

SAVIOURS OF

ISLAMIC SPIRIT

Volume One

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S. Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi

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CONTENTS

<i>Introductory Remarks</i>	vii
-----------------------------------	-----

<i>Prologue</i>	xi
-----------------------	----

Chapter I

Umar Ibn Abdul Aziz	1
---------------------------	---

Chapter II

Hasan Al-Basri	11
----------------------	----

Chapter III

The Abbasids	17
--------------------	----

Chapter IV

Ahmad Ibn Hanbal	25
------------------------	----

Chapter V

Abul Hasan Al Ash'ari	35
-----------------------------	----

Chapter VI

Decline of Dialectics	45
-----------------------------	----

Chapter VII

Al-Ghazali	53
------------------	----

Chapter VIII

Sheikh Abdul Qadir Jilani	77
---------------------------------	----

Chapter IX

Ibn al-Jawzi	89
--------------------	----

Chapter X

Nur ud-din Zangi and Salah ud-din Ayyubi	103
--	-----

Chapter XI

Sheikh ul-Islam Izz ud-Din Ibn Abdul Salam	121
--	-----

Chapter XII

Tatars the Scourge of God	129
---------------------------------	-----

Chapter XIII

Maulana Jalal ud-din Rumi	149
---------------------------------	-----

<i>Index</i>	173
---------------------------	-----

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

The author of *Saviours of Islamic Spirit* Maulana S. Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi hardly needs any introduction. He was one of the most reputed scholars and an eminent leader of Muslim India, who was held in high esteem by the entire world of Islam. He wrote more than seventy books in Arabic and Urdu on subjects related to Islamic faith, literature and history, and on problems confronting the Muslims in the present time. A number of his books have also been translated into English, French, Turkish, Persian and a few other languages.

The author was Rector of Darul Uloom, Nadwatul Ulama, India; President of the Academy of Islamic Research and Publications India; and Chairman of the Centre of Islamic Studies at the St. Cross College, University of Oxford (U.K.); Member of the Standing Committee of the World Muslim Organisation (Rabita-e-Alam-e-Islami), Saudi Arabia; Member of the Advisory Committee of the University of Medina, Saudi Arabia; and Member of the Academy of Arts and Letters of Damascus, Syria. He was also associated in various capacities with numerous other religious and literary institutions and organizations all over the world. He was awarded Shah Faisal Award in 1980 for his services to the Cause of Islam.

Many muslim young men asked my maternal grandfather Mr. Zaheerun Nabi questions about the intellectual and spiritual

history of Islam. This book written by Maulana S. Abul Hasan Ali Nadvi was the answer. But the Muslim young men, busy in their pursuit of professional targets, did not find time to read voluminous books inspite of their keen desire to know their roots and ancestors. They mentioned it to Mr. Zaheerun Nabi and pointed out that abridged editions of valuable and monumental works of western writers are published and these serve to make knowledge available to a large number of people. Mr. Nabi suggested this to the author, Maulana Syed Abul Hasan Ali Hasni Nadwi, and sought his permission to abridge the first volume. The Maulana liked the idea and gladly gave permission.

Maulana Sahib patronised all who sought his patronage. To Zaheerun Nabi he was kind because of the close intellectual and spiritual relationship with his ancestors. Zaheerun Nabi's great grandfather, Maulana Ahmad Ali Saharanpuri is known throughout the Islamic world for his commentary on Sahih Bukhari. That commentary is still popular in India and also in Arab countries. Zaheerun Nabi's grand father, Maulana Khalilur Rahman was associated with Darul Ulum Nadwatul Ulum, Lucknow since its beginning and was its Nazim in 1913-15. Zaheerun Nabi's father, Maulana Manzurul Nabi, was member of the Nadwatul Ulama. He was also member of the Legislative Assembly of UP.

Mr. Zaheerun Nabi did his B.A. and LLB from Allahabad University and joined service of the Govt. of India. He retired as Dy. Manager, Food Corporation of India. After retirement he devoted himself to social and literary work.

He translated Mufti Zafeeruddin Sahib's book *Islam Ka Nizam-e-Masajid* which was published under the title *Mosques in Islam*. His book *March of Science in the Middle Ages* was published in 2005.

This abridgement of *Saviours of Islamic Spirit* has been made from the English version done by Mr. S. Mohiuddin

Ahmad, who retired as Deputy Secretary, UP govt. He was a prolific writer who authored and translated many books. The help taken from his translation is acknowledged with gratitude.

I thank the Academy of Islamic Research and Publications, Lucknow and its President, Maulana Saiyed Mohammad Rabe Nadwi for permission to publish an abridged edition of *Saviours of Islamic Spirit*.

I also thank Mr. Nitin Gupta for his personal interest in the publication of this book.

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2325, West Chase Drive
Dunlap, Illinois, USA

PROLOGUE

THE NECESSITY OF REFORMATION AND RENOVATION AND ITS CONTINUITY IN ISLAMIC HISTORY

Life is Ever Changing

Islam is the last message of God Almighty; it has been presented in a complete form before the world, which has been told that:

“This day have I perfected your religion for you and completed My favour unto you, and have chosen for You as religion AL-ISLAM”.

(Al Maida: 3)

It is also a fact that life is on the move, ever-changing and evolving as someone has aptly said:

Life is ever youthful,
Continuously on the move, zestful

The religion bestowed by Omniscient God is grounded in a faith in eternal values and transcendental facts, yet, it is also zestful, perpetually moving and sufficing for the transformations of life.

It can help humanity to find its way at every turn and pass. It is not a culture of any particular age or the architecture of a particular place preserved in the shape of archaeological remains,

but a living faith, a masterpiece of ingenuity and craftsmanship of the Omniscient and Wise Creator.

In its being given as the last and universal religion, the *Ummah* of Islam had of necessity to participate in the building up of a universal brotherhood, encompassing all the nations of the world at one time or the other. In this endeavour they have had to face situations and undergo experiences as no other people have had to face.

Divine Arrangements for the Existence of Islam

In order to enable the followers of Islam to meet the time bound and extremely variable human needs changing according to circumstances, God has bestowed two things upon this *Ummah*. First, the precepts and teachings of the Holy Prophet of Islam, Mohammad (may the peace of God be upon him), which can withstand all changes brought about by time and space, and solve all problems posed by the time-bound needs of humanity. Secondly, the Lord has taken it upon himself, that He shall always be raising such beacons of light and learning who will be translating the teachings and precepts of Islam into practical life and thus infusing a new life-blood into the veins of the *Ummah* for its march onwards. *Ummah* always did get a man of the same type and stature that it needed in a particular age.

Attacks on Islam

There have been religions which had once conquered the then known world but they could not survive under offensives much less serious than those Islam had to face. Unlike others, Islam not only overcame all its adversaries but was also successful in maintaining its original form and purity. If, on the one hand, Assassins posed a grave internal danger for the faith and spirit of Islam, the onslaught of the Crusaders and the invasion of the Mongols, on the other, were sufficient to efface it completely. Islam, not only survived in the face of all these internal and

external threats to its very existence, but was also able to gain victories in entirely new fields. Islam was continuously called upon to resist the onslaught of innovations, deviations and misguided interpretations of the Qur'an and the *Sunnah*, foreign traditions, heretical rites of the worship of saints, relics and tombs, speculative thought, materialism, epicureanism and godlessness, and, indeed, it sometimes appeared as if Islam would not be able to weather the storm, but the conscience of its followers always refused to strike a compromise with the evil, and Islam emerged triumphantly on each occasion. In every age, it produced a man of God who attacked these innovations and deviations with the full weight of unshakable conviction and restored the true spirit of the faith; propounded the teachings of Islam to contradict speculative thought and materialistic percepts; raised the banner of revolt in the face of despots and emperors; condemned opulence, luxury and indolence of the rich and enunciated the teachings of Islam as the sole valid source of religious, moral and political advancement. The fact of the matter is that God has ordained that the task entrusted earlier to the prophets and apostles will have to be accomplished by the followers of the last Prophet.

Relevance of Revivalists to Maintain Purity of Faith

No religion can maintain its vigour for long and offer a satisfying answer to the questions of ever-changing life unless it can produce guides and standard-bearers who can infuse a breath of new life into its followers through their personal example of unflinching faith, moral and spiritual excellence, ardent zeal, intellectual eminence and erudite scholarship. Life always poses new problems. Temptations of the flesh and materialistic urges always tempt him to adopt the path of self-indulgence and licentiousness.

Thus renovators who could help to rectify malpractices and deviations which find their way into religion, restore the original

purity give a call to shed the accretions, decry the foreign elements, rites and customs, wage a war against the inroads of materialistic and pleasure-seeking ideas and enlighten the hearts of co-religionists by their faith, true spiritualism and a personal example of ennobling sacrifice for their cause are needed at all times.

Defence Against Heresy

History bears testimony to the fact that there has never been a spell, however brief, during the past one and a half thousand years when the message of Islam was eclipsed or its teachings were engulfed by heresy, and the Islamic conscience became dormant enough to accept a contaminated faith. Whenever an effort was made from any quarter whatsoever to distort the tenets of Islam, pervert or falsify its teachings, or it was attacked by sensistmaterialism, some one invariably came forward to accept the challenge and fight it out to the grief of Islam's adversary. History records many a powerful movement in its day, which posed a danger for Islam but now it is difficult to find out even the true impact of its thought. Only a few people know today what *Qadriyah* (Rationalists believing in free will), *Jahmiyah* (Determinists), *'Itizal* (Dissenters), creation of the **Qur-an**, Existentialist Monism, Din-i-Ilahi, etc., exactly mean, although these represented, at one time or the other, very important schools of thought and, with the most powerful imperial powers of their day and some extremely learned and able persons at their back, they had threatened to stifle Islam. Finally, however, it was Islam which gained ascendancy over these contending forces. These powerful movements are know today as simply different schools of thought and are to be found now in philosophical and dialectical treatises. This tradition of struggle against un-Islam, the spirit to re-assert the divine message are as old as Islam itself.

Lost Sources of History

A vast treasure of information on the social, political and historical events of the bygone days is in fact to be found in the religious works which can serve as a valuable source of History. These are the writings of the religious savants and scholars wherein they have laid bare their innermost feelings, given numerous accounts of the incidents they or their contemporaries had come across, quoted their teachers, and mentors and recorded proceedings of the profound and heartfelt reunions of their masters and fellows. There are compilation of letters and discourses from which we can gain access to the thoughts and ideas, feelings and emotions of their writers. There are also monographs written for the refutations of innovations and deviations or to censure the wayward sections of society. If one could extend his vision to all these writings and had time to cull out relevant data from these works, a complete and detailed history of Islamic missionary effort could be written to show that the effort to re-kindle the fire of religious ardour and dynamic energy into the followers of Islam has never ceased for a moment and the Muslims too have never remained cold or indifferent to the call.

Had not these defenders of Islam worked with ardent zeal and immaculate sincerity and made heroic sacrifices for the cause held dear by them, we would not have inherited what has been recounted in this volume and which still contains a reservoir of guidance and inspiration for us. We can be rightly proud of these ancestors of ours and present with confidence the story of their work and achievements before other nations.

The writer of these pages has endeavoured to depict the picture of these eminent personalities and describe their accomplishment in the field of Islamic revival and renovation.

(The above is translated and abridged from the *Muqaddama* which the author had written in his original book)

CHAPTER - I

UMAR IBN ABDUL AZIZ

Reformist Endeavours of the First Century

Soon after the Khilafat-E-Rashida (the rightly-guided Caliphate) came to an end and the Umayyad Empire, which was more Arab than Islamic, consolidated itself, the need for reformation and renovation in Islam was felt keenly. Customs, traditions and remembrances of the pagan past, which had been discredited under the impact of the prophet's teachings, began to re-assert themselves among the new Arab converts to Islam. The then government was not organised according to the dictates of the Quran and the Sunnah—its guiding lights were Arab diplomacy. Expediency and interest of the State, Arab racialism, tribal pride, partisan spirit and nepotism, regarded as unpardonable sins during the days of the Khilafat-E-Rashida, became the hall-mark of the new aristocracy.

The extravagant rulers, surrounded by dissolute parasites who flocked to the capital demoralised the society and produced an aristocracy resembling the pagan Arab wastrel of the age of ignorance in moral and behaviour.

Religious Teachers of the Umayyad period

However, the masses had still not forsaken the moral values and deference for Islamic teachings. The regard for moral worth and tenets of Islam was due mainly to those scholars of impeccable worth and ability who were held in high esteem by

the masses for their moral and spiritual excellence, selflessness and piety. The person most respected and loved during the period was Ali-Ibn-Husain (Zainul Abdin).

Other highly reputed religious scholars of outstanding piety during the Umayyad period were Hasan-al-Muthanna, his son Abdullah al-Mahadh, Salim ibn Abdullah ibn Umar, Qasim ibn Muhammad ibn Abu Bakr, Saeed ibn Musayib and Urwah ibn Zubair.

The demoralisation that had set in owing to the immoral conduct of the ruling elite was undoubtedly on the increase but the moral influence wielded by these persons on the masses was not without a salutary effect, their pure and simple life was a standing reproach to the unprincipled this-worldliness of the rulers, which made people think of reforming their intemperate life.

The Umayyad power was, however, entrenched in such a firm military strength that it was not possible to dislodge it, nor there existed any internal or external force which could dare to challenge it. It appeared as if the fate of Muslims had been sealed for a fairly long time. It required a miracle alone for the Islamic precepts to find an expression again in the political law guiding the community's behaviour.

Accession of Umar ibn Abdul Aziz

The miracle was the accession of Umar ibn Abdul Aziz to the throne in 99 A.H. (717 A.D.). He was a grandson of Marwan and his mother, Umm Asim, was grand-daughter of Umar I, the second Caliph.

Umar ibn Abdul Aziz was born in 61 A.H. He was a cousin of the preceeding Caliph, Sulaiman ibn Abdul Malik and had been posted as Governor of Madina since the time of Walid ibn Abdul Malik, the Caliph before Sulaiman. The life led by him as Governor was entirely different from that he adopted as a

Caliph. He was known as a polished and decorous aristocrat of refined taste. Anybody could tell from the fragrance of perfumes he used that Umar had passed that way. He was all the rage for the fashionable youths of his day. Except for his integrity of character and righteousness there was nothing to suggest that he was destined to perform a memorable task in the history of Islam.

But he proved to be a standing miracle of Islam. The very way he ascended to the Caliphate was miraculous, for, nobody could have predicted the dramatic turn that the events took in bringing him to the throne. He could not have hoped to be anything more than a viceroy under the hereditary custom of accession to the Caliphate, but God had willed otherwise. Sulaiman ibn Abdul Malik fell seriously ill and lost all hopes of recovery. He was anxious to leave the throne to one of his sons who were still minors.

UMAR BIN ABDUL AZIZ
(Al Khalifat as Saleh)

Born: 61 or 63 AH (680 or 682 AD) At Halwan in Egypt

Father: Abdul Aziz Governor of Egypt and son of Marwan I the forth Umayyad Khalifa

Mother: Umm Asim daughter of Asim, son of Umar bin Khattab

Wife: Fatima, daughter of Abdul Malik the 5th Umayyad Khalifa

Education: in Medina from his uncle Abdullah bin Umar

Governor Medina: 706 AD for two years during the Period of Walid bin Abdul Malik the 5th Umayyad Khalifa

Contemporaries: Abdullah Ibn Zubair, Hasan Al-Basri, Hajjaj Ibn Yusuf, Umayyad Khalifas Abdul Malik, Waleed Ibn Abdul Malik, Suleiman Ibn Abdul Malik.

Khalifa: 717 to 720 AD the 8th Umayyad Khalifa for 2 year and 5 months.

Died: 720 AD by poisoning instigated by Umayyad clan due to his austerity measures in all aspects of life.

In his dreadful agony, he cast a pathetic glance over his sons and said "He is really fortunate who has grown-up sons". Reja ibn Haiwah happened to be present at the time and he promptly proposed Umar ibn Abdul Aziz as the successor to the throne. Caliph Sulaiman accepted the suggestion and thus, by his timely intervention, Reja rendered yeoman service for the revival of Islam.

Character of Umar II

Immediately upon his accession, Umar dismissed provincial governors known to be cruel or unjust to the people. All the jewellery and valuable presents brought before him on accession to the throne were deposited in the state treasury.

He was now a completely changed man. He considered himself a successor to Caliph Umar I, son of Khattab, rather than to Sulaiman ibn Abdul Malik. Slaves of the royal household were emancipated. The royal court modeled after Persian and Byzantine Royal patterns was now marked by an austere and primitive simplicity. He returned to the State not only his ancestral fief but even the valuables and jewellery his wife had received from her father and brothers. He was the ruler of the mightiest empire of his day but he did not have enough money to perform the Hajj.

'Umar II was careful not for his person alone. He always exhorted the state officials to be extremely cautious in their dealings involving the state property.

Not only that extreme caution, moderation, simplicity and unaffected piety were the feature of Umar's character, he transformed the view-point of his government, making the will of the people the sole object of administration.

The historic dictum of 'Umar II that 'Muhammad was sent as a prophet and not as a collector', adequately illustrates the objective he had set before the state under him. In truth and

reality, during the entire period of his Caliphate he sought to translate this idea into practice. He always preferred principles, moral dictates and demands of the faith to political expediency and never cared a whit for financial loss suffered by the state if the policy commended by religion entailed it. During his reign the non-muslims were embracing Islam in ever-increasing numbers which meant a dwindling income from the poll-tax. As the sharp fall in revenues posed a danger to the financial stability of the State, Umar's attention was drawn towards it. But his reply was that the situation was eminently in accord with the objectives underlying the prophet-hood of Muhammad. To an official he wrote "I would be too glad if all the non-Muslims embrace Islam and (owing to the drying up of income from poll-tax) we have to take up cultivation for earning our living." A fixed amount of land revenue was to be remitted by the provincial Government of Yemen every year whether it had a favourable crop or not. Umar II ordered that the revenue should be assessed in accordance with the agricultural production every year. He added that he would willingly accept it even if a handful of grain were to be received in pursuance of his order. He discontinued levy of octroi¹ throughout the kingdom saying that it was prohibited by the Qur'an.

Umar II used to say that people have made octroi lawful by changing its name. Barring the few taxes allowed by the Shari'ah, he abolished all taxes and duties levied by his predecessors. All the land and sea routes were opened for trade without any embargo whatsoever.

Far-reaching reforms were introduced in the administration of the kingdom. Some of the steps were that officials were precluded from entering into any business or trade, unpaid labour was made illegal, pasture-lands and game-preserves reserved

¹ Octroi is a tax levied at the gate of a city on articles brought in.

for the royal family or other dignitaries were distributed to the landless cultivators or made public property, strict measures were taken to stop illegal gratification of state employees who were forbidden to accept gifts, all officers holding responsible posts were directed to afford adequate facilities to those who wanted to present their complaints to them in person, a proclamation was made every year on the occasion of pilgrimage that any one who would bring to the notice of administration any maltreatment by a state official or offer a useful suggestion shall be rewarded 100 to 300 dinars.

Solicitude For Moral Reformation

After the khilafat-e-Rashida came to an end, the Caliphs began to consider themselves simply as monarchs and administrators; they were neither capable nor had the time to bother about the moral and social conditions of their subjects. 'Umar ibn Abdul Aziz' did away with this dichotomy and proved himself to be really a successor of the Prophet as his office implied. No sooner did he ascend the Caliphate, he sent out quite lengthy letters and directives which dealt with religious and moral reforms more than with the so-called administrative affairs.

Compilation of Traditions

The study and cultivation of religious sciences did not escape attention of Umar Ibn Abdul Aziz. Drawing the attention of an eminent man of letters of his time, Abu Bakr ibn Hazm, towards compilation of the traditions of the Holy Prophet, he wrote:

“Reduce into writing whatever traditions of the Holy Prophet you can collect, for I fear that after the traditionists pass away, the knowledge will also perish.”

Defender of the Faith

The unalloyed Islamic thought and spirit of religion that 'Umar ibn Abdul Aziz tried to infuse among the Muslims and give a

practical shape through the State he presided over, can be gauged from the letters and edicts he issued from time to time to the different functionaries of his government.

It was once reported to him that certain tribal chiefs and Umayyad aristocrats had revived the pagan custom of entering into alliance and were giving a call to one another in the name of tribal solidarity during their fights and forays. This custom cut at the very root of Islamic concept of brotherhood and the social order it wanted to bring into existence. 'Umar ibn Abdul Aziz, being fully alive to the pernicious implications of the practice, issued an order to Dahhak ibn Abdur-Rahman for curbing the evil forthwith.

The directives sent by 'Umar ibn Abdul Aziz to the commander of a military expedition illustrate the extent to which he had imbibed the Qur'anic mode of thought and view-point, and how he differed diametrically from other rulers and emperors of his time, in one of his edicts to Mansur ibn Ghalib he wrote:

“whereas the commander of the faithful has charged Mansur to wage war against those who might oppose him, the latter is also instructed to inculcate awe of God since, it constitutes the best of provisions, the most effective strategy and the real power. For sin is even more dangerous than the ruses of the enemy, The commander of the faithful bids upon Mansur that instead of taking fright of his enemy, he should fear transgressing the limits of God. We can not deploy troops in the same numbers as our enemies can do nor do we possess the equipments they have got.”

Behold, if we are not able to gain ascendancy over our enemies on account of our righteousness, we would never be in a position to defeat them through our might. We need not keep an eye upon anything more than the enmity of our own wickedness nor do we have to hold in leash anything more than our own

**WORKS OF
UMAR BIN ABDUL AZIZ**

- During Governorship of Medina repaired and enlarged the Prophet's Mosque and beautification of city. And also erased the signs of ravages committed in Medina during time of Yazid and Abdul Malik.
- Moral Reformation
- Compilation of Hadith
- Defender of Faith
- Propagation of Islam
- Financial Reforms

viciousness. Never consider yourselves superior to your enemies, nor take your victory for granted because of the sinfulness of your foes, for many a people worse than his enemy was granted ascendancy in the past. Therefore, seek the help of God against your own temptations in the same way as you desire the succour of God against your opponent.

“Commander of the Faithful also bids Mansur ibn Ghalib that he should treat his men with leniency.

“For giving rest to his men and the beast of burden and also for getting his armaments repaired. The commander of the Faithful orders Mansur ibn Ghalib to break his journey on every Friday for the whole day and night thereof. He is also ordered to encamp far away from the habitations which have entered into treaty relations with us, and allow none from his troops to visit their dwellings, markets or gatherings, only those of this men who are firm in faith and trustworthy and who would neither be ill-disposed nor commit a sin against the people could be allowed to visit such habitations for collection of lawful dues. You are as much bound to guarantee their rights as they are enjoined to fulfill the duties devolving on them i.e. you have to honour your obligations to them so long as they do theirs. You should never try to gain an advantage over your enemy through persecution of those who have come under your protection, for you have already got a share (in the shape of Jeziah or poll-tax)

in their earnings and you neither need to increase it nor they are bound to pay more.”

“I bid you to be cautious and God-fearing in all the affairs of your obligations, perform that which has been ordained by God and desist from the acts prohibited by the Shari’ah.”

Propagation of Islam

The efforts of ‘Umar ibn Abdul Aziz were not limited to the enforcement of the Shari’ah, as the law of the land, and reformation of the Muslim only. He also paid attention towards spreading the message of Islam among the non-muslims and his endeavours were also successful on account of his personal example of simple life, unaffected piety, unswerving uprightness and immaculate sincerity.

Financial Reforms

The financial reforms embarked upon by ‘Umar ibn Abdul Aziz viz. remission of numerous taxes and *tithes* disallowed by the Shari’ah did not result in pecuniary difficulties or deficits in the State income. On the contrary, people became so much well-off that it became difficult to find destitute and beggars who would accept the poor-due (*zakat*).

Apart from the prosperity of the masses, which is invariably a by-product of the Islamic form of government, the more important change accomplished by the regime of ‘Umar ibn Abdul Aziz was the diversion in inclination and aptitude, mood and trend of the populace. His contemporaries narrate that whenever a few friends met during the regime of Walid, they used to converse about buildings and architecture for that was the rage of Walid, Sulaiman was fond of women and banquets, and these became the fad of his days, but, during the reign of ‘Umar ibn Abdul Aziz the prevailing demeanour and subjects for discussion were prayers, supplicatory and benedictory, obligatory and supererogatory.

The guiding light for 'Umar ibn Abdul Aziz and the impelling force behind his endeavours were his unflinching faith, the love and awe of the Supreme being and conviction of accountability on the day of Resurrection.

If providence had only granted Umar the span of rule enjoyed by his predecessors, the world of Islam would have witnessed a complete and lasting revolution changing the course of its history. But the Umayyads who had been hit hard during the reign of 'Umar ibn Abdul Aziz and who saw power and influence slipping out of their hands, openly regretted the day when the families of 'Umar ibn al-Khattab and the Umayyads' had maritally been united. They could not endure the ordeal any longer for it was against their grain, and they soon found a way to get rid of the most virtuous Muslim of their times. 'Umar ibn Abdul Aziz died in the middle of 101 A.H. after a rule of only two years and five months. There are reasons to believe that a slave in the employ of the caliph was commissioned by his family to administer poison to him.

* * * * *

CHAPTER – II

HASAN AL-BASRI

Atrophy of Faith and Moral Decadence

After the death of 'Umar Ibn Abdul Aziz, there was a complete reversal of the state policy to the ways of his predecessors. Jahiliyah again returned with a vengeance to undo every reform 'Umar had introduced. Yazid II, who succeeded 'Umar, and his successors too, took full advantage of the position and power enjoyed by them to gratify the grasping demands of their kinsmen.

Hereditary and despotic rule along with the affluence of Umayyads gave birth to a nobility, hypocrite and time-server, spendthrift and libertine, whose morals and code of conduct were not different from the rakes of other nations.

- Umayyad Khilafat 661-750 AD
- Capital: Damascus.
- Moral Decadence during Umayyad Khilafat except for brief period under Umar bin Abdul Aziz.
- Influence of Hasan Al-Basri in minimising the moral decadence.

Taking after the ways of the nobility, pursuit of pleasure and gay abandon threatened to become the prevailing taste of the masses. This worldly attitude of life now threatened to inundate the warmth of spirit, faith and the awe of God thereby causing the failure of spiritual forces and atrophy of moral

excellence. It was in truth a moment of great danger for the Ummah, it appeared to be the beginning of the end.

The Prophet of Islam had flooded the heart of his followers with reverence, awe, complete submission and a living relationship with the Almighty but these qualities were now on the wane.

Had this reservoir of vitality and dynamic energy been left unattended to be crumbled and smothered by the then social and political forces of profanation, Muslims would have soon become a materialistic and self-indulgent people devoid of any conception of the life-after-death.

A few days before his demise, the Prophet had apprised his companions of this danger thus:

“I have no apprehension from your poverty and indigence: what I fear is that the world might shower down its affluence and luxuries as it did on the people before you; and you might begin contending amongst you, thereby exposing yourself to the danger of being annihilated like the nations preceding you.”

The danger to which the Holy Prophet had alluded was soon to manifest itself but its tide was stemmed by a few indefatigable crusaders of unflinching faith and ardent zeal.

Those who spearheaded the movement to fill in the gap at this crucial moment in the life of the Ummah and thus saved the world of Islam from acquiescing in an utterly agnostic, characterless and spiritually enfeebled existence, were, Sa'eed ibn Jubair, Muhammad ibn Sireen, Sha'bi and, the precursor of all, Hasan al Basri. Born in 21 A.H. his father Yasar, was an emancipated slave of Zaid ibn Thabit, a celebrated companion of the Prophet, and he was himself brought up in the house of Umm-ul-Momineen, Umme-Salmah.

Capabilities of Hasan Al-Basri

Hasan Al-Basri had been gifted with ennobling virtues and brilliant capabilities essential to make his exhortation for revival and renovation of Islam effective in his times. In his knowledge of the Qur'an and the Traditions he excelled all the doctors of his time. He had been blessed with the opportunity of being an associate of the companions of the Holy Prophet. It seems that he was also a keen observer of the contemporary events and the transformation which the Islamic society was undergoing. He was also an equally celebrated orator.

Sermons of Hasan Al-Basri

The discourses delivered by Hasan are reminiscent of the simplicity and moral grit of the Prophet's companions. Speaking of the transitory nature of the world and human life, these sermons stress the significance of the hereafter and final retribution, develop the meanings of faith and righteousness, inculcate awe and reverence of God and denigrate self-indulgence and licentiousness. In an age of crass materialism, when the rank and file and many of the elite too had taken to the gratification of bodily and sensual desires, a responsible debate on these very subjects was required. When he contrasts the moral degradation of the later Umayyad period with the simplicity and unflinching faith, moral and spiritual excellence of the earlier times, his description becomes graphic and forceful, sparkling with the fire of his own heart-felt sorrow at the degeneration of the Ummah; he castigates, chastises and leashes out at the revolting change.

Fearlessness

Hasan al-Basri was as much distinguished for his moral courage and unfiltered pursuit of justice as he was in the domain of erudition and oration. He opposed the then Caliph, Yazid ibn Abdul Malik. Once in his presence someone asked Hasan to

express his opinion about the two insurrectionists, Yazid ibn al-Muhallab and Ibn-Ash'ath. Al-Hasan replied "Don't be a party to either faction". A Syrian, springing upon his feet, repeated the question "Yes not even to Amir-ul-Monineen". The intolerable and ferocious cruelty of Hajjaj ibn Yusuf is proverbial but Hasan did not hold his tongue from expressing what he considered to be right and just even during the rule of Hajjaj.

Hypocrites

The lightning success of the Muslim arms and the complete political domination of the Umayyads over an extensive area had given rise to a class which had embraced Islam for the sake of material gains but had not been able to translate the ethics and precepts of Islam in its everyday life.

Indication of Hypocrites

The sermons of Hasan challenged, indicted and denounced the aims and objects, designs and ambitions, longings and fancies of the age; it became difficult for the then society to ignore or remain indifferent to his haranguing. Innumerable

people returned changed men after hearing the sermons of Hasan and offered earnest repentance for the life of licentiousness and self-indulgence they had led previously; they made solemn

- Rise of hypocrites and materialists during Umayyad Period.
- Dissatisfaction with Umayyad Rule and movement to restore Islamic Values.
- Revolts against Umayyads:
 - Zaid Ibn Ali 740 AD
 - Berber Revolt in Africa 740 AD
 - Muhammad Zunnafs-az-Zakiya revolt in Medina
 - Ibrahim Ibn Abdullah revolt in Basra
- Imam Abu Hanifa and Imam Malik issue Fatwa in favour of Ibrahim Ibn Abdullah against Umayyads

affirmation of loyalty and obedience to God for the rest of their lives.

Death of Hasan Al-Basri

When he died in 110 A.H., the entire population of Basra attended his funeral which took place on Friday.

After the demise of Hasan, his disciples and spiritual protégés continued to disseminate the message of Hasan uninterrupted. After twenty-two years of Hasan's death the rule of the mighty Umayyads ended giving place to the Caliphate of Abbasids who shifted the seat of the empire from Damascus to Baghdad.

Revolts Against Tyranny

Along with the efforts directed towards propagation of faith and moral and spiritual renovation, attempts were also made, time and again, to re-organise the caliphate in accordance with the political law of Islam and thus terminate the monopoly of political ascendancy enjoyed by the Umayyads, and, later on by the Abbasids. The Caliphate had unfortunately been organised by that time around such racial and tribal loyalties that no call to overthrow the established order could be effective unless it could also lay a claim to the noble lineage and was also backed by tribal fidelity. We, therefore, find that most of the persons who raised the banner of revolt against the Umayyads and the Abbasids belonged to Ahl-ul-bait – people of the House of Muhammad – who could fire the much needed enthusiasm for overthrowing the hated administration. Since they represented the religious urge for reform and renovation and also enjoyed the sympathy and support of the religious-minded people, they stood a fair chance to succeed in their enterprise.

After the massacre of Karbala a number of descendants of Prophet tried to bring about a revolution. Husain's grandson, Zaid ibn Ali, attempted a rising against Hisham ibn Abdul Malik

which failed and Zaid was killed in 122 A.H. Imam Abu Hanifa, founder of the Hanafite school of jurisprudence, apologised to Zaid ibn Ali for not being able to join in his expedition but contributed ten thousand *dirhams* for the army of Zaid. Thereafter another descendent of Hasan, Muhammad Zun-Nafs-az-Zakiyah (b. Abdullah al-Mahz b. al-Hasan al-Muthanna b. Hasan b. Ali) raised the banner of revolt in Madina while his brother Ibrahim ibn Abdullah rose against Mansur in Basra. Imam Abu Hanifa and Imam Malik, both founders of the school of canon law, pronounced fatwas in favour of the validity of Ibrahim's claim to the Caliphate and the former even extended financial assistance to him. Imam Abu Hanifa even dissuaded Hasan ibn Qahataba, a general of Mansur, from fighting against Ibrahim. These efforts were, however, also doomed to failure and Muhammad met with a heroic death at Madina on the 15th of Ramadan 145 A.H. while Ibrahim was killed during the same year at Kufa on the 24th of Zul-Qa'da. All these efforts turned out to be a dead failure owing to the armed strength and well established rule of the Umayyads and the Abbasids.

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CHAPTER - III

THE ABBASIDS

The Abbasids were successors of the Umayyads, not only in political power, but also in the 'this-worldly' attitude of life, hereditary and autocratic system of government, misuse of public funds for personal ends and rejoicing in the rounds of pleasure and dissipation. If there was any difference between the two, it lay in the Arabian monopoly of high officers of the State under the former whilst under the later non-Arabs came to have an upper hand in the administration. The vices peculiar to the Arabs under the Umayyads had thus given place to the failings of the other nations.

The wealth and prosperity of the empire caused an influx into the capital from the most distant parts, of the servile classes like musicians and singers, poets and jesters, in pursuit of their vocation of providing recreation to the sovereign, princes and grandees and the men of taste.

Some Preachers of Baghdad

Amidst this life of dissipation and gay abandon there were a few inspired souls who, having detached themselves from all fascinations and immoral demeanours of the then society, had given themselves up to the propagation of the faith, self-purification, education and edification of the religious sciences.

They upheld steadfastly the traditions of detachment, earnestness and undaunted championship of the truth; for, the

powers that could neither purchase them nor force them to give up the task they had taken upon themselves.

Baghdad of the Abbasid period manifested both the cross-currents; if on the one hand people of every calling and trade, desirous of fortunes and riches, amusement and gratification, had gathered in the city, there was also, on the other, a great influx of religious teachers and the taught from all over the world. This atmosphere of piety and catholicity was due mainly to Sufyan Thauri, Fudhayl ibn Ayadh, Junaid Baghdadi, Maruf Karkhi, and Bishr Hafī who had dedicated themselves to the propagation of the faith. The moral rectitude and integrity of these masters, their kind-heartedness and sincerity, detachment and contentment, benevolence and readiness to make sacrifice for others had endeared them to all Muslims and non-Muslims alike. They upheld and gave a practical demonstration of the Islamic morality with the result that countless Jews, Christians, Magians and Sabians who came into their contact embraced Islam.

The Two Urgent Problems

It was imperative at this juncture of Islamic history, to formulate and strengthen the norms of communal, social and political behaviour of the Ummah, in the same way as its moral and spiritual heritage had been protected and nourished in the past. New exigencies were arising as Muslims came into contact with the peoples in different lands; problems relating to business and cultivation, poll-tax and land revenue, customs and rites of their vassals and liegemen (A vassal or subject under a feudal tenure) were awaiting to be solved in accordance with the Shari'ah and its jurisprudence.

One of the two important problems requiring immediate attention was the collection and compilation of the Traditions of the Holy Prophet which had by then been taken down or

committed to memory by a large number of traditionists spread all over the Islamic realm. The Tradition or the Sunnah was a major source of legislation as the details of the law were only hinted at or sometimes not explicitly mentioned in the Qur'an, and thus these constituted the only means of regulating the rules of conduct and safeguarding the Islamic character of the Muslim society. Apart from its educational and doctrinal value, the Sunnah is a reservoir of guidance for moral rectitude and spiritual uplift, of reverence and awe of God, of infusing people with a dynamic energy to fight the evil.

The other need of the hour was to collect, systematise and make analogical deductions in consonance with the teachings of the Qur'an and the Sunnah, to answer all possible questions of a sacred or secular nature. The Qur'an and the Sunnah provide, undoubtedly, guiding principles which can be applied to every stage of social and intellectual development of human beings, but, life being ever on the move, change is indispensable for human progress. And this is why Ijtihad or analogical deduction of legal opinions under the inspiration of the Qur'an and the Sunnah had become unavoidable to meet the new situations and necessities of the then expanding Islamic community.

Compilation of Hadith (Traditions)

A mention must here be made of the divine arrangements made for safeguarding the Traditions for God Almighty had selected for a nation reputed for its memory, veracity and fidelity whatever the companions of the Prophet saw or heard from him, they preserved the same with utmost care and transmitted it to the succeeding generations in such a vivid and live description of the appearance and deportment of the Prophet which not only dispenses with the need of picturisation but is also free from all its vices.

Assiduity of the Traditionists

Again, God Almighty provided Islam with hundreds of earnest scholars, peerless in prodigious memory and intelligence, industry and enthusiasm, erudition and scholarly attainments, for the cultivation and development of the science of Tradition. A large number of these, belonging to the non-Arab stock and coming from distant lands, set off on extensive travels all over the Islamic world in quest of the Traditions.

Dictionary of Biography

These savants did not simply collect and compile the Traditions but they also made researches in regard to the narrators of the Traditions, their integrity, truthfulness, moral and spiritual excellence. All these hundreds of thousands narrators become known to the posterity since they had handed down a Tradition or part thereof, thereby bringing into existence another science known as *Asma ur-rijal*. This branch of knowledge is a living monument of the deep erudition and scholarly attainment, bent for research and the sense of responsibility, intellectual acumen and lofty idealism of the people inventing it. In the introduction to Hafiz Ibn Hajar's *al-Isabath-fi-Tamiz-is-Sahabah*, Dr. A. Sprenger has paid a glowing tribute to the savants of the Traditions:

“The glory of the literature of the Mohammedans is its literacy biography. There is no nation, nor has there been any which like them has during twelve centuries recorded the life of every man of letters. If the biographical records of the Musalmans were collected, we should probably have accounts of the lives of half a million of distinguished persons, and it would be found that there is not a decennium of their history, nor a place of importance which has not its representatives.”

Trustworthiness of the Traditionists

“The matchless courage exhibited by the traditionists in subjecting the narrators of Traditions to an impartial and close scrutiny can justly claim a pride of place in the annals of Islamic peoples. There were numerous caliphs and commanders noted for their despotism, among the narrators, but the Traditions assigned them that very rank which they deserved.”

Popular Enthusiasm

The selfless devotion and care with which the traditionists addressed themselves to the study of the Prophet’s Sunnah, aroused a general awareness and enthusiasm among the masses with regard to this branch of religious science. People flocked to the lecture of the traditionists in thousands with an avid desire to benefit from these study circles. It is related by the annalists that despite the huge crowds attending the lectures of the traditionists, these meetings were more disciplined and tidy than the courts of the sovereigns.

Sihah Sittah

Unprecedented popular enthusiasm, devotion and ardent desire for the cultivation of religious sciences was helpful in securing the authentic and trustworthy collection of the Traditions which is undoubtedly a valuable asset and a storehouse of guidance for the Ummah. Among the compilations of Sunnah, Sahih-al-Bukhari of al-Bukhari and Sahih Muslim by Muslim are held to be of undisputed authority, and the Traditions accepted by both are known as the “agreed ones” signifying a high degree of reliability. Other works, held in high esteem but taking their place after the collections of al-Bukhari and Muslim, are Muwatta of Imam Malik (d. 179 A.H.) Jam’e of Imam Tirmizi, Sunan al-Abu-Daud of Abu-Daud Sijistani (d. 275 A.H.) and the collections of Abu Abdur-Rahman an-Nisa’i (d.303 A.H.) and Abu Abdullah Muhammad ibn Majah (d. 272 A.H.). All

the later movements for reformation and regeneration in Islam owe their existence to the endeavours made by the traditionists as no effort can succeed even now without drawing inspiration from these beacons of light.

Compilation of Jurisprudence

Like the traditions, the codification of canons regulating the public and private life, amplification of the corpus juris and deduction of the rules for giving decisions in legal matters were the problems to be tackled immediately. Islam had set foot on far off lands of Syria, Iraq, Egypt, Iran and other countries where its impact on local habits, customs and usages had given rise to many complicated problems. Now, in order to solve these problems in consonance with the spirit of Islam, it required a deep knowledge of the conditions obtaining in these countries, customs and traditions of the different sections of society, patterns of human behaviour, a penetrating intellect and prudence along with a command over the Islamic lore, the Qur'an and the Sunnah, history and lexicon of the Arabs.

SAHIH SITTA

The six authentic books of Hadith (Traditions of Prophet)

- **Sahih Bukhari:** by Imam Bukhari (810-870 AD) original name Abu Abdullah Muhammad Ibn Isma'il
- **Sahih Muslim:** by Imam Muslim (817- 857 AD) original name Al Hajjaj Abul Husain Al Kushairi Al Nishapuri.
- **Al-Muwatta:** by Abu Abdullah Malik Ibn Anas (713-795 AD)
- **Jam'e:** of Imam Tirmizi (824-889 AD)
- **Sunan Al Abu Daud:** by Abu Daud Sijistani (d 888 AD)
- **Collection of :** Abu Abdullah Muhammad Ibn Majah (d 885 AD)
- **Collection of:** Abu Abdur-Rahman An-Nisa'I (d 912 AD)

The Four Jurists of Islam

Among the men of mark, the four founders of juristic school, N'uman ibn Thabit Abu Hanifa (d.150 A.H.); Abu Abdullah Malik ibn Anas (d. 179 A.H.); Muhammad ibn Idris Al-Shafe'i (d. 204 A.H.); and Ahmad ibn Hanbal (d.241 A.H.), were highly esteemed scholars noted for their outstanding piety and service to the community, scholarship and understanding of legal matters. These savants dedicated their lives to the noble cause they had taken up, set up a tradition of contentment and resignation and turned their backs upon all the inducements of wealth, power and position. Abu Hanifa twice refused the high office of Chief Justice offered to him by the then Caliph and was cast into

Founders of four main Sunni juristic schools

1. Imam Hanifa: 699-767 AD
2. Imam Malik: 713-795 AD
3. Imam Shafe'i: 767-820 AD
4. Imam Hanbal: 780-855 AD

prison where he died on account of the corporal punishment inflicted upon him. Malik ibn Anas was flogged so severely that his shoulder-blade got dislocated. Al-Shafe'i withdrew himself from the world, became indifferent to its concerns and led a life of the self-abnegation and sublime asceticism resulting in irreparable loss to his health. Ahmad ibn Hanbal set his face against the official school of the then prevalent theology. He was tried before a court of inquisition and thrown into prison but he steadfastly held to the tradition of orthodox school. Each one of these jurists left voluminous treatises on law and legal dicta as can hardly be produced even through an organised effort. Abu Hanifa is reported to have elucidated eighty-three thousand juristic-theological issues of which thirty-eight thousand pertained to acts of devotion and prayer and forty-five thousand to transactions, rights and duties owed by one Muslim to another. Al-Mudawwanah, the collection of religious and judicial

sentences of Malik ibn Anas, contain thirty-six thousand decision. The collection of writings and lectures of al-Shafe'i known under the title of Kitab al-Umm, runs into seven bulky volumes. The decisions of Ahmad ibn Hanbal were compiled by Abu Bakr Khallal (d. 311 A.H.) in forty volumes.

Advantages of Fiqh

The fact that jurists of redoubtable scholarship were born in the first few centuries of Islamic era bespeaks of the vitality and inherent capability of the Ummah. The endeavours of the jurists supplied a frame-work for manifestation of the Islamic ideals of ethical precepts in day-to-day affairs of the people and protected them from intellectual confusion and social anarchy which has brought many nations to wreck and ruin in their initial stages. The jurists founded the Islamic legal system on a firm ground and formulated its canons in such a way that it could always solve new problems confronting the Ummah in future and provide a pattern of behaviour in consonance with the spirit of Islam.

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CHAPTER - IV

AHMAD IBN HANBAL

Metaphysics

The conquests had brought to the fore numerous problems relating to affairs of private and social life. These had to be patterned in accordance with the ethical norms of Islam, however, with the translation of Greek and Syriac works and a close contact with the scholastics, philosophers and scholars of other peoples, a section of the Muslims began to take interest in the so-called rational and intellectual interpretation of the revealed truth. These people, not content with a realistic and direct answer available in the Scriptures to the spiritual questions, which was in fact more satisfying to an intellect, were attracted by the sophism of philosophical speculation. The result of their endeavours was that futile controversies pertaining to the nature and attributes of God, eternal or accidental nature of His word, vision of God through corporeal eyes, predestination and free-will were started, although these were neither necessary for theological purposes nor had any utility for cultural or social advancement. These discussions had definitely a dissolving influence on the solidarity of the Ummah and were injurious to its grit and tenacity.

Mu'tazilism

The Mu'tazilites, at the head of this group of religious philosophers, were regarded as rationalists and dialecticians since they had made philosophical speculation a touchstone of

faith and apostasy. They endeavored, with all the wits at their command, to reconcile religion with philosophy, faith with the so-called reason; while jurists and traditionists, on the other hand, adhered to doctrinal tenets of their predecessors and considered these quibblings not only futile but harmful for the Ummah. Itizal did not take root till the reign of Harun al-Rashid but in the time of Mamun, who was very much impressed with the Greek thought and its rationalism owing to his upbringing and for certain other reasons, the star of the Mu'tazilites rose on the horizon. Ibn Abu Al-Hudhayl, an ardent propagator of Itizal and the Chief Justice of the Abbasid Empire, exerted his influence to make it a state religion. Mamun, who was himself a zealous exponent of the Mu'tazilite school, had the impatience of a youth and the obstinacy of an autocratic sovereign. He made it possible for the Mu'tazilites to exercise undue influence over the whole empire.

The doctrine of the creation of the Qur'an was held as the basic tenet of the Mu'tazilite school which was made a criterion for determining one's apostasy or adherence to the true faith. This brought forth a vehement opposition from the traditionists with Ahmad ibn Hanbal spearheading the opposition movement.

Main principles of Mu'tazilah:

1. Shahada. Unity of God. Quranic Anthropomorphism interpreted as metaphors.
2. Quran was created by Allah
3. Divine Justice and human destiny: Free will as opposed to predestination.
4. Promise and the threat.
5. Intermediate position: Manzila bain Manzilatain. State between belief and unbelief.
6. Amr bil Ma'ruf wa nahi anil Munkar
"Commanding of good and forbidding of evil" is an obligation incumbent on all Muslims and not only the ruler.

Ahmad ibn Hanbal

Ahmad ibn Hanbal was born at Baghdad in the month of Rabi ul-Awwal, 164 A.H. He came of an Arab tribe, 'Shaiban'. His grandfather, Hanbal ibn Hilal had migrated from Basra to Khurasan and was appointed as Governor of Sarakhsh under the Umayyads. Ahmad's mother, migrated to Baghdad after the death of her husband. Ahmad was born there. She took pains to provide him with the best possible education. Ahmad committed the Qur'an to memory when still young, studied literature for some time and then enlisted in an office to gain proficiency in penmanship.

In religious sciences, Ahmad paid special attention to the Traditions. In the beginning he took notes of the Traditions from Abu Yusuf and then studied for four years under a famous traditionist of Baghdad, Haitham ibn Bahsir (d. 182 A.H.) and other respected teachers of Hadith.

In due course of time, he acquired a high reputation for his profound knowledge, particularly for his erudition with respect to the precepts, actions and sayings of the Prophet, of which he could repeat over a million.

Ahmad learnt the rules of jurisprudence from al-Shafe'i

AHMAD IBN HANBAL

- **Born:** 780 AD in Baghdad.
- **Father:** Mohammad Ibn Hanbal,
- **Grandfather:** Hanbal Ibn Hilal Governor of Sarakhsh in Khurasan during Umayyad Period.
- Orphaned at early age.
- **Teachers:** Early: Qadi Abu Yusuf

Principal: Sufyan bin Uyayna

Hadith: Haitham ibn Bahsir

Fiqh: Al-Shafe'i

- **Period:** Abbasid Khalifs: Harun-ur-Rashid; Mamun-ur-Rashid; Al Mu'tasim; Wasiq; Mutawakkil.
- Spent 28 months in Prison for not accepting Mu'tazilah View on Quran
- **Died:** 855 AD during Mutawakkil's period

and later developed his own doctrine of uncompromising adherence to the text of the traditions as a source of law. Ultimately he rose to be an eminent theologian and jurisprudent, and the founder of one of the four schools of Islamic jurisprudence, which has adherents in many parts of the Islamic world.

Ahmad ibn Hanbal began his discourses on traditions in 204 A.H., at the age of forty. A large number of persons used to attend his lectures.

Ahmad ibn Hanbal was extremely simple in his habits and led an almost ascetic life like the mentors of the old. He never accepted any gift or present offered by the Caliphs or the grandees. He managed to meet his expenses from the income of his ancestral fief or from his own earnings but despite him being financially hard-pressed he was very large-hearted and generous. He was charitable not only in respect of wealth but exhibited the same virtue even when his own-self was involved. Once a man abused and denounced him but soon came back to repent and offer his apology. Ahmad replied that he had already forgiven him before leaving the place where the incident had occurred. After enduring the tortures in connection with his stand on the eternity of the Qur'an, he forgave all those who were involved in loitering him including the Caliph under whose orders he had been severely scourged. He used to say "I cannot pardon the innovator in religion but excepting him everyone who took part in my victimization has been pardoned by me".

Modest as he was, Ahmad never liked to mention his lineage although he descended from a celebrated Arab tribe.

After the persecution which Ahmad ibn Hanbal had to undergo for his stand on the question of the creation of Qur'an, he obtained such a high reputation for sanctity that countless people offered prayers for divine blessings on him. Ahmad ibn Hanbal, however, felt terribly worried and uncertain. Once

Marwazi, one of his disciples, told him "A large number of people solemnly invoke the divine blessings on you."

"how do you say so?" Ahmad exclaimed, "I actually fear punishment in the shape of divine benefits that are sometimes conferred on ungrateful sinners".

Very often non-Muslims came to meet him from distant places. A Christian physician once visited him in connection with his treatment. He said, "I wanted to meet you since long. You are a blessing not for the Muslims alone but for all the human beings. All of our friends and co-religionists have similar feelings for you".

The reign of the first three Abbasid sovereigns of his time, Mamun, Mu'tasim and Wathiq, constituted a trial for Ahmad since each one of these was bent on putting him to harm. Wathiq was succeeded by Mutawakkil in 232 A.H. who held Ahmad in high esteem, but Ahmad was far more afraid of him since he took the favours of the Caliph as a temptation to evil. Often he said that he was able to withstand the sufferings inflicted by the earlier Caliphs, but in his old age, he had to face another trial which was far more severe. The respect and deference, favours and gifts of Mutawakkil could not, however, make any inroad into the contentedness and resignation of Ahmad just as the threats and sufferings at the hands of earlier Caliphs had failed to deter him from the path enjoined by the Sunnah of the Prophet. Once Mutawakkil sent him a donkey-load of gold-pieces but he refused to accept the same. The man who had brought the present insisted on his accepting the money and implored that the Caliph would take it ill if the present was refused. At last Ahmad consented to let the bag being placed in a corner. Ahmad, however, called on his uncle late in the night and asked him to advise as to what he should do with the money since he deeply regretted that he had accepted the present, and could not sleep on account of it. His uncle advised him to wait at least till the

day-break and then to dispose it off in the manner he liked best. Early next morning Ahmad collected his trusted disciples and associates and asked them to prepare a list of the poor and indigent persons. He distributed the entire amount and then gave away the bag to a destitute.

Mutawakkil had sanctioned stipends for the sons of Ahmad. One of his sons reports that prior to their being stipendiary, Ahmad had no objection to accepting anything from them but he completely discontinued the practice thereafter. Once, when Ahmad was ill, a physician prescribed water extracted from parched pumpkin for him. Ahmad was advised by someone to get the pumpkin parched in the oven of his son Saleh which happened to be burning at the time, but Ahmad refused to do so. Although he was extremely cautious for his own self, he still felt uneasy in regard to the stipends received by his sons, and ultimately he told Saleh "I want that you should forsake the allowance, for you are getting it on account of me."

Ahmad fell seriously ill at the age of 77, he was suffering from haematuria. On Friday night Ahmad's malady grew worse and he died the next day, on Friday, the 12th of Rabi-ul-Awwal, 241 A.H.

Dispute regarding the Nature of the Qur'an

Caliph al-Mamun applied himself vigorously to the task of spreading the doctrine of the Mu'tazilites about the nature of the Qur'an, who held it to be a creation rather than an eternal word of God. In Mamun's judgment, any deviation from this doctrine was worse than treason, and therefore, he issued a detailed mandate to the Governor of Baghdad in 218 A.H. severely criticising the dogmatism of the populace, particularity traditionists. He ordered that all those officials who did not subscribe to the tenets expounded by him should be dismissed under intimation to him.

Thereafter Mamun issued another order to the Governor of Baghdad asking him to present before him seven reputed traditionists of the city who were opposed to the doctrine. When they came, Mamun questioned them about his dogma regarding the creation of the Qur'an. Each one of them, either from conviction or as a matter of expediency, expressed his agreement with the views of the Caliph and was allowed to go back. They were also asked to express their views in public meetings convened for the purpose but the masses remained unaffected, holding the orthodox view.

A few days before his death, Mamun issued a third rescript to Is'haq ibn Ibrahim, expounding the doctrine in still greater detail, and enlarging its scope to test all the doctors of religion along with the officials of the State. He made it compulsory for everyone to subscribe to the tenet. Is'haq convened a meeting of all the reputed doctors, asked their views about the royal dogma and reported back their answers to the Caliph. Mamun was in tantrums on reading the letter of Is'haq. He ordered that of the persons reported by Is'haq, Bishr ibn al-Walid and Ibrahim ibn al-Mahdi should be executed, and of the rest, those who still insisted on their views should be sent to him in chains. Now, only Ahmad ibn Hanbal and Muhammad ibn Nuh insisted upon their views and they were sent to be presented before the Caliph in Tarsus. With these two were nineteen other savants who had refused to accept the Qur'an as created. By the time the prisoners reached Raqqa, Mamun died and they were sent back to the Governor of Baghdad. Muhammad ibn Nuh died in the way and Ahmad along with other prisoners were taken back to Baghdad.

A few days before his death Mamun nominated his brother Abu Muhammad, surnamed al-Mu'tasim b'Illah, as his successor to the Caliphate. Mu'tasim vigorously pursued the policy laid down for his guidance by his predecessor.

Calamity befalls Ahmad

When Ahmad arrived at Baghdad from Raqqa, he wore four iron fastenings in his legs. He was cross-examined for four days but he did not recant his views. On the fourth day Ahmad was brought before the Governor who implored him to accept the doctrine of the Mu'tazilites. He told Ahmad that the Caliph had taken a vow that he would not execute him but have him most severely scourged and confined in a dungeon where the Sun never arose. Ahmad, however, did not yield and ultimately he was brought before Mu'tasim. The Caliph ordered Ahmad to be given thirty four lashes. A fresh executioner was brought after every two strokes but Ahmad said after getting each whip "I will accept if you can bring anything from the Qur'an or the Sunnah in your support".

Firmness of Ahmad ibn Hanbal

Ahmad ibn Hanbal was thereafter sent back to his house. He spent 28 months in imprisonment and got 34 lashes.

Achievements of Ahmad ibn Hanbal

The undaunted courage and steadfastness of Ahmad ibn Hanbal gave a death-blow to a sacrilege which had exposed the faith to a great danger. All those who had expressed their agreement, either from fear or expediency, with the views of the Caliphate, were exposed. All such savants were despised and held in contempt despite their erudition and learning. On the other hand, Ahmad ibn Hanbal was received by the people with the most honourable marks of distinction, and affection for him became a mark and symbol of the orthodox school of Islam.

Ahmad ibn Hanbal was highly esteemed for his outstanding erudition in the science of Traditions. The compilation of Musnad by Ahmad is truly an achievement of his profound knowledge. Ahmad was also a theologian and an eminent

jurisprudent, the founder of one of the four orthodox schools of Islamic jurisprudence. He led the life of pious recluse, but, notwithstanding all these qualities, the reason for the distinction, reputation and the affection with which he was received by the Ummah lay in his fearless championship of the true content of the faith against the most powerful empire of his time.

Ahmad ibn Hanbal obtained so high a reputation for sanctity, that when he died in 241 A.H. the whole of Baghdad came out to pay homage to the departed teacher. The city had never witnessed such a surging crowd. His funeral was attended, according to the analysts, by a train of 800,000 men and 60,000 women.

Achievements of Ahmad ibn Hanbal:

- Compilation of Musnad containing 28000 to 29000 traditions.
- Jurisprudence: Kitab-us-Sunnah. Founded one of four Sunni School of Jurisprudence.
- Kitab-us-Salât.
- Ar-radd alalzindika (Treatise in refutation of Mu'tazilah).
- 850 AD Khalifa Mutawakkil Restores Orthodoxy-Mu'tazilah influence recedes.
- Influenced Salafiya Movement.
- Hanbali School achieves greater prominence under teachings of Ibn Taymiyah four centuries later.
- In recent times Abdul Wahab in 18th century in Arabian Peninsula consolidated Hanbali branch of Jurisprudence.

CHAPTER – V

ABUL HASAN AL ASH'ARI

The Crisis of 'Itizal

The Mu'tazilites suffered a severe set-back after the death of Mu'tasim and Wathiq, both of whom were ardent supporters of this school. Mutawakkil, the tenth Abbasid, Caliph, succeeded his brother Wathiq in 232 A.H. He was against the Mu'tazilites and keen for the restoration of the true faith. He declared as heretic the allegedly free-thinking Mu'tazilites, expelled them from public offices and interdicted discussions on dogmatic questions by them. Yet, 'Itizal had taken roots in the circles of the learned and the philosophers, all over the Islamic world. Although the doctrine in regard to the creation of the Qur'an had died-out, the Mu'tazilites continued to be vigorous owing to the eminent exponents of Itizal who were well-versed in literature, dialectics, jurisprudence and other sciences, and held high offices under the State. They gained ascendancy by the middle of the third century A.H. when it was commonly held that they possessed rationalistic tendencies, were of progressive taste which was taken after by the youngmen, students and others who wanted to cut a figure. The Hanbalite school could not produce another savant of Ahmad ibn Hanbal's erudition while the traditionists and the teachers of orthodox school came to regard secular sciences as undesirable intruders into the domain of religion. The ignorance of orthodox theologians in dialectics and other secular disciplines began to be regarded as their

weakness with the result that the Itizal acquired a predominance such as it had never gained before or after that period. It is true that all those who had a profound knowledge of religious sciences had generally accepted the tenets of the traditionists and jurisprudents but the misinformed commonly were mostly swayed by the wit and art of discursive reasoning exhibited by the Mu'tazilites. Many among the theologians too suffered from inferiority complex which served to attract minds not content with the formalism of the orthodox school towards the Mu'tazilite thought. This, indeed, posed a great danger for the Shariah and the path trodden by the mentors of the old. The rationalists, holding the view that human reason was competent to go searching after the ultimate reality, explained away those passages of the Qur'an which they did not find helpful to their modes of reason. These explanations were undermining the religion and fundamental tenets of the faith. Pseudo rationalism lacking in erudition and wisdom was thus gaining ground among the Muslims which could not be refuted successfully by the unflinching faith and ardent zeal of the Hanbalites and traditionists or by the moral and spiritual excellence of the pious, nor yet by the analogical deduction and elaborate canonical laws and rules of the jurists.

The Man demanded by the Faith

The crisis demanded a savant, profound in knowledge and well-versed in the secular sciences, who could fight the Mu'tazilites with their own weapons. He had to be a man of towering personality, unrivalled even by the most eminent exponents of the Mu'tazilite thought; and, such was the man of the hour that Islam got in the person of Abul Hasan Ali al-Ash'ari.

Abul Hasan Ali al-Ash'ari

Abul Hasan Ali was the son of Isma'il who descended from Abu Musa al-Ash'ari, a reputed companion of the Prophet at

Basra in 260 A.H.; After the death of Isma'il his mother had married Abu Ali al-Jubba'i (d. 915 A.D.) who was the last great teacher and an ardent expounder of Itizal. Al-Ash'ari, thus brought up and educated by al-Jubba'i, soon became an adherent of the Mu'tazilite doctrine and a trusted lieutenant of the latter. Abu Ali al-Jubba'i was a

successful teacher and writer but not a good debater while Abul Hasan Ali al-Ash'ari was celebrated both for his wit and eloquence. During the debates on the doctrines of 'Itizal, al-Jubba'i used to ask him to contend with the opponents of his school. Thus he soon earned a name for his mastery over the science of disputation and was recognised as a teacher of the Mu'tazilite school of thought. It was expected that he would succeed his god-father and mother and prove a still more vigorous and eminent exponent of the Mu'tazilite doctrines. God had, however, willed otherwise.

Notwithstanding the fact that al-Ash'ari had spent his life in the advocacy of the Mu'tazilite school whose leadership was about to fall in his lap, Providence had selected him to vindicate the Sunnah. He began to see through the intellectual sophistry, and ultimately realised that the specious reasoning of the rationalists was nothing more than an intricate yet well argued spell of words, ideas and thoughts but really inconsequential in so far as the search for truth was concerned.

Thus getting disenchanted from the Mu'tazilite doctrines at the age of forty, he developed an intense dislike for the so-called rationalist school. He did not come out of his house to the

ABUL HASAN ALASH'ARI

Born: 873 AD at Basra.

Father: Isma'il died early

Mother: Married abu Al Jubba'i after death of Isma'il.

Teacher: abu Al Jubba'i during Mu'tazilah period.

After leaving Mu'tazilah Ishaq al-Marwazi for Fiqh

Died: 935 AD at Baghdad.

principal mosque of the city. It was Friday and Al-Ash'ari elbowed his way through the thronging crowd of the faithful. Going straight to the pulpit and ascending its steps he started to proclaim:

“Many of you know me. I want to tell those who do not know me that I am Abul Hasan Ali al-Ash'ari. I was a Mu'tazilite and believed in their doctrines. Now I seek repentance from God and turn away from my earlier beliefs; henceforth, I shall endeavour to refute the doctrines of the Mu'tazilites and lay bare their mistakes and weaknesses.”

And from that day on al-Ash'ari devoted himself wholeheartedly to the repudiation of the Mu'tazilites and began propounding the tenets of the orthodox school. With his profound knowledge, penetrating intellect, eloquence, mastery over dialectics and a facile pen, he was able to over-shadow his disputants and uphold the doctrines of the conformist school.

Missionary Zeal of al-Ash'ari

Al-Ash'ari performed the task he had taken upon himself with an untiring zeal. He used to attend the meetings of the Mu'tazilites and search out rationalists to set at rest their doubts about the doctrines of the orthodox school. If anyone raised the objection as to why he met the skeptics and dissenters, who ought to be shunned, he explained that the Mu'tazilites were all well-placed in life, held the offices of administrators, judges, and other venerable positions, and, therefore, they could not be expected to come to him. If he too were to sit with folded hands, how would they come to know the Truth, and that there was someone who could defend the faith with reason and arguments.

Achievements of al-Ash'ari

Al-Ash'ari was a past master of debates and polemics. He had an aptitude and facility which he used with consummate skill in contending for the religion of secular sciences.

Abul Hasan Ali al-Ash'ari was the founder of Islamic scholasticism (Kalam). All the dialecticians of the later ages have acknowledged al-Ash'ari's God-gifted intelligence and sagacity, discernment and profundity.

The Middle Course of al-Ash'ari

Al-Ash'ari adopted a middle course between the Mu'tazilites and the traditionists. Al-Ash'ari maintained that the ultimate source of faith and the key to metaphysical realities were revelation and the teachings of the Prophet rather than human reason, speculation or Grecian mythology. At the same time, he disagreed with the rigid dogmatism of the conformists who thought it prudent to keep quiet about the issues raised by the misguided sects simply

because the Traditions handed down from the Prophet did not mention their terminology. Al-Ash'ari held the view that this attitude would be reckoned as a weakness of the orthodox school and would ultimately be harmful to it. Al-Ash'ari also maintained that the attitude of the rigid dogmatists would enable the Mu'tazilites and other misguided sects, through their apparent endeavour to reconcile faith with reason and religion

Achievements of Al-Ash'ari

Refuted the claims and logic of Mu'tazilah, Rafida, Jahmiyya, Khwarij.

Founder of Islamic Scholasticism (Kalam):

Later famous scholars of Kalam:

Ishaq Isfraini
Abu Bakr Baqilani
Imam Harmain
Imam Ghazali
Imam Shahrastani
Imam Razi

Works: 250 – 300 e.g.

Maqalat al-Islamiyyin wa Ikhtilfa al-Musallin.

Al-Mukhtasar fi al-Tawhid wa al-Qadar

Al-Sifat ("The Attributes")

Ithbat al-Qiyas ("The Upholding of the Principle of Analogy").

Maqalat al-Falasifa ("The Sayings of Philosophers").

with philosophy, to attract the young and intelligent who were not content to be driven in a common groove. He employed philosophical terminology in his discussions which enhanced the respect of the orthodox school. In fact al-Ash'ari followed the maxim – talk to the people according to their understanding; and this meant keeping the laity in view as much as the elite.

For the Mu'tazilites had followed their own instincts and desires by explaining away the dictates of religion. Al-Ash'ari criticised them with all the emphasis at his command.

The achievement of al-Ash'ari, however, did not consist merely of his defence of the orthodox school, for the Hanbalites and other traditionists had already been seized with the task. The most valuable accomplishment of al-Ash'ari was the formulation of the principles which enabled the tenets of the orthodox school to be accepted in the light of reason, i.e. on the basis of logical arguments. He examined the doctrines of the Mu'tazilites and other sects in accordance with the principles of logic and the philosophical terminology evolved by these sects, and brought out their mistakes so as to uphold the beliefs and tenets of the orthodox school.

Al-Ash'ari earned the displeasure of the Mu'tazilites and other misguided sects, natural and inevitable as it was; but he was also criticised by those rigid Hanbalites and traditionists who considered it a sin to discuss the issues raised by the rationalists or to use the philosophical terms for elucidating the tenets of the faith in the light of reason.

Thus, ignoring the approbation or opposition of either sect, al-Ash'ari went ahead with the task of defending religion according to his own light. This undoubtedly required great courage and intelligence; and, as it were, al-Ash'ari proved himself equal to the task. Al-Ash'ari's defence was, however, not the least apologetic. On the contrary, he was able to eradicate

the inferiority complex that had unconsciously seized the followers of the orthodox creed, and was insidiously undermining their self-confidence. Al-Ash'ari soon turned the tables on the Mu'tazilites who, far from maintaining the force of their onslaught on the orthodox school, found it difficult to withstand the offensive of al-Ash'ari which was made with the full weight of an unshakable conviction. Abu Bakr ibn as-Sairfi says that the Mu'tazilites had caused a crisis for Islam but God brought forth Abul Hasan Ali al-Ash'ari to take up the cudgels against them. He was able to overcome them with his intelligence and dialectics. He, therefore, soon came to be regarded as one of the foremost expounders and renovators of the faith.

Al-Ash'ari's Works

Al-Ash'ari defended the orthodox school not merely with his sermons, debates and polemics, but also wrote valuable treatises to expose the weaknesses of heretical sects. Al-Ash'ari is said to have written some 250 to 300 works, a large number of which traverse the main positions of the Mu'tazilites or other non-conformist sects and heretical creeds. His *Maqalat-ul-Islamiyin* shows that al-Ash'ari was not merely a dialectician but also a reliable chronicler of different faiths. In this book he has recorded the doctrines of a number of sects with a sense of responsibility behaving like an eminent historian, for, his explanation of their dogmas agrees with the exposition of these faiths by their own followers.

Profound Knowledge and Piety

Al-Ash'ari was not simply a prolific writer but, like all other mentors of the old, he was unrivalled in moral and spiritual excellence too. The personal servant of al-Ash'ari, Bindar ibn al-Husain, is on record that the only source of livelihood of al-Ash'ari consisted of a fief with an income of seventeen dirhams per day, which he had inherited from his grandfather.

Al-Ash'ari died in 324 A.H. and was buried in Baghdad. An announcement was made over his funeral that the "Defender of the Traditions" had passed away.

Abu Mansur al-Maturidi

During the same period another theologian, Abu Mansur al-Maturidi (d. 332 A.H.) emerged in Samarqand to defend the faith against the attacks of the heretical sects. Owing to the continuous wrangling with the Mu'tazilites, Al-Ash'ari had become a bit extremist in some of his views which were stretched further by his followers. al-Maturidi's thought is, however, marked by its moderation.

However, since al-Ash'ari had to confront the Mu'tazilites in the center of Islamic world, which also happened to be a seat of the Mu'tazilites school, he came to exert a far greater influence over the intellectual circles. Also, al-Ash'ari was a great original mind who would always be remembered for laying the foundation of Islamic scholasticism¹.

Later Ash'arites

A number of reputed savants of profound knowledge and unequalled agility of mind were produced by the Ash'arite school. They contributed to the development of the school and exerted an immense influence on the minds of the intellectuals and the educated youth with the result that the orthodox school was enabled again to gain supremacy in the Islamic world. In

¹ There were others before Ash'ari who had attempted to counter the philosophers. According to Shibli Naumani, Abul Hudhail (died 235 AH) had laid the foundations of Ilm-ul-Kalam, hundred years before Al Ash'ari, but Al Ash'ari was the most powerful exponent of Islamic Scholasticism who turned the tide of Greek Philosophy which had gained ascendancy under the ruler's patronage.

the fourth century of the Muslim era were born such luminaries as Qadi Abu Bakr Baqilani (d. 403 A.H.) and Abu Ishaq Isfrai'ni (d. 418 A.H.) and after them came Abu Ishaq Shirazi (d. 476 A.H.) and Imam ul-Haramayn Abdul Ma'ali Abd Al-Malik al-Juwaini (d. 478 A.H.) in the fifth century who were held in high esteem owing to their profound knowledge.

Nizam ul-Mulk Tusi, the Prime Minister of the then strongest Islamic kingdom of Saljukids was himself an Ash'arite. He gave great impetus to the Ash'arite school by providing it with the official backing. The two renowned educational institutions, the Nizamiyah Universities of Nishapur and Baghdad proved to be a turning point in the Ash'arite bid for victory over other intellectual movements in the then Islamic world.

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CHAPTER – VI

DECLINE OF DIALECTICS

Philosophic and Esoteric Schools

The Ash'arites had gained ascendancy over other schools of thought by capturing the educational institutions, religious and intellectual circles. But unfortunately, after the fifth century they had developed a sense of complacency and were content simply with transmitting what they had learnt from their mentors. They lost all originality which made them generally retrogressive. And those who were not content with treading the beaten path introduced philosophic concepts and terms into dialectics. They were enamoured by the philosophical method of reasoning although it neither provided any conclusive evidence to prove the issues they debated nor it employed an approach so natural and direct as the Qur'an did. The method employed was liable to be refuted. Thus, the dialecticians who borrowed the philosophical terminology, concepts and approach did neither render any help to the orthodox school whom they claimed to represent, nor could they gain the respect of the rationalists and philosophers.

Popularity of Philosophy

Owing to the patronage and keen interest of Caliph Mamun a large number of Syriac, Greek, Latin and Persian works on Hellenistic philosophy had been translated into Arabic. A large number of these were treatises pertaining to the Aristotelian school. These translations also comprised works on logic,

physics, chemistry, mathematics, etc. which could have been studied with profit but more interest was shown in metaphysical writings which were nothing else than a collection of Greek mythology cleverly presented as an intricate yet well-argued philosophy. It was a spell of words, ideas and thoughts based on certain assumptions and conjectures, non-existent and unverifiable; it had the genealogy of Heavens and Agent Intellect and horoscopes showing the movement of the assumed First cause, Logos and Nous. The Philosophers who were great admirers of Greek logic, physics and mathematics accepted its mythology couched in philosophical terms as if it were a revealed truth. It is rather amusing to see how these people venerating Greek sciences as the fountain-head of classical wisdom also accepted their metaphysical pursuits so avidly.

Arab Philosophers

The Grecian Philosophy was destined to get in the world of Islam such foremost exponents as Yaqub al-Kindi (d. 258 A.H.), Abu Nasar al-Farabi (d.339 A.H.) and Abu Ali ibn Sina (d. 428 A.H.), as ere not to be found amongst the Greeks themselves. They assigned such an infallible place to Aristotle in piety and moral excellence, knowledge and wisdom which cannot perhaps be claimed for the Primal Cause. Aristotle had thus come to wield such an influence over the Arab philosophers that they made his system the basis of their philosophical speculations without any evaluation or criticism of his thought.

Brethren of Purity

By the end of the fourth century A.H., the speculations of Greek and Hellenistic philosophers had generally been adopted by the rationalist schools amongst the Muslims. It became a craze and progressive elite Ikhwan us-Safa or Bretheren of Purity, a kind of secret fraternity like Freemasons, had come into existence in the second half of the fourth century with its seat in Basra. It was an eclectic, Philosophical-cum-scientific school of thought

which strove to reconcile religious and ethical doctrines with the standpoint of Greek philosophy. The charter of their aims and objects ran thus :

“The Shariah of Islam has been polluted by ignorance and perversion of the truth, and it can now be purified only through philosophy; for, the latter comprises religious tenets and knowledge, wisdom and analogical methods of reasoning. Now, only a synthesis of Greek philosophy and the Shariah of the Prophet can achieve the desired objectives.”

The ikhwan summed up the philosophical and scientific learning of the time in an encyclopedic collection of 52 Epistles, (*Rasail Ikhwan us-Safa*) dealing with every branch of science, such as physics, mathematics, metaphysics, philosophy, etc. the Mu'tazilites and other rationalists who were sympathetic to the ideas formulated in these treatises gave widest circulation to these Epistles which found their way into the system of Hispano-Arabic philosophy within a hundred years.

The Mu'tazilites and Philosophers

In their effort to rationalise the tenets of faith the Mu'tazilites had consciously or unconsciously done a great disservice to Islam. Nevertheless, they were religious persons who believed in revelation, were god-fearing, scrupulously followed the religious obligations, enjoined the lawful and prohibited the wrong.

Philosophy was, however, quite different from Itizal. In so far as philosophy claims to be an infallible source through which one can attain the knowledge of God in the fullness of His essence, it is a rival of revelation; it builds up a system of thought and approach which is opposed to the faith and tenets of revealed religion. Obviously, therefore as philosophy caught the imagination of the people, the respect for religion and the prophets dwindled in their estimation. Not simply the faith in

revelation but ethical norms and injunctions laid down by it for the practical conduct of life began to be viewed from an entirely different angle. Philosophy gave birth to a section among the Muslims who were openly antagonistic to religion and took pride in rejecting the Islamic dogma. There were also philosophers who were not courageous enough to forsake Islam openly. They were content with paying a lip service to it but they had actually lost all faith in the religion.

Batinites

Philosophy also gave birth to a new schism in Islam which was even more fatal to the spirit of religion and the teachings of the Prophet than philosophy itself. These were Batinites or the adherents of a theological school of thought so named after Batin (inner, esoteric), whose precursors and exponents were mostly drawn from the people who had lost their national kingdoms to the irresistible arms of Islam. They could not hope to regain their lost power and prestige in open contest against the might of the Muslim people. There were also self-indulgent people or those desirous of commanding a position of power and influence but who found the injunctions laid down by Islam for the conduct of life as obstacles in their way. All these persons gathered under the banner of the Batinites chose an entirely new path to checkmate Islam.

Literally Batiniya means "inner esoteric". They maintained that only a symbolic interpretation requiring gradual initiation by an illuminated teacher could reveal the real meaning of the Qur'an. The word, they claimed, was like a veil, hiding the deep and occult meaning never attainable to those clinging to literal explanation. Being a Shia'ite school of thought, they also upheld the doctrine of the hereditary succession from the Caliph 'Ali'. The widespread Ishmaelite sect and its offsprings (Qarmatians, Fatimids, Assassians etc) belong to the sphere of Batinite Thought.

Esoteric and Exoteric Interpretations of the Scripture

The Scripture has clearly laid down the tenets of belief and code of conduct, if only because these are meant to be understood and acted upon by every human being:

“And we never sent a messenger save with the language of his folk, that he might make (the message) clear for them.”

(Ibrahim: 4)

The meaning of this verse is manifestly clear. The Prophet of Islam too had explained the import of Divine revelations and lived up to these precepts so that his followers might not remain in any doubt. The vocabulary of the Qur'an and its meanings have thus been handed down, from the Prophet, without any break, and have ever afterwards been recognised and accepted by everyone as authentic and genuine, and to which no one raised any objection.

Whenever the words ‘Prophet’, ‘apostle’, ‘messenger’, ‘prayer’, or ‘poor-due’ are used, these denote the same exposition as taught by the Prophet and understood by his companions and successors; all of whom acted upon these in a particular manner and transmitted the import of these words which have been handed down by one generation to another. The Batinites knew that the interdependence of Qur'anic vocabulary and its meanings form the key to the exposition of the doctrines of Muslim Faith; these constitute the moorings of intellectual and practical life of the Ummah, connecting the later generations with the fountainhead of Divine guidance which lay in the past. If they could only drive a wedge between the past and the present, as under the connecting link by rendering the import of Qur'anic vocabulary ambiguous and oracular, undefined and obscure, then the Ummah could be made to give credence to any innovation or deviation, agnosticism or infidelity.

These elements, therefore, began a vigorous campaign to popularise a new type of Qur'anic exegesis and the Sunnah's interpretation which invested the vocabulary and used therein with a hidden or mystic sense apart from their open or manifest meanings. It was claimed that the allegoric or enigmatic sense, beyond the range of ordinary understanding and accessible only to the initiate, guided unto a purer knowledge than did the meanings of the Quranic terms understood commonly by the scholars. The masses clinging to the literal sense could never attain the hidden but true content of the revelation. They maintained that the detailed ritual enjoined by the Shari'ah was cold formality meant for safeguarding the spiritual existence of the laity. In other words, the Qur'anic terminology, like a veil, hid the deep and occult meanings, but when an initiate attains the purer and sublimer knowledge he is set free from the legal obligations of the Shari'ah. They based their claim on this verse of the Qur'an:

“..... and he will relieve them of their burden and the fetters that they used to wear.”

(Al-A'raf:157)

After accepting the doctrine of obvious and hidden meanings in principle, it presented no difficulty to explain away the meaning of the terms like 'prophet', 'revelation', 'angels', or 'Hereafter' in whatever manner one desired.

The Traitors of Islam

The Batinite view with regard to the latent and deeper application of God's word or the Prophet's teachings and repudiation of the manifest sense has always been successfully adopted by the traitors and hypocrites. The so-called deeper sense, interwoven with mystical and philosophical ideas borrowed from a variety of sources, can be made equally adaptable to the requirement of a learned elite as well as the uncritical mind in order to

undermine the intellectual, moral, social and religious structure of the Muslim society. It can be employed to secure a split within the body-politic of Islam as indeed, all the later rebels against the prophet hood of Muhammad have taken advantage of this heretical view. All those impostors who have subsequently elevated themselves to the position of a fake prophet hood, have first rendered ambiguous the terminology employed by the Qur'an and the Sunnah.

The dialectical quibblings had already produced an atmosphere of intellectual anarchy in the world of Islam, wherein people unnecessarily longed for hair-splitting and philosophical sophistry. The Batinites were, therefore, successful in misleading these sections of the people who, under the influence of Greek philosophy and mythology, were freely applying the terminology like "Nous" and 'Logos', 'Universal Spirit' and the 'First Cause' to Islamic doctrines. With the help of an elaborate occult ritual for initiation of their adherents the Batinites had created a secret yet highly efficient instrument of power which was cause of concern for the then powerful Islamic kingdoms. Some of the most reputed and ablest personages like Nizam ul-Mulk Tusi and Fakhr ul-Mulk fell to the terrorism and murderous assaults of the Batinites.

Apart from the lawlessness, the Batinites had also helped, as explained earlier, the growth of occult and heretical interpretation of the Qur'anic text and perversion of the accepted tenets of the faith.

In an atmosphere surcharged with the anti-Islamic influences of Batinites and philosophical ideas borrowed from varied sources, a richly endowed thinker was required to save the situation. Such a man appeared on the scene in the middle of the fifth century A.H., and he was Abu Hamid al-Ghazali.

CHAPTER – VII

AL-GHAZALI

Abu Hamid Muhammad al-Tusi al-Ghazali was born in Tus at Tabran in 450 A.H. He lost his father while still very young. Although his father had entrusted him to the care of a mystic friend, he got himself admitted in a seminary for receiving education.

Al-Ghazali first studied the Shafe'i system of jurisprudence from Sheikh Ahmad al-Razkani in his home town and then moved on to Jurjan for completing the course and thereafter al-Ghazali went to Nishapur where he became a disciple of Imam ul-Harmayn. His outstanding intellectual gifts were soon recognised and he was appointed as an assistant of his reputed teacher who used to say that al-Ghazali possessed an encyclopaedic knowledge. After the death of his mentor in 478 A.H. he went to Nizam ul-Mulk. The Prime Minister of Malik Shah, who accorded al-Ghazali a coveted place in his court. Himself an erudite scholar, Nizam ul-Mulk fostered arts and literature by a lavish patronage. Scholars in different branches of learning had gathered round him and discussion on literary and other academic topics had become an everyday affair. Impressed by his outstanding intellectual gifts, Nizam ul-Mulk selected al-Ghazali in 484 A.H. for appointment as a professor at the famous Nizamiyah University at Baghdad.

In 485 A.H. the 'Abbasid Caliph Muqtadi b'illah, appointed him as his ambassador in the court of Turkhan Khatoon, who

then headed the Saljukid empire. Another 'Abbasid Caliph, Mustazhir b'illah, held al-Ghazali in high esteem and it was on his behest that he wrote a treatise to refute the cult of Batinites.

Al-Ghazali's Intellectual Crisis

For a man of lofty ideals, creative genius and intellectual grit, as al-Ghazali was, it was unthinkable that he should rest satisfied merely with position and prestige. His internal conflict and disquietude, the Promethean quest, made him a renovator of the faith. History can offer but a few such striking examples where one had abandoned a brilliant career, fame and position for the satisfaction of his soul. The deep inner struggle forced him to give up all the worldly possessions including his teaching vocation and to withdraw into a life of asceticism and solitary contemplation.

“After emerging from the earlier state of doubt, I had four groups before me who seemed to be engaged in the search after Truth. These were Dialecticians, who claimed to possess insight and wisdom; Batinites, who insisted on a hidden, true and deeper knowledge vouchsafed to them through impeccable Imams; Philosophers, who arrogated themselves as masters of logic and reason; and, Mystics, who laid a claim to be illuminated and favoured with beatific vision. I proceeded to explore the ideas, thoughts and writings of each of these groups but was not satisfied with anyone of them.

It had been firmly implanted in my heart that the eternal bliss could be had only through inculcating the awe of God, renunciation of the material world, whole-hearted attention to the eternal life in the Hereafter and an earnest devotion to God. All this was, however, not possible so long as one did not sever the attachments of position and riches, fame and worldly life.

"I pondered over my own condition. I realised that I was wholly immersed in worldly temptations, its ties and attachments. The vocation of teaching appeared to be a noble pursuit but, as further reflection revealed, I was paying my entire attention to those sciences which were neither important nor beneficial for the hereafter.

I probed into the motives of my work as a teacher, and found that, instead of any sincere desire to propitiate God, I was after honour and fame. I was convinced that I was on the edge of an abyss, and if I did not take immediate steps to retrieve the situation, I should be doomed to eternal fire. Still undecided, one day, I resolved to abandon everything and leave Baghdad; the next day I gave up my resolution. Six months passed away in this state of uncertainty. On the one hand the pull of temptations asked me to remain where I was on the other; the faith gave a call to get up.

It became impossible to postpone my decision any longer. Then, God Himself caused an impediment. He chained my tongue and prevented me from lecturing. Vainly I desired to teach my pupils who came to me but my mouth became dumb. The silence to which I was condemned cast me into a violent despair..... I lost all appetite, I could neither swallow a morsel of bread, nor drink a drop of water.

Gradually I became too weak and at last the physicians under whose treatment I was, gave up all hope of my recovery. They said that my heart was so severely afflicted that no treatment would be of any avail till this affliction was removed. Finally, conscious of my weakness and of the prostration of my soul, I took refuge in God like a man who has exhausted himself and is denied all means. I prayed to Him Who answered the wronged one when he

crieth unto Him, and he made easy for me to sacrifice honour, wealth and family.

I left Baghdad, having given away all my fortune and preserving only as much as was necessary for my support and that of my children. I went to Syria from Baghdad and remained there for two years. During this period, I engaged myself in meditation and penance. I practiced whatever I had learnt of the ways of mystics and endeavoured to purify my soul, rectify my morals and occupied myself with the recollection of God.

For a time I retired to the principle mosque of Damascus. Often, I went into one of the minarets of the mosque and remained there in seclusion for days together. From Damascus, I went to Jerusalem. After having visited the tomb of Abraham, I felt a desire to go for the Hajj and visit the mosque of the Prophet. I, therefore, embarked upon my journey to Hejaz. After the Hajj was over, I went to my home town although I had earlier no longing to visit my family. I took care to spend my time in secluded meditation, purification of the heart and recollection of God at

IMAM AL-GHAZALI

Born: 1058 AD at Tus

Teachers: Shiekh Ahmad Razkafi; Abu Nasar Ismaili; Imamul Harmain of Nishapur

Spiritual Mentor: Abu Ali Farmadi

1095 AD First Crudade

1099 Jerusalem Falls to Crusaders

Contemporaries: Nizam-ul-Mulk Toosi; Ibn Bajja; Abdul Qadir Jilani; Syed bin Faris

Abbasi Khalifa: Al-Qaim; Al-Muqtadi; Al-Mustazhar

Seljuk Sultans: Tughril Beg; Alp Arsalan; Malik Shah

1111 AD Death of Imam Ghazali

my house but the events and happenings, care of dependants and their needs constantly intervened in securing a perfect state of peace and bliss. I was, however, not denied of it entirely and, from time to time, was favoured with the illumination and ecstatic transports. I spent ten years in this manner. What revelations were made to me during this period of meditation could not be described."

From Seclusion to Public Life

It was just possible that al-Ghazali might have spent the remainder of his life in solitary meditation and contemplation, enjoying the bliss of beatific vision. However, for the great achievement God had destined him to accomplish, it was necessary that al-Ghazali should return again to pedagogic and penmanship. It was all the more necessary for al-Ghazali to refute the philosophers and atheists and establish the superiority of Islam, in the fields of knowledge with certitude. There was then no other personage in the entire world of Islam more suited for the task. The fact is, Islam stood in need of him and God wanted him to perform what had already been set for him. He, therefore, felt an urge to take up the defence of the faith.

Al-Ghazali set off for Nishapur in 499 to resume his teaching vocation in the Nizamiyah University. There was, however, a world of difference between his taking up the teaching profession earlier and for the second time. Earlier he taught to secure honour, wealth and position, but now he considered himself commissioned to exhort people to purify their morals and soul.

Achievements of al-Ghazali

Endeavours of al-Ghazali for the revivification of Islam were two-fold, as follows :

1. He stemmed the tide of philosophy and of the Batanite evil and began a counter-attack on these movements on behalf of Islam.

2. He made a critical evaluation of the religious and moral state of the then Islamic society and proposed measures to reform it.

Encounter with Philosophy

The efforts made till the time of al-Ghazali to counteract the atheistic influence of Greek philosophy consisted merely of an apologetic vindication of Islamic tenets.

The tone of the dialecticians, save only that of Abul Hasan al-Ash'ari who did not have, however, to face the philosophers, was apologetic, or, at best, defensive. Al-Ghazali was the first man, who, along with a profound knowledge of religious sciences, made a detailed and deep study of philosophy as well. He then wrote *Maqasid al-Falasafah* (The aim of the Philosophers) in which he summed up the salient issues of Logic, Metaphysics and physics. In this book, he condensed the philosophical premises dispassionately in as explicit manner.

Al-Ghazali then wrote another book entitled '*Tahafut al-Falasafah*' (Incoherence of the philosophers).

In this book, he criticises from an Islamic point of view, physics and Metaphysics of the philosophical school and brings out their weaknesses and contradictions in a lucid and forceful language. We find al-Ghazali expressing himself self-confidently, in an elegant and incisive style. At places he employs a satirical diction which was not only effective but perhaps necessary to bring back the self-confidence of those who had been overawed by philosophy.

After giving a detailed description of the genealogy and horoscope of the Greek philosophic-cum-metaphysical concepts like logos, Nous, the First Cause or the intermediate agents between the Primal Cause and His creation, al-Ghazali becomes more trenchant and lively in his criticism of the philosophers.

"Those who have misgivings about the omnipotence of God Almighty think that divine things can be

subjected to their thought and imagination. Being presumptuous of their intellect they hold that it is not necessary to follow the prophets of God. That these persons should propagate, under the cover of philosophy, such ludicrous presumptions which others would be ashamed to dream of, is indeed natural and reasonable.”

Effect of the Incoherence of Philosophers

The courageous criticism and, to an extent, the denigration of Philosophy by al-Ghazali began a new chapter in the history of Islamic scholasticism which was later brought to a successful completion by Ibn Taymiyah.

Tahafut al-Falasafah caused a stir in the ranks of philosophers who had to suffer an irreparable loss on account of it. However, after al-Ghazali there arose no philosopher worthy of note for one hundred years. At last, Ibn Rushd, a great admirer of Aristotle and a spirited defender of philosophy wrote Tahafut (Incoherence of Incoherence) by way of rejoinder to Tahafut al-Falasafah by the close of the sixth century. Philosophy was granted fresh lease of life through the efforts of Ibn Rushd for another one hundred years.

Attack on Batinites

Besides philosophy, the crisis caused by the Batinite movement had received attention of al-Ghazali during his first stay in Baghdad when he wrote al-Mustaz'hiri at the instance of the then Caliph.

Taking shelter behind the terminology drawn from philosophy, their cult of “esoteric meanings” was a combination of sophism and conspiracy, for a man like al-Ghazali it was comparatively easy to smash this snare of Batinites. His effective answer to the challenge of Batinites made it a discredited sect ever after him.

Al-Ghazali's evaluation of Social Conditions

The second remarkable achievement of al-Ghazali was his evaluation of the religious and moral state of the society from an Islamic viewpoint which awakened the spirit for re-Islamisation in the community. *Ihya 'Ulum id-din* (The Revival of Religious Sciences) was the result of his endeavours in this regard.

Ihya' 'Ulum id-Din

Ihya' 'Ulum id-Din occupies a distinguished place among the few literary works which have had a lasting effect in moulding the moral and spiritual life of the Islamic world.

Al-Ghazali's critique of the Society

Al-Ghazali's object was to bring about a moral and spiritual transformation of the people of his time; he wanted to create for the purpose an awareness of the ills and weaknesses, the Muslims as well as their religious and intellectual leaders were suffering from.

In order, therefore, to achieve the end he had in view, al-Ghazali undertook a detailed analysis of the intellectual and moral approach of the then society towards life and the world; highlighted the vices of different sections; defined the aims and the methods necessary to achieve those objectives; delineated the individual and communal obligations of the people; brought out the distinguishing features and differences between secular and religious sciences; invited the attention of the affluent and ruling classes towards their shortcomings; criticised the unjust laws and rules promulgated by the state; and exhorted them to give up their un-Islamic ways, customs and usages. It was thus the first detailed sociological study in Islam which brought out courageously and poignantly the social and moral ills of the society and suggested measures for its reform and transformation into a healthy community.

The Religious Preceptors

Al-Ghazali held the religious doctors, the 'Ulama, responsible for the all round religious and moral degeneration of the Muslim people.

“In short, the debasement of the people proceeds from the corruption of their rulers, who get perverted on account of the demoralization of the doctors of religion. Had there been no self-seeking Qadis and religious scholars, the rulers would not have become so depraved, for, in that case, they would have had to be mindful of the warnings of the 'Ulama'.”

Most of the religious scholars of his day, as Ghazali pointed out had given themselves up to the hair-splitting of juristic issues and cavilling of real or imaginary problems. In social gatherings and religious meetings, royal courts and scholarly seminars specious contentions of a juristic nature had come to be regarded as an inevitable intellectual diversion. It had become such a rage in those times that in their craze to arm themselves for a knock-out victory in the debates and disputations, the scholars were neglecting all other branches of learning including even the religious sciences, the knowledge necessary for spiritual and moral rectitude or for the preparation of the life in the Hereafter. Al-Ghazali protests against this state of affairs in the *Ihya'*.

“If any scholar-jurist is asked about the virtues vices like patience and thankfulness, fear and awe, envy and malice, hypocrisy and deception, contentment and earnestness or how to avoid hankering after the praise and respect by others, he would not be able to give any answer although he ought to know these as the preparation for life in the world-to-come depends on them. On the other had, if you ask him about *lia'n*, *zihar*, *sabaq* or *rami*, he will give out a detailed description of each although one seldom comes across these issues, and, if anybody does need

a juristic opinion on these matters, he can easily obtain it in every town. These scholars thus devote their entire time and energy in learning and teaching the details of similar insignificant issues but remain oblivious of the knowledge essential for a religious teacher. If these scholars are ever asked about it, their reply is that they are engaged in acquiring a religious knowledge which constitutes a communal obligation (Fardh-Kafayah) enjoined by the Shari'ah.

They are really keeping their own-selves in the dark and deceiving others; for, as everybody knows, he who wants to acquit himself of a communal obligation should first discharge the obligations enjoined on him personally. Also, there are many other communal obligations which claim a preference, as, for example, we have many non-Muslim physicians in the city whose evidence is not acceptable under the Shari'ah in religious matters requiring medical opinion. We do not find any scholar turning to the study of medicine. Students overcrowd the class-rooms of the sciences pertaining to jurisprudence, logic and dialectics although there are hundreds of jurisconsults who are ever willing to let one have their legal opinions. I fail to understand how these scholars can defend their engagement in a communal obligation which is being already performed by numerous 'Ulema, while disregarding another obligation which is not being attended by anyone. Is there any reason for it except that the study of medicine cannot help them to secure trusteeship of the charitable trusts, enforcement of the wills, guardianship of the orphans and management of their property, appointment to the post of judges and official jurists, respect and honour in governmental circles or a precedence over their compatriots, friends and foes?"

Al-Ghazali laments over the general lack of interest in and apathy of the people towards the tenets of faith and calls attention towards the need of spreading literacy and disseminating the knowledge of religion.

After tracing the origin of contentious debates, al-Ghazali sets forth in some detail the ill-effects springing from these wranglings. He also describes his own experiences since he had himself earlier taken a keen interest in such polemics.

The vocabulary employed to denote the new sciences then being cultivated was also creating a misunderstanding. Words or phrases occurring in the Quran, traditions of the Prophet or the sayings or works of his companions were being widely used for the new sciences being evolved in those times.

The Qur'anic verses "so that they may understand religion and the Tradition God grants understanding of religion to those who intended to be virtuous" were applied to the unforeseeable legal quibbling; the Divine tidings that those granted wisdom (in religion) have been bestowed a great favour was appropriated to philosophy and scholasticism of the fifth century; and the verse of the Qur'an "remember God, for he may be one of the devoted" was employed for the vile sermons of the ignorant and misguided preachers. Al-Ghazali explained how these words were being used out of their context to mean something which these terms were never intended to convey. He traced the original meanings of these words and phrases which had not only been lost owing their misuse but which also differed widely from the sense conveyed during his times. The analysis made by al-Ghazali was as much instructive as it was helpful in removing the misconceived notions created by the careless and indiscriminate use of religious terminology which was being employed as a vehicle for the furtherance of the new sciences.

Critique of the Rulers and Kings

Al-Ghazali held that along with the religious scholars, kings and rulers, administrators and nobles were also responsible for the widespread moral and spiritual degeneration of the people.

Unmindful of his personal safety al-Ghazali stood up against the unjust ways of the powerful despots and autocratic rulers who considered themselves above every law.

Al-Ghazali maintained that since the riches amassed by the kings was either unlawful or at least of a doubtful nature from the viewpoint of the Shari'ah, it was advisable that no grants or donations out of it should be accepted by a scholar.

“The kings now-a-days have, however, only such scholars on their pay-rolls whom they hope to win over to their side for certain ulterior motives or those who would be willing to act as their entourages and sing their praises.

We are living in a democratic age when freedom of speech and expression is more or less assured in almost every country of the world. It is rather difficult to visualize the amount of courage Al-Ghazali had to muster, and the grave danger to which he exposed himself by openly preaching disassociation with the rulers or advising refusal of their grants, and criticising them for their tyrannical and un-Islamic policies in the social, political and fiscal matters. For the despotic and autocratic rulers, as the kings generally were in those days, even the slightest criticism of the state or its policies or officials was a sufficient mark of treason, and the heads of eminent scholars and reputed personages rolled on the ground at the slightest displeasure of these tyrants.

However, throwing all considerations of personal safety to the winds al-Ghazali preached and practiced what he considered to be right and never faltered from the duty of severely admonishing the arrogant kings of his time. Sultan Sanjar, the son of Seljukin King Malik Shah, was the Governor of Khurasan.

Once al-Ghazali happened to see him in his court. Addressing Sanjar, he said before his courtiers:

“It is indeed regrettable that the necks of the Muslims are breaking under the crushing burden of thy tyranny, while those of thy horses are over burdened with expensive harness.”

Al-Ghazali therefore, paid more attention to them than to the Seljukid kings for bringing about reforms in administration. He wrote detailed letters and directives inviting their attention to the mismanagement, mal-administration, inefficiency, illegal exhortations and high handedness of the State officials.

Other Classes of the Muslim Society

Al-Ghazali had also made a deep study of the religious and moral life of the other sections of society besides the scholars, kings and chieftains.

One section of the book deals with those people who were suffering from one or the other misconceived notions which impeded the improvement of their character. This section is concerned with the people who were suffering from different types of self-deceptions, weaknesses, fallacies, illusions and paradoxes. The survey includes the affluent, nobles, scholars, mytics and similar other classes of rank and distinction, exhibiting a keen insight into their mental and

AL-GHAZALI

Principal Nizamiya
University, Baghdad 1091
AD

Intellectual and Spiritual

Crisis: 10 years

Returns and teaches in home
town at age of about 50 yrs.

Al-Ghazali's World:

Ihya-ul-Uloom

Maqasid al-Falasafah

Tahafut al-Falasafah

Mustazhari: Refuting
Baitnites

Al-Mustasfa: Legal Theory

Role in Spain in Establishing
Al-Muwahidin dynasty
through Tumart

emotional life which can be expected from an expert psychologist only. His study reveals the elements of misgivings and illusions of which the people concerned would have themselves been hardly aware.

Turning to the affluent and well-to-do sections of the society al-Ghazali has made certain pertinent observations of far-reaching importance:

“There are many amongst the men of substance who are too liberal in spending their wealth on the performance of Hajj. They set out for the pilgrimage regularly year after year as if they have none hungry or in want amongst their neighbours.”

In regard to another self-deception from which people generally suffer, al-Ghazali says:

“There are still others, both among the well-to-do and the poor who are victims of self-deception for they consider it sufficient enough to attend the religious discourses and sermons. They regularly attend such gatherings and think that it is propitious to listen to these discourses even without acting on the counsel of the preachers. These persons are deceiving themselves because the merit of these sermons lies simply in their exhortation to adopt the righteous course.”

Purpose of the *Ihya'*

Ihya' 'Ulum id-Din is not merely a book of criticism. One of the objectives underlying this book is to reform and Islamise the Muslim society.

Ethical Philosophy of al-Ghazali

Besides being an eminent scholar, jurist, dialectician and a mystic, al-Ghazali was also a propounder of the Islamic ethics. His studies in ethical philosophy fathom the mysteries of head and heart and exhibit a penetrating insight into the eternal values

of life. In fact al-Ghazali has left such an indelible mark on the subsequent thought that no study of Islamic ethics and ethical philosophy can be deemed complete without a mention of al-Ghazali's thought and his writings on the subject. The *Ihya'* is a masterpiece of al-Ghazali on this subject too in which he, like a true thinker, sets out to examine the innate psychological dispositions and impulses actuating ethical behaviour.

Yearning for Honour (Jah)

Under the caption "Why man has a natural longing for honour (Jah) and why it seldom leaves even the heart of a penitent," al-Ghazali writes in the *Ihya'*:

"One must know that exactly for the same reason which makes wealth dearer to man, he inculcates the love of Jah. Just as gold is liked more than silver, even if the two be of the same value, jah claims precedence over riches. As you know, gold and silver have no attraction in themselves for these can neither satisfy hunger nor can be put on: these are just as good as any other metal, but these have an allurements because they serve as a means of satisfying the desires held dearer by man. Similar is the case with jah which means winning and dominating the heart of others.

The most precious of all earthly possessions, then, is the domination and winning over the hearts of men. The perfection of domination lies in the authority exercised by a man over the hearts of others who are ever willing to comply with his bidding. The hearts of men can best be dominated by creating love and reverence which is born out of a conviction about the perfection of qualities in the person adored; for, perfection of qualities is a divine attribute to which man has an inherent inclination. The heart of man, therefore desires to attain perfection either through knowledge or authority. Riches and jah,

being the two potent means of acquiring this authority are limitless, man endeavours to gain knowledge of everything and command authority over every existence. As the prophet has alluded to the dissatisfaction of the learned and the wealthy — the desire of man for domination over things beyond his authority — ever goes on increasing.”

Critique of the Self

The most effective part of the *Ihya'* is where al-Ghazali expounds the significance of purifying one's own soul and reforming the morals for achieving blessedness. His exposition covers the fleeting nature of the faith and righteous action, cleansing of the spirit and eradication of the vices of heart which he deems to be the inner bases of all grossness in human conduct.

Critics of *Ihya'*

Ibn Taymiyah's verdict on the *Ihya'* is that on the whole it is a well-written book employing an elegant style. At the same time, Ibn Taymiyah criticises it for four reasons. The first of these is that al-Ghazali's thought shows definite traces of Greek philosophy.

In delineating the unity of God, prophet hood and the final recompense al-Ghazali has, maintains Ibn Taymiyah, introduced numerous concepts which were held by the then philosophers. Even if al-Ghazali opposed the philosophers, he gave scholasticism a philosophical foundation. Ibn Taymiyah being emphatically opposed to philosophy found some of the writings of al-Ghazali implausible from a purely religious view-point.

The second ground for criticism of the *Ihya'* is that al-Ghazali employs a syllogism which is not fully in keeping with the spirit of the Qur'an and the Sunnah. The third reason given by Ibn Taymiyah is that the book contains many concepts and teachings of those treading the path of mysticism and their claims in regard to gaining insight into the divine truth. Ibn Taymiyah disagrees

with al-Ghazali in regard to the latter's views on mysticism. The fourth reason for disagreement of Ibn Taymiyah is that the *Ihya'* contains many traditions of doubtful authenticity. Despite these shortcomings pointed out by him, Ibn Taymiyah writes about the *Ihya'*:

“Notwithstanding these defects, the *Ihya'* contains the teachings of numerous illuminated mentors and mystic, and their experiences in regard to the purification of self and the intuitive knowledge, which are identical with the canons of the Qur'an and the Sunnah and can thus be acceptable from a theological point of view. It is because of this reason that the scholars hold different opinions about the *Ihya'* and all of them are not opposed to it.”

Ibn al-Jawzi has also criticised al-Ghazali for making use of unauthentic and weak traditions. He is of the opinion that this was because al-Ghazali was not a traditionalist. He further maintains that al-Ghazali has mentioned several examples of mystics or the methods resorted to by them for penance and self-purification which cannot be held permissible under the Shari'ah, much less to be recommended for being followed by the people. Ibn al-Jawzi, however, acknowledges the effectiveness of the *Ihya'* and the valuable contribution it has made to the subsequent Islamic thought. He has also summarised the *Ihya'* in a book entitled *Minhaj ul-Qasidin* (Path of the Truth seekers) in which he has deleted the portions objectionable from his point of view. This work of Ibn al-Jawzi, however, lacks the inspiration and effectiveness so characteristic of the *Ihya'*.

Al-Ghazali and Dialectics

Unfortunately, the science of dialectics, which had been evolved for the defence of religion and which had to keep itself abreast with the current developments in other branches of learning, had lost its vigour by the end of the fourth century. The Ash'arites of the time had taken to the path of rigid dogmatism insisting

on the acceptance of not simply their tenets and beliefs but also the canons devised by al-Ash'ari and Abu-Bakr Baqullani without the slightest modification or improvement.

Al-Ghazali did, in fact, lay the foundations of a scientific scholastic system, thus infusing a new blood in the old Ash'arite school. The modified doctrines of the Ash'arite school eventually became, thanks to al-Ghazali, the most popular system of scholasticism in the entire Islamic world, but, since al-Ghazali held divergent views from al-Ash'ari and other eminent scholars of that school on several issues, many ardent followers of the Ash'arite school looked down upon al-Ghazali's thought with misgivings and disfavour. Some of the Ash'arite zealots even accused al-Ghazali of breaking away from the orthodox faith and adopting heretical tenets. After the compilation of the *Ihya'*, the Ash'arite scholars became so critical of al-Ghazali that one of his friends wrote a letter to invite his attention towards the matter.

Al-Ghazali explained the position in some detail in a booklet with the title *Faisal at-Tafarraqa Bain al-Islam wal-Zandaga*.

Al-Ghazali's refusal to return to Baghdad

Al-Ghazali was prevailed upon by Fakhr ul-Mulk, the son of Nizam ul-Mulk, who became a Vazier of the Saljuq Prince Sanjar, to return to Nishapur in the month of Zul-Q'adah, 499 A.H. and resume the chief professorship at the Nizamiah University. Fakhr ul-Mulk was assassinated in the beginning of 500 A.H. by a Batinite emissary and al-Ghazali abandoned the profession of teaching shortly thereafter. He returned to his native town Tus, and founded a small institution for the teaching of his local disciples and the cultivation of a religious life.

The 'Abbasid Caliph as well as the Saljuq King tried their best to persuade al-Ghazali to return to Baghdad but he refused to comply with their requests.

Death of al-Ghazali

Al-Ghazali spent the rest of his life in further studies like a student. He had not been able to pay as much attention to the Traditions as he had to the religious and secular sciences. He, therefore, tried to make up the leeway by studying the Sahih of Bukhari and Muslim under a reputed traditionist of the time, Hafiz 'Amr ibn Abi al-Hasan al-Rawasi. He even obtained the diploma of having studied the two books under al-Rawasi.

Al-Ghazali wrote another book on legal theory, known as al-Mustasfa, just a year or so before his death. This work of al-Ghazali is still considered as one of the three outstanding contributions on the subject; the other two being al-Mu'tamad of Abul Husain al-Basri and al-Burhan of Imam-ul-Haramayn.

Al-Ghazali died at Tabran on the 14th of Jamadi al-Aakhra, 505 A.H. at the age of 55 years.

Two Outstanding Qualities of al-Ghazali

Immaculate sincerity and indomitable courage are the two most impressive qualities of al-Ghazali which have been acknowledged by all—Ibn Taymiyah differs from al-Ghazali on many issues but he has absolutely no doubt about the sincerity of al-Ghazali's purpose. The reason behind effectiveness as well as immense popularity gained by al-Ghazali's works was his earnestness and selfless devotion for the truth which made him abandon the most coveted post at the Nizamiah University, led him to spend a decade in seclusion and contemplation and, finally, gave him the courage to turn down the invitations of emperors and resist the temptations of riches, honour and glory.

Al-Ghazali was fired with an adventurous spirit and a lofty idealism which enabled him to set his heart upon an ever higher objective. His work on jurisprudence and theory of law was a beacon of light for the scholar-jurists for many centuries to come. Contrary to the pattern of education followed in al-Ghazali's

time, he studied secular sciences after acquiring mastery over religious learning. He engaged himself in the intensive study of philosophy and other speculative sciences of the times and soon acquired in making a personal search for the truth his efforts were in no way meaner than his accomplishments in the field of intellect.

He turned to the path of mysticism for purification of self and gaining spiritual strength under a reputed spiritual mentor of the time, Sheikh Abu 'Ali al-Farmadi (d. 477 A.H.) He abandoned everything he had, spent a decade in solitude and contemplation and was favoured with illumination and beatific visions.

Al-Ghazali's endeavours for the revival and revivification of Islam were not limited to the reformation of the Muslim society alone. Shibli Na'omani says:

“Al-Ghazali was not satisfied with the then existing Muslim states which had degenerated into secular governments. He held the view that unless a new state was established in accordance with the Islamic principles of polity, the Muslim society could not be Islamised. He could not, however, spare time for this stupendous task from his pre-occupations of contemplation and penance, purification of self and rectitude of morals.”

However, after the *Ihya' 'Ulum id-Din* was brought to light and its copies were taken to Spain in 501 A.H., the then king, 'Ali ibn Yusuf ibn Tashfin, ordered to burn them. Al-Ghazali sadly learnt of the incident but shortly thereafter a young man, by the name of Muhammad ibn Abdullah ibn Tumart, arrived from Spain to study under him.

Muhammad came of a distinguished family, reputed for its long record of eminent warriors. While he was studying under al-Ghazali he had made up his mind, either of his own account,

or, most probably under the influence exerted by al-Ghazali, to overthrow 'Ali ibn Yusuf in order to set up a truly Islamic State in Spain. Although al-Ghazali agreed with him, he asked Muhammad about the means as well as the help he hoped to muster in his venture. Having satisfied himself about the project, al-Ghazali allowed Muhammad to proceed with his undertaking.

The kingdom established by Muhammad ibn Abdullah ibn Tumart, known as al-Muwahidin, lasted for a pretty long time. The reign of 'Ali ibn Yusuf Tashfin, which was notorious for its widespread tyranny, had given encouragement to the laxity of morals among all the classes of society. abduction and rape of women belonging to respectable families by the king's legionaries had become a common feature of the day. The royal family, descending from a recently converted Berber tribe called Mulassamin, followed a curious custom. Their men always wore a veil while their women moved about unrestrained and unveiled. Muhammad ibn Tumart, after achieving power, did not himself ascend the throne but chose a capable and learned young man by the name of Abdul Momin who succeeded the last Mulassamin king Tashfin, son of 'Ali ibn Tashfin in 540 A.H.

Abdul Momin and his descendants ruled over the empire of Morocco strictly in accordance with the wishes of Muhammad ibn Tumart and al-Ghazali. Ibn Khaldun has given an account of the rule by al-Muwahidin in these words:

“During their rule ‘Ulema were held in high esteem and all the affairs of the State were decided in consultation with them. Justice was made available to the weak and the poor; tyrannical officials were severely punished; ruffians were held in leash; mosques were constructed in royal palaces; the frontier posts were fortified and strengthened and fresh conquests were made.”

Impact of al-Ghazali

In intellectual and spiritual attainments, brilliance of his mind and the totality of knowledge he mastered, there have been only a few personalities comparable to al-Ghazali. His epoch making writings were the harbinger of a vigorous intellectual movement and a source of inspiration to the subsequent generations.

Al-Ghazali did in fact leave such a deep imprint on the pages of Islamic history that his impact on the subsequent Islamic thought has always been acknowledged both by his admirers and critics. His writings are still held in high esteem and profitably studied by those who yearn for purification of the self and mystic communion with God.

Reformers after al-Ghazali

Despite al-Ghazali's successful encounter with the scepticism of philosophers which threatened a spiritual chaos in Islam, the moral and spiritual disintegration of the masses by the end of the fifth century had become so widespread that it required a popular movement for the regeneration of the simplicity and directness of the faith.

The autocratic governments of the past four hundred years had definitely a dissolving influence on the spiritual and moral life of the community.

The fifth century after Hijra, on the other hand, also saw a diffusion of arts and sciences in the world of Islam. We find during this period some of the greatest intellectual leaders brought forth by Islam — Abu Is'haq Shirazi (d. 476 A.H.) and al-Ghazali (d. 505 A.H.) in the field of religious sciences, Abu Wafa ibn 'Aqeel (d. 513 A.H.) and Abdul Qahir al-Jurjani (d. 471 A.H.) in jurisprudence and literature, Abu Zakarya Tebraezi (502 A.H.) in grammar and lexicography and Abul Qasim al-Hariri (d. 516 A.H.) in literature.

During such a period of intellectual awakening no religious mentor could have hoped to achieve any success unless he was himself well-versed in all the prevalent sciences.

The Two Saints of Baghdad

God Almighty brought for the two outstanding personages during this period who devoted their life for the religious and spiritual revivification of the Muslims. These were Abdul Qadir Jilani and Abdul Rahman ibn al-Jawzi.

The fields of their activities were different but both of them deeply impressed the life of the Muslims in their times.

* * * * *

CHAPTER – VIII

SHEIKH ABDUL QADIR JILANI

‘Abdul Qadir was born in Gilan in 470 A.H. He was an Arab by descent, being the tenth descendent of Hasan ibn ‘Ali, but his ancestors had migrated to Iran, in 488 A.H., when he was 18 years old. It was perhaps not merely fortuitous that he arrived at Baghdad to acquire education almost at the same time when another reputed teacher, al-Ghazali, was leaving the city in search of truth. Although inclined to penance and cultivation of religious observances from an early age, he addressed himself whole-heartedly to acquire education under the most reputed teachers of the time such as Abul Wafa Ibn ‘Aqeel, Muhammad ibn Hasan al-Baqillani and Abu Zakariya Tebrezi. Therefore, he turned to mysticism and was guided in its tenets and practices by Sheikh Abul Khair Hammad ibn Muslim al-Dabbas and Qadi Abu Sa’eed Makhrami, and was allowed by the latter to initiate others in the mystic order of his mentor.

Popular Enthusiasm

After completing his education of religious sciences as well as the training in mystic disciplines, Abdul Qadir began his career as a teacher in the seminary of his teacher Qadi Abu Sa’eed Makhrami. In his sermons which were delivered in the premises of the same institution, there was soon such a rush of people that extensions had to be carried out in the building of institution.

The king, his chief and ministers attended his sermons along with the rank and file and used to sit in a corner without any fanfare.

Moral Excellence

Notwithstanding the implicit reverence cherished for Abdul Qadir by the people, he was always modest, humble and unpretentious. He often left his work to attend to the needs of a child, a destitute or a slave girl. Never evading the company of the poor he even washed their clothes or performed similar other personal services for them, yet he never stood up in honour of any person of the rank or the elite. Abdul Qadir never paid back the courtesy call to any vizier or the king.

His behaviour was so affectionate that everyone who met him gained the impression that Abdul Qadir had the highest regard for him.

Reassurance to the Dejected

The analysts of his time agree that quite a large number of miracles were worked by Abdul Qadir but his miracle of miracles was filling the heart of the despaired and broken-hearted with faith, hope and enthusiasm.

Sheikh 'Amr al-Kaisani reports that there was hardly a sermon delivered by Abdul Qadir after which a number of Jews and Christians did not embrace Islam; marauders and robbers did not repent for their sins and heretics and apostates did not renounce their mistaken beliefs.

Teaching and Missionary Activities

Gifted with divine grace and illumination, Abdul Qadir was ever conscious of the purification of spirit and rectitude of morals, yet he did not lose sight of the importance of teaching and disseminating the correct doctrines of the faith. Being a follower of the Hanbalite school of Sunni theology, he endeavoured, like his mentor, to root out innovations and deviations from the orthodox faith and practice, because of his forceful defence of the strict orthodoxy the traditionist and their followers came to be held in high esteem by the masses.

Abdul Qadir used to take daily a class each of the Qur'anic exegesis, traditions and Jurisprudence in which he also explained the differences between various juristic school of Islam. The classes were held in the morning and evening, while Abdul Qadir listened to the recitation of the Quran after the mid-day prayers and thereafter dictated *fatwas* on religious or legal questions referred to him.

Certitude of Knowledge

Profound knowledge of the religious lore and meticulous observance of the traditions of the holy prophet, aided by the grace of God, had unveiled the mysteries of celestial world to Abdul Qadir, who had reached the stage where discrimination between truth and untruth, divine intuition and demoniacal imposition is born in a man. He had acquired the certitude of knowledge that the Shari'ah of the last prophet was perfect and unchangeable, and that any claim made contrary to the divine edict simply a satanic suggestion.

He used to tell his disciples that if any action transgresses the commandments of God, then it is surely an imposition by the Satan. In such cases one should return to the tenets of the Shari'ah, inculcate an unflinching faith, and firmly reject the temptations of self-indulgence; for, whatever is not permitted by the Shari'ah, is decidedly misleading.

Trust in God

The unfailing and penetrating vision into the Tawhid or Unity of God had conferred upon Abdul Qadir that sublime piety which produces an absolute resignation in the will of God. He explains the state of resignation in these words:

“When a man finds himself in a trouble, he first endeavours to get rid of it. If he fails, he seeks the help of others, such as, kings, officials, grandees or the rich, or, physicians in the case of an illness. When

this effort also fails him, he turns to God with invocations and praises, and not often with tears and lamentations. In other words, he does not look for the assistance of others so long as he can obtain the requisite help from his own self; similarly, he does not implore God if he can get the help from His creatures; and, finally, he surrenders completely to God Almighty. It is only at this stage that man seeks the help of God with prayers and invocations, lamentations and tears but God does not accept his entreaties till he gets tired of these too. Then, being completely dejected and broken-hearted he is permeated by an illumination of spirit which makes him indifferent to causes and effects. Now he has a sublimated soul, unconscious of everything save the Divine being and aware of the true content of Tawhid (Unity); he has now a certitude of knowledge that save God nothing has any power to do or undo a thing; to Him belongs the power to move a thing or keep it stationery, to promote or debase, to benefit or harm, to give life or bring death, to give honour or indignity, or to make affluent or indigent. The man is now like a ball in the hands of a player, or a child in the lap of a nurse, or else a corpse in the hands of those who bathe it; for, these are completely at the mercy of those who possess them. Likewise, the man thus loses his identity in the will of his Master; immersed in his higher-self he has no comprehension of anything save the acts of his Lord, nor does he witness or hear or think anything else. If he seeks anything, it is the craftsmanship of the Supreme Creator; if he hears, it is His voice; if he comprehends, it is by the knowledge vouchsafed by Him; and if he is enlivened, it is only by His nearness. Thus, in the state of total absorption, he gets peace only through the grace and blessings of

God; he detests to depend on anything save his Lord; he surrenders himself completely before the will of God; acquires the knowledge of mysteries hidden from the senses through intuition and illumination of heart; and overflows with the gratitude of the Lord for His countless blessings.”

Love of Humanity

The love of humanity, in general, and the affection for the Ummah, in particular, was symptomatic of Abdul Qadir’s sublimated soul and indicative of his close affinity to the successors of the Prophet.

The Times of Abdul Qadir

Abdul Qadir spent 73 years of his life in Baghdad. When he came to Baghdad, Caliph Mustazhir b’Illah Abul ‘Abbas (487-512 A.H.) was the reigning monarch after whom four other ‘Abbasid Caliphs, al-Mustarshid b’Illah (512-559 A.H.), al-Rashid b’Illah (deposed 529 A.H.), al-Muqtafi I’ Amr Illah (530-555 A.H.) and al-Mustanjid b’Illah (555-565 A.H.) succeeded to the throne one after another.

This was one of the most troubled times of the ‘Abbasid rule when the Caliphs and Saljukid Kings vied with each other for maintaining their supremacy. The former being shorn of their temporal power were prevailed upon, sometimes with their permission but often through coercion, by the Saljukid Kings to accept their domination. This also sometimes engulfed the Islamic world into fratricidal conflicts in which the Muslims shed the blood of one another.

Several such incidents took place during the reign of Caliph al-Mustarshid. He was a brave and wise administrator who won numerous battles but he was finally defeated by the Saljukid King Mas’ud in 529 A.H. Ibn Kathir, giving an account of the Caliph’s defeat writes:

“The Sultan (Mas’ud) gained victory and the Caliph (al-Mustarshid) was taken prisoner. Baghdad was ransacked which plunged the city into sorrow. The people dismantled the pulpits of the mosques, gave up attending congregational prayers and women came out lamenting for the Caliph and other captives. The people in other parts of the country followed suit with the result that Malik Sanjar had to ask his nephew to reinstate the Caliph. Mas’ud acted on the advice of his uncle ... But the caliph was assassinated by the emissaries of the Batinites while he was on his way back to Baghdad.”

These heart-rending incidents were witnessed by Abdul Qadir. It is true that he had nothing to do with these struggles for power; he was, nevertheless, alive to the miseries inflicted on the people and evil effects of the unsettled conditions during his times. Through his sermons, therefore, he endeavoured, to give a call for moral propriety and rectitude of the self; he vividly explained the transitory nature of the world and its fleeting pleasures, the need for coveting the eternal bliss and preparing for the life-to-come, and the importance of evoking faith and correct mental attitude consisting of right conduct in speech, livelihood and ethical behaviour.

Sermons of Abdul Qadir

The discourses of Abdul Qadir had a magnetic effect which is still discernible in them. Abdul Qadir is at his best in *Futuh ul-Ghaib* and *al-Fatah al-Rabbani*. In describing the love and unity of Divine being he appears to be inspired by higher sources.

The reader still finds the spirit of sincerity and enthusiasm running through these sermons.

Unity of the Divine Being

The forces of worldliness had become so strong during Abdul Qadir’s time that the entire social and economic life of the

community appeared to be woven into the context of political situation then obtaining; people had developed a tendency of depending upon the kings and nobles for realisation of their worldly ends and had begun to treat them as ultimate dispensers of benefits and harms. He counteracted this in his sermons.

Refuge of the Broken-hearted

The Muslim society in the time of Abdul Qadir could broadly be divided into two classes. The first of these comprised the men of substance who were deficient in faith and virtuous behaviour. As against this, there was another class, poverty-stricken and down-trodden, but endowed with faith and a spirit of righteousness, moral strength and uprightness. These people, sometimes, feeling disconcerted and broken-hearted, viewed the affluent with jealousy and mistrust, and regarded themselves as deprived and discarded. Abdul Qadir holds out hope and cheer to these people.

ABDUL QADIR JILANI

Born 1078 AD at Jilan

Life Spent in Baghdad

Teacher: Abdul Wafa ibn Aqeel Al-Baqilani & Abu Zakaria Tabrezi

Spiritual Mentor: Sh. Abdul Khair Al-Dabbas Qadi Abu Saeed Makhrani

Follower of Hanbali School of Fiqh

Contemporary of Al-Ghazali

Died 1166 AD at Baghdad

Period of Abbasi Khilafa: Mustazhir; Al-Mustarshid; Al-Rashid; Al-Muqtafi; Mustanjid

Fights between Abbasi and Seljuqs

Adopted middle course between extremes of Spiritualism and Rationalism

Works: Sermons and Books: Fatuhat al-Ghaeyb on Mysticism

Ghinyat-ul-Talibin on Principles of Shariat and Rariqal

Fath-al-Rabbani

Worldly Pleasures

Abdul Qadir did not preach asceticism nor did he exhort to give up the worldly possessions. What he emphasised upon in his sermons was that these should be made use of by a man to the extent he needs them but he should never allow himself to become a slave of his desires and temptations, nor should he hold the earthly gifts dear to his heart. Explaining the purport of the tradition which runs—Verify, the world has been created for you, and you have been created for the Hereafter, he says:

“Do not try to obtain your share of the worldly gifts in a way that you have to keep standing before it like a beggar. You ought to be like a sovereign who keeps himself seated while the gifts are presented before him. This world acclaims those who stand and wait at the door of god almighty but it demeans those who wait upon it. Therefore, get your share of the worldly benefits without demeaning yourself or compromising your dignity, and this is what Allah expects of you.”

Critique of the Kings

Abdul Qadir did not sermonize and admonish the populace alone; he fearlessly performed the duty made incumbent by the Shari'ah i.e. of enjoining the right and forbidding the wrong; and whenever he considered it necessary, he publicly denounced the actions and policies of the kings, nobles, and officials. He bitterly criticised the faults of the great ones without the slightest consideration of their power or position.

Ibn Kathir writes that when Caliph al-Muqtafi I' Amr Illah appointed Abul Wafa' Yahya, a man notorious for his cruelty, as a Qadi, Abdul Qadir admonished the Caliph in these words:

“You have appointed a man notorious as the ‘Most Tyrant’ to rule over the Muslims. What would your answer be tomorrow on the Day of Judgment, before the Lord of the worlds, the Most Merciful?”

Ibn Kathir further says that when the Caliph came to know of the admonition of Abdul Qadir he burst into tears and immediately dismissed Abul Wafa' Yahya from the office.

Abdul Qadir also vigorously condemned this-worldliness of those scholars, jurists and saints who were prepared to accept an office or to act as entourages of the rulers. He held this class responsible for the waywardness of the kings and ruling chiefs.

Concern for Moral Rectitude

Extremely solicitous of eradicating the moral laxity and viciousness produced by ever increasing opulence, luxury and indolence in the metropolis of Islam, Abdul Qadir sometimes came out with the most severe criticism of the then society giving expression to his heartfelt misery over the sinful ways of the people.

Reform and Renovation

The impressive sermons of Abdul Qadir were a source of inspiration to innumerable persons in Baghdad. These enabled thousands to offer earnest repentance for their sins but in order to build up a movement aiming at a widespread and permanent reform of the social, moral and spiritual life of the people, it was necessary to find out a way whereby more durable relations could be fostered between the mentor and the disciple and, at the same time, arrangements could also be made for the religious education and training of the latter. As it were, the discourses did not provide a permanent link between the speaker and the audience. People came to these meetings, listened to the sermons and left to come back again or not, at their sweet will. Many of them persisted in the way they had been treading along without paying any heed to the call of the reformer to purify their souls and to rectify their moral behaviour.

Religious seminaries and educational institutions too did not provide an answer to the problem because of the vast

population of Muslims and the mundane pre-occupations of the people. The problem of making arrangements for a continued and concerted effort for the education and training of the people in religious tenets and practices, and infusing a breath of new life in the vast numbers spread over far-off lands defied a solution in the absence of a truly Islamic State.

The foremost business or rather the objective of the Caliphate was, in the words of Caliph 'Umar ibn Abdul 'Aziz, to guide the people in moral rectitude rather than to collect revenues for the conduct of administration. The then Muslim States were, however, not only indifferent to this fundamental objective but were also extremely allergic to any movement or criticism on this score which could pose a threat to their political supremacy. Thus, these governments being suspicious of all efforts made for the resurgence of Islamic spirit, and, erroneously taking these as movements designed to build up political leadership, lost no time in crushing them.

In these circumstances there was no way left to revivify the religious spirit and fill the people with an enthusiasm, zeal and self-confidence for reintroduction of the precepts of religion in their daily life. The only alternative left was to call upon the people to take an oath of allegiance for the purpose, following in the footsteps of the Apostle of God. It had become necessary that a guide of spiritual and moral excellence should obtain an oath, or the *ba'it*, as it is called, from the people willing to offer sincere penitence and undertaking to lead a virtuous life in future in accordance with the directions of their mentor. If placing oneself under the instruction of an inspired guide meant that he was fairly started upon in his journey to the end of purification of spirit and moral rectitude; the oath of allegiance enjoined a much more onerous responsibility on the mentor himself.

The guide or the spiritual teacher had to lead the wandering soul of the disciple taking the *ba'it*, stage by stage, from cleansing

of his spiritual impurities, renouncing the love of worldly temptations and desires, wealth and honour, infusing a spirit of moral uprightness and correct ethical behaviour, following teaching contained in the Qur'an and the Traditions, to the illumination of the pupil's soul.

This was, in truth, what the ba'it meant and by which the inspired souls tried to infuse into their disciples, through preaching and personal example, loving care and unalloyed sincerity, an inner vitality of spirit and strength of moral integrity. As the experience shows, the reformers and renovators of faith did succeed in revivifying the true faith and tapping new sources of popular strength in their own times, through this tried and infallible method which just copied the procedure and technique followed by the prophet of Islam.

Innumerable persons have been provided with an opportunity of not only adopting a virtuous life through this method but have also been led to attain even the stage of 'Divine Acquaintance' and 'Love' by the inspired guides and teachers, of whom the mentor par excellence was Sheikh Muhi ud-din Abdul Qadir Jilani.

A few divines and mystics had employed the method of ba'it, before Abdul Qadir but none had achieved the success as he did. With his profound knowledge, intellectual gifts, charming and loving personality and spiritual excellence he renovated the system of ba'it and founded a new mystic order known as the Qadiriyyah. Abdul Qadir elaborated and systematised the mystic practices, made these more wide-based and developed to make them more harmonious with the tenets of the Shari'ah.

The branches of the order were founded in Yemen, Hadhramaut, India, Indonesia and in the countries of Africa where it helped innumerable people to come back to the path of loyalty and obedience to god and His Apostle. Abdul Qadir and

his disciples were also successful in converting a considerable number of non-Muslims to Islam.

Death of Abdul Qadir

Abdul Qadir died at the age of 90, in 561 A.H. His voice failed thereafter, the tongue having been fixed up in the palate, his soul departed from the body.

Abdul Qadir left quite a large number of pious and saintly disciples who continued to disseminate his message and fight this-worldliness and its vices like opulence and luxury, fame and power.

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CHAPTER - IX

IBN AL-JAWZI

Ibn al-Jawzi presents another striking example of a preacher, reformer and renovator of the faith. He was the most reputed and profound scholar of his time and a prolific writer of voluminous book on exegesis of the Qur'an, Traditions, history and literary criticism.

Early Life

Born in 508 A.H. at Baghdad, Ibn al-Jawzi was 38 years younger than Abdul Qadir. His father died when he was still young but his mother sent him to study under a reputed traditionist of the day, Ibn Nasir. He committed the Qur'an to memory and learnt its recitation, studied the traditions and calligraphy.

Zeal for the Traditions

Ibn al-Jawzi had an intense enthusiasm for acquiring knowledge and propagating the Traditions of the Apostle of God. His works on the

IBN AL-JAWZI

Born: 1126 AD Baghdad

Teacher: Muhaddith Ibn Nasir

Followed Hanbali Fiqh

Cotemporary of Sh. Abdul Qadir Jilani

Period: 2nd and 3rd Crusade

Imaduddin Zangi
Salahuddin Ayyubi

Works: 700—1000

Talbis-o-Iblis (Satan's Delusions)

Kitab-ul-Mauzua't

Sifat-us-Sufwah

Tarikh-l-Muluk wa al-Umam

Kitab-ul-Yaqut

Al-Nutq-al-Mafhum

subject were so numerous that, as the chroniclers of his time report, Ibn al-Jawzi had made a will that the water for the ritual washing of his dead body should be heated by burning the clippings and ends of his pens used for writing the Traditions. It is further related that these clippings were found more than sufficient for the purpose.

Ibn al-Jawzi was a voracious reader from an early age. In his time Baghdad had well-stocked libraries where he used to spend most of his time. He read whatever book he could lay his hands on.

Penmanship of Ibn al-Jawzi

Ibn al-Jawzi turned to writing from an early age. He began writing four folios daily and continued the practise throughout his life. Ibn Taymiyah relates that when he took a stock of Ibn al-Jawzi's books, they were found to be more than one thousand in number. Ibn al-Jawzi had such a profound knowledge of the science of Traditions that he claimed to tell the authenticity or otherwise of any Tradition with reference to the character of those through whom the Tradition had been narrated. He was also without a peer as a literature and as an orator.

His Piety

Ibn al-Jawzi was as much celebrated for his moral uprightness, devotion and piety as for his literary attainments.

The works of Ibn al-Jawzi present a striking example of his fervent devotion and the heartfelt love of God. In an autobiographical passage included in the *Saeed al-Khatir* he writes:

“From early childhood I had an inclination towards devotion to religious contemplation and worship. I zealously observed obligatory as well as supererogatory prayers and preferred seclusion. Spending my days thus, I felt peace and

enlightenment. I extremely regretted the time spent otherwise for I had an ardent desire to utilise every moment of my life under a diligent consciousness of the Omnipresent Lord. In those days I felt my heart attuned to God while my supplication and benedictions were a source of indescribable pleasure to me. My lectures and discourses, quite effective in those days, it appears, attracted a few high officials and chiefs who wanted to come closer to me by paying homage and putting themselves at my service. As it were, I too felt inclined towards them but in their company I lost the sense of peace and sanctifying grace that I enjoyed earlier in my supplications. Thereafter other functionaries of the government started gaining my favour with the result that the precautions I used to take earlier in regard to avoiding everything unlawful and doubtful, gave place to a sense of complacency. It was still not so deplorable but gradually my specious reasoning made the doubtful objects appear as perfectly lawful and, then, I realised that I had lost the sublimity and purity of my heart; instead, it seemed, as if a profaneness had taken its place which gave rise to restlessness and disquietitude in me. I witnessed that my sermons too bore a mark of my anxiety which caused an ever larger number of persons to offer penitence for their sins while my own guilt weighed heavily on my consciousness. This, obviously, made me still more disturbed, but there seemed to be no way out. I visited the tombs of the saints and earnestly beseeched God to show me the right path. Ultimately, God helped me and I again felt an inclination to spend more of my time in prayer and solitude. Now I came to know what was wrong with me and I thanked my Lord, the most compassionate and Merciful, for His kindness."

Character of Ibn al-Jawzi

He is reported to a well-built man with handsome features and an imposing countenance. Favoured with easy circumstances "he possessed a refined taste", says Muwaffaq Abdul Latif, "in dress and dietary habits and was charming and graceful". Another analyst, Ibn al-Dayni relates that Ibn al-Jawzi was soft-spoken, handsome and of medium height, reputed for his clemency and generosity.

Extremely careful of his health, he liked what may be called the "good things of temperate quality". In the *Saeed al-Khatir* and the *Talbis-o-Iblis* he has mentioned his numerous clinical experiences and advised against penance and arduous religious practices which had then been introduced by the Iranian mystics.

Encyclopaedic knowledge

The most outstanding feature of Ibn al-Jawzi's character is his versatility. He towered over his contemporaries in his ardent desire to be well-versed in almost every branch of learning. He has himself described it, in some detail, in the *Saeed al-Khatir*.

Popular Enthusiasm

The sermons delivered by Ibn al-Jawzi were attended by the caliphs, kings and chief of the state besides the common people of Baghdad.

Ibn al-Jawzi always condemned innovations and unlawful accretions to the Faith in his sermons, asking the people to follow the path enjoined by the scripture and the traditions. Because of Ibn al-Jawzi's profound knowledge and eloquence as also his popularity the sectaries of heretical factions never dared to controvert him, with the result that the orthodox school gained a dominating influence. The Caliphs and nobles of the time became followers of the Hanbalite school which was distinguished for its strict adherence to the Traditions and the scripture.

Literary Endeavours

Ibn al-Jawzi produced some of the most distinguished works which had a profound effect on the subsequent academic endeavours. His writings helped the succeeding generations to keep to the right path as enjoined by the Shari'ah.

Kitab ul-Mauzu'at is Ibn al-Jawzi's chief work on the traditions. In this book, he has discussed all those spurious or weak Traditions which were then commonly relied upon by the heretics for spreading beliefs contrary to the authorised teachings of the conformist school. It is true that Ibn al-Jawzi has been too harsh in his judgments since he had adopted an extremist course in regard to certain issues dealt with by him in this book; nevertheless, he has performed an invaluable task by exposing the fallacies of the heretics and innovators.

Talbis-o-Iblis is a critical study of the then Muslim society by Ibn al-Jawzi. In this book, he has made a critical evaluation of the different classes and sections of the Muslim society of his time, highlighted their weaknesses, misconceptions and aberrations and delineated the causes which had given birth to different vices marring their faith, action and behaviour. Ibn al-Jawzi has set forth the habits and customs, faults and self-deceits to which the scholars, jurists, preachers, writers, rulers and the pious often fall a prey.

Critique of the Scholars and Administrators

The criticism by Ibn al-Jawzi is at places too severe in the Talbis-o-Iblis as is his verdict symbolic of his extremist views, yet the book contain a mine of useful information since it deals extensively with the vices found among different sections of the people.

Criticising the scholars of his time, some of whom were engaged in unnecessary hair-splitting of legal issues, he writes in the Talbis-o-Iblis:

“One of the greatest weaknesses of these scholars-jurists is that they have occupied themselves with the vain discussions but they do not pay heed to the Scripture, Traditions and the biographies of the companions of the Prophet which would have had a salutary effect towards the purification of their souls. It hardly needs any emphasis that the discussions on trifling issues like the kinds of impurities and the methods of purification would not make one tender-hearted or receptive of the awe of God. What is needed by man is the recollection of God and the discourses on the subject so that these may create a longing for success in the life-to-come.

In his critique of the preachers in the same book, Ibn al-Jawzi observes:

“Most of these preachers are accustomed to using a grandiloquent and heavily embellished language which often means nothing. The greater portions of their discourses are devoted to the accounts of Prophet Moses, Mount Sinai, Joseph and Zulaikha, or the like, but they have hardly to say anything about the obligatory performances enjoined by the religion or how to avoid sins. How can their sermons prevail upon an adulterer to offer penitence; or else convince a woman to be faithful and maintain good relations with her husband? These discourses are completely devoid of the ethical or religious teaching of the Shari’ah. This is also one of the reasons for these sermons being so popular, for the truth is always distasteful while falsehood is pleasing.”

In connection with the vices developed by the kings, rulers and administrators, Ibn al-Jawzi writes:

“These people prefer to pattern their behaviour according to their own wishes rather than do what the Shari’ah enjoins. They would cut off the hand

or execute a person even though it might not be lawful to do so. They labour under the misconception that what they do is essential as a matter of political expediency. This means, in other words, that the Shari'ah is incomplete and they are now making up for that deficiency.

“This is in reality a great deception created by the Satan; for, the Shari'ah comprises divine guidance for the conduct of our temporal affairs as well, and it is unthinkable that the guidance vouchsafed by God should be deficient. God almighty has ordained—we have not left anything incomplete in the Scripture, and also there is none to amend our order. Thus, the man who wants to superimpose his own ideas over the Shari'ah in the Garb of political expediency, really claims that the guidance vouchsafed to man by God is imperfect and incomplete. This is obviously blasphemous.”

Ibn al-Jawzi points out another weakness of the rulers and administrators in these words:

“Besides their persistence on their wrongful ways they also ardently desire to pay a visit to some pious and godly personage for the purpose of seeking his benediction in their favour. The devil has brought them round to believe that the solemn invocation of the divine blessings by a godly person would make the burden of their sins lighter. This is, however not so. Once a trader whose goods had been withheld by a collector of the toll-tax went to the reputed saint Malik Ibn Dinar and requested him for his help.

Malik ibn Dinar went to the collector of the toll-tax who treated him respectfully and released the goods of the tradesman. Thereafter the official asked Malik ibn Dinar to pray for him but Malik replied, ‘Ask this purse in which you keep the money acquired

illegally, to pray for you. How can I invoke blessings for you when countless people curse you?' 'Do you think,' added Malik, 'that God will accept the entreaties of a single individual in preference to the prayers of a thousand others?'

At another place he writes:

"The rich and the affluent have a great regard for such misguided mystics who approve of the hearing of songs and playing on musical instruments. They are lavish in spending their riches on these mystics but would not part with a single cent for the sake of scholars and savants. As a matter of fact, the scholars are like physicians on whose advice a man spends his money grudgingly only when he falls ill. On the other hand, the misguided mystics and the musicians and singers accompanying them are like courtiers and flatterers who are normally hangers-on of every wealthy person.

"Likewise, they are devoted to the ascetics and other persons of assumed piety, and prefer them to the doctors of religion.

They would readily submit to a charlatan attired as a mendicant; if he practices a pious fraud upon them they are easily led astray and begin to sneer at the scholars for not being ascetics.

"Satan has misled the masses to believe that attending of religious discourses and raising a wall of woe are highly meritorious acts and the sole purpose of delivering these sermons. This is perhaps because the people have been told about the merits of listening to these discourses but they do not know that the end of these sermons is reformation of their own morals and rectitude of their behaviour. Nor do they appear to be aware that whatever they listen to in these lectures shall be cited as an evidence against them on the Doomsday. I personally know a

number of persons who are attending such discourses for a number of years. They get excited on hearing these sermons and burst into tears but they still persist in accepting interest, cheating others in their trade, remaining unmindful of the religious performances, and disobedience to their parents. Satan has led them to believe that their presence in these sermons, their lamentations and fits of crying will atone for their neglected duties and the sins of omission and commission. There are also others who think that accompanying the pious and godly persons or paying visits to them shall be enough for expiation of their sins.”

In regard to the rich and affluent, Ibn al-Jawzi has the following to say:

“Many among these persons spend lavishly on the construction of mosques or bridges but their object really is to become famous and win over the people by such acts of piety. Another objective they have in view is that they should be remembered after their death, and for that purpose they get their names inscribed on the foundation stones of these edifices. Had they undertaken the construction of these works for the pleasure of God, they would have been content with the knowledge that God is aware of what they do. If these persons were to be asked to get simply a wall constructed without having their names inscribed on it, they would never agree to it.

“Like wise, these persons donate candle-stick to the mosques during the month of Ramadan although these remain without light during the remaining part of the year. They cannot, obviously, evoke admiration of other by providing oil for daily lighting, which they hope to attain by donation of a single candle-stick during the month of Ramadan.”

Saeed al-Khatir

Not strictly an autobiographical work, the book also contains reminiscences of Ibn al-Jawzi, his ideas and feelings and personal experiences. In describing the incidents he had come across, Ibn al-Jawzi frankly admits his mistakes and weaknesses. Ibn al-Jawzi often addresses his own self to criticise its longings and aspirations, gives an account of his mental and emotional states, and describes his social experiences with the help of common and everyday happenings, rough and tumble of life or his dealings with women, friends and servants. An outstanding feature of this book is also noted for the easy eloquence and lucidity of its style, which marks the first attempt made by an Arab writer in this direction, since the then prevailing style was to use a heavily embellished language in the literary works.

A man who has been favoured by God with faith and wisdom bears no ill-will against those who lack these qualities even though the letter might be moved by jealousy towards him. In fact the faithful does not consider the faithless worthy of his attention, for, their spears of hopes and aspirations are quite different—one harbours a feeling of hostility at another's good in this world but the other aspires for success in the world-to-come. There is a world of difference between the two."

Dialogue with the Self

Ibn al-Jawzi sometimes applies the method of tracing an incident to its source so as to discover the general principles underlying that phenomenon.

He with the help of self-dialogue:

"Once I acted on legal opinion which was upheld by certain schools of jurisprudence but rejected by others. However, I felt an uneasiness as if I had committed a sacrilege which was causing me spiritual contraction and a drift towards unorthodoxy. With a depending sense of

bereavement and sullenness, I realised as if my own self was asking me, 'You didn't act against the advice of the jurists. Why is then this feeling of privation?' I replied, 'O my insinuating Self, I have two answers to thy question. First, thou turned aside from the teachings of thy own juristic school. If thou had been asked to pronounce a legal opinion on his question, then wouldst not have advised it thus.' 'I won't have acted on it' interjected the self, 'if I had not considered it lawful.' I replied, 'No, thou wouldst not even advise others to act likewise.' And the second reason is,' I added, 'that thou shouldst be happy over the gloom experienced by thee, for had thou not been already favoured with the illumination thou wouldst not have had this feeling of bereavement.' 'But I dislike the gloom coming over me.' Replied the self 'Then thou shouldst make up thy mind,' said I, 'to give up the disputed act. Thou thinkest that it has been made lawful through consensus of opinion. Still thou shouldst decide to renounce it simply for the fear of God. 'The self was then saved of the spiritual contraction and gloominess after it had acted likewise."

Biographical Studies

Ibn al-Jawzi was primarily a traditionist and jurist but he always emphasised the importance of the study of biographical accounts of the pious and saintly masters of the olden times for the purpose of purification of soul and implanting a religious zeal. He has advised the scholars, jurists and traditionists in the Talbis-o-Iblis and the Saeed al-Khatir to pursue this branch of learning.

Biographical Writings

Ibn al-Jawzi has, accordingly, written the biographies of a number of luminaries such as hasan al-Basri, Caliph 'Umar ibn Abdul' Aziz, Sufyan Thauri, Ibrahim ibn Ad'ham, Bishr Hafi

Ahmad ibn Hanbal, Ma'ruf Karkhi and others. In addition to these biographies, he has also written a compendium of reputed scholars, writers, saints, etc, in four volumes under the title of *Sifat us-Safwah*.

This book is really a revised edition of the *Hilyatul Auliya* by Abu Nua'im Asbahani which was edited by Ibn al-Jawzi. In revising the book he has kept in view the principles of historical criticism and deleted the spurious accounts related by Abu Nua'im.

Study of History

Ibn al-Jawzi held the view that along with the study of religious sciences like the law and the Traditions, History should also be studied by the students because the lack of knowledge in this branch of learning had led certain scholars to commit unpardonable mistakes. He, therefore, advised that every student should have at least as much knowledge of history that he does not commit grievous mistake. Writes he in the *Saeed al-Khatir*:

“A scholar-jurist must be conversant with all the related sciences. A jurist has to have the knowledge of other sciences like History, Traditions, Lexicology, etc, on which he has very often to rely upon.

I heard a jurist saying that Sheikh Shibli and Qadi Shuraik had once got together in a meeting. I wondered at the ignorance of the jurist who did not know that the two were not contemporaries. ‘Ali had bathed the dead body of Fatima, their marriage did not terminate even after the death of the latter. I thought, God may help this man, for he does not know that Caliph Ali had married the niece of Fatima, Ummah bint Zainab, after Fatima had passed away. How would it have been possible if their marriage had continued after the death of Fatima? I have seen similar grievous mistakes committed by

al-Ghazali in the *Ihya' 'Ulum id-Din*. I was surprised to see how he could mix up the incidents happening at quite different times. I have compiled all such errors of *Iyha'* in one of my book. Another scholar, Sheikh Abul Ma'ali al-Jawalini has mentioned another curious story in his book. He writes that certain Batinites have related that Hallaj, Abu Sa'id al-Janabi Qarmati and Ibn al-Muqann'a had conspired to overthrow the then government by creating dissatisfaction among the masses.

If the narrator of this story only knew that Hallaj was not a contemporary of Ibn al Muqann'a, he would not have given credence to this story. Massur had ordered the execution of Ibn al-Muqann'a in 144 A.H. while Abu Sa'id al-Janabi Qarmati came to prominence in 286 A.H. and Hallaj was killed in 309 A.H. Thus Qarmati and Hallaj were almost contemporaneous but Ibn al-Muqann'a was born much earlier. There is thus no question of the three meeting and conspiring together.

Historical Writings

The chroniclers of his time agree that Ibn al-Jawzi was a gifted orator who could draw large crowds. In the *Saeed al-Khatir*, he had mentioned his internal struggle which once almost prevailed upon him to pay absolutely no attention to the rhetoric and the choice of words in his speeches as this could be construed as a show of oratory.

However, he gave up the ideal since on further reflection he came to the conclusion that eloquence was a God given gift, a perfection and not a defection, which ought to be employed for the propagation of faith.

He continued to press his intellectual gifts for more than half a century to the task of serving his people and revivification of the faith.

Ibn al-Jawzi died on a Friday night in 597 A.H. The entire population of Baghdad suspended its work to attend his funeral prayers which was held in the mosque of (Jam's) Mansur. It was a memorable day in the history of the metropolis; innumerable people were found sobbing for the departed teacher. The analyst reports that quite a few inhabitants of Baghdad spent their nights throughout the ensuing month of Ramadan at his grave offering prayers and reciting the Qur'an for the peace of his soul.

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CHAPTER – X

NUR UD-DIN ZANGI AND SALAH UD-DIN AYYUBI

The Crusaders

The commonwealth of Islam was devoting its attention to the educational and intellectual pursuits, on one hand, while Christendom was consolidating its might to wipe off the entire Islamic world, on the other. Europe had been nourishing an intense hatred for Islam ever since the Arabs had taken their arms to the eastern possessions of the Byzantine Empire. All the holy place of Christendom including the birth-place of Jesus Christ were under the Muslims; this afforded, by itself, a sufficient cause to Europe for breathing vengeance on Islam but the existence of powerful Islamic Empire did not give them the heart to covet the Muslim territories. However, the downfall of the Seljukid empire and the unsettled conditions in Asia Minor and Syria towards the end of the fifth century A.H. were in many respects calculated to favour the success of Europe.

At the same time, the Christendom got a wandering preacher in the person of Peter, the Hermit, who distinguished himself by his fiery zeal and ability to carry away by his eloquence thousands of the poor Christian from one corner of Europe to another. Apart from these, numerous other factors, social and economic, contributed to surround the religious venture of the Crusaders with a hallow of romance tainted with avarice, ambition and lust.

The first eastward march of the Crusaders towards Syria commenced in 490 A.H., within two years the great cities of Edessa and Antioch and many fortresses were captured; and by 492 A.H., the Christians had regained possession of Jerusalem itself. Within a few years the greater part of Palestine and the coast of Syria, Tortosa, Acre, Tripolis and Sidon fell into the hands of the Crusaders.

The fall of Jerusalem marks the beginning of the decline of Islamic power and the increasing strength of the Christian West which was successful, in due course, in establishing four Latin kingdoms of Jerusalem, Edessa, Antioch and Tripoli in the territory bordering the eastern end of the Mediterranean from the Euphrates to Egypt, exposing the entire world of Islam to the danger of annihilation.

The opening decades of the sixth century A.H. marked the dissension of the Islamic East. After the death of Malik Shah, the last great Seljukid ruler, civil war broke out among his successors and the empire split into many separate principalities. There was then no ruler who had the capacity to unify the forces of Islam in order to stand on the defensive against the increasing pressure from the north-west.

Atabek 'Imad ud-din Zangi

At this critical moment, when the despair of the Muslims was at its height, a lucky star rose in the eastern horizon. As it had happened earlier, Islam got a champion for its cause from an unexpected quarter, who appeared on the scene to save the situation. The leader was found in Imad-ud-din Zangi.

'Imad ud-din Zangi was the son of one of the court chamberlains of Malik Shah. Sultan Mahmud conferred on him the government of Mosul along with the title of Atabek, the Tutor of the Princes. After consolidating his power in Syria and

Iraq, 'Imad ud-din advanced against Edessa (Roha) which was one of the strongest fortresses held by the Crusaders, and formed the centre of their aggressive inroads into the neighbouring territories held by the Muslims. 'Imad ud-din captured Edessa on the 6th of Jamadi ul-Akhir, 539 A.H. According to Arab historians it was the "conquest of conquests" for Edessa was regarded by the Christians as the "stoutest prop of the Latin Kingdom." The valley of the Euphrates was thus finally saved from the marauding excursions of the Crusaders. Shortly after achieving this brilliant victory 'Imad ud-Din was assassinated by a slave on the 5th of Rab'i ul-Thani, 541 A.H. thus perished one of the greatest heroes of Islam who had opened the way for a counter-attack on behalf of Islam against the crusaders. However, the task left incomplete by the great Atabek was taken far ahead by his illustrious son, Al-Malik al' Adil Nur ud-din Zangi.

Al-Malik al-'Adil Nur ud-din Zangi

Nur ud-din Mahmud was now the Sultan of Aleppo on whom devolved the responsibility of the championship of Islam. The constant aim of his efforts was the expulsion of the Latin Christians from Syria and Palestine and to this object he remained faithful throughout his life. For him jihad with the crusaders was the greatest act of piety crowned with the divine blessing. In 559 A.H., Nur ud-din Zangi captured Harim, a stronghold of the crusaders in the north, after defeating the united armies of the Franks and the Greeks. It is related that ten thousand Christians were slain in this battle and innumerable crusaders were taken prisoners along with the most of their chieftains, such as Bohemond, prince of Antioch, Raymond of the court of Tripoli, Joscelin III, and the Greek general, Duke of Calamer. Soon after it the fortress of Banisa (Caesarea Philippi) at the foot of Mount Hermon, fell before the arms of Nur ud-

din, encircling the crusaders from two sides. The significance of this political change has been described thus by Lane-Poole:

The possession of the Nile by Nur ud-din's general (Salah ud-din) placed the kingdom of Jerusalem as it were in cleft stick, squeezed on both sides by armies controlled by the same power. The harbours of Demietta and Alexandria gave the Moslems the command of a fleet, and enabled them to cut off the communications of the crusaders with Europe, stop the annual pilgrim ships and seize their supplies."

Nur ud-din had thus practically outmanoeuvred the crusaders in Palestine but his greatest ambition was to drive them out of Jerusalem. This was, however, to be accomplished by Salah ud-din but this foundation was laid by the departing sovereign, Nur ud-din, who died in 569 A.H. in his fifty-sixth year, of a disease of quinsy. The news of the death of Nur ud-din, writes Lane-Poole, "fell like a thunderbolt among the Saracens."

Character of Nur-ud-din

Muslim historians describe Nur ud-din as a chivalrous, just and generous ruler, most tender hearted, pious and high-minded, and a fearless warrior ready to expose himself in the front of every battle. True to his name, 'Mahmud', he was acclaimed as one of the best of the kings; as the historians tell us, he was more capable and enlightened than his predecessors.

Ibn al-Kathir, the reputed historian and author of the *Tarikh al-Kamil*, writes:

"He met his personal expenses from the property he had acquired out of the proceeds of his own share in the booty taken in war. He had set apart three shops situated in Hams which fetched an annual rent of 20 Dinars for meeting his household expenses. Once, when his wife complained to him that the income from the shops was insufficient, he dryly

replied, 'I have nothing more to give you. Whatever else you see, I hold in sacred trust for the Muslims and I am no more than their trustee. I would not like to be consigned to Hell for your sake by spending anything on ourselves out of the public funds.'

"He used to devote a greater part of his time after the nightfall in prayers. Belonging to the Hanafi School, he had studied jurisprudence and the Traditions but the narrow dogmatism was entirely foreign to his character.

"He was distinguished for his remarkable love for justice which could be seen, for example, in the fact that he had abolished all customs, dues and tithes throughout his vast kingdom comprising Egypt, Syria and Mosul. He was always eager to observe, in exact details, the disciplines and injunctions of the Shari'ah. Once he was summoned to appear before a court. He sent the word to the Qadi that no preferential treatment should be accorded to him when he appeared before the court as a defendant. Although he won the case against the plaintiff, he gave up his claim in favour of his opponent saying, 'I had already decided to do so, but I thought that perhaps my vanity wanted me to avoid attending the court of law. I therefore, decided to appear before the court and now I give up what has now been decided in my favour.' He had set up a special tribunal known as Dar-ul'Adl (House of Justice) where he along with a Qadi, personally heard the cases to check arbitrariness on the part of high officials, princess, etc.

"On the battle-field he earned the admiration of everyone by his personal bravery. He always took two bows and quivers to the battle-field. Once somebody said to him 'For God's sake, don't expose to danger your own self as well as Islam.' 'Who is

Mahmud', retorted Nur ud-din, 'that you speak thus of him? Who defended the country and Islam before me? Verily, there is no defender save Allah.'

"He held the scholars in high esteem and always stood up to receive them. He took keen interest in their affairs and patronized them with generous gifts but despite his humility and simplicity, he had such a commanding personality that the people were seized with fright in his presence. The fact is that it is not possible to relate all his qualities in the limited compass of this book."

Unflinching Faith

The unflinching faith of Nur ud-din can well be imagined by an incident reported by the historians. While he was laying a siege to Banias (Caesarea Philippi), his brother, Nusrat ud-din lost an eye. Nur ud-din on meeting his brother said, "If you only knew the divine reward for losing your eye, you would ardently desire to lose the other one too."

Salah ud-din Ayyubi

Salah ud-din was, in truth and reality, a standing miracle of the Prophet of Islam and a manifest sign of the truthfulness and authenticity of his message.

Salah ud-din was brought up like other Kurd youth of moderate means, 'studying the conventional sciences and threat of warfare. Nobody could have predicted before Salah ud-din captured Egypt and confronted the Crusaders, that this young man would one day emerge as the conqueror of Jerusalem and a great Defender of the Faith, and that he would achieve such an eminence as to be looked upon by posterity as a brilliant example for his ardent zeal and courage in fighting the infidels, or, for his sterling virtues which could rightly be envied even by the most pious and pure in heart. Describing the youthful days of Salah ud-din, Lane-Poole says:

“As the favoured governor’s son, he naturally enjoyed a privileged position, but, far from exhibiting any symptoms of future greatness, he was evidently a shining example of that tranquil virtue which shuns ‘the last infirmity of the noble minds’.”

God had, however, destined him to become the most renowned leader of his time; and when God wills a thing He provides the means therefore. His master Nur ud-din ordered him to proceed to Egypt.

Transformation of his life

Salah ud-din was, however, completely a changed man after assuming power in Egypt, conviction dawned upon him that God had to take some work from him which would be thwarted by the pursuits of pleasure.

Lane-Poole Says

“On his side, Saladin began to order his life more rigorously. Devout as he had always shown himself, he became even more strict and austere. He put aside the thought of pleasure and the love of ease, adopted a Spartan rule, and set it as an example to his troops. He devoted all his energies henceforth to one great object – to found a Moslem empire strong enough to drive the infidels out of the land. ‘When God gave me the land of Egypt’, said he, ‘I was sure that He meant Palestine for me also.’ It may well be that natural selfish ambition quickened his zeal; but the result was the same; thence forward his career was one long championship of Islam. He had vowed himself to the Holy War.”

Battle of Hittin

After a series of fights and forays a hotly-contested battle was fought in the neighbourhood of Tiberias beneath the hills of Hittin on Saturday, the 24th of Rabi ul-Akhir 583 A.H., which gave a death-blow to the power of the Crusaders.

Religious Ardour of the Sultan

The fateful fight at Hittin came to a close with an incident which is symptomatic of Sultan Salah ud-din's fiery zeal for the religion. This is how Lane-Poole describes it:

"Saladin camped on the field of battle. When his tent was pitched, he ordered the prisoners to be brought before him. The king of Jerusalem and Reginald of Chatillon he received in his tent; he seated the king near himself, and seeing his thirst, he gave him a cup of water iced in snow. Guy drank and passed the cup to the lord of Karak; but Saladin was visibly annoyed. 'Tell the king,' he said to the interpreter, 'that it was he, not I, that gave that man drink.' The protection of 'bread and salt, was not to baulk his vengeance. Then he rose and confronted Reginald, who was still standing, 'Twice have I sworn to kill him; once when he sought to invade the holy cities, and again when he took the caravan by treachery. I will avenge Mohammed upon thee!' And he drew his sword and cut him down with his own hand, as he had sworn. The guard finished it and dragged the body out of the tent; and God sped his soul to Hell.

"The king, trembling at the sight, believed his own turn was now coming, but Saladin reassured him-- 'It is not the custom of kings to slay kings; but that man had transgressed all bounds, so what happened, happened.'"

Conquest of Jerusalem

On Friday, the 27th of Rajab 583 A.H., the day of the Prophet's Ascension, when he had led the congregational prayer of the earlier prophets in Jerusalem, the Sultan entered the city.

Benevolence of Salah ud-din

The forbearance, humanity and magnanimity of Salah ud-din on this occasion was in striking contrast with the brutality of his Christian foes. The Christian biographer of Salah ud-din, Lane-Poole, acknowledges that the Sultan's kindness of heart had conquered his desire for revenge. He writes:

“Never did Saladin show himself greater than during this memorable surrender. His guards, commanded by responsible emirs, kept order in every street, and prevented violence and insult, insomuch that no ill-usage of the Christians was ever heard of. Every exit was his hands, and a trustee Lord was set over David's gate to receive the ransoms as each citizen came forth.”

Then, after describing how the people left in the holy city were ransomed and how Al-Malik al-Adil, the brother of the Sultan, the Patriarch and Balian of Ibelin, were each allowed to set free a thousand slaves given by Salah ud-din, Lane-Poole writes:

“Then said Saladin to his officers ‘My brother has made his alms, and the Patriarch and Balian have made theirs; now I would fain make mine.’ And he ordered his guards to proclaim throughout the streets of Jerusalem that all the old people who could not pay were free to go forth. And they came forth from the postern of St. Lazarus, and their going lasted from the rising of the sun until night fall – such was the charity which Saladin did, of poor people without number.”

“Thus did the Saracens show mercy to the fallen city. One recalls the savage conquest by the first Crusaders in 1099, when Godfrey and Tancred rode through streets choked with the dead and dying, when defenceless Moslems were tortured, burnt, and shot down in cold blood on the towers and roof of

the Temple, when the blood of wanton massacre defiled the honour of Christendom and stained the scene where once the gospel of love and mercy had been preached. 'Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy' was a forgotten beatitude when the Christians made shambles of the Holy city. Fortunate were the merciless, for they obtained mercy at the hands of the Moslem Sultan.

"The greatest attribute of heaven is Mercy; And it is the crown of justice, and the glory.

Where it may kill with right, to save with pity.

"If the taking of Jerusalem were the only fact known about Saladin, it were enough to prove him the most chivalrous and great-hearted conqueror of his own, and perhaps of any age."

The Third Crusade

The fall of Jerusalem and the terrible rout of the crusaders at the battle of Hittin threw the whole of Christendom into a violent commotion. Reinforcements from Europe poured forth into Palestine. Almost all the principal sovereign and eminent generals of the then Christendom, such as, Frederick Barbarossa, the Emperor of Germany, Richard Coeur de Lion, King of England, and Philip Augustus, King of France, Leopold of Austria, the Duke of Burgundy, the count of Flanders sallied forth with their armies against the lonely Sultan and his few chiefs and relatives who had to defend the honour of Islam.

Negotiations of Peace

Both the parties which had been arrayed each other in a sanguinary combat for five years at last got tired of the fruitless, harassing and decimating struggle. They came to an agreement at Ramla in 588 A.H. which recognised Salah ud-din as the sovereign of the whole of Palestine leaving the principality of

Acre in the hands of the Christians. Thus ended the Third Crusade and with it the task entrusted to Salah ud-din by God.

Death of Salah ud-din

On Wednesday, the 27th of Safar, 589 A.H. died Salah ud-din, the faithful ally of Islam, after working his way up to the summit of his ambition, in the fifty-seventh year of his age.

Ibn Shaddad writes, the Sultan left nothing except one dinar and forty-seven dirhams when he died; nothing else did he leave by way of houses, or goods, or villages, or gardens, or any personal property. He had not left even as much that could suffice to defray his burial expenses and it had to be met by obtaining a loan in his name, while the shroud was provided by his minister and amanuensis, Qadi Fadhil.

Character of Salah ud-din

A devout Muslim as he was, the dominant notes of his character were an acute sense of justice, charitableness, tender heartedness, patience and courageousness.

Ibn Shaddad writes that he held courts twice a week on each Monday and Tuesday, which were attended by the chiefs of state, scholars, jurists and Qadis. Great and small, everyone found the door open. He used to read all the petitions and himself sign the orders dictated by him. He never allowed anyone to leave him without meeting his requirement. At the same time he also kept himself busy in the recollection of God.

On one occasion a man brought a suit against the Sultan himself who immediately made necessary investigations. Although the claim of the person presenting the suit was not established, the Sultan granted him a robe of honour and a handsome grant before allowing him to leave the court.

He always overlooked the mistakes of his associates and servants; if anything unpleasant was heard by him, he never allowed his annoyance to be betrayed to the person concerned.

Salah ud-din once asked for water which was somehow not procured for him. He reminded five times for it and then said: "I am dying of thirst." He drank the water which was brought thereafter without saying anything more. The servant apologised and the Sultan instantly forgave him. Ibn Shaddad has narrated a number of other incidents exhibiting Salah ud-din's charity and goodness of heart.

The Sultan never allowed his visitor, even if he was a pagan, to leave him without a gift or some mark of recognition. The ruler of Saida once paid a visit to the Sultan whom he welcomed with open arms. The Sultan not only entertained him but also explained the tenets of Islam to him. He regularly sent ice and fruits to Richard, his greatest foe, during the illness of the latter.

SALAH UD-DIN Ayyubi:

Born: 1137 AD

Father: Najmuddin Ayyubi

Served Under Ruler
Nooruddin Mahmud Zangi.

Prime Minister of Egypt:
1169

End of Fatimid Rule and
influence of Batinites in
Egypt 1169.

Succeeded Nooruddin
Mahmud Zangi as Ruler of
Muslims 1174.

Battle of Hittin and defeat of
King Guy and Reginald of
Chattillon July 1187.

Capture of Jerusalem 2 Oct.
1187 after 90 years of
Christian occupation.

29 Oct. 1187: Pope Gregory
VIII announces III Crusade.

1192 Richard the Lion
Hearted of England
concludes peace with Salah
ud-din and left Palestine.

Death of Salah ud-din:
March 1193 at Damascus

He was of so noble deposition and kind at heart that he could not see anyone in distress without being moved. Once an old Christian woman came to him seeking her baby. The old woman, screaming and in flood of tears, told the Sultan that her baby had been taken away from tent by the dacoits. She had

been told, the woman said, that only he could help her to get her child back. Touched by her lamentation, the Sultan broke into tears and asked his men to find out from the slave market where her baby was. After a short while her baby was brought back and the woman departed praying for the welfare of the Sultan.

Ibn Shaddad relates that the Sultan was very kind to the orphans. Whenever he found such a child he entrusted him to someone or himself made arrangements for his up-bringing. Similarly, he was always grief-stricken to see the aged and infirm whom he considered to be his special charge.

Courage and Fortitude

During the siege of Acre, tells Ibn Shaddad, the Sultan had been overtaken by a painful illness which made it difficult for him even to come to table. Still, mounting his horse he went round the battle-field and spent the whole day, inspecting his forces.

Another time when he was indisposed he pursued the enemy for the whole night.

"During his illness", says Ibn Shaddad, "I and the physician of the Sultan were with him in the night. He could not sleep owing to the pain he had but as the day dawned, he got up and mounted his horse for facing the enemy. He sent away his sons to the battle front before allowing others to take the field. I was with the Sultan along with his physician; he spent the whole day on the horse-back till the armies retired in the evening from the battle-field.

Salah ud-din was never dismayed by the enormous host brought forth by the Crusaders to oppose him. On a few occasions, as the historians report, the enemy troops numbered five or six hundred thousand, but Salah ud-din decided to face the enemy with the slender forces under his command, and, by the grace of God, he came out victorious killing quite a large number and taking as many prisoners. During the siege of Acre

more than seventy enemy ship-loads of fighting men and munitions of war landed during an afternoon. Everyone present on the occasion was perturbed except the Sultan. In one of the most hotly-contested battles during this period, a fierce charge by the enemy threw back the Muslim troops into disorder.

The enemy rummaged the Muslim camp and even got into Salah ud-din's tent, pulling down the Royal banner, but Salah ud-din stood firm along with a few of his comrades and was quickly able to muster his soldiery to back him, turning the defeat into victory.

Salah ud-din — A Scholar

Salah ud-din had a good grounding in the religious lore. He was aware of not only all the Arab tribes and their genealogy but even the pedigree of famous Arab horses, which testifies to his wide knowledge of the history of Arabs. He, as always was keen of gathering information from his courtiers and associates. It has been reported by certain historians that he had also committed the *Hamasa*¹ to memory.

Writing about the youthful days of Salah ud-din, Lane-Poole says:

“To judge by later years, his literary tastes tended to the theological; he loved poetry indeed, but less than keen dialectic; and to hear holy traditions traced and verified, canon law formulated passages in the Koran explained, and sound orthodoxy vindicated, inspired him with a strange delight.”

Collapse of Fatimides

Rise of Salah ud-din signalled the fall of Fatimid power which had established a separate Caliphate in Egypt. It lasted for 266 years from 299 A.H. to 567 A.H. The Fatimids had introduced

¹ The Divan or Collection of poems of the Arab poet Al-Mutanabbi.

strange cults in the Islamic faith and practice changing its tenets and doctrines, rules of conduct and behaviour out of recognition.

The Fatimid rule in Egypt was indeed a scourge for Islam. During the three hundred years of its supremacy it continued to play a cruel joke with the tenets and doctrines, performances and practices enjoined by the Scripture and Traditions. The orthodox school was looked down upon and its followers were persecuted, while the dissenters, sceptics and non-conformists preaching licentiousness and libertine conduct were elevated to the positions of power and authority.

It was during their reign that the Franks captured many Muslim cities in Syria and northern Iraq. Their onslaught continued till the Atbeks came into power and a defender of Islam, as Salah ud-din was, came forward to crush their power. He retained the Islamic territories and saved the bondsmen of God from the Fatimid scourge.

The revolutionary change brought about by Salah ud-din in Egypt was a harbinger of great religious and moral revival and, therefore, it is only natural that the historians of that period have expressed satisfactions over it. Al-Maqdisi had himself witnessed the traces of a revolution that had transformed Egypt only 29 years before his birth. The collapse of Fatimid rule finds expressions in these words of al-Maqdisi:

“Their kingdom collapsed and with it ended the age of degradation for Islam.”

Hafiz Ibn Qayyim, has given an impressive account of the rise of the Batinites and their downfall at the hands of Nur ud-din Zangi and Salah ud-din in his book *al-Sawayiq al-Mursalah*. He says:

“The teachings of the Batinite died a natural death in the East but it began gradually to gain ground in the West until it became a force, deeply entrenched, to be reckoned with. They assumed the charge of a

few cities in North Africa, from where they advanced to Egypt and succeeded in taking possession of that country. They founded al-Kahira (Modern Cairo). Their missionaries continued to enlist adherents and diffuse their esoteric cult. It is they who produced the Tracts of the Brethren of Purity. Ibn Sina (Avicenna) wrote the *Isharat*, and the *Shifa'* and certain other tracts under their influence, for he has himself acknowledged that his father was one of the missionaries of the Fatimid Caliph Hakim b'illah.

During the reign of the Fatimid the path of the Prophet became an impious blasphemy, the collections of the Traditions were proscribed and only a few remained who read these books or secretly acted on these precepts. A dominant note of their teachings was that reason should be given precedence over revelation and the guidance of the apostles of God.

Gradually a greater part of the territories in North Africa, Egypt, Syria and Hejaz submitted to the Fatimid rule. Iraq also remained under their sway for about a year. Sunnis were treated like *Zimmis*² under their rule; the Jews and the Christians at least enjoyed the security of life and property unknown to the Sunnis. Innumerable religious scholars were executed or expired in their dungeons.

At last God Almighty came to the rescue of the Muslims who were saved from the clutches of the Fatimid by Nur-ud-din and Salah ud-din. Islam appeared to be on the verge of extinction in these countries but the revolution brought about by Salah ud-din granted a new lease of life to it.

2

A non-Muslim subject of an Islamic state who, for the payment of a poll-tax or captivation tax, enjoy security of his person and property and other civic rights.

Muslims were indeed overjoyed at this miraculous revivification of Islam at a time when people had begun to ask one another: Who can now dare to defend the faith of God?' It was at such a moment that Allah enabled His bondsmen to get back Jerusalem from the Crusaders whom the defenders of Islam fought with indomitable courage and chivalry."

The chronicles of the time show that the news of the fall of the Fatimid kingdom was generally received with a sense of relief and pleasure by the entire Islamic world and by the Muslims of Syria, in particular.

Thus Salah ud-din stemmed the tide of the Crusaders which saved the world of Islam from the bondage and exploitation of western nations for centuries to come. On the other hand, he plugged a great source of evil by overthrowing the Fatimid Caliphate which was spreading the contamination of Batinite and Isma'elite cult to other Muslim lands from its centre in Egypt.

The esoteric doctrines preached by these sects during the last two or three centuries were responsible for the then prevailing intellectual waywardness and the degeneration of the faith and morals.

The world of Islam cannot, indeed, forget either of these two achievements of Salah ud-din nor can any Muslim, living in any part of the world, ever fail to acknowledge his debt of gratitude to Sultan Salah ud-din Ayyubi.

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CHAPTER – XI

SHEIKH UL-ISLAM IZZ UD-DIN IBN ABDUL SALAM

The heroic endeavours of Salah ud-din who set himself to work in the most earnest fashion with the reintroduction of orthodox doctrines of Islam in place of the Shia'ite creed, the chain of educational institutions started for the purpose all over his wide realm and, above all, the personal example set by him and some of the Muslim rulers in following the religious precepts and code of moral conduct redirected the energies of the people towards learning and teaching of the religious sciences. As a result thereof, we find several erudite scholars during the seventh century, who had devoted themselves among their compatriots. The most outstanding personage among these savants was Sheikh-ul-Islam Izz ud-din ibn Abdul Salam (d. 660 A.H.) Reputed for profound learning, piety and courage, he never compromised with the corrupting influences of his time and the degenerate ways of the then rulers.

Al-Zahabi writes in his book entitled al-Ebar:

“In his knowledge of Fiqh, devotion to religion and awe of God he had attained that degree of perfection which makes one capable of Ijtihad i.e. of interpreting the revealed law of God and of deducing new laws from it.”

Izz ud-din occupied the chair of professor for a fairly long period in the Madarsa Zawiyah Chazaliyah of Damascus along with holding the offices of Khatib and Imam in the principal mosque

of the city called the Umayyad Mosque. Sheikh Shahab-ud-din Abu Shama relates that Izz ud-din vehemently opposed the innovations and later-day accretions like Salat al-Raghayeb¹ and the special prayers of mid-Sha'ban² which had become so popular in his time that several scholars of note thought it prudent to keep silence about these.

Al-Malik al-Kamil insisted on Izz ud-din for accepting the office of Qadi in Damascus which he accepted reluctantly after imposing a number of conditions. During the same period Al-Malik al-Kamil appointed him as his envoy to the court of the then Abbasid Caliph.

Righteousness of Izz ud-din

Among the religious scholars of Syria, Izz ud-din was held in such a high esteem that he was received by the then king with the most honourable marks of distinction. On his own part, however, Izz ud-din never visited the king unless he was requested to do so.

During his illness Sultan Al-Malik Al-Ashraf who held the principality of Aleppo after the demise of his father, Al-Malik al-Adil, sent for Izz ud-din. Earlier the Sultan had some misunderstandings with the Sheikh on account of certain views held by the latter but the same were removed as a result of their meeting. The Sultan requested the Sheikh to forgive him for his mistake and also to let him have a word of advice. "So far as the

¹ Salat al Raghayeb was a special prayer of 12 Rak'ats in the night of 27th Rajab. The people has come to regard it as highly meritorious.

² In the night of 15th Sha'ban a prayer of 100 Rak'ats was performed in a manner specially prescribed for it.

Ibn Subki and Imam Nawavi have held both these offerings detestable innovations.

request for pardon is concerned,” replied Izz ud-din. “I forgive everyone with whom I happen to be displeased; for, I never allow the sun to go down upon my animus against anybody. Instead of seeking my recompense from the human beings, I desire it from God alone as the Lord has said ‘But whosoever pardoneth and amendeth, his wage is the affair of Allah.’ As for my benedictions for you”, added ‘Izz ud-din, “I very often pray

to God for the well-being of the Sultan for this also means the welfare of Islam and the Muslims. God may grant the Sultan insight and understanding of the matters which may be helpful to him in the life to come.”

“Now, coming to the advice, it is my bounden duty to enjoin the right course since the Sultan has asked for it. I know that the Sultan is reputed for his valour and the brilliant victories he has won, but Tartars are making inroads into Islamic territories. They have been emboldened by the fact that the Sultan has pitched his arms against Al-Malik al-Kamil and thus he would not have time to face the enemies of God and the persecutors of Muslims. Al-Malik al-Kamil is, however, the elder brother of the Sultan and therefore, I would request the Sultan to give up the idea of fighting against his own brother, instead I would advise him to turn his forces against the enemies of Islam. The Sultan should make up his mind, in these critical days of his illness, to fight for the sake of God alone and for restoring the supremacy of

**Sheikh-ul-Islam Izz ud-din
Ibn Abdus Salam**

Teacher: Shahabud-din Suhrawardy.

Followed: Shafe’i Fiqh.

Taught at Madarsa Zawiyah Chazaliyah at Damascus. Also Khatib and Imam at Umayyad Mosque.

During the period of Khilafat-e-Abbasiya.

Writings: Al-Qawaid al-Kubra; Kitab Majaz-al-Qura’n.

Died: 660 AH.

His faith. We hope to overcome the infidels with the help of the Sultan, if God restores him his health. This would verily be a great achievement but if God has willed otherwise, the Sultan would undoubtedly be recompensed for his intention to come to the rescue of Islam”.

The Sultan also presented one thousand Egyptian gold mohurs to ‘Izz ud-din but he refused to accept them saying, “I met you only for the sake of God and I do not want any worldly temptation to be made an additional reason for it.”

Courage of ‘Izz ud-din

Al-Malik al-Ashraf was succeeded by Saleh Isma’il who sought help of the Christians against the impending danger of invasion from Egypt. In lieu of the aid promised by the Christians the cities of Saida, Thakif and few other forts were ceded to them. The friendly relations thus established by Saleh Isma’il encouraged the Christians to purchase arms and ammunition from the Muslim traders in Damascus. ‘Izz ud-din deprecated these deals as the arms purchased by the Christians were likely to be used against the Muslims and, therefore, when the arms dealers asked for his legal-opinion in the matter, he advised that all such bargains were prohibited by the Shari’ah. This was not all, ‘Izz ud-din gave up benedictions for the king in the Friday sermons and started invoking the wrath of God on the enemies of Islam. The matter was brought to the notice of the King who ordered to imprison him. After some time he was transferred to Jerusalem from his Damascus goal.

In the meantime Saleh Isma’il along with his allies, Al-Malik al-Mansur, the king of Hams and a few Christian monarchs converged at Jerusalem with intention of invading Egypt. He gave his handkerchief to one of his trusted councillors with the instruction that he should present it to ‘Izz ud-din and tell him courteously that if he so desired, his previous position would be

restored. The councillor was also directed to present 'Izz ud-din before the king in case he agreed to the suggestion with the highest respect, otherwise to imprison him in a tent beside that of the King. The councillor did what he had been commissioned; paid his compliments and related the admiration of the king for the Sheikh, and then said, "Everything will be set right and your previous position will be restored in no time, if you just kiss the hand of king and show courtesy to him." 'Izz ud-din replied, "what a fool you are! You expect me to kiss the hands of the king while I would not like my own hands to be kissed by him. My friend, you are living in a world other than that of mine, Praise be to Allah that I am not a prey to the temptations which have captured your soul."

The councillor then told him that in that case he had orders to imprison him again. The Sheikh was accordingly placed under confinement in a tent beside the king's, who heard him daily reciting the Quran. The king one day told his Christian ally that the person whom he heard reciting the Quran at the moment was the chief pontiff of Muslims but he had been divested of his post and honours and kept under confinement because of his opposition to the cession of cities and forts to the Christian. The Christian monarch, however, replied that if he were to have such a man as his bishop, he would have felt honoured to sit at his feet.

Shortly thereafter Saleh Isma'il was defeated and killed in an encounter with the Egyptian forces, and 'Izz ud-din was honourably taken to Egypt.

'Izz ud-din in Egypt

'Izz ud-din was received by the then Sultan of Egypt, Al-Malik al-Saleh Najmud-din Ayyub, with great reverence and honour. He was appointed Khatib of the Mosque of 'Amr ibn al-'As as well as the grand Qadi of Egypt. He was also entrusted with the

task of looking after the rehabilitation of deserted mosques and the professorship of Shafe'i jurisprudence in Madarsa Salahiya founded by the king.

There is yet another incident which bespeaks of 'Izz ud-din's fearlessness. The Sultan who was holding a durbar on the occasion of 'Id was seated on the throne in a large reception hall, with the princes and chiefs of the State ranged on his right, and the courtiers and dignitaries on the left. In front of the Sultan stood all the people entitled to enter and salute the sovereign, when a voice was suddenly heard addressing the Sultan by his first name: "Ayyub, what would be your reply before God when He would ask you whether the kingdom of Egypt was given to you so that people should openly indulge in drinking-bouts and you should enjoy public receptions?" "Is it," blurted out the Sultan who was taken aback, "is it a fact?" "Yes," came the reply from 'Izz ud-din, "wine is being freely sold and consumed in the city while people indulge in other vices too". Surprised as the Sultan was, he replied, "But it is not my fault, Sire, for it has been happening from the time my father held the reigns of this kingdom". "Then, you are one of those," admonished 'Izz ud-din, "who say that we found our fathers acting on this wise." The Sultan immediately gave orders to stop the sale of wine in his realm.

The Mongols had also started raiding and plundering Muslim territories of Egypt but the Sultan and his commanders were so disheartened that they could not muster courage to face the Mongol hordes. 'Izz ud-din encouraged the Sultan to fight the Mongols. He even assured the Sultan of his success against the Mongols. At last the Sultan agreed to his suggestion but as he was facing paucity of funds he sought the advice of 'Izz ud-din about raising the necessary finances through loans from the businessmen. 'Izz ud-din, however, advised "First bring the ornaments your women-folk and those of your dignitaries and

nobles have in their possession. These are all prohibited by the Shari'ah and should be used for meeting expenses of this expedition. And if you still need the money, then you can raise it through loans." Surprising thought it may seem, the king and his nobles brought out without demur all the jewellery and valuables they possessed as the Sheikh had directed. The riches so brought forth were enough to meet the expenses of raising an adequate force to face the Mongols who were defeated by the Egyptian army as predicted by 'Izz ud-din.

Moral Rectitude

'Izz ud-din was equally courageous and truthful against his own self as against the kings and nobles. Ibn al-Subki and al-Suyuti write that once during his stay in Egypt 'Izz ud-din made a certain mistake in the juristic-opinion given by him. As soon he came to know of his mistake, he got an announcement made that the people should not act on that opinion since it was wrong.

Ibn al-Subki relates that 'Izz ud-din had also been favoured with the inner enlightenment. His fearlessness, disregard for worldly power, fame and riches and, above all, the unflinching faith and trust in God showed that he had attained the sublimeness of spirit. He was a disciple of the famous spiritual mentor, Shahab ud-din Suhrawardy who had authorised him to guide others in the mystic path.

Righteousness

'Izz ud-din preached and acted on the Qur'anic dictum commanding to enjoin the right and forbid the wrong, no matter what dangers and hardships one might have to face for it.

'Izz ud-din considered it imperative for the scholars to be ever willing to face dangers in the discharge of their sacred obligation and enjoin the right course, cost what may. Thus, he vehemently disagreed with those religious scholars who did not consider it lawful to expose themselves to avoidable dangers.

His commentary on the Qur'anic verse: "... and be not cast your own hands to rule" amply bears out his point of view in this regard.

"To risk one's life for the honour and dominance of the Faith is permitted by the Shari'ah; it is rather enjoined on all able-bodied persons to wage war in the way of God and fight the infidels."

Writings of 'Izz Ud-din

He was an erudite scholar, broad-minded jurist and a successful preacher. In penmanship too, he was equally celebrated, his two most well-known works being *Al-Qawa'id al-Kubra* and *Kitab Majaz al Qur'an*. Ibn al-Subki writes about these books.

"In the introduction to his famous treatise *Hujjat Allah al-Baligha*, Shah Wali Ullah Muhaddith of Delhi, the greatest authority on the subject, has acknowledged his debt to the three earlier masters viz. al-Ghazali, Abu Sulaiman Khattabi and 'Izz ud-din."

Death Of 'Izz Ud-din

'Izz ud-din died in the eighty-third year of his age on the 9th of Jamadi al-Awwal, 660 A.H. Al-Malik al-Zahir Baibers, the then king of Egypt, accompanied the funeral of the Sheikh along with the dignitaries and chiefs. The king was very much aggrieved that the Sheikh's death was destined to occur during his reign.

Witnessing the mammoth funeral procession by the side of the royal Castle, the king said to one of his councillors.

"My kingdom would have been nowhere if this man had decided to oppose me. He had verily won the hearts of the people."

TATARS THE SCOURGE OF GOD

The cause of Tatar Invasion

Islam was confronted with another danger in the seventh century, which was about to wipe it out of existence. This was the invasion the wild and savage hordes of the Tatars who issued forth from the Mongolian steppes and over-powered almost the whole of the Islamic world with a lightning speed.

The immediate cause of the Mongol invasion can be attributed to a grievous mistake of Ala ud-din Muhammad, the shah of Khwarizm. A body of traders who had arrived from Mongolia was put to death, and when Genghis Khan deputed an embassy to enquire into the reasons for it, Muhammad replied by killing the envoy too. On receiving the news of this outrage upon international courtesy, the Mongol Genghis Khan unloosened the whirlwind of savagery upon the world of Islam.

However, if one were to look into the moral behaviour and attitudes of ancient nations, particularly those relating to the Bani Israel as well as their destruction and massacre, demolition and sacrilege of Jerusalem, and the reasons therefore described in the Quran, one can clearly see with the insight provided by the scripture into the nature of historical process, that the reason for converting the Islamic world into a vast charnel-house was not a solitary act of cruelty on the part of a reckless and haughty sovereign. As the Quran tells us, it was certainly not due to the

mistake of a single individual that the storm of death and destruction burst forth on the entire world of Islam. If we were to cast a glance over the religious, moral, social and political conditions of the Muslim peoples in those days, there would be no difficulty in finding out the reason for this calamity. Such a survey would amply bear out that however, the carnage did not take place all of a sudden. It had deeper and far-reaching reasons than those narrated hitherto by the historians. We shall have to look for these reasons into the political situation and the social condition of Muslim society over a century or more prior to the Mongol invasion.

After the death of Salah ud-din in 589 A.H., the vast empire carved out by him split up into several independent principalities and kingdoms headed by his sons or other successors. Like many other founders of the empires and the emperors, his successors did not possess the talent of their progenitor, and, what was more, they continued to fight each other for a fairly long time. Some of these even did not hesitate to seek the assistance of the crusaders against their own brethren. The whole of Islamic world was, in fact, in a state of chaos; moral and social disintegration deteriorating political situation. The crusaders were again making inroads into the Muslim territories and had recapture the lands emancipated from their clutches by Salah ud-din. All those factors had already contributed to the repeated famines and epidemics. Death stalked over the land, killing the people in such large numbers that the dead had to be buried without shrouds. The analyst Abu Shama relates that Sultan Al-Malik al-Aadil provided shrouds for two hundred and twenty thousand dead bodies in a single month. These were grim reminders of God calling people to a sincere penitence for their sins and mending their ways; the ravages of famine pestilence were followed by a severe and widespread earthquake which hit the region covering Syria, Asia Minor and Iraq. Regularity, and, on

the other, fratricidal feuds and forays were continuing unabated. In 601 A.H., the two chiefs belonging to the same family, Qatadah Husaini of Mecca and Salim Hussaini of Madina were licked up in a hotly contested battle. In 603 A.H., the deadly feuds between the Ghozzds of Afghanistan and the ruler of Khwarism flared up which encouraged the Muslims to waste their energy and power by shedding each other's blood. This was the state of affairs on the one side, while the Christendom had inflamed another crusade, on the other, barely two years after the death of Salah ud-din and landed its forces on the Syrian coast in 604 A.H. the rulers of al-jazirah were secretly in league with the Franks in 607 A.H. while Damietta in Egypt, a city of considerable military importance, had fallen to the crusaders in 616 A.H.

In the metropolis of Islam, Baghdad, the magnificence and splendour of the caliph's court, copied from the etiquettes and ceremonials observed by the Iranian and Byzantine Emperors. It is difficult to imagine the wealth amassed by such personal servants of wardrobe, who normally entered the revive merely as sales. The annual income from the property acquired by 'Alaud-din-al-Tabrasi al-Zahri, a slave purchased by the caliph al-Zahir, is reported to have been as much so three hundred thousand Dinars. The house built by him in Baghdad was conspicuous for its size and beauty. Similar was the case with other state officials—Mujahid-ud-dib-Aibek, al-salah abdul Ghani, to name only a few. The former had an annual income of five hundred thousand Dinars while the latter, although an illiterate man, lived like a prince. Analysts have left staggering accounts of their lavish expenditure on the marriages of their sons and daughters. On the other hand, the teachers of the celebrated Madarsa al-Mustansaryah were doled out such paltry sums which bore no comparison to the wages paid to the meanest of the state officials.

This was the time when the Mongols were devastating Turkistan and Iran and were casting a covetous glance over Baghdad. "The year 626 A.H. began", writes Ibn Kathir, "with the indecisive yet sanguinary battles between the monarchs of the house of Ayyubids". Such a state of chaos prevailed in Baghdad, the centre of caliphate, that from 640 A.H. no arrangements could be made by the caliph for sending out Hajj parties nor was the covering for K'aba sent by the caliph. For 21 days the walls of the holy shrine remained without a cover, which was taken as an ill omen by the people. Ahmad Abul Abbas succeeded his father, caliph al-Mustadhi, in 575 A.H. under the title of Al-Nasir li Din-Allah. He had an opportunity to rule for forty-six years. His reign was the longest one ever enjoyed by any Abbasid caliph yet, perhaps, it was also the darkest of all the regimes of the house of Abbasids. Historians have severely criticised his regime for tyranny and mal-administration. Writes Ibn al-Kathir:

"He was a tyrant who ill-treated the populace. Iran was a devastated land during his regime; its population migrated to neighbouring countries, and their possessions were confiscated by the caliph. He gave contradictory orders; rescinded the orders given by him a day earlierbeing too much interested in sports and pastime, he had prescribed a special uniform which could be put on only by those permitted to take in gymnastics and athletic sports.....Iranians accuse him of inviting the Mongols to attack the Muslim territories and hatching a conspiracy for the same".

Al-Nasir li'din-Allah died in 622 A.H. and Mustansir b'Allah (623-640) was a pious and just severing. He was too mild and miserly and also lacked foresight

In 642 A.H., a man by the name of Muwayyid ud-din Muhammad Ibn Alqami was appointed as Prime Minister by

the Caliph Mustasim. Disorders and disturbances were a source of constant trouble in Baghdad specially when the Sunnis and Shia's quarrelled in 655 A.H. It is reported that in these riots the Shia' quarters including those of the relatives of Ibn Alqami were plundered which led him to seek revenge from the Sunnis. Although the danger of the Mongol invasion was hovering over Baghdad, a great reduction was made in the armed forces on the advice of Ibn Alqami. The number of cavalry was reduced to mere 10,000 their allowances and promotions were withheld; the disbanded soldiers were directed to take to trade and husbandry with the result that many of them were, later on, seen begging alms in the bazaars and in front of the mosques. Islam was reduced to the state of imbecility which led many poets to compose elegies to lament the helplessness of the Muslim peoples.

Al-Mustasim was personally a man of unimpeachable character. He also wanted to reform administration and bring peace and prosperity in his realm but unfortunately he lacked the courage, zeal and ability of the founders of empires which alone could have saved the situation by infusing a breath of new life in the then tottering society and the administration of social and political order had reached the point in his time where its only natural outcome was final decay and crumbling down of that dynasty. This was the case with Mustasim too whom Providence had chosen for the badge of infamy, although he was better than most of his predecessors and had also a desire to set right the fast deteriorating situation.

It is undoubtedly true that a group of people, pure in spirit and righteous in conduct, were there teaching and preaching in the mosques and seminaries of Baghdad but the affluent and those in authority had become so corrupt that an analyst of that age, Abdul Hasan Khazraj had to describe the conditions prevailing in his time in these words:

“The desire to acquire estates and effects has become a craze with these people who never think of the community’s welfare. They are so engrossed in feathering their own nests that it can never be deemed as a rightful course. The officials of the Government are all tyrants who are obsessed with the idea of amassing as much wealth as possible. This is the most dangerous state of affairs, for the government can co-exist with apostasy but never with tyranny.”

In the eastern part of the Islamic world, the kingdom of Khwarism, raised towards the end of the fifth century of the Muslim era on the ruins of Saljukid Empire, held sway over almost the entire Islamic territories excluding the principalities of Saljukid Sultans over parts of Egypt, Syria, Iraq Hejaz and Asia Minor and that of the Ghorids in Afghanistan. Sultan Ala ud-din Muhammad Khwarism Shah (596-617) was one of the most powerful Muslim monarchs and perhaps the greatest sovereign of his day.

Muslim historians have not mentioned any noticeable personal laxity in the character or moral behaviour of Khwarism Shah. But he spent most of his prowess and capabilities in subjugating the Muslim Kingdoms around his dominions.

The Sultans of Khwarism made the same fatal mistake which was committed by the Moors in Spain—an unpardonable blunder under the divine Law of Retribution governing the historical process. They set about, body and soul, to extend and strengthen the bounds of their domain and subjugate their enemies but they never tried to diffuse the message of God and enlist adherents to it from the neighbouring lands which constituted a world different from their own. Quite apart from the religious fervour which should have diverted their energies towards this imperative task commonsense as well as political foresight dictated the same course which would have won over a vast but

hostile population to their side and thus saved themselves as well as other Muslims from the tragic fate which was soon to engulf all of them.

Such were the conditions when the Mongols issued forth from the steppes of Mongolia under Genghis Khan and swooped down upon Iran and Turkistan, the eastern part of the Islamic world, like the scourge of God. By 656 A.H. the Mongol had reached the centre of Islam, Baghdad, converting it into a shamble fulfilling the Quranic dictum "And guard yourselves against a chastisement which cannot fall exclusively on those of you who are wrongdoers, and know that Allah is severe in punishment"

Folly of Khwarism Shah

The immediate cause which paved the way for this calamity was that Genghis Khan sent a message to Khwarism Shah that since each of them headed a vast empire it would be in their interest to encourage trade between their subjects. He wanted that the traders should be allowed to move freely between the two realms, purchasing and selling their goods without any undue restriction. Khwarism Shah agreed to the proposal of Genghis Khan and tradesmen began to ply freely between the two kingdoms. The inter change of traders, however, was soon followed by an act of folly which has been graphically described by Harold Lamb whose account agree with those left by Muslim historians. He says,

"But Mongol's experiment with trade came to an abrupt end. A caravan of several hundred merchants from Karakorum was seized by one, Inaljuk, governor of Otrar, a frontier citadel belonging to the Shah. Inaljuk reported to his master that spies were among the merchants, which may very well have been the case."

“Mohammad Shah, without considering the matter overmuch, sent to his governor an order to slay the merchants, and all of them, accordingly, were put to death. This, in due time, was reported to Genghis Khan who dispatched envoys at once to the Shah to protest. And Mohammed saw fit to slay the chief of the envoys and burn off the beards of the others.”

“When the survivors of his embassy returned to Genghis Khan. The master of the Gobi went apart to a mountain to meditate upon the matter. The slaying of a Mongol envoy could not go unpunished; tradition required revenge for the wrong inflicted.”

“There cannot be two suns in the heavens,” the Khan said, “or two Khans upon the earth”

The Tataric Invasion

The storm of Tartar invasion burst in 616 A.H. Bukhara was first razed to the ground, and its inhabitants put to the sword. Samargand was reduced to ashes and its entire population passed under the sword. Other important and populous cities like Ray, Hamadan, Zanjah, Qazwin, Marv, Nishapur met the same fate. The forces of Khwarism Shah, the most powerful Muslim sovereign of his day, were simply swept away by the tempest of the Mongol arms; Khwarism Shah was himself hunted from place to place by the Tatars with ruthless pertinacity. Muhammad Khwarism Shah ultimately took refuge in an unknown island in the Caspian Sea, where he died broken-hearted, alone and abandoned.

Khwarism Shah had already dismembered the independent Islamic Kingdoms of Iran and Turkistan and therefore, none had remained in the east to check the onslaught of the Mongols after his defeat. The Muslims were so seized with the terror of the Mongols that often a lonely Tatar attacked a hundred of them but none had the heart to defend himself every one of

them was killed by the Tatar without being opposed by a single Muslim. Once a Mongol woman dressed as a man, plundered a house and killed all its inmates excepting a captive. It was only after this that the captive somehow came to know that the marauder was a woman, and then he could muster his courage to kill her. It often happened that a Mongol caught hold of a Muslim and asked him to wait till he brought a sabre to slaughter him, and this poor man did not have the courage to run away in the absence of the Mongol.

This was an affliction, which overwhelmed the entire world, like a severe torrent it suddenly swept over all the lands. The entire civilised world trembled before the savage Tatar hordes. Their atrocities had caused a flutter even in those far off corners of the world where Tatars could have hardly been expected to carry their arms. Edward Gibbon writes in his “History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire”,

“The Latin world was darkened by this cloud of savage hostility; a Russian fugitive carried the alarm to Sweden; and the remote nations of the Baltic and the ocean trembled at the approach of the Tatars, whom their fear and ignorance were included to separate from the human species.”

Harold Lamb comments on the impact of Genghis Khan:

“This ‘New power in history’ - the ability of one man to alter human civilization – began with Genghis Khan and ended with his grandson Kublai, when the Mongol empire tended to break up. It has not reappeared since”.

Sack of Baghdad

At last in 656 A.H., the myriads of savages and heathens advanced towards Baghdad, killing every man that came in their way, setting fire to every habitation and trampling into dust

whatever they could not possess. The metropolis of Islam, celebrated throughout the world as the centre of civilisation, learning and crafts was reduced to ashes; the sack of Baghdad is too harrowing and lengthy to be detailed here. The accounts given by the contemporary historians include some eye-witness accounts of the carnage and atrocities committed by the Mongols.

“The horrors of rapine and slaughter lasted forty days; and, after the carnage was over, the most populous and beautiful city of the world was so devastated that only a few people could be seen here and there. All the streets and markets were strewn with dead bodies; heaps of corpses were to be found like small mounds from place to place. After the rains the dead bodies began to rot giving out a disagreeable smell of the putrid flesh and then a deadly pestilence ravaged the town which spread as far as the land of Syria. Innumerable people died as a result of this epidemic. The ravages of a terrible famine and pestilence and the rising prices reigned over the city thereafter”.

The Caliph was rolled in a carpet and then beaten to death. The general massacre continued in Baghdad for more than a month. Only those could save themselves who were able to find a hiding place. Halaku then ordered, it is related to count the dead, who numbered eighteen hundred thousand.

In spite of all its vices and weaknesses, Baghdad was the metropolis of Islam; a centre of learning, arts and crafts as well as a city of mosques and shrines, saints and preachers. Its destruction made the heart of every Muslim bleed, many poets rendered the heart-rending account of its ruin into songs of mourning.

From Baghdad, the Mongol hordes marched on to Haleb (Aleppo), sacked the city and turned to Damascus. They captured

Damascus in Jamadi al-Ula, 658 A.H. After the fall of Syria, the Mongols wanted to carry their arms to Egypt, which was the only Muslim country still out of their reach. The Sultan of Egypt, Al-Malik al-Muzaffar saif ud-din Qataz knew that his country would be the next target of the Mongol and also, that it would be difficult to hold off those savages if they were allowed to make adequate preparations for invading his land. He, therefore, decided to attack the Mongols in Syria before they were allowed to make adequate preparations for invading his lands. The forces of Egypt accordingly met the Mongols at Ain Jalut, a town below Nazareth in Palestine, on the 25th of Remadhan, 658 A.H., under the command of Baybers who afterwards became the sovereign of Egypt. Unlike previous battles the Muslims met the Mongols in a hotly contested battle and drove back the stream of savage hordes. The Egyptians pursued the defeated Mongols, slaughtering and capturing a large number of them, eastward beyond the Euphrates.

Sultan Baybers defeated the Tatars in many a fierce battles after the battle of Ain Jalut and thus disproved the proverb that the Tatars were invisible.

Conversion of the Mongols

Islam was about to be submerged in the whirlpool of the Mongol ardour of slaughter and destruction, as several Muslim writers had then expressed the feat, wiping it out of existence, but Islam suddenly began to capture the hearts of the savage Tatars. The preachers of Islam thus accomplished a task, which the sword had failed to perform, by carrying the message of Islam to the barbaric hordes of heathen Mongols.

Conversion of the Mongols to Islam was indeed one of the few unpredictable events of history.

The Tataric wave of conquest which had swept away the entire Islamic east within a short period of one year was, in

truth, not so astounding as the Mongol's acceptance of Islam during the zenith of their glory; for, the Muslims had by the beginning of the seventh century of Muslim era imbibed all those vices which are a natural outcome of opulence, luxury and fast living. The author of the *Preaching of Islam*, T. W. Arnold, has expressed his amazement over the achievement of this unbelievable feat.

“But Islam was to rise again from the ashes of its former grandeur and through its preachers win over these savage conquerors to the acceptance of the faith. This was a task for the missionary energies of Islam that was rendered more difficult from the fact too that there were two powerful competitors in the field. The spectacle of Buddhism, Christianity and Islam emulously striving to win the allegiance of the fierce conquerors that had set their feet on the necks of adherents of these great missionary religions is one that is without parallel in the history of the world.....

“For Islam to enter into competition with such Powerful rivals as Buddhism and Christianity were at the outset of the period of Mongol rule, must have appeared a well-nigh hopeless undertaking.

For the Muslims had suffered more from the storm of the Mongol invasions than the others. Those cities that had hitherto been the rallying points of spiritual organisation and learning for Islam in Asia, had been for the most part laid in ashes—the theologians and pious doctors of the faith, either slain or carried away into captivity. Among the Mongol rulers—usually so tolerant towards all religions—there were some who exhibited varying degrees of hatred towards the Muslim faith. Genghis Khan ordered all those who killed animals in the Muhammadan fashion to be

put to death, and this ordinance was revived by Kublai, who by offering reward to informers set on foot a sharp persecution that lasted for seven years, as many poor persons took advantage of this ready means of gaining wealth, and slaves accused their masters in order to gain their freedom. During the reign of Kuyuk (1246-1248), who left the conduct of affairs entirely to his two Christian ministers and whose court was filled with Christian monks, the Muhammadans were made to suffer great severities.....

“Arghun (1284-1291) the fourth Il khan persecuted the Musalmans and took away from them all posts in the departments of justice and finance, and forbade them to appear at his court.

“In spite of all difficulties, however, the Mongols and the savage tribes that followed in their wake were at length brought to submit to the faith of those Muslim peoples whom they had crushed beneath their feet”

Unbelievable and of far-reaching significance, although the conversion of the Mongols to Islam had been, it is also not less surprising that extremely few and scanty records of this glorious achievement are to be found in the annals of the time. The names of only a few dedicated saviours of Islam who won proselytes from the savage hordes are known to the world, but their venture was no less daring nor their achievement less significant than the accomplishment of the warriors of the faith. Their memory shall always be enriched by the gratitude of Muslims for they had, in reality, performed a great service to the humanity in general and to the Muslims in particular, by diffusing the knowledge of faith among those barbarians winning them over to the service of one God and making them the standard-bearers of the Apostle of Peace.

After the death of Genghis Khan the great heritage of that Mongol conqueror was divided into four dominions¹ headed by the off-springs of his sons. In regard to the conversion of the ruling princes in the lineage of Batu, the son of Genghis Khan's first, born Juji, who ruled the western portion as Khan of the Golden Horde, writes Arnold:

"The first Mongol ruling prince who professed Islam was Baraka Khan, who was chief of the Golden Horde from 1256 to 1267. According to Abu'l-Ghazi he was converted after he had come to the throne. He is said one day to have fallen in with a caravan coming from Bukhara, and taking two of the merchants aside to have questioned them on the doctrines of Islam, and they expounded to him their faith so persuasively that he became converted in all sincerity. He first revealed his change of faith to his youngest brother, whom he induced to follow his example, and then made open profession of his new belief...Baraka Khan entered into a close alliance with the Mamluk Sultan of Egypt, Rukn al-Din Baybars. The initiative came from the latter, who had given a hospitable reception to a body of troops, two hundred in number, belonging to the Golden Horde; these men, observing the growing enmity between their Khan and Halaku (Hulegu), the conqueror of Baghdad, in whose army they were serving, took flight into Syria, whence they were honourably conducted to Cairo to the Court of Baybars, who persuaded them to embrace Islam.

¹ After the death of Genghis Khan the empire was divided into 4 Khanate: 1. Chagatai Khanate in Central Asia; 2. Kipchak Khanate or Golden Horde in Russia; 3. Il Khanate in Persia; 4. Yuan dynasty in China.

Baybars himself was at war with Halaku, whom he had recently defeated and driven out of Syria. He sent two of the Mongol fugitives, with some other envoys, to bear a letter to Baraka Khan. On their return these envoys reported that each princess and emir at the court of Baraka Khan had an imam and a muadhdhin, and the children were taught the Quran in the schools. These friendly relations between Baybars and Baraka Khan brought many of the Mongols of the Golden Horde into Egypt, where they were prevailed upon to become Musalmans.

Halaku² had founded the dynasty of II khans in Iran, to which he had later added a great part of Asia Minor. Arnold relates the conversion of this branch of Genghis Khan's progeny in these words.

In Persia, where Halaku founded the dynasty of the II khans, the progress of Islam among the Mongols was much slower. In order to strengthen himself against the attacks of Baraka Khan and the Sultan of Egypt, Halaku accepted the alliance of the Christian powers of the East, such as the king of Armenia and the Crusaders. His favourite wife was a Christian who favourably disposed the mind of her husband towards her co-religionists, and his son Abaqa Khan³ married the daughter of the Emperor of Constantinople.... His brother Takudar, who succeeded him, was the first of the II khans who embraced Islam. He had been brought up as a Christian, for (as a contemporary Christian Writer Hayton tells us) he was baptized when young and called by the name of Nicholas. But when he was

² Halaku son of Tolui and grandson of Genghis Khan ruled 1256 to 1265.

³ Abaqa Khan Ruled 1265 – 1282; Takudar ruled 1282-1284.

grown up, through his intercourse with Saracens of whom he was very fond, he became a base Saracen, and, renouncing the Christian faith, wished to be called Muhammad Khan, and strove with all his might that the Tatars should be converted to the faith and sect of Muhammad, and when they proved obstinate, not daring to force them, he brought about their conversion by giving them honours and favours and gifts, so that in his time many Tatars were converted to the faith of the Saracens. A revolt broke out against him (Takudar Ahmad), headed by his nephew Arghun, who compassed his death and succeeded him on the throne. During his brief reign (1284-1291), the Christians were once more restored to favour, while the Musalmans had to suffer persecution in their turn, were dismissed from their posts and driven away from the court.

“The successors of Takudar were all heathen, until, in 1295, Ghazan⁴, the seventh and greatest of the II khans, became a Musalman and made Islam the ruling religion of Persia...”

The accounts left by historians show that the conversion of Ghazan was brought about by a pious Turk, Amir Tuzaub by name. Ibn Kathir's version is as follows:

“In this year the great-grandson of Genghis Khan, Ghazan b. Arghun b. Igha b. Tuli b, Genghis Khan announced his conversion to the faith of Islam, along with all or a majority of the Tatars under him, through the persuasion of amir Tuzaun (on whom may rest the peace of God). Pearls, gold and silver balls were showered upon those who declared their allegiance

⁴ Ghazan son of Arghun and grandson of Abaqa first converted to Buddhism and then in 1296-97 converted to Islam. Ghazan ruled 1295-1304 AD.

to Islam; the King renamed himself as Mahmud and attended Friday services; a number of heathen temples and Churches were demolished and poll-tax was levied on them; goods and properties confiscated from Baghdad and other Muslim cities were returned, and justice was restored to them. Rosaries were seen in the bands of Tatars, for which act of benevolence the people thanked God Almighty”

Continuing the account relating to Islamisation of the Mongol’s Kingdom of Persia, Arnold writes:

“His (Ghazan’s) brother, Uljaytu, who succeeded him in 1304, under the name of Muhammad Khudabandah, had been brought up as a Christian in the faith of his mother and had been baptised under the name of Nicholas, but after his mother’s death, while he was still a young man he became a convert to Islam through the persuasions of his wife. Ibn Batutah says that his example exercised a great influence on the Mongols. From this time forward Islam became the paramount faith in the Kingdom of the Il Khans”.

Coming to the story of the spread of Islam in the Middle Kingdom of the Mongols, Arnold says:

“The details that we possess of the progress of Islam in the Middle Kingdom, which fell to the lot of Chaghatay and his descendants, are still more meagre. Several of the princes of this line had a Muhammandan minister in their service, but they showed themselves unsympathetic to the faith of Islam. Chaghatay harassed his Muhammandan subjects by regulations that restricted their ritual observances in respect of the killing of animals for food and of ceremonial washings. AL-Jurjani says that he was the bitterest enemy of the Muslims

among all the Mongol rulers and did not wish anyone to utter the word Musalman before him except with evil purpose. Orghana, the wife of his grandson and successor, Qara-Hulagu, brought up her son as a Musalman, and under the name of Mubarak Shah he came forward in 1264 as one of the claimants of the disputed succession to the Chaghatay Khanate; but he was soon driven from the throne by his cousin Buraq Khan and appears to have exercised no influence on behalf of his faith, indeed judging from their names it would not appear that any of his own children even adopted the religion of their father.

Buraq Khan is said to have 'had the blessedness of Eecelving the light of the faith' a few days before his death in 1270, and to have taken the name of Sultan Ghiyath al-Din, but he was burried according to the ancient funeral rites of the Mongols, and not as a Musalman, and those who had been converted during his reign replaced into their former heathenism. It was not until the next century that the conversion of Tarmashirin Khan, about 1326, caused Islam to be generally adopted by the Chaghatay Mongols, who when they followed the example of their chief this time remained true to their new faith."

Certain Turk historians have related the story of Taqluq Timur's conversion in greater detail and reported the dialogue verbatim between him and Jamal ud-din. Taqluq Timur had enquired, pointing out towards his dog, whether he (Jamal ud-din) was better than the beast. Jamal ud-din calmly replied, "If I pass away from this world with my faith intact, I would be better than the, dog; if not, the dog would be better than me". Taken aback by this reply, Tuqlaq Timur asked what he meant by 'faith'. And thus he was eventually led to embrace Islam as related by Arnold. It is thus certain that a word uttered by Jamal ud-din in all sincerity was the ultimate cause of the conversion

of Tuqluq Timur and of the spread of Islam in his realm—a feat which could not have perhaps been accomplished by a thousand speeches or the might of arms.

Turning to the spread of Islam among that brand of the Golden Horde which was succeeded by Ogotay (Ogodei), the third son of Genghis Khan, and under which Kubilai Khan later brought the whole of China, Arnold says:

“Scattered up and down throughout 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 unbelievers to the faith. In the reign of Ogotay (1229-1241), we read of a certain Buddhist governor of Persia, named Kurguz, who in his later years abjured Buddhism and became a Musalman. In the reign of Timur Khan (1323-1328), Ananda, a grandson of Kubilai Khan and viceroy of Kan-Su, was a zealous Musalman and had converted a great many persons in Tangut and won over a large number of the troops under his command to the same faith. He was summoned to court and efforts were made to induce him to conform to Buddhism, and on his refusing to abandon his faith he was cast into prison. But he was shortly after set at liberty, for fear of an insurrection among the inhabitants of the Tangut, who were much attached to him”.

In this way Islam won over, in a short time, it's most inveterate enemy who had trampled underfoot the entire Islamic world, and whose onslaught, for a time, no Muslim power was able to withstand. Islam again proved that it possessed an irresistible charm which can captivate the hearts of its bitterest foe. The Mongols, after accepting the faith of Islam, produced a large number of scholars, theologians and doctors of faith as well as

those who fought for the cause of God, and served to defend Islam on many a critical occasion. Iqbal has rightly said:

“A *sign* manifest did adduce the charge of Tatar
hordes, that defenders are flock to Kaabah from the
heathen brutes”

* * * * *

CHAPTER - XIII

MAULANA JALAL UD-DIN RUMI

The Crisis of Rationalism

By the seventh century of the Muslim era dialectics had come to occupy such a pride of place among the religious sciences that nobody could lay a claim to scholarship unless he had mastered the controversial issues between the Mu'tazilites and the Ash'arites on the one hand and, between the Ash'arites and the Hanbalites, on the other. Fakhr-ud-din al-Razi who died in 1209 A.D. had attracted all minds so powerfully that the human intellect had come to be acknowledged by all as the infallible touchstone for the verification of metaphysical truths. A compromise between reason and faith, which was regarded as the ultimate end by the scholars of the time had made them so fond of rationalisation that no religious dogma or tenet of faith was acceptable to them unless it could be established by rational arguments, logical syllogism and philosophical premises.

The Ash'arites had succeeded in building up a powerful system of Islamic scholasticism which gained the day against "Itizal and Philosophy" but they had nevertheless, imbibed the spirit of these sciences. The system evolved by them had a deep rationalistic foundation naturally; they had also come to regard the conceptual data furnished by the human senses as the most reliable criterion for verification of certitude. They had thus accepted logical reasoning and speculative thinking as the

cornerstone for building up their arguments for the affirmation of the religious tenets and finding out the ultimate reality.

The religious scholars throughout the Islamic world had, as a result been seized by an excessive formalism of dialectics which, had by then deteriorated into a stale science handed down from generation to generation without any addition or modification. It had been unable to produce for quite a long time a celebrated thinker like Abul Hasan al-Ash'ari or Abu Hamid al-Ghazali. The Ummah having thus been seized by the so-called rationalism was losing that fervour of faith which had been bequeathed to it by the Apostles and the elects of God. Philosophical discourses and dialectical argumentations had turned the people into academicians as dry as dust; lacking that warmth of feeling and certitude of knowledge which is born out of divine intuition. There were a few sublimated souls, pure of heart and beatified by divine grace; the overwhelming majority of the doctors of faith and the laity had become votaries of intellect, fond of beautiful and high sounding phraseology but completely oblivious of the radiance of spirit and the love of God.

The world of Islam needed at the time, a celebrated spiritual guide who had mastered the religious and temporal sciences so that he could break the snares of intellect and who was himself illuminated in order to light the flame of ardent faith in the hearts of the people.

And, the man of the hour Jalal ud-din Rumi was born in 1207 A.D. who laid the foundation of a new scholasticism so badly needed by the world of Islam at the moment.

Rumi and His Ancestors

Muhammad was his name, Jalal ud-din the surname, but he is commonly known as Maulana-i-Rum or Rumi. He belonged to the lineage of Abu Bakr, the first Caliph, on the father's side and to that of Ali, the fourth Caliph, on the side of his mother.

Rumi's ancestors belonged to Balkh, a city in Khurasan, where he is stated to have been born. His forefathers were reputed for their virtue and learning while his grandmother Malika-i-Jahan was the daughter of the King of Khwarism, the Khwarism Shah. His father Muhammad Baha'ud-din Veled; had the honorific title of Sultan ul-Ulema (the king of scholars) while he used to hold his assemblies like the courts of monarchs.

Early Education

Jalal-ud-din Rumi was born on 30th September, 1207, A.D. Baha'ud-din Veled entrusted Jalal ud-din to the care of one of his disciples Saiyid Burhan ud-din, for early education.

Migration from Balkh

The popularity of Baha'ud-din Veled and the great number of his disciples and followers had made certain scholars jealous of him.

Arrival in Konya

Ala ud-din Kaikabad, the then Sultan of Rum, requested Baha'ud-din Veled to come to his Capital where he arrived in 626 A.H. The Sultan himself went to receive Baha'ud-din and became his disciple along with his chiefs. In Konya Baha'ud-din resided in a local college and died there in 1231 A.D.

After the death of Baha'ud-din Veled, Rumi was raised to occupy the seat of his father by the Sultan of Konya on the advice of the scholars and disciples of the departed teacher. Saiyid Burhanu ud-din, who had been Jalal ud-din's tutor during his childhood, had in the meanwhile migrated to Tirmiz. He came back to Konya. Rumi received instruction in the mystic lore from Saiyid Burhan ud-din.

Travels for Further Education

In 1233 A.D., Rumi went forth to Syria for further education. He arrived at Haleb (Aleppo) where Sultan Al-Malik Al-Zahir

had established/several colleges. From Haleb Rumi went to Damascus and returned to Konya in 1238 A.D. and resumed teaching.

The other pursuits of Rumi, besides teaching, were preaching in meetings held for the purpose and giving juristic opinion on the questions referred to him. Fifteen Dinars were fixed for him, as remuneration for this public service.

Rumi Turns to Mysticism

Rumi spent his days in this manner till 1244 A.D. when an incident completely transformed his life and turned him from Jalal ud-din Konwi to Maulana-i-Rum. This was his meeting with Shams Tabrez and his devotion and adoration of the latter.

Shams Tabrez

Muhammad ibn Ali ibn Malik Dad was his name but he was commonly known as Shams Tabrez. His ancestry is shrouded in mystery and the place to which he belonged is also not known with certainty. Of the many charges levelled against him, one was that he belonged to an unknown descent.

He is reported to have been gifted with keen intellect and a fervour of love since his very childhood. After he had mastered the esoteric sciences he became a disciple of Sheikh Abu Bakr the basket maker. Some chroniclers report that he had taken Sheikh Zain ud-din Sanjasi as his spiritual mentor while the name of certain other mystics have been mentioned in other reports. May be he received a grounding in the mystic lore from all these from time to time.

Not content with the esoteric teachings of “the Path” he had received from his tutor Shams Tabrez took to extensive travels in various lands in search of the best spiritual teacher. Thus he earned the nickname of Parinda (the Flier, Bird, etc.) In his travels he took care to conceal his own spiritual attainments.

Pretending to be a wealthy merchant, he wore a black felt and always bolted the doors of his room in the inn with a costly lock although there was nothing inside except a tattered mat. He travelled in this way to Tabrez, Baghdad, Jordan, Rome, Qaisaryak and Damascus. He used to weave strings with which trousers are fastened and this was enough to meet his frugal expenses. He lived for one year in Damascus where he did not take more than a cup of soup once a week. Often he prayed to God for a companion with whom he could share the mysteries of divine love.

Meeting of Shams Tabrez and Rumi

The spiritual mentor of Shams Tabrez, it is related, asked him to proceed to Rum and illuminate a broken hearted soul yearning for the divine love. He accordingly reached Konya in 1244 A.D. and engaged a lodging in an inn. One day he saw Rumi coming by riding on a mule in the midst of a crowd of students and disciples accompanying him on foot. Shams Tabrez stepped forward and asked Rumi, "what is the object of learning and prayer?" "It is to know" replied Rumi "the Shari'ah and its tenets." "No" replied Shams Tabrez "the object is to attain what is knowable." Thereafter, he recited this couplet of Hakim Sinai:

"Compared to that knowledge, ignorance is better;
Which allows your self to remain as it were."

Rumi was lost in amazement at the remark of Shams Tabrez. The company of Shams Tabrez opened a new vista of the hidden realm to the view of Rumi who now felt a trenchant urge to grasp the mysteries of earth and of heaven through spiritual illumination

Rumi had so long been a profound scholar and a successful teacher but now he himself became a pupil of Shams Tabrez. The result was that Rumi abandoned teaching as well as sermonising.

Tumult by Rumi's Disciples and Departure of Shams Tabrez

Rumi gave up teaching and delivering lectures, which was intensely resented by his followers, disciples and friends. They accordingly, raised a fearful and threatening tumult against Shams. The resentment of Rumi's disciples was kindled by the respect paid to Shams by Rumi and they were also jealous that an unknown person should cause their revered teacher to sever all relations with those who had so long been serving him well. Shams Tabrez calmly put up with the irritation caused by Rumi's followers for some time but when he found that they were bent upon taking resort to violent means he stealthily left Konya one day.

The departure of Shams Tabrez left Rumi in such a state of distress and depression that he completely cut himself off from all the disciples and acquaintances, friends and relatives. This was an unexpected turn of events unforeseen by those who had been envious of Shams for Rumi was now not prepared to see even those who had not opposed Shams, much less the persons who had been his adversaries.

Return of Shams Tabrez

Rumi remained cut off from everybody till he unexpectedly received a letter from Shams Tabrez from Damascus. Rumi took steps to invite him back to Konya again. He sent his son Sultan Veled to bring Shams Tabrez. Sultan Veled conducted Shams Tabrez to Konya from Damascus like a prince.

Shams Tebrez Departs Again

Rumi was overjoyed to see Shams Tabrez for the second time. All those who had been discourteous to Shams requested him to condone their mistakes. However the followers of Rumi again rose in opposition to Shams with the result that he slipped away from Konya.

Rumi's Impatience

When Rumi found Shams missing again one morning, his distress knew no bounds. Now Rumi again started his search for Shams, he was now even more distressed than he had been earlier. He ceased all intercourse with those who had caused ill-will to Shams and even forbade them to appear before him.

A few days later when his quest for Shams had proved fruitless Rumi became even more restless. Now he spent most of his time either in listening to the musical recitals or lamenting and raising a wail of woe for the departed companion. It was during this period that Rumi composed a number of beautiful and extremely touching lyrics expressing the agonising pangs suffered by him due to Shams' separation.

This was the year 1258 A.D. Rumi was extremely anxious for Shams, especially because of the disturbed conditions in Egypt, Asia Minor and the tempest of rapine and slaughter let loose by the Tartar invasion. If anybody could give him the whereabouts of Shams.

Travels to Syria

Rumi set out for Damascus along with a few companions in search of Shams Tabrez. He was honoured by the scholars of Damascus but they were surprised to learn that a person of his intellectual stature should be so agitated for any individual.

Rumi could not, however, get any trace of Shams Tabrez in Damascus. He returned to Konya from Damascus but his restlessness did not abate. After a couple of years he again undertook a journey to Damascus but returned this time convinced that in reality he was himself Shams and that all his search for Shams was no more than a quest to find out his own self.

After coming back from Damascus for the second time Rumi gave up all hopes to meet Shams Tabrez again. Nevertheless,

he now experienced the same effulgence of spiritual wisdom streaming in his own self, which he had sought in Shams.

Sheikh Salah ud-din—The Gold-beater

A few days after his return from Damascus for the second time, Rumi again became restless. He now promoted Sheikh Salah ud-din as his confidant and chief assistant. Sheikh Salah ud-din came of a poor family belonging to a nearby village. His father was a fisherman while Salah ud-din had himself taken up the profession of gold-beating. Reputed as a trustworthy young man from his early days he had been a disciple of Saiyid Burhan ud-din. After Saiyid Burhan ud-din's death he took the oath of allegiance to Rumi whose closest associate he remained during the last ten years of his life.

Elevation of Salah ud-din as the most trusted disciple and spiritual successor of Rumi again made his other disciples and followers run amuck. Now their complaint was that Shams was at least an educated person but this man, who was a mere goldbeater by profession did not deserve to be the chief assistant of their respected teacher. They were amazed to see that Rumi held Salah ud-din in such a high esteem and this fired their envy again. However when Salah ud-din came to know of the tumult among other disciples he remarked "They deplore my selection as the Chief associate of the Maulana but they don't appear to understand that the Maulana is really in with his own self. I simply act as a veil to conceal this fact."

Chelebi Hisam Ud-din

After the death of Salah ud-din, Chelebi Hisam ud-din Turk was nominated by Rumi to act as his chief assistant, confidant and spiritual vicegerent in place of the deceased friend. Chelebi Hisam ud-din had already occupied a distinguished place among the followers of Rumi and for eleven years after the demise of his spiritual superior he acted as his successor. He was a Turk

belonging to Armenia and came of a respectable and influential family known as Akhi.

Composition of The Mathnawi

Mathnawi was composed by Rumi during this period at the instance of Hisam ud-din. The fact is that Rumi's endowment with love was so fervent and rapturous that he could not do without a close companion and confidant with whom he could share the mysteries of the esoteric truth experienced by him. First he selected Shams Tabrez whose place was taken by Salah ud-din and Hisam ud-din one after another. Saiyid Burhan ud-din was also elevated to his circle of selected associates. Although in a different capacity, for a short while. Rumi spent the period of five years between the death of Saiyid Burhan ud-din and the arrival of Shams Tabrez in Konya in such a way as if he felt some deficiency in his life. It is obvious that the latent capabilities with which Rumi had been endowed required a stimulant for their expression. The Mathnawi is itself a proof of Rumi's yearning for love for it would not have come into existence without the spiritual fervour aroused by Rumi's favourite associates. There had been a gap of two years in the compilation of the Mathnawi when Rumi suspended its composition on account of Hisam ud-din's grief at the death of his wife.

Death of Rumi

Rumi died at the age of sixty-eight years and three months on the fifth of Jamadi-ul-Akhir, 672 A.H.; 17th December 1273 A.D. When his corpse was brought forth, a great multitude swarmed the place. Jews and Christians came reading their own scriptures. The Muslims strove to drive them away but they would not be repelled. It was feared at length that a tumult would break out. The intelligence was conveyed to Parwana', who asked the Rabbis and Bishops why they mixed themselves up

with the funeral of a Muslim saint. They replied that they had found in him all the signs and virtues of the prophets described in their scriptures and have learnt the ways of the sages and saints of yore. They were all ultimately allowed to accompany the funeral.

Character of Rumi

Shibli writes in the *Sawaneh* (Biography) of Maulana-i-Rumi,

“So long as the Maulana had not taken to the path of mysticism he led the life of an eminent scholar and a doctor of faith. Whenever he went out; riding on his mule, a large number of students, theologians and even the grandees accompanied him on foot. The kings and chiefs of State received him with highest honour. But no sooner did he adopt the mystic way of life, his life was completely transformed. He continued to teach and give juristic-opinions but these vocations appeared to be only reminiscent of his past life; he always seemed to be enchanted with a rapturous love in trance of a sublimated soul.”

Lawful Earnings

Rumi received a stipend of 15 Dinars a month out of the proceeds of charitable trusts. Since he did not like to accept remuneration without doing some work in lieu thereof, he had taken upon himself to give juristic-opinion on religious and legal matters referred to him by the people. He was so particular about it that he had instructed his disciples to let him know of the questions referred to him as soon as these were received.

Dislike of Worldliness

Rumi hated the rounds of visits frequently paid to him by the King, Princes and the nobles. He never liked them to call upon him and sometimes even expressed his distaste to the face of visiting personage. Once a certain grandee who paid a courtesy

call to Rumi said "Excuse me, Sir, I couldn't pay my respects more frequently owing to other preoccupations." "You need not be sorry for it" came the reply from Rumi, "I am more grateful to those who do not call upon me."

The Mathnawi and Its Message

Rumi had been endowed with a tremendous spiritual enthusiasm and fervour of love which was lying dormant under the cover of his erudition. As soon as Shams Tabrez casted his enchanted spell over Rumi his spirituality was animated and the outcome was enchanting and beautiful lyrics describing the mysteries of divine love and spiritual raptures, indescribable ecstasies and transports. Rumi found it difficult to spend his days without a confidant and companions, his restlessness did not calm down until he found a companion in Salah ud-din after Shams and in Chelebi Hisam ud-din after Salah ud-din.

The Mathnawi is a collection of heart-rending lyrics, it unveils the innermost feelings of its author. The Mathnawi affords a glimpse of Rumi's ardent love and fervour of spiritual yearning, certitude of knowledge and unflinching faith. And therein perhaps lies the secret of its effectiveness and universal popularity.

Critique of Reason

Rumi began his career as a successful teacher and a dialectician. He had a firm grounding in the Ash'arite school of thought. However, when God raised him to the state of beatific visions and illuminations, thus enabling him to reach beyond the veils of words and phrases, ideas and thoughts which merely cloud the inward aspect of Reality, he became aware of the mistakes and weaknesses of the philosophers, dialecticians and other rationalists. His forceful criticism of the rational or logical syllogism is thus an expression of his personal experience which can hardly be controverted by others.

During Rumi's time too the sense-perception was regarded as the only infallible source for acquisition of knowledge. The then scholars were increasingly denying whatever was beyond the ken of perception. The Mu'tazilites had upheld this view so forcefully that the faith in the "unseen realities" had suffered an irreparable loss and the people had begun to cast doubts on the veracity of revealed truths. Rumi raised a severe criticism of this view and frowned upon its standard-bearers.

Rumi has asserted at more than one place in the *Mathnawi* that in addition to the external senses man has been endowed with certain inner senses too, and that these inner senses are much more wider, potent and sagacious than the outer sense-organs

If anything can not be seen or, for that matter, is beyond the awareness of a physical experience, then in Rumi's view, it is not necessarily non-existent. He holds the view that the latent underlies the manifest in the same way as healing properties form the intrinsic quality of a medicine.

Rumi says that the materialists lose their sense of inner cognition and are unable to understand its objectives simply because they cultivate the habit of accepting only the external and manifest. In his opinion this signifies lack of foresight on the part of the materialists.

Rumi proceeds further to censure the intellect as well which like sense-perception, lacks the capacity to obtain the knowledge of realities revealed by the prophets. It really does not possess the ground on which it can base its speculation in such matters.

The philosopher may possess a complete mastery over speculative branches of learning and may also be endowed with foresight but he lacks insight into his own self, although the cognition of the latter is more important than the knowledge of everything else.

Rumi advises the philosophers and dialecticians to abandon philosophy and scholasticism and cultivate the knowledge of religious truth, for it alone has the light of certainty and wisdom.

Rumi says that man can attain the knowledge of self through purification of his heart and rectitude of his behaviours.

Love of God

The impetus received by the movement of rationalism and scholasticism in the seventh century of the Muslim era had cooled the yearnings of the human soul for the apprehension of the divine. From one end of the Islamic world to another, leaving a few illuminated souls here and there, nobody seemed to have any taste for divine manifestation and illumination of the heart. It was, as if, an apathy or coolness had overtaken the hearts of the people.

It was at this critical stage that Rumi sounded the note of alarm and exhorted the people to betake the path of love. His call fired the frenzy of love once again in the entire world of Islam. Rumi says that love is essentially a spiritual passion. In so far as it serves to purify the soul, it helps to ascent to divine favour in a moment that years of penance and prayer may be unable to attain.

Rumi says that only the overwhelming grace of the divine believed can truly inspire and refresh the heart of man. Nobody need have any apprehension of being denied access to that glorious true love for he is ever willing to respond to the call of the lover.

“Do not say, we have no admission to that king. Dealings with the generous are not difficult. The love may appear to be a sickness for it produces a crushing grief in the lover’s heart. Its pain may be unbearable but if the lover is able to endure it, he is rewarded with an everlasting illumination and the gnosis of God.

The sickness of love is in fact a cure for every other illness, be it moral or spiritual. Where the spiritual healers fail and yield to despair, the love succeeds and cures a lot of the moral and spiritual diseases in no time.

The love of god is an ocean, boundless and wide-spread; it pervades the cosmos and is without any beginning or end. It is a story of the rapturous flame kindled in the heart of man, which can never be described adequately and therefore it can hold his tongue."

The World of the Heart

The message of love diffused so vigorously by Rumi could not have taken roots without a liveliness and warmth in the heart of those to whom it was addressed. In his time too, however, people were increasingly losing sight of the power and efficacy, vigour and energy possessed by the heart. Rumi called attention towards fathomless vitality of the spiritual entity residing in the human heart. He reminded that every man has a world of his own which can accommodate the most far-flung empires of this earth without any danger of it being devastated by the enemy.

Rumi, however, rings a note of caution that one should not be misled by the mention of 'heart' by him. He does not mean the heart that abides in the body and throbs, which is a seat of carnal desires and sexual appetites, completely oblivious of the taste of love and the richness of conviction.

In his view the logical syllogisms and the inferences drawn there from smack of an artificial method of reasoning which is only of limited utility. This method is unsuited for establishing the veracity of theological truths

Place and Worth of Humanity

The autocratic kingdoms of the middle ages, their unjust and tyrannical ways of government along with the continued warfare

between powerful despots, which always held a bleak future for the people, had, in consequence, brought about a scene of despondency and inferiority amongst the people. The people had lost their worth in their own eyes.

In this atmosphere of mental torpor came the Iranian mysticism which zealously propagated the negative doctrine of fana, annihilation which meant the loss of ego and a passing away of the human consciousness in a mystical union. The invertible result of these teachings was that the ideas of self-affirmation and self-perfection, which are at the root of courage and manliness struggle and betterment, had come to be looked down upon as unpardonable spiritual sins. The Iranian mysticism, in its zeal to propagate the cultivation of divine attributes and the absorption of individual self in the 'Universal Ego' through annihilation of the self had depicted such an enlarged portrait of the baser elements in the human self that one felt ashamed of the manhood. It had come to regard the negation of 'self' as the ultimate end. This spirit of non-worldliness and renunciation of physical activity, denigration of humanity and the negation of self had also made inroads into the literary compositions of the time. The doctrine preaching negation of the world and life had imperceptibly brought the urge of life to a standstill within the people who were overtaken by a sense of dejection and helplessness and who sometimes regarded themselves as baser than even the beasts and vegetable growths. Man had thus become completely oblivious of his exalted position in this universe and the boundless possibilities of his spiritual and material progress through the unfolding of individual potentialities. In order to remove this misunderstanding and rectify this defect Rumi forcefully expanded the theory of the exalted position enjoyed by man, in his own inimitable style. Which lit the flame of self-affirmation, hope and confidence in the hearts of men. The melodious epics elevating the position of man, sung by Rumi, have had a far-

reaching effect on the subsequent Islamic poetry and opened a new vista of thought of the mystics and poets after him.

Rumi invites man's attention to God's unique creation as a human being. This is a Divine boon, he asserts, and a special favour from God; His robe of honour, prepared and reserved for Adam's progeny alone. This human creation has been repeatedly referred to by God in the Quran in the eulogistic expression of *Ahsan-i Taqwim* that is, of the best stature.

Man, Rumi says further, is the ultimate end of creation and it is for him alone that the universe was created by God. The entire creation therefore is bound to serve him.

Self-Assertion

Rumi did not believe, like some other mystics, in self-negation, indifference, lethargy and renunciation of physical activity. On the contrary he affirmed the importance of social progress, active life, self-assertion and self-preservation. He considered that the theories of monasticism and renunciation of the world were opposed to the teachings of Islam and the example set by the Prophet. "Had social life not been the object of God," asserted Rumi; "He would not have

JALAL-UD-DIN RUMI

Born: 1207 AD at Balkh in Khurasan

Settled in Konya.

Father: Baha-ud-din Veld.

Lineage: from father's side to Abu Bakr Siddique and from Mother's side to Ali Ibn Talib.

Teachers: Syed Burhan-ud-din Mohaqqiq

Spiritual Guide: Shams Tabrez

Companions: Salah-ud-din and Chalabi Hisam-ud-din

Sons: Sultan Veld and Ala-ud-din.

Works: Diwan – 50,000 couplets
Mathnawi-e-Manawi- 26600 couplets

Criticises both Rationalists and Dialecticians.

For Rumi Love of God is rewarded with an everlasting illumination and the gnosis of God

prescribed congregational prayers five times a day and on Fridays; and the duty of enjoining the right and forbidding the wrong.”

In the days of Rumi; Tawakkul i.e. confidence or sincere trust in God was held to mean a complete resignation to the preordained will of God. Any effort, direct or indirect, to obtain the means of subsistence; or admit the thought of providing for the morrow was looked down upon and deemed as incompatible with Tawakkul. Rumi explained the correct meaning of Tawakkul as taught by the Shari’ah and urged the people to make effort for earning their livelihood with trust in the beneficence of God.

Rumi sets out to that the way of the prophets and the saints consists of striving and making effort. He also explains that “this worldliness” from which the Shari’ah wants a faithful to seek deliverance does not comprise the riches or offsprings, it lies in being attached to worldly possessions and temptations, since the Divine blessings shall be denied to those who lead a life of negligence and ingratitude

Critique of the Rulers

Rumi reproached not only the populace or the learned who made mistakes in following or expounding the religious precepts, in his preaching’s and poems he often bitterly criticised those who held the reigns of government. He openly taxed them with the charge that they were an inefficient lot who had turned the government into a child’s play. In the days of despotic rule, Rumi’s criticism could have had dangerous consequences but he never held his tongue from expressing what he considered to be just and truthful.

Dialectics

Rumi is critical of the rationalists for their undue dependence on senses. At the same time he criticises the dialecticians too

for their formalism and addiction to disputation. But, unlike other mystics, he is not content with summoning the people towards love and faith; intuition and spiritual enlightenment alone, he also tries to find out a convincing answer to the difficult question of dialectics and philosophy. In other words, Rumi's approach to scholasticism is not simply critical but affirmative and constructive as well. In cases where the dialectical method leads nowhere, or the logical syllogism employed for it makes the matter even more intricate and insoluble, Rumi approaches the problem directly as if it were a simple question and brings forth such parallels from every day happenings, or analogies, anecdotes, fables or legends that a solution to the problem almost suggests itself and helps to convince the reader of the truth underlying it. The method employed by Rumi is simple yet so subtle that the reader never feels that Rumi is leading him, on the contrary he feels as if Rumi has simply given expression to his own views on that particular question. His *Mathnawi* is thus a striking example of solving the most intricate theological and metaphysical issues and also of instilling a deep conviction through the solutions offered by it which can not be had by going through a library of philosophical dissertations.

Rumi belonged to the Ash'arite School of dialectics and had earlier been a profound scholar and successful teacher of the Islamic scholasticism. He did not, however, remain a mere interpreter of that school but laid the foundation of a new method of dialectical reasoning which is quite distinct and more efficacious than the method of earlier propounders of that school. He is nearer to the Quranic arguments in approach and treatment of the theological problems, for he follows in the footsteps of the Qur'an in its simplicity, directness and appeal to the common sense.

Existence of God

The universe does not simply exist, it is functioning in accordance with certain set physical laws in an orderly fashion,

the celestial bodies move in their orbit according to a preordained law; the wind and clouds are not free to go wherever they like. All these laws drawn out so carefully and minutely and the order and sequence we see in the cosmos drive us to one conclusion only and it is that the universe has a Creator and Ruler who is Wise, knowing. The world can never deviate for a moment from the path chalked out for it by Him.

Prophethood

Instead of himself explaining the significance of prophethood Rumi prefers the prophets to elucidate the content and purpose of prophethood. They tell us that as Divine physicians they purify the hearts of mankind. Other physicians reach the heart by feeling the pulse but prophets need no medium to look into it. Ordinary physicians are concerned with the physical health of man while prophets cleanse his heart and rectify his morals and behaviour.

Rumi says that no external evidence is required of the genuineness and truthfulness of a prophet because the call of the prophet strikes a hidden cord in the hearts of those who follow him. The call of a prophet constitutes both a premise and an argument in its favour, for that is the only natural and convincing testimony required by the true nature of man. When a thirsty person is offered water, he never asks to prove it first nor the child calls for any evidence before taking to the breast of his mother. What is really required for finding credence and acceptance of the truth is simply a sincere demand and sympathetic approach by the seeker of truth.

Rumi does not consider that miracles are capable of inspiring faith or to say it differently, it is not necessary that anyone witnessing miracle should also become convinced of the truthfulness of a prophet's message. And this is an incontrovertible fact too, since the biography of the Prophet of Islam hardly mentions anyone whose conversion was brought about by a miracle. All the illustrious companions of the Prophet

were those who had responded to his call and that is really what the faith means to a person.

Life After Death

Rumi propounds the view that death is the gateway to eternal life and spiritual advancement. For death is not annihilation but simply dissolution of the bodily particles, essential for sustaining higher forms of spiritual life, so, it is nothing more than demolition of the ruins before undertaking new construction.

Death is quite different for those who are spiritually enlightened from what it is for others. Those who are illuminated welcome death as a bounty from the Lord, for they regard it as a stepping-stone to further elevation of their spirit.

Free-will and Necessitarianism

This has been one of the most hotly-contested issues of dialectics. One school of the dialecticians denied "Free will" and held that man was helpless before the preordained and immutable decree of the Creator. The people subscribing to this view were known by the name of Jabriah or Necessitarians. Rumi poses the question, if man has been made so helpless why has he been enjoined to perform certain actions and refrain from others? Why was the Shari'ah promulgated for him? "Has anybody heard," asks Rumi, "someone giving a command to the stones?"

"He (the Necessitarian) says that commanding and forbidding are naught and that there is no power of choice. All this (doctrine) is erroneous.

The entire Qur'an consists of commands and prohibitions and warnings (of punishment); who (ever) saw commands given to a marble rock?"

Rumi says that free-will is ingrained in the nature of man who demonstrates it by his everyday actions. If a piece of timber falls on somebody from the roof, he is never angry with it nor does he seek vengeance from the flood or the wind from which

he suffers a loss. This is so because he knows that these things do not possess a will of their own but the same man seeks retribution against another man because he is aware that man is the master of his actions.

Rumi goes a step further and claims that even animals are aware whether a certain being possesses free will or not. He draws this conclusion from the behaviour of pets like dogs and camels who sometimes retaliate against the man hitting them but not against the stick or the stone with which they are struck.

Causation

Different factions of the Muslims held divergent views about the cause and effect. The view held by the philosophers was that the phenomenal world is governed by a sequence of cause and effect and, therefore, there is a permanent and essential correlation between the two—the effect proceeds from its cause in the same way as the cause is immanent in the effect. The Mu'tazilites too generally subscribed to the same view and held that since the effect was an inevitable outcome of the cause, there was hardly any possibility of any change in it. A natural consequence, they denied miracles and viewed the effect proceeding without a cause whatsoever for an effect to follow it. All causes were, in their view, of only secondary importance in determining the production or non-production of the effects. Similarly, their view was that no substance were mere instruments for manifesting the effects and accident in accordance with the will of God. The divergent views held by the different sections of the Muslim community were also proving harmful in as much as these were employed by the free-thinkers and libertarians to accept or reject whatever they liked or disliked according to their wishes and sweet-will

The view propounded by Rumi in this regard is a middle path between the two extremes of the Mu'tazilites and the Ash'arites, he recognises causation and accepts that there is a

sequence of cause and effect in this phenomenal world which cannot be denied. He says that God has appointed effect to proceed from the cause just as he had made the properties immanent in the substances. At the same time, miracles are possible and men of God have also worked these from time to time.

Rumi says that the causation is decidedly a fact but the "cause of all causes" is still a greater reality. He is the only real Agent, creator of all causes and omnipotent Lord, and, therefore, it does not behove man to recognise the phenomenal causes and forget the first cause.

"O`thou who art caught by the cause do not fly outside (of causation); but (at the same time) do not suppose the removal of the causer.

The causer brings (into existence) whatsoever He will: the Absolute power tears up (destroys) the causes."

Till the sequence of cause and effect is the ordinary law or the way of God prescribed for the phenomenal world. It is intended to create an urge in man for making effort and striving to achieve his ends.

"But for the most part, He lets the execution of His will follow the course of causation, in order that a seeker may be able to pursue the object of his desire."

Rank and Worth of The Mathnawi

The Mathnawi is one of the greatest mystical poems, which has left a lasting and indelible mark on the thought, and literature of the Islamic world. The intellectual and literary circles have been drawing inspiration from the Mathnawi for the past six hundred years. In poetic merit and originality of ideas' in sublimity of thoughts and intensity of feelings' in the raptures of love ecstasy the Mathnawi has proved to be an unexcelled literary composition. It is an inexhaustible treasure, ever

shedding its brilliance and bringing to light new ideas and thoughts, styles and dictions, The dialecticians and doctors of religion have ever since been drawing upon the Mathnawi to solve the problems of dialectics through its direct and easily understandable method of solving these issues. The examples and anecdotes through which Rumi has solved these problems can still satisfy the critical minds of the intelligent youths who do not want to be driven into a common groove.

No work of the nature, as the Mathnawi is, can be free from faults or can remain beyond criticism. It has been often that the misguided mystics have taken advantage of Rumi's views, or the people with a pantheistic bent of mind have employed certain quasi-erotic expressions used in the Mathnawi for the defence of existentialist monism. The Mathnawi is, after all, literary composition by a human being who was neither infallible or in a position to avoid his intuitional knowledge and spiritual illumination being influenced to some extent by his own propensities and inclinations of mind and extraneous impressions. Despite these human feelings, the Mathnawi excels the literary and poetic work on the subject in its boldness of approach, variety of ideas and wealth of expression of Rumi that the Mathnawi pulled out the thinkers and literatures of his time from the intellectual stupor into which they had failed and revitalised them with a ferment of literary endeavour.

The Mathnawi has yet another achievement to its credit and that belongs to the recent times. When materialism began to make inroads into the world of Islam for the second time during the twentieth century under the cover of western thought, science and philosophy, producing scepticism and an inclination to disbelieve everything beyond the ken of senses, the old Islamic scholasticism failed to cope with the situation. The Mathnawi of Maulana-i-Rum was again able to withstand the intellectual onslaught of the victorious and advancing materialistic West. It brought back to the citadel of Islam innumerable souls which

had been waylaid by the materialistic view of the life and the world, so forcefully propounded by the West. Quite a large number of western educated Muslims, especially in the Indian subcontinent, have acknowledged the debt they owe to the Mathnawi in rediscovering the true content of the faith. The greatest Muslim thinker and philosopher of the present era, Dr. Sir Mohammad Iqbal, has repeatedly owned with gratitude that he has imbibed the inspiration of faith and love, inner warmth of spirit and the effervescent dynamism of action from the Mathnawi of his spiritual mentor, Jalal ud-din Rumi.

But as Iqbal complains, instead of taking to heart the gift of Rumi—his lofty idealism, his intuitive certitude and the glow of rapturous love—a section has been using his verses simply for musical recitals and whirling frenzy.

“They dilated upon his works but cared not to understand at all. The content of his words eluded these fellows like a gazelle. Nothing they learnt save the chant and whirl, and shut their-eyes to the dance of soul.”

This was, however, not the fault of Mathnawi which can still be a lodestar to the present materialistic age which is repining for the true and ardent love.

Iqbal is confident that the Mathnawi of Rumi can still awaken the soul from its slumber of heedlessness. Therefore, his message to the youth of today is;

“Have Rumi as thy guide and spiritual mentor,
Thy heart shall be filled, God-willing, with a mighty
fervour,
Rumi can cleave the kernel from its shell,
Since implanted firmly is his foot in the path of
love.”

INDEX

- Abaqa Khan 143
 Abdul Hasan Khazraj 133
 Abdul Momin 73
 Abdullah al-Mahadh 2
 Abu Bakr Baqilani 39, 43
 Abu Bakr Khallal 24
 Abu Ishaq Isfrai'ni 43
 Abu Ishaq Shirazi 43, 74
 Abu Musa al-Ash'ari 36
 Abu Nua'im Asbahani 100
 Abu Sulaiman Khattabi 128
 Abu-Daud Sijistani 21
 Acre 104, 113, 115
 Adil Nur ud-din 105
 Ahmad Abul Abbas 132
 Ahsan-i Taqwim 164
 Al-Malik Al-Zahir 151
 Ain Jalut 139
 Ala ud-din Kaikabad 151
 Ala ud-din Muhammad 129, 134
 Alaud-din-al-Tabrasi al-Zahri 131
 Aleppo 105, 122, 138, 151
 al-Farabi 46
 al-Farmadi 72
 al-Ghazali 51, 53, 54, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 77, 83, 101, 128, 150
 Achievements 57
 Al-Ghazali and Dialectics 69
 Ethical Philosophy 66
 Impact 74
 Critique of Rulers and Kings 64
 Critique of the Society 60
 Evaluation of Social Conditions 60
 Intellectual Crisis 54
 al-Hariri 74
 Al-Hudhayl 26
 Ali-Ibn-Husain 2
 al-Jawzi 69, 75, 89, 90, 92, 93, 94, 95, 97, 98, 99, 100, 101, 102
 al-Jurjani 74, 145
 al-Kindi 46

- Al-Malik al-Adil 111, 122
 Al-Malik Al-Ashraf 122, 124
 Al-Malik al-Kamil 122, 123
 Al-Malik al-Mansur 124
 Al-Malik al-Muzaffar saif ud-din Qataz 139
 Al-Malik al-Zahir Baibers 128
 al-Maturidi 42
 Al-Mudawwanah 23
 al-Mustadhi 132
 Al-Mustasim 133
 al-Mustaz'hiri 59
 al-Muwahidin 65, 73
 Al-Nasir li Din-illah 132
 Al-Qawa'id al-Kubra 128
 al-Razkani 53
 al-Suyuti 127
 Al-Zahabi 121
 Amir Tuzaub 144
 Antioch 104, 105
 Arghun 141, 144
 Aristotelian 45
 Aristotle 46, 59
 Baha'ud-din Veled 151
 Balian 111
 Baraka Khan 142, 143
 Batinites 48, 49, 51, 54, 59, 82, 101, 114, 117
 Bindar ibn al-Husain 41
 Bishr Hafi 18, 99
 Brethren of Purity 46, 118
 Bukhara 136, 142
 Chelebi Hisam ud-din 156, 159
 count of Flanders 112
 Damietta 131
 Dar-ul'Adl 107
 Dialectics 45
 Duke of Burgundy 112
 Edessa 104, 105
 Esoteric and Exoteric Interpretations of the Scripture 49
 Fakhr ul-Mulk 51, 70
 Fardh-Kafayah 62
 Frederick Barbarossa 112
 Fudhayl ibn Ayadh 18
 Genghiz Khan 129, 135, 136, 137, 140, 142, 143, 144, 147
 Ghazan 144
 Halaku 138, 142, 143
 Haleb 138, 151, 152
 Hamasa 116
 Hasan-al-Muthanna 2
 Hellenistic philosophy 45
 Hilyatul Auliya 100
 Hittin 109, 110, 112, 114
 Hujjat Allah al-Baligha 128
 Hulagu 146
 ibn 'Aqeel 74, 77
 Ibn al-Dayni 92
 Ibn al-Subki 127, 128
 Ibn Khaldun 73
 ibn Majah 21, 22
 Ibn Nasir 89
 Ibn Sina 46, 118
 Ibn Taymiyah 33, 59, 68, 69, 71, 90
 Ibrahim ibn Ad'ham 99

- Ihya' 'Ulum id-din 60, 66, 72, 101
 Il khans 143, 144, 145
 Imad ud-din 104, 105
 Imam Abu Hanifa 14, 16
 Imam Hanbal 23
 Imam Malik 14, 16, 21, 23
 Imam Shafe'i 23
 Imam ul-Haramayn 43, 71
 Inaljuk 135
 Incoherence of Philosophers 59
 Itizal 26, 35, 36, 37, 47, 149
 Izz ud-din ibn Abdul Salam 121
 Jabriah 168
 Jalal ud-din Rumi 149, 150, 151, 164, 172
 Jerusalem 56, 104, 106, 108, 110, 111, 112, 114, 119, 124, 129
 Jilani 56, 75, 77, 83, 87, 89
 Junaid Baghdadi 18
 Karak 110
 Khilafat-e-Rashida 1, 6
 Kitab al-Umm 24
 Kitab Majaz al Qur'an 123, 128
 Kitab ul-Mauzu'at 89, 93
 Kublai 137, 141
 Kurguz 147
 Lane Poole 106, 108, 109, 110, 111, 116
 Leopold of Austria 112
 Ma'ruf Karkhi 100
 Madarsa al-Mustansaryah 131
 Madarsa Salihya 126
 Madarsa Zawiyah Chazaliyah 121, 123
 Malik ibn Dinar 95
 Mamun 26, 29, 30, 31, 45
 Mansur ibn Ghalib 7, 8
 Maqalat-ul-Islamiyin 41
 Maqasid al-Falasafah 58, 65
 Ma'ruf Karkhi 18, 100
 Marwan 2, 3
 Mosul 104, 107
 Mulassamin 73
 Muqtadi b'illah 53
 Mustazhir b'illah 54, 81
 Muwaffaq Abdul Latif 92
 Muwayyid ud-din Muhammad Ibn Alqami 132
 Necessitarians 168
 Nizam ul-Mulk 43, 51, 53, 56, 70
 Nizamiyah University 53, 57
 Nur ur-din Zangi 103, 105, 117
 Nusrat ud-din 108
 octroi 5
 Ogotay 147
 Otrar 135
 Philip Augustus 112
 Qaisaryak 153
 Qasim ibn Muhammad ibn Abu Bakr 2
 Ramla Agreement 112
 Reginald of Chatillon 110
 Reja ibn Haiwah 4
 Richard Coeur de Lion 112
 Rukn al-Din Baybars 142

- Rumi 167, 168, 169, 170, 171, 172
 Dialectic 165
 Causation 169, 170
 Existence of God 166
 Free will 168, 169
 Life after Death 168
 Prophethood 167
 Saeed al-Khatir 90, 92, 98, 99, 100, 101
 Saeed ibn Musayib 2
 Sahih Muslim 21, 22
 Sahih-al-Bukhari 21
 Saïda 114, 124
 Saiyid Burhan ud-din 151, 156
 Salah un-din, Sheikh 156
 Salat al-Raghayeb 122
 Saleh Isma'il 124, 125
 Salim ibn Abdullah ibn Umar 2
 Samarqand 42, 136
 Shahab ud-din Suhrawardy 127
 Shahab-ud-din Abu Shama 122
 Shibli Na'omani 72
 Sidon 104
 Sifat us-Safwah 100
 Sihah Sittah 21
 Sufyan Thauri 18, 99
 Sulaiman ibn Abdul Malik 2, 3, 4
 Syria 22, 56, 103, 104, 105, 107, 117, 118, 119, 122, 130, 134, 138, 139, 142, 143, 151, 155
 Tahafut al-Falasafah 58, 59, 65
 Takudar 143, 144
 Tangut 147
 Tarikh al-Kamil 106
 Tashfin 72, 73
 Tawakkul 165
 Thakif 124
 The Mu'tazilites and Philosophers 47
 Tortosa 104
 Tripolis 104
 Tumart 65, 72, 73
 Umar ibn Abdul Aziz 1, 2, 4, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 99
 Compilation of Traditions 6
 Defender of the Faith 6
 Financial Reforms 9
 Propagation of Islam 9
 Umm Asim 2, 3
 Urwah ibn Zubair 2
 Wali Ullah 128
 Walid ibn Abdul Malik 2
 Wathiq 29, 35
 Zain ud-din Sanjasi 152
 Zainul Abdin 2