

'*Zil-Lullāh Fil Ālimeen*' (God's Shadow on the Worlds);  
'*Zill-e Yazdāni*' (Divine Shadow);

'Zil-Lullāh Fil Arad-e' (Vice-regent of God on Earth);  
'Sāyah-e Yazdān Pāak (Shadow of Holy Deity);

These high appellations were used even for those Rulers whose personal lives were highly tainted or vicious.

The worship of Rulers was considered a religious obligation. Rebels against the Rulers were looked down as sinners. These Ulamā used to declare such *Fatwas* as gave sanctity to the observance of practices opposed to Islamic Shariah. For example, kissing the ground in front of the Ruler's Throne was held to be the correct behaviour. During *Emperor Akbar's* reign, the Ulamā eulogised the Ruler as '*Qibla-e Hajaat*' (the venerable Personality for fulfilment of necessities) or as *Ka'ba-e Muradaat*' (the Centre of Hopes), and made reverential prostrations before the Emperor a compulsory act.

The Rulers utilised the Ulamā in their own interest, and the Ulamā allowed themselves to be so utilised according to their rank and status. The common people had no respect for such lowly Ulamā. *Maulana Ziauddin Barni* has described such Ulamā as '*Murtad Sifatan-e Kafir*', meaning, a renegade having qualities of a *Kafir*. *Sultan Ghiyasuddin Balban* has compared such Ulamā with lame dogs.

*Hazrat Mujaddid Alf Sani (R.A.)* called such Ulamā as '*Ulamā-e Soo*', meaning vicious Ulamā, and has written out a joke about them that once upon a time, a Saint found Iblis (*Satan*) sitting idle, and accosted him, "Why idle?" The Iblis replied, "The Ulamā of the present day are doing all that I had to do, and so I am left idle".

Badaūni, the celebrated Historian-Scholar of the Moghul times, mentions in his famous book

'Muntakhabāt Tawārikh' about many Ulamā of Emperor Akbar's Court. One of them was Maulana Abdullah Sultanpuri, who received the Title of 'Makhdum-ul-Mulk', because he was considered as the Supreme Guide and 'Expositor of Islamic Faith'. But though he was the top man among Ulamā, he gave most sinful 'Fatwās', that Hajj Pilgrimage at Mecca was not binding upon Muslims, and that Zakat may or may not be paid, (vide Page 69, Vol. III, *Saviours of Islamic Spirit* by S. Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi). Another top Alim of Akbar's Court was Maulana Abdun Nabi, the *Sadr-us Sadr* (the Chief Justice) of the Empire, who was a half-learned, arrogant and dishonest man, open to indirect bribing.

There are Historical Records showing that many of the Ulamā in Moghul Regime amassed enormous wealth through bribes and dishonest earnings. Abdur Rahman's book mentioned above contains a List of such Ulamā. When Maulana Abdullah Sultanpuri, the 'Supreme Guide of Islamic Faith' in Akbar's Darbar died, a sum of Rupees Three Crores was found accumulated in his personal Treasury. (Rs. 3 Crores of the Moghul Era may be equivalent to Rs. 300 Crores or more in present currency).

A few other instances may also be given. Maulana Meer Abdul Hai, the Chief Mufti of Akbar's Court, was not only an inveterate drunkard, but was also steeped in pomp and luxury. Qazi Abdul Wahhab, the Qāzil Qāzāt (Chief Justice) of Gujarat in Emperor Aurangzeb's reign, acquired so much of illegal wealth, that the wealthy of his age became jealous of him. On one occasion, an amount of Rupees Three Lakhs belonging to him was looted on the highway. When he died, Rupees Eight lakhs in Moghul Coins was found in his personal Treasury, which was distributed among his four sons.

## ULAMĀ OF MODERN TIMES

### **Communalist and Obscurantist**

The British sowed the seeds of Communalism in India, and the Country is reaping the the fruits of Revivalism, Fundamentalism and Fanaticism among all Sections of the people, Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs. The vice has captured the head and heart, not so much of the Secularists, but primarily of those who pose to be the Defenders of the Religions concerned. As in the case of the so-called Religious Leaders of Hindus and Sikhs, the Muslim Religious Leaders, the Ulamā, are deeply involved in this vice on the pretext that in Islam, Religion can not be separated from Politics.

Although the Ulamā pretend to show that involvement in Communalism is necessary for protection of Islam, the under-lying motive is personal gain in money, power and social prestige. The level of their honest income compares unfavourably with that of men with equivalent Secular Education. The Ulamā therefore are really needy in these hard times with skyrocketing price index. So they stoop to lower levels of honesty and morality, and are unfit to provide moral and religious guidance to the Muslim Society. The position was the same even in the Medieval times. Eminent Muslim savants like *Imam Ghazali* and *Hafiz Ibn Taimiyah* have expressed words of severe reproach against self-seeking Ulamā of their times. Their wise observations are relevant even today in respect of the Ulamā of the 20th Century.

The present day Ulamā of India have earned a bad name for being Obscurantist, Communalist and fanatic. A historical factor is partly responsible. The banishment of *Bahadur Shah Zafar*, the last Moghul Emperor,

created an honest apprehension in the minds of Muslim Leaders that the foreign infidel Government, after wiping out Muslim Political Power, may obliterate Islamic Faith also. By way of precaution, they founded Islamic Theological Colleges (Madrasahs) at Deoband, Bareilly and other places for keeping the flame of Faith alit by imparting Islamic Education. In their utter hatred against the non-Muslim Ruler, they decided to keep aloof from every thing connected with the British Culture, Civilisation and Language. In this process, they slid back to controversial tenets and practices of the early Islamic period, unthinkingly following the rigidity of *Taqleed*, obscurantism and fundamentalism. *Sir Sayyid Ahmad*, a great visionary, tried to offset this retrograde step by establishing the Aligarh College for English Education. But the oriental education in Madrasahs still continued, and produced year after year along with some sober Theologians, batches of Mullas and mis-guided Ulamā, who ultimately proved to be the *Bane of Islamic Society*.

These Ulamā, without substantial financial footing as a result of their Madrasah education, began to eke out their precarious livelihood by uncertain engagements in preachings and teachings, or by indulging in petty politics and village feuds. Their technic of hair-splitting operation in the matter of rituals and creed results in aggravating the 'duals' between different sects and groups in a village. Disturbed political and economic conditions of the country helps them to challenge Hindu Revivalism and fanaticism by themselves becoming more fanatic and fundamentalist.

The dis-service rendered by *Ulamā-e Fāsiq* are too numerous to be recounted. During the early Eighties of the present Century, one of the leading Ulamā of

Balasore District (Orissa), who is held in high veneration by hundreds of disciples of *Bombay* and *Allahabad*, visited *Mecca* and declared the system of Prayers there as un-Islamic. He was then subjected to corporal punishment by order of the Saudi Government. Recently (in 1987), another leading personality among the Ulamā of Lucknow visited Saudi Arabia, and raised a Call for Jihad for declaring the Saudis, the Najdis and the Wahhabis as *Kafirs*. He was consequently sent to jail by order of the Government. In India itself, these *Ulamā-e Fāsiq* are taking a narrow and un-Islamic view of Religio-Political issues, thereby creating confusion and mis-understanding among the Muslim mass.

The private lives of many of these Ulamā and of some of the Shariah Amirs in India are tainted with calumny and slander in the matter of marriage and divorce. There are many Ulamā who are recipients of secret funds, un-accounted for grants and Financial Assistance. Many of the Ulamā have been involved in Communal riots and convicted and jailed. During the period of Emergency declared by Smt. Indira Gandhi, the entire Organisation of *Jamaat-i Islami* was declared unlawful, and its Ulamā were detained in Prison. While the Muslim Community was suffering under a multitude of Political, Economic and Educational handicaps, the Ulamā without paying heed to the basic grievances of the Community, got themselves involved in an affair of much less importance, namely, against the Supreme Court Judgement in *Shah Bano Case*. This unwise venture was undertaken for the sake of Political gains though a false show of religious issue was maintained. The conduct of the Ulamā involved was far from honesty and wisdom.

Gone are the days when Ulamā of towering



personality and possessing profound knowledge of Religious and Scientific matters were born to serve the cause of Islam Centuries after Centuries in their capacity as Jurists, Theologians, Scientists, Physicians, Mathematicians, and even as Mujaddids. They worked with undaunted courage and steadfastness, giving death-blow to heresies, atheism and sacrilege. They led the mass of Muslims in correct path of the Quran and Sunnah. But now is the time when a multitude of Ulamā with antiquated education, mis-guided Faith and selfish motives are found swarming the Country. By treating Secular Sciences as undersirable intruders in the realm of Religion, they not only betray their ignorance of Quranic Injunctions, the provisions of Hadith and the teachings of great Saints and Mujaddids like *Imam Ghazali* and *Ibn Taimiyah*, but they become directly responsible for killing the innate vitality of Islam, and for moral and religious degeneration of the Muslim Society.

The eminent Scholar and divine *Shah Waliullah* of Delhi (1703- 1763), who received his education in Mecca and was a well-known Sufi of Naqshbandi Order, writing in his book '*Tafheemat-i Ilahiya*', expressed strong disapprobation of the conduct of Ulamā who happened to be the Successors of great Spiritual Leaders. He observed:

"I ask the descendants of the Spiritual Guides who have occupied their seats without deserving them: Why have you turned Religion into a play thing of your prejudices and whims? And why have you all abandoned the way of life which was ordained and taught by Allah through His *Apostle Muhammad* (May Allah's peace be upon him)? Each of you have become a self-centred Leader and is inviting the people to himself. Each of you regards himself as rightly-guided and *Mehdi*; whereas he

has lost the right way and is leading others also astray. We can not approve of the behaviour and attitude of those who seek to enlist the allegiance of the people for the sake of worldly gains and interests, or who acquire knowledge in order to fulfil and meet their mundane desires, or who call the people to themselves and demand of them to serve their lusts and selfishness. They are indeed all decoits and imposters and liars; they have deceived themselves and are now deceiving others."

### ULAMĀ-E FĀSIQ HOSTILE TO EMINENT SAINTS

The *History of Islam* abounds in instances of many *Ulamā-e Fāsiq* acting under feelings of mischief or revenge against some of the great Saints and Sufis. Their antagonism was born of jealousy and heart-burning on account of the latter's gaining eminence in the field of piety and large following. It often happened that some of the erudite Scholars or Spiritual Leaders, being men of morals and conscience, avoided contact with the Rulers and declined to accept remunerative employment under the State. They knew that the Administration was corrupt, and any employment under it might induce them to work at times against their sense of morals and propriety. On the other hand, a legion of *Ulamā-e Fāsiq* remained attached to various ranks of the State for personal gain in money, power and prestige. They took undue advantage of the Ruler's whims and fancies whenever occasions arose. They would then incite the Rulers to humiliate many a great savant of Islam on false or flimsy grounds.

Sometimes the *Fāsiq Ulamā* would provoke the Rulers to pass Orders of severe punishment, torture or imprisonment on grounds of heresy against the Spiritual Leaders. In such cases the intriguing *Ulamā* cunningly

remained in the background to pull wires from behind the scene of activity. A few tragic instances from history are given below to illustrate the reproachable acts of imprisoning, torturing or even killing some of the highly respected Saints of Islam on the instigation of mischievous Ulamā.

**(a) Flogging and Imprisonment of Imam Abu Hanifa (699-767)**

Imam Abu Hanifa was the leading Theologian of the Islamic Commonwealth in the second Century A. H. , who ultimately emerged as the Founder of *Hanafi School of Fiqah*. The Governor of Kufa, *Yazid bin Umar*, offered him the Office of the Kazi of Kufa in view of his acknowledged erudition, piety and honesty, but the Imam declined to accept it. The Abbaside *Caliph Al-Mansoor* also requested him for the same, but Abu Hanifa remained adamant, as he knew that these powerful Rulers wanted him to be used for their personal interest. The Courtier-Ulamā then reported that Abu Hanifa had leanings for *Hazrat Ali's* family, which the Caliph did not like for Political reasons. So Governor Yazid, with the advice of other Ulamā ordered Abu Hanifa to change some of his *Fatwas*, which Abu Hanifa declined to do. The Governor awarded him the punishment of flogging ten stripes per day for eleven days continuously, followed by imprisonment for an indefinite period, till he died in Prison in 767 A.D.

**(b) Flogging of Imam Malik (1713-1795)**

Imam Abdullah Malik of Medina was an eminent Theologian of the 2nd. Century A.H. He combined in him the double status of Faqih (Jurist) and Mohaddis (Compiler of Hadith). His great work is the Hadith known as '*Kitab-al Muwatta*'. *Fatwas* given by him were regarded as authoritative, but one of the *Fatwas* which was not favourable to *Caliph Al-Mansoor*, brought a hell of trouble

for him. *Ja'far bin Sulaiman*, the Governor of Medina, on the advice of other Ulamā, directed him to cancel his *Fatwa*. The Imam did not agree. He was punished by flogging 70 lashes, resulting in dislocation of his shoulder bone. He was then taken round the Streets of Medina in profusely bleeding condition.

The deplorable incident however, increased the Imam's prestige still further among the general public. The subsequent Caliph Al-Mahdi consulted him about the structural additions to the Haram Sharif at Mecca, while the next Caliph, *Harun-al Rashid*, called on him during a visit to Medina in course of performing Hajj rites.

### **(c) Torture and Imprisonment of Imam Hanbal (781-856)**

Imam Ahmad Ibn Hanbal was the celebrated Faqih (Jurist) of the 9th Century A.D., who compiled the series of Hadith called '*Masnad*'. During his time, the Abbaside Caliph *Al-Mamun* officially patronised the Doctrine of Mu'tazilism, holding the Quran to be a man-made Document. The Caliph desired the people at large to accept it, and ordered the production of all those Ulamā who did not accept the Doctrine. The vast multitude of Ulamā accepted it, either by way of exigency or of conviction, but a few did not. As Imam Hanbal did not agree to this heretic view, he was brought before the Caliph under heavy distress, with four iron chains fastened to his hands and legs. He was tortured and confined to a small Cell with no lamp or day-light.

On the day of interrogation, when Imam Hanbal was taken to the Court, there were top Ulamā and Dignitaries of the Empire ranged on the right and the left of the Caliph's Throne, with hundreds of Attendants in splendid Uniform, some with Swords drawn, and some with

shining whips held aloft. Then the Caliph, *Al-Mu'tasim*, ordered, "Take hold of his arms, stretch them till they are dislocated." Then the Imam was given ferocious whipping by savage Executioners, each man changing after two hard lashes, so that the flogging may be the hardest. Out of 34 lashes ordered to be executed, the 19th stroke of whip made the Imam completely unconscious. As he did not accept the new Doctrine either in conscious or semi-conscious state, he was thrown into the dark Cell unconscious with profusely bleeding wounds. He was condemned to confinement in prison for an indefinite period. On the death of the Caliph however, his Successor *Caliph Al-Mutawakkil* released the Imam after he had suffered imprisonment for 28 months.

Imam Ibn Hanbal's case illustrates the unflinching faith of *Ulamā-e Rāshid* fearlessly facing a cruel Ruler and hundreds of his evil minded *Ulamā-e Fāsiq* wanting to force him to acknowledge that the Quran is a product of human ingenuity. The Imam defied the Royal pleasure and unholy pressure in order to maintain the sanctity of the Holy Quran being the Revealed Book of God.

**(d) Torment and Deadly Assault on Imam Nasai (829-915)**

*Abu Abdar Rahman Al-Nasai*, Compiler of the Hadith known as '*Sahih Nasai*' is regarded as a Martyr because he died in the cause of Religion by physical violence of fanatics. In a congregation at Damascus, the Imam read out a book written by him on the life of Hazrat Ali. The Politicians and *Ulamā* present in the audience declared him pro-Shi'a and anti-Umayyad. They shouted in a frenzy and pounced upon him, and mercilessly hammered him so severely that he knew that his end was imminent. He asked his disciples to carry him to

Mecca where he wanted to die. Accordingly, he was quickly carried to Mecca, where he breathed his last. He lies buried in between Safah and Marwah, the two small mounts between which ceremonial running is performed during observance of Hajj rites.

**(e) Life Imprisonment of Hafiz Ibn Taimiyah (1263-1328)**

The Muslim Society of the 14th Century A.D. was degraded in morals and in matters of Religion. Shaikh-ul Islam Hafiz Ibn Taimiyah was deeply anguished, and decided to launch a Reforms Movement, with the aim of cleansing Islam of all impurities, purging out all innovations and restoring Islam's original purity. Being an outspoken critic, he did not spare even the most respected Leader or the most highly placed Dignitary. Among items of his Reforms, were the denouncing of *Taqlid* (rigid obscurantism), discouraging of visit to Shrines, or begging of favours from dead Saints. Most of the Ulamā felt offended at such puritanic Reforms and declared Ibn Taimiyah as a heretic. They influenced the Ruler to send him to prison for long terms on more than one occasion. Ultimately, Ibn Taimiyah breathed his last while undergoing a sentence of imprisonment.

**(f) Hadith Condemns Later-day Ulamā**

The holy Prophet's Hadith, forming an integral part of Islamic Shariah, contains adverse references about the Ulamā of later times in more than one narration. The Treatise titled "*Muqaddamāh Dar Mustalahāt-i Hadith*" by Shaikh Abdul Huq Mohaddis Dehlavi records a damaging tradition in Hadith No. 257 at page 76 about the later-day Ulamā, which reads:

عُلَمَاءٌ وَهُمْ شَرُّ مَنْ تَحْتَ أَدِيمِ السَّمَاءِ  
 مِنْ عِنْدِهِمْ تَخْرُجُ الْفِتْنَةُ وَفِيهِمْ تَعُودُ

"Ulamā ū hūm Sharru Man Tahta Adeem-is Samā-e Min Indihim Takhrujul Fitnatu Wa feehim Tawoodu". meaning, "Their Ulamā will be the worst people under the Heaven, and mischief will begin from them, and will revert to them".

This authentic Hadith is confirmed word for word in Hadith No. 276 at page 154 of "Mishkāt-ul Masābih", Vol. I, which is the Anglo-Arabic Version of the most accurate collection of Hadith by *Shaikh Muhammad bin Abdullah Tabrizi*.

Among other authentic narration of Hadith relating to the above topic, is one which mentions the holy Prophet observing that the Ulamā born among the later-day Ummat will be the first to fill the *Jahannum* (Hell), as cited in 'Akhbār-e Mashriq' dated 28.11.1986.

Thus the holy Prophet was aware of the fact that a time will come (meaning the modern times), when the Ulamā will become sinful persons, and will suffer as inmates of the Hell.

## Chapter 5

# MULLĀ - E - SOO THE VICIOUS MULLA

### 'MULLA' DEFINED

The word 'Mulla' is Arabic, originally meaning an object created by the 'Maula' or God, but very soon its etymological sense was lost, and it came to mean a person engaged in fine writings, or in teaching work, or in preaching of religious lores. In recent times, the significance of the term has undergone further degradation. The Standard 20th Century Dictionary (Urdu to English: 1984 Edition) shows it as a derogatory term applicable to a Muslim Priest, or a Teacher in a Mosque, or a person knowing only the preliminary Religious Tenets. In the sphere of learning, piety and popular esteem, there is a gulf of difference between the Ulamā and the Mullās.

### EMERGENCE OF MULLĀ S

During the Rule of *Sultan Sikandar Lodi* (1489-1517), education in Intellectual and Rational subjects began to spread slowly from Sind and Multan to other areas of India. *Sikandar Lodi* was an enlightened Monarch like the seventh Abbaside *Caliph Al-Mamun* of Baghdad (813-833), who was keenly interested in Cultural and Educational progress of his Subjects. *Sultan Sikandar Lodi* engaged two Ulamā, namely, *Shaikh Abdullah* in Delhi and *Shaikh Azizullah* in Sambhal<sup>†</sup> for popularisation of studies in Philosophy and Logic.



This educational novelty continued during the later period of Afghan Rule in India and thereafter. During the reign of early Moghuls, the result was seen in the emergence of a new class of educated Muslims, known as 'Mullas'. Among the Courtiers of the Imperial Darbar of Akbar, there were a number of such Mullas, two of whom were well-known. One was the Revenue Minister *Abul Fazl's* brother, *Abul Faizi*, who encouraged the Emperor in his ideas of reconstruction of Religious Thoughts in the form of a new Faith called '*Deen-e Illāhi*'. The other Courtier was *Abul Hasan*, better known as '*Mullā Do-piāzā*', the famous Comedian and Court Jester, who together with Minister Birbal, kept the Emperor in good humour.

The denomination of '*Mullā*' acquired special popularity during the later Moghul Rule. *Emperor Jahangir* was a Patron of Rational Sciences, and appointed a Philosopher named *Mulla Abdul Hakeem Sialkoti* to a high rank. *Emperor Shah Jahan* was impressed with the talents of this Mulla, twice weighed him against silver coins and presented the weighed coins to the Mulla as a token of the Emperor's recognition of talent.

In course of time, hundreds of Mulla families rose up and acquired prominence in public life. Some of them earned reputation for high level of piety and religiosity. Notable among such families were the Mullas of Firingi Mahal of Oudh, namely, *Mulla Qutbuddin Shahid* (who was murdered in a land dispute by a rival Zamindar), *Mulla Nizamuddin*, *Mulla Hasan* and *Mulla Mobin*. Others among the celebrated Mulla families were the Khairabadi Mullas. This family produced a legion of Scholars in Philosophy and Metaphysics, notable among whom were *Moulvi Hamdullah Sandilwi*, *Mulla Mahmood*

Jaunpuri, Mulla Muhibullah Bihari and Mulla Gholam Yahya Bihari.

### *MULLĀ-Ē HUQ AND MULLĀ-E SOO*

With decadence setting in Moghul Imperial splendour and the decline of Oudh Aristocracy, the Mullās lost substantial patronage, and were gradually demoralised in intellectual and economic fields. The earlier generation of Mullās which had earned name and fame by winning Imperial honours and material favours, were succeeded by later generations which, by force of circumstances, descended to lower rungs of Muslim Society, and were compelled to eke out their livelihood by performing humble services in Mosques and Madrasahs.

The passage of time and change of circumstances resulted in division of Mullās into two categories, one being '*Mullā-e Huq*' (the virtuous Mullā), and the other, '*Mullā-e Soo*' (the vicious Mullā). In fact, these two categories existed all along since the first emergence of Mullās during the Afghan Rule in the 15th Century. But the distinction between the two was not so much noticeable then. It appears that in earlier times, the proportion of *Mullā-e Huq* was considerably larger than that of *Mullā-e Soo*, while in recent times, the proportion has been drastically reversed, the *Mulla-e Soo* preponderating in high numbers within the Muslim Society, while the *Mulla-e Huq* are few in number and are rarely seen.

Since the decline of Muslim Political Power, and particularly after the banishment of *Bahadur Shah Zafar* by the British Government 130 years back, Muslims became victims of bad days. Their Society grew weak and

backward decade after decade in Economy, Education and out-look. The liquidation of Muslim Nobility of Hyderabad since the Independence of India, and the emigration of intellectuals and wealthier class of Muslims to Pakistan in the wake of Partition of the Country, further reduced the weight and worth of Muslims in India.

With such a downward trend afflicting the Muslim Society, the Mullās became further demoralised. They could no more depend wholly upon their meagre source of income from Mosques and Madrasahs, which themselves were utterly dependent upon the precarious charity of poor residential population. The unscrupulous individuals among the Mullās therefore started to trade upon the gullibility of poor and ignorant Muslim folks, or entangled themselves in feuds and factions, or entered into petty politics, or exploited the religious faith and practice with mis-conceived interpretations of Holy Books. Minor differences in religious practice were magnified into hot controversial dogmas, dividing the Muslim Society into ever-quarreling Sects, and killing the urge for serious secular pursuits and advancement of Education.

### **IGNOMINIOUS IMAGE OF MULLĀS**

No wonder therefore that the Mullās were treated with disdain and contempt by educated Muslims in general, and were looked down as the scourge of Muslim Society. Although some of them were really good in heart and soul, the great majority of them were just the opposite, and the whole lot unfortunately earned the stigma of being fanatic, dishonest, quarrelsome, intriguing, malicious and avaricious. Many eminent Muslim Poets, Authors, Lawyers, Educationists, Administrators and

Journalists have expressed their sense of dislike or even contempt against them in course of lectures, discussions and writings. A few typical observations illustrating poor opinion held against the Mullās are mentioned below:

(i) *Sir Mohammad Iqbal*, the immortal Poet, says in 'Jawaid Namah':

"*Mullā Ki Shariat mein Faqat Masti-e Guftār*", meaning, the Mullā's Shariat abounds in frenzied talks devoid of sense. Else where Iqbal Says:

"*Ālimān az ilm-e Qurān be Niyāz*";,

meaning, the Ulamā are incapable of grasping the underlying implications of the Qurān. Sir Iqbal had really very poor opinion of the Mullās as well as of those who paraded themselves as Ulamā.

(ii) *Dr. A. J. Kidwai*, Director, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi, says, "The Mullas are compromising the dignity of Islam" (*The 'Telegraph'* dated 7.8.1985).

(iii) *Miss Farhāna Tayyab*, Lecturer of the Department of Islamic Studies, Jamia Millia Islamia, says, "Reforms are essential in the Muslim Personal Law, as the Mullas are suppressing the women" (*The 'Telegraph'* dated 7.8.1985).

(iv) *Badrudin Tyabji*, I.C.S. (Retd.), Ex-Ambassador of Iran, Indonesia, Japan and Germany says, The Mullas "deliberately shut their minds and hearts to them (the Prophet's advice), and try desperately, almost pathetically, to live in the past" (*'Secular Democracy'*, July, 1985).

(v) *Asaf A.A. Fyzee*, Ex-Ambassador of Egypt, and

Vice-Chancellor of Jammu and Kashmir University, says, "These two (Polygamy and Divorce) as encouraged by Mullas are the greatest evils in the Mahomedan Law of India" (*'Secular Democracy'*, June, 1985).

(vi) *Dr. M. Husayn Haykal*, a renowned Islamist of Egypt, and prolific Author of 'Hayat-e Muhammad' (Arabic, translated into English by Ismail Ragi A. Faruqi) writes:

"This corruption (in Islamic Civilisation) is attributable to the fact that a number of Ulama, who are normally expected to be the heirs of the Prophets, preferred Power to Truth, Worldly glory to Virtue, and used their Knowledge and Leadership to misguide the Community of the people and their young, in the same way as do the Ulama of this age. Such Ulama are however the Devil's associates. Upon them will fall the greatest responsibility on the Day of Judgment"(page 553-54, 8th Edition, Sherwani Offset Printers, Delhi).

(vii) The monthly Magazine *'The Review of Religions'* published from Washington, mentions in its issue of May, 1985, at page 39 as follows:

"The Mulla has dehumanised a Religion which taught Compassion, Charity and Grace."

(viii) *Daniel Latifi*, an eminent Advocate of the Supreme Court of India, says, "The detested Talaq Bidai, the sinful Talaq, was innovated by the Corrupt Ulamā in the time of Umayyad Monarchs" (*The 'Sunday'*, June, 8, 1986 at page 15).

(ix) *Justice Baharul Islam*, Ex-Judge of the Supreme Court of India, says, "Vested interests (meaning the Mullas) are interpreting certain

Institutions of Islam to perpetuate their own interests” (*Secular Democracy*, June, 1985 at page 17).

(IX) Imam Al-Ghazali, in his famous Treatise *Ihya Uloom-id Din* quotes a sacred Hadith and says, “Abids will be ignorant and Ulama will be Fasiq in the later ages” (page 145, Part I, Vol. I of Urdu Translation by Moulana Nadimul Wajidi of Deoband).

The views mentioned above come from a cross-section of eminent Muslim intelligentsia belonging to different walks of life, such as Poet, Educationist, Administrator, Vice-Chancellor of Universities, Journalist, Lawyer, Supreme Court Judge and American International Journal. This is a fair collection of representative opinion. It shows that enlightened Muslims have poor opinion of the character and conduct of Mullas, whom they regard as objects of contempt and derision.

If the image of Mullas has thus become soiled, the responsibility goes to the section of Mullas described as *Mulla-e Soo*. This particular class is numerically so large within the Muslim Society, and the other class of Mullas described as *Mulla-e Huq*, is so small in number, that the spectre of ignominious image earned by the majority is usually reflected upon the whole tribe of Mullas.

## Chapter 6

# TRENDS OF REFORMATION

### HISTORICAL EVOLUTION

In course of a thousand and four hundred years, Islam has passed through phases of evolution from a simple, rigid and orthodox monotheism preached to a small Arab Community into a multitude of Theological Sects and a complex of Legal Schools spread through out the vast Region from *Indonesia* in the East to *Morocco* in the West, with appreciable sprinklings over the rest of the World. The historical evolution of Islam appeared to have reached its full in the first stage by the 13th Century A.D., when the splendour of Abbaside Sovereigns was centred at *Baghdad*; and in the second stage till about the 18th Century, when the *Ottoman Turks*, the *Safavi Iranians* and the *Indian Moghuls* kept the torch of Civilisation aflame over the most populous areas of the World.

Soon thereafter, Islam began to experience external pressures arising out of Political and Economic expansion of Western Europe, coupled with internal challenge coming from the heart of the Muslim Society itself. Effects of these internal developments were in fact more profound than the impact from the West. Short accounts of these developments resulting from Reforms within the Socio-Religious spheres in modern times initiated by eminent Personages are given below, in order to show how these Reformers endeavoured to protect and promote the pristine Islamic values, as did the great Saints and Mujaddids of Islam in earlier times.

### 1. ***Muhammad ibn Abdal Wahhab (1703-1787)***

The first Reformatory Movement within the Muslim Society started from Central Arabia, when Abdal Wahhab began in the year 1744 a Revivalist Movement based on the puritanic Hanbalite School of Thought, coupled with the anti-Sufi Polemics of Ibn Taimiyah. This came to be known as the *Wahhabi Movement*, which condemned Saint-worship and Sufism as heresy, and also blamed the other Sunni Schools for allowing accretions on the pristine purity of Islam. Such Reforms Movement received active support from the Saudi Emirate of Hejaz. The present Saudi Arabian Kingdom carved out by *Malik Abdul Aziz* also patronises the Wahhabi Reforms.

In India, a shadow of the above Reforms Movement gained ground, primarily to revive and stimulate religious Faith which ran the risk of being submerged in the tide of modern life. In the early decades of the 19th Century, the preachings of Wahhabi puritanism and the revolt against Saint-worship were initiated by Shariat Allah and by *Sayyid Ahmad* of Rai Bareli. They eliminated the authority of the 'Medieval Schools', claiming themselves to be the true followers of the Prophet.

### 2. ***Jamaluddin Afghani (1839-1897)***

In the mean while, the Political and Economic impact of the Christian West had begun to create new tensions in the Muslim Society and Polity. Confronted with the penetrating power of Western influences, the Muslim Nations were unable to ignore them any longer. It necessitated efforts of comprehension and adjustment with their own life and thought. For the Thinking Section, two ways of meeting the challenge of the West appeared feasible.

Such thinking led to two-pronged Reformation



Movement of the 19th Century. On the aspect of Religion, it laid emphasis on purification of Islamic Faith and Practice as well as on modernisation of Education. On the Political aspect, the Movement aimed at removal of causes of conflict among Muslim Nations, uniting them into one single authority charged with the defence of Faith. The protagonist of both these ideas was Jamaluddin Afghani. His untiring campaigns through out the Middle East powerfully stirred Islamic fervour, and contributed to the political uprising in Egypt and Persia. He was the inspiration behind Pan-Islamism, which sought to unite all Muslim Nations under the banner of Ottoman Caliphate. He vigorously exhorted Muslims to develop Reason and to acquire Science and Technology, as the West was doing.

### **3. *Shaikh Muhammad Abduh (1849-1905)***

While Jamaluddin Afghani started by combining Islamic Fundamentalism with Political activist programme, his disciple Shaikh Muhammad Abduh of Egypt had the foresight to separate the Political from the Religious Reforms. As a young Teacher in Al-Azhar, he introduced a broader and more Scientific concept of Religious Education. He worked against strong opposition from conservative Ulamā and Political opponents, which he tried to neutralise by expounding his thoughts in the form of a Commentary of the Quran. He was a sincere Modernist, and he firmly urged the pursuit of modern thought with the conviction that in the long run, modern thoughts will tend to confirm the inherent Truths of Islam, rather than undermine them in any way. He re-stated the rights of Reason in Religious Thought, thereby restoring some amount of flexibility to a rigid and obsolete System.

Muhammad Abduh's contribution may be seen in

two forms, namely, spread of a type of modernism which while holding to the basic principles of Islam, is strongly influenced by Western ideas. Secondly, formation of a new Religious Party, called '*Salafiyā*', of which the principal Protagonist was Muhammad Abduh's disciple, Shaikh Rashid Rida of Syria (1865-1935). The *Salafīs* uphold the Traditions of the early Muslim Leaders, and reject the authority of the Medieval *Ulamā*. They regard themselves as '*Neo-Hanbalites*', and hold that the '*Gate of Ijtihad*' is open, and that the individual has the right of interpreting matters of Theology and Law.

#### **4. Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan (1817-1898)**

The efforts of *Jamaluddin Afghani* and his brilliant disciples opened the door for more enlightened activities in other Muslim Countries in order to reconstruct the Islamic way of life in terms of modern thought. In India, Sir Sayyid Ahmad (1817-98), like *Shaikh Muhammad Abduh*, asserted that Islam and Science are not antagonistic in any way, and that Islam was in conformity to nature and to Laws of Science. In order to develop this line of thought, he founded in 1875 a College at Aligarh for imparting Religious Education combined with modern Scientific studies through the medium of English Language. The new College and its Founder became the target of violent opposition from orthodox *Ulamā*, who bitterly attacked the '*Nechari*' Philosophy of Sir Sayyid as pure materialism and treason to Faith. But in spite of such opposition, the new liberalising tendency of Sir Sayyid and his preachings and teachings kept on growing and providing a rationalist approach to Islam, and helped to modernise the traditional outlook and out-of-date Social Ethics of the Muslim Community.

#### **5. Other Modernists of India**

The change from Medieval rigidity of Religious

outlook to the new interpretation of Islamic values, as well as the need for Western Scientific Education was welcomed by educated Muslims of India. Many Authors and Writers appeared on the scene to popularise the new ideal. *Syed Amir Ali*, a distinguished Jurist, wrote the '*Spirit of Islam*' in 1891, which was intended to stimulate the political and ethical consciousness of Muslims to face the Western World with self-respect. The Muslim intelligentsia accepted the new approach as re-orientation of Islamic doctrines in terms of Western Thought.

The modernist trend was thus initiated and disseminated by enlightened Thinkers and Reformers such as *Jamaluddin Afghani*, *Shaikh Muhammad Abduh*, Sir Sayyid Ahmad, Syed Amir Ali and others. They preached and propounded that Islam, rightly understood and practised, rejects all forms of obscurantism, and requires its adherents to pursue all branches of Learning, including Modern Science and Technology with utmost earnestness. This was a direct rebuff to Medieval-minded *Ulamā* deprecating secular learning. The Modernists supported their view by referring to the frequent Quranic Injunctions relating to the study of Divine 'Signs' in the natural phenomena from the Heavens down to the Earth. They also drew wisdom from the well-known sayings of the Prophet such as, "Seek Knowledge even unto China", and "The ink of the Scholar is more sacred than the blood of the Martyr". All these imperatives of Islamic Faith had been by-passed by Fundamentalist *Ulamā*.

Some modern Muslim Thinkers have very persuasively commended Western Scientific studies for Muslims. They point out that in taking over modern Western Learning and Science from the present

custodians, namely, the Western Nations, the Muslims would only be resuming the heritage of their own Civilisation, which they had left half-way in the 13th Century A.D. So why should they shirk now? This argument has been most effectively presented by *Sir Muhammad Iqbal*, whose modernist inclinations found expression in a series of Persian and Urdu Poetical Works. These writings have made powerful appeal to the present generation of Muslims, particularly in India and Pakistan.

### **THE EXAMPLE OF JEWS**

Muslims, particularly in India, attribute their backwardness to the factor of prejudice against them. Prejudice exists, no doubt. To be realistic however, there is no Country in the World where the Minorities are not subjected to discrimination and prejudice. But the wiser group of Minorities some how devise a practical solution for themselves. The case of Jews in America is particularly instructive. The American Educational System does not allow running of Community Schools. The Jews are religious-minded. As they were debarred from opening Jewish Schools, they sent their children to Secular Schools, while organising Sunday assemblage for imparting religious education to Jewish children. In this manner, the handicap of the Minority Community was got over. While they gave Religious Instruction to their children in this manner, the Jewish children competed seriously in Secular Schools with Christian children. Today, this Minority Community is dominant in American Economy and Polity.

But the Indian Muslims are doing just the opposite. Either they send their children to Madrasahs, where there is no facility for development of Scientific talent nor secular competence, or they send their children to

Secular Schools, without making any arrangement for Religious Instruction at home. The result is that an average Indian Muslim youth is much less fit for life's struggles than an average Jewish youth.

Jews in America are a creative Minority, but Muslims in India are not so, because most of them being Fundamentalists, they can not be creative. Fundamentalists are imitative, and have no originality or creative faculty. Imitative persons fail to make mental adjustment with the progressive Scientific temperament. While the sister-communities are progress-oriented, the Muslims remain behind as a mere 'Grumbling lot', complaining against every thing around them.

### **SAUDI ARABIA TURNS TO SCIENCE**

Saudi Arabia is making rapid progress in the field of Education, re-doubled since the reign of the far-sighted *King Faisal bin Abdul Aziz*. It is a country with a small population of 80 Lakhs only, but is running six large Universities, with a considerable number of Colleges affiliated to them. The paramount need of fostering and promoting Arabic Language and Islamic Studies has received due attention, side by side with the need to comply with the Quranic exhortations for acquisition of Scientific knowledge. King Faisal updated and reformed Education in his Country by establishment of the Ibn Saud Islamic University at Medina. Two other Saudi Arabian Universities, including the University of Petroleum and Minerals at Dhahran, are imparting Technical Education through the medium of English Language. The nucleus of Scientific Education in Saudi Arabia was started with the establishment of the Riyadh Scientific Institute (*al-Ma'hid al-Ilmi*). Modern Subjects

such as Applied Geology, Meteorology, Marine Science, Agriculture, Architecture and Planning, as well as Medical, Engineering and Veterinary Sciences are also taught in other Universities.

The composite effect of such multi-dimensional education is admirably moulding the Saudi Arabian character, creating necessary infra-structure elements for a modern Society. This does not mean that the Country has done all that is necessary to develop itself into a viable modern State. It is still in the grip of the older conservative generation with deep fundamentalist association, while the younger generation is still not hard-working or earnest like the young men and women of Japan or West Germany. But the State is trying to do its utmost to put the Citizens in the right track, and the country has happily turned the corner, at least in the field of Education and is fast refining its national outlook by taking to the study of Science and Technology in combination with observance of Religious practice.

### **MEDIEVALISM IN INDIAN MADRASAH EDUCATION**

Things are very much different in Islamic Institutions in India. Senior Indian Madrasahs such as exist at Deoband, Bareili, Lucknow, Jalalabad and other Centers of Islamic Education are intended to impart education in Arabic and Islamic Theology to students who finally emerge as *Alims* or *Fazils*. The products of these Islamic Universities constitute the bulk of present day *Ulamā* in India. The subjects taught to them, and the method of teaching in these Institutions are legacies of the Medieval age, which were condemned by *Imam Ghazali* nearly one Thousand years back. According to *Imam Ghazali*, there were two major defects in this obsolete system of Education. Firstly, it segregated the Sciences of the World from the Sciences of Islam, which

inevitably resulted in the segregation of mundane from religious affairs, a trend unwholesome from the Islamic point of view. Secondly, certain things which had no place in the Shariah were included in the curriculum as if they were a part of the Shariah. Thus these Islamic Institutions were infusing wrong notions into the Pupils' mind about Islam, and were indirectly helping in the creation of sectarian difference and animosity.

### **RE-CASTING OF MADRASAH SYLLABUS**

The Authorities prescribing the Syllabus adopted in Indian Madrasahs are completely oblivious of the repeated directions in the Holy Quran regarding the need to acquire competence in study and reflection over Scientific phenomena, as indicated in as many as 750 verses of the Holy Book. The Syllabus framing authorities are also heedless to the demands of the fast approaching 21st Century, which the Muslims like any other Citizen of the World must be prepared to face, unless they are destined to perish. Far from introducing Scientific temper into the curricula of these Institutions, the men at the helm of Madrasah Education have been advertently or inadvertently infusing into the head and heart of the Student-Ulamā a spirit of indifference towards Modern Science and Western Education. Ultimately, when these emerging Ulamā complete their biased and antiquated education, and step into the contemporary Society, they find themselves unfit to breathe in the free air of the present age of Science and Technology. They would generally be suffering from inferiority complex, hating every body with modern Education, and themselves being hated by every body with modern Education.

Islam could not be adequately defended by such

type of mis-fits, who though educated in Islamic Literature, are completely unfamiliar with Modern Sciences. In this Scientific age, the Ulamā are incapable of explaining and interpreting the inner beauties of Islamic System, which is based on Scientific groundings of the Quran. The Ulamā invariably fail to convince the Protagonists of other Religions, particularly the Christians and the Jews, who themselves are adequately qualified in Religious Education re-inforced by Scientific awareness.

There is therefore the obvious necessity of reformation of Madrasah Education, by up-to-dating its syllabus with a view to create a sense of awareness in Modern Science along with Islamic Theology. Extreme care should be taken to discard all those items in the syllabus, which create Sectarian feelings, as very wisely warned by Imam Ghazali. If those who are responsible for framing the syllabus display patience and take the trouble to study the precepts of great Saints and Scholars like Al-Biruni, Al-Ash'ari, Al-Ghazali, Hifiz Ibn Taimiyah, Maulana Jalaluddin Rumi and other eminent Defenders of Islam, they would indeed be in a position to judge that the currnet Syllabus of Indian Madrasahs needs drastic revision, if the future products of these Institutions are intended to emerge as the wise and acceptable Leaders of the present-day bewildered Muslim Society.



## Chapter 7

# THE RETROSPECT

### **THE CHALLENGE OF MODERN TIMES**

In Centuries past, Islam had to face onslaughts of heresy, atheism and innovations, but it successfully weathered the storm on all such occasions by its inherent virtues of Truth, Universality and adaptability. Three centrifugal trends were seen working within the frame of Islamic Society all along. One is the Puritan temper, holding fast to the legacy and traditions of orthodoxy by depending upon the literal sense of Holy Texts, at times deflecting the generous provisions of Islamic Tenets into stunted canons of Sectarian Dogmas. The second is the erudite mind, probing deep into the inner significance of Divine Commands, and trying to maintain purity of Faith by expounding meaningful interpretations of the Quran and Sunnah in order to meet the changing situations of life in the context of Modern Age. The third trend represents the thinking of those who acknowledge the supremacy of man's Reasoning Faculty, utterly disregarding the possibility of unseen and imperceptible Spiritual Forces at work. The Protagonists of all the three trends were intellectuals, though some of them were 'rightly guided', while others were 'mis-guided' individuals.

It is obvious that the effective pressure of today's Secularism tends to relax the religious conscience of man, and to weaken his will to stick to the puritan rigidity of earlier times when there was no such palpable pressure.

The new situation lays special responsibility on the Conscience-keepers of the Community, whether they be Political Leaders or Religious Guides. In the historic days of Islam, such a function used to be discharged by the Khalifā or the Ulamā. The days of Khalifā being over, the only choice now lies with the Ulamā. These 'Guardians' of the Community are expected to regulate its religious conscience strictly according to the spirit of the Quran and Hadith, and to uphold the integrity and stability of the Community, themselves yielding to no extreme views either of stark rigidity or of lax materialism, but keeping a realistic balance between the two.

The present day diversification of Country's multi-headed responsibility, and the expansion and popularisation of the courses of Secular Education in Schools and Colleges, pose a challenge to the Ulamā, as was not known in Medieval times. The Ulamā should therefore be properly equipped to face the new challenge, and solve the out-standing problems. But unfortunately, the personal accomplishments of the present day Ulamā are limited to Medieval type of Education, and their outlook is very much short of the far-flung horizon created by explosion of modern Knowledge. With such inadequate outfits, today's Ulamā are not qualified to study correctly the demands of new life around them, or to offer solutions of grave issues which their Community is confronted with. Mentally, they still live in the atmosphere of Medieval World, and this makes them mis-fits for the Modern World.

### **FAILURE OF ULAMĀ TO RISE TO THE OCCASION**

The present day Ulamā should therefore realise that they are no longer living in the Medieval age, but are very much breathing in the air of modern times, and are

surrounded on all sides by modern Civilisation. They can not run away from modern Civilisation and escape into Medieval Regimes. Similarly, the present day Muslims can not shut themselves off from the modern World, nor can they afford to cut themselves off from the Cultural and Spiritual roots of their parental Religion.

Amidst worries of modern avocations, a good busy Muslim needs the correct way to be shown to him. It is only the enlightened Ulamā, the rightly guided Ulamā, who can lead him to the correct path, the '*Sirat-al Mustaqeem*', so that while keeping to the norms of Islamic way of life, he is able to shine bright in the secular fields of activity. Indeed, the present generation of Muslims needs the right minded Ulamā not the obsolete minded Ulamā, just as the early generation of Muslims needed the rightly guided Khulafa-e Rashideen, and not the misguided wealthy Quraish Chiefs.

### **ULAMĀ NEEDING ADAPTABILITY**

If the Ulamā fail to rise to the appropriate level, they would be sadly failing to safeguard the Religious heritage of Islam from the onslaughts of modern Civilisation, thereby proving themselves unworthy of the distinction associated with their appellation. Necessarily therefore, they have to change their line of thought and action, elevate their accomplishments and adjust themselves so as to be in tune with the demands of the present day Scientific outlook. This they can do, only if they correctly understand the warning contained in the Holy Quran, "Verily, God does not change the condition of a people until they change their own condition" (Surah Ar-Ra'd, 13:11).

The Ulamā can prove themselves equal to the complex task confronting them, only when they realise the indispensability of adjustment with the needs of the present day. If they turn out to be what their compatriots were in the early Centuries of Islam, if they become the core of the present day Learned men, if they become fit enough now to be the Leader in intellectual as well as Spiritual life as in the days of yore, the Community will certainly welcome them as its Friend, Philosopher and Guide, so much needed in the present age for keeping the balance between *THIS WORLD* and *THAT WORLD*.

### **TAKE TO SCIENCE OR SINK INTO OBLIVION**

The Ulamā can still be hoped to steer clear of the complexities of the present day, and emerge as the Leader of Muslim Society, if they take to study of Secular Sciences together with the study of Theology and allied Islamic Disciplines. The time for acquiring Scientific awareness has not only come, but is already past. Either the Ulamā must wake up and keep pace with the latest explosion of Knowledge as the Christian and the Jewish Doctors of Religion are doing, or they must be prepared to perish in the irresistible avalanche of changes rushing at the threshold of the Space Age, where Mankind now precariously stands.

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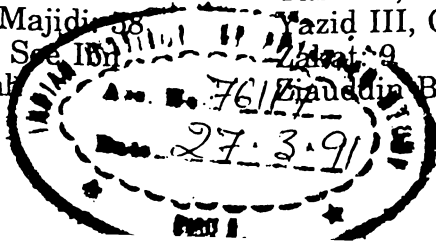
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