Revival of Islam

English version of 'Tajdeed-e-Deen'
By: **Maulana Wahiduddin Khan's**

English Rendering:
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TO

'Those who Reason'

> *Religion is one; the one preserved forever, in the pages of Quran and Prophetic Sunnah. However, slowly but surely; it so happens that the human distortions, obscure the real image of religion as revealed. At such a stage, purging it of human interpolations to refresh and revivify its original image, is termed, the 'Revival of Islam'.*

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I developed my first love with Maulana's writings when I was in my teens; an age well known for intense love. It was, probably because of curious nature and some underlying knowledge of both Urdu literature and Islam since childhood, fortified with the school education in science. Since then I have never divorced the interest although many distractions encountered on the way. Thus, the relation kept on growing stronger with each passing year. I have gone through most of the writings of Maulana and what I learnt all these years; could be put as, *'Just be realistic and fair in Analysis'.* Probably this is the reason I opted for *'Religious thought of Maulana Wahiduddin Khan'* as the subject of my second doctorate at University of Kashmir, Srinagar. I have appended herewith a list of Maulana's must-read books; however the present manual with an enduring value, is special in many ways and always occupied a special place close to my heart. I think, *'it was enough for Maulana to have written only "Tajdid-e-Deen" to get relieved of the responsibility of conveying the essence of divine message to humanity in 2oth century, and secure a place in Jannah' (insha Allah)!* Therefore, I present here a brief outline of the book before we take up the detailed account of each chapter.

The book *"Tajdid-e-Deen"* (Revival of Islam) by Maulana Wahiduddin khan is small but very important as regards its subject matter, scope and significance. **Primarily addressed to scholars, academicians and educationists;** this 87-page book

was first published by *Maktaba Al-Risala* New Delhi in 1987 and reprinted in 2008. Consisting of Ten small, but significant chapters, it deals with ***issues and approaches*** of Revival of Islam in modern times.

'Revival of Islam', according to Maulana is the return to the pure and pristine form of Islam that existed in the times of Prophet of Islam ﷺ, purging it of the dust that has gathered over it, over the centuries. The later day interpretations in the name of explanations have turned a simple divine creed into a very complex, formal and ritualistic religion with its inherent spirit, missing altogether. This is because of shift of emphasis from essential and core message to ritualistic aspects. E.g. the revolutionary concept of *Tawhid* is reduced to mere utterance of few words, faithful following of prophet's example (*ittiba'*) gets replaced by lip service in the name of loyalty (*ishq*), *Hadith* is taught under discipline of *Fiqh*, religious personalities are adored as infallible and above all, the *Dawah* aspect of Islam, as an obligation, is forgotten. The real job of a revivalist according to Maulana would be to revive the essence of Islam so that it conforms to the originality of the Prophetic period.

Maulana expresses reservations about the development of *Tasawwuf* and *Fiqh* in Islam, and the way these branches have made progress. Maulana, like Sheikh Muhammad Abduh of Egypt makes a very important distinction between two spheres of activity in Islam, one of which is badly in need of reform. The first one is worship as embodied in the five pillars. This, formed the core of Islam and is unchangeable. What remains is then a vast body of social relations and matters: commercial transactions, legal issues and public

dealings that are subject to reform. He argues that the elaborate legal system that had grown up concerning these matters,was conditioned by historical circumstances and as the historical circumstances changed, the old legal rulings should be subjected to reinterpretation to reflect the new social realities.

Maulana exposes the paradox, that, Muslim scholars have introduced new concepts in sphere of worships that was unwarranted, while exercise of *Ijtihad* in the social sphere being treated as a taboo.[1] He proposes this development to be undone and the status of Prophetic period to be restored. Maulana's thought, despite hurdles, has been enormously influential among reform-minded Muslims. Maulana is even critical of the *Ilm-al-kalam* or scholastic theology of medieval periods that has outlived its utility and surprisingly enough, is still being taught in Islamic institutes. He argues that Science is the *Ilm al kalam* of modern world, and it should be made full use of, in *Dawah* work.

Maulana has his own unique and scientific explanation of western challenges and Muslim response during 19th and 20th centuries. He traces the history of Western dominance to development of Science and Technology, as, also the opening up of Suez Canal that tilted the balance of power in favor of West. In addition, from there onwards, they continued their march uninterrupted; subduing, colonizing and dominating the Muslim lands particularly in Asia and Africa.

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[1]*Maulana Wahiduddin Khan;'Tajdid e Din' Maktaba Al-Risala, New Delhi, 2015. p-51.*

Maulana divides the Muslim response movements to western dominance in four categories: independence movements, conservative movements and, revivalist movements.

The confrontational movements became freedom movements for their respective territories; which achieved their goals in the end. Nevertheless, according to Maulana's analysis, it was more because of internal weakness of the colonizers due to their defeat in world wars; that they could not hold foreign lands any longer. However, he observes, despite territorial freedom the West is still ruling the Muslim lands through economical, technological and cultural dominance.

The conservative movements mainly took the form of religious education and a network of *Madrasas* spread across Indian subcontinent. It was a partially successful strategy as it produced innumerable religious graduates' trained in Islamic *Fiqh* and Medieval *Ilm al kalaam*, but lacking in the modern scientific knowledge and financial self-support.[2]

The Revivalist movements started in the name of Islam for example; the *Ikhwan al Muslimun* of Egypt and *Jamaat e Islami* of Pakistan turned out to be politically motivated. They struggled to re-establish Islamic governments replacing the incumbent Muslim rulers. These movements also failed miserably as they failed to read the public mood in favor of modern values like democracy and secular trends.

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[2] Ibid.p-61

The positive or reconstruction movements, though right in concept, failed at execution level, due to mismanagement by the ideologues and lack of public support. Maulana cites the example of Muhammad Abduh and Jamal al-Din Afghani who failed to make progress in *Dawah* among *Westerners*.

Sir Sayyid Ahmed Khan rightly concluded that although Britishers have blocked our political progress, we could still make advancements in the fields of education, science and technology. However, Muslims viewed his attempts with suspicion and he turned to interpretation of Islamic sources in the popular Western idiom of 18th century to find justifications for his viewpoint. As a result, his energies were wasted in refuting the charges leveled against him by Indian '*Ulama'*, though still he could make valuable contributions in the field of education.

Another example according to Maulana was that of Ghulam Ahmed Qadiyani who persuaded Indian Muslims to stop confrontation with Britishers in political field and better take to *Dawah* among Westerners as a more suitable campaign. Nevertheless, Qadiyani according to Maulana, while trying to explain his pacifist preaching, overstepped to the extent of declaring *Jihad* as not a permanent feature of Islam, then calling it allowed only in defense, and finally declaring *Jihad* as abrogated in modern times. Again, when Muslims, viewing him as an agent of Britishers objected to his utterances; he claimed that he received *Wahi* (revelation) from Allah and declared himself, a prophet of God, a manifest case of

apostasy after the declaration of "*khatam e Nabuwwatt*"[3] in Islam. Thus, his right vision ended up in disaster.[4]

Maulana proposes reorganization and recompilation of Islamic sciences in their purest form as in the Prophetic period, with more emphasis on teaching of Arabic, Quran and *Hadith* only; to produce more committed and competent *Dayees* of Islam. He finally concludes that modern knowledge and methods of communication are powerful tools that Muslims should make use of, in spreading the word of God to whole humanity.

I have thus, made a humble attempt, to present a simple translation, avoiding the more complex terminology and associated convoluted philosophies. Further, I have also added footnotes and inserted references from Quranic verses and Prophetic traditions at appropriate places.

Finally, without a claim for exhausting the subject or an ideal rendering into English let me acknowledge that 'If there is any merit discernible in the work, it is absolutely due to the grace of Almighty Allah, and if there are faults, and undoubtedly there might be many, they must be credited to my own incompetence. With a strong belief that, *'the largest room in the world is the room for improvement'* **I solicit feedback and suggestions for improvement in the next edition.**

Dr. Rafique Anjum
BGSBU Rajouri   May 20, 2020
                                       [Ramadhan 27, 1441]

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[3] Al-Quran, 33:40
[4] Tajdeed.p-80

CHAPTER ONE

REVIVALISM: AN OVERVIEW

The word *Tajdid* or *Jaddada* from Arabic root, j/d/d, literally means to refresh, renew or revive. In other words, it means to rectify the later day distortions and restore the original state of something. This revival is in fact an elucidation of principles rather than a practical implementation of a system. That is why the concept, has been described in various Prophetic traditions as *Tajdid* (renewal/ renovation) or *Tabaiyyan* (refreshing, or exposition). Thus, the *Tajdid* in Islamic terms does not refer to any innovation in Religion (*Din*).

In contemporary world, certain scholars felt the need to modernize Islam. For example, they postulated that, in Islam, the matters of faith are eternal while the *Shariah* laws are dynamic, characterized by constant changes as per changed situations. They even earned the title of Revivalists from certain sections. It is however not right. They can instead be termed *Mujaddids* who are attempting to reshape Islam.

Similarly, according to the analysis of another group, the contemporary Muslims have been facing political subjugation and economic breakdown. They made efforts to revive them, towards that direction. These ideologues were, also categorized as revivalists. Such an effort can, at best be called service to Muslim community but not an act of revival of Islam.

Going a step further; some thinkers projected Islam as a universal political system and even initiated violent conflicts

with incumbent rulers assuming the role of political oppositions in many countries. It was in the name of Islam that championed the cause of political and civilizational revolutions. These thinkers too, earned the titles of revivalists. This again is an absolute untruth. Such theorization and political activism is not consistent with the concept of *Tajdid.* In Prophetic traditions, *Tajdid* refers to presenting Islam in its original, pure form and spirit. According to Quran:

<div dir="rtl">﴿بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ وَالزُّبُرِ وَأَنْزَلْنَآ اِلَيْكَ الذِّكْرَ لِتُبَيِّنَ لِلنَّاسِ مَا نُزِّلَ اِلَيْهِمْ وَلَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ﴾</div>

"[We sent them] with clear signs and scriptures. And We have sent down the reminder to you, to enable you to make clear to mankind what has been sent down to them, so that they may reflect upon it."[5]

The expounding of this revealed message is in fact the real revival. This activity of revival of religion is called *Tajdid* and one who carries it out is called *Mujaddid*.

Here is a Hadith, which relates to the revival of Islam, reported by different *Muhaddithin* with slight variations in the text.[6] The Prophet ﷺ is reported to have said:

"Allah will raise, for this community at the head of every hundred years, the one who will revive its religion (faith) for this Ummah." [7]

From the above Hadith we can infer that Revival is synonymous with refreshing, renovation, exposition or elucidation of the original message of Islam.

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[5] Al-Quran, 16:44
6 *Dawatul Haqq, Al-Ribat, Rabi al-Awwal 1405 AH.*
7 *Abu dawud#4291,Sahih Muslim#1842, Mishkatul Masabih#247, Silsilatul Sahiha#985 & 988 Abu dawud#4291/ Silsilat ul-Sahiha#985.*

Since the religion of Islam is destined to be a guidance for humanity, for all times to come; God made a provision in advance to send at the end of each century, someone from the Muslim community to free the divine religion of aberrations and expound it to the people in its pure form. This is to make the truth clearly distinct from untruth so the solemn seekers of truth could avail of it easily and those who are not serious about it stand out marked so.

The Religion of Islam (*Din*) will never disappear from the world; however, what will actually happen is disappearance of the true *Sunnah* of Prophet☀, with passage of time. According to a tradition, the Prophet of Islam ☀ addressed his companions thus:
"One, who among my Ummah, will hold fast to my Sunnah, during a period of decadence, will get a reward equivalent to one hundred martyrs." [8]

It implies that, being martyred, while fighting for the cause of Islam carries great rewards; but holding fast to a Prophetic *Sunnah* during testing times is a greatly rewarded act. The reason for this enhanced reward is that, while a martyr sacrifices his life for Islam just once, but one who firmly adheres to a Prophetic *Sunnah* is like sacrificing his life daily.

The period of religious decadence among *Ummah* is characterized by a distorted set of social rituals being presented as divine religion (*Din*). This distorted form of

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[8] *[Tabrani; Mishkatul Masabih#176.*

religion gets such acceptance with people that all the institutions and honorific names get associated with it. As a result, people start treating religion as a profession. While the authorities accept this distorted religion out of their own interests, the masses follow it out of their sheer negligence.

In such a scenario, when someone rises with the pure and pristine form of religion, he is perceived as a threat to their interests and hence everyone, turns enemy to such a Muslim. As a result, the person who is practicing the prophetic religion in its original form appears to be a stranger and rather unwanted in his own society.

During the period of religious deterioration, people take the few current rituals as a key to the paradise. In contrast, the follower of prophetic *Sunnah* describes the righteous acts as prerequisite for the final success. People start believing the religious and political debates in vogue as religious campaigns. Whereas he presents the patience and sacrifice as the essence of religion, people continue performing social functions with religious zeal. He preaches to live and die for *Aakhirah* (afterlife), while people hold fast to the distorted religion of their leaders and priests. While he describes the teachings of Allah and his Prophet as the essence of religion, people keep clinging to the sayings and stories of their ancestors. He advises them to adopt the religion enshrined in the Quran and the prophetic *Sunnah*, people continue with the practice and preaching of their self-styled leaders. While he invites people to divine religion with firm foundations, they respond with their own innovative terms and concepts in the name of religion.

A true dayee, however, continues inviting people to the straight path of Islam, enshrined in the sacred texts and practiced by the companions of Prophet ﷺ.

A person(*dayee)* who presents such pure and pristine religion among people with perverted tastes for religion, is sure to face the worst kind of ire of the masses, because, his preaching of the original version of Islam is a potential threat to their professional version, a threat to their very religious stature itself. It is also detrimental to their business interests and the sociopolitical seats of power. A positive response to the caller of truth would mean for them, depriving themselves of the privileges and prestige they have earned. Such a call to practical religion stirs the easy- going lifestyle of masses on one hand, and on the other hand; their leaders feel that their status in society as champions of Islam is under threat. All these put together; make the life of the caller to truth, so hard that it is really far easier to lose life just once, in a battlefield.

The worst kind of challenge, is posed by those religious leaders who gain worldly benefits; in the name of religion. The secret to their apparent success is not the service to religion in its real sense but rather they thrive on the distorted version of religious practices, creating niches for themselves in some institutions or religious functions as public speakers. They either present the religion according to whims and wishes of masses or else establish their business in the name of some religious personality of repute in the past. Still others sell a formula of assuring tickets to paradise, without a slightest change in the life style of complacent middle class Muslims.

A sincere call for return to puritan Islam is a threat to all such categories of people, as; a success of such a movement is bound to destabilize their respective positions. Further, such positions of authority for longer times, fills them with such a sense of pride that they oppose all such efforts, falsely calling them to be a threat to religion. As such, they are not expected; to respond positively to a person who could in any way, injure their false pride or destabilize their social positions.

Such opposition from people higher up in social hierarchy creates great hardships for the true representative of religious reform and revival. The existing religious circles announce boycott of such individual, issue verdicts of anti-religious beliefs and even push him into economic disaster. This all is done to devalue his sincere efforts among masses who in turn, backed up by higher echelon, make it impossible for this noble soul to survive in that society.

These are the situations when any effort at revival of Prophetic *Sunnah* becomes akin to getting killed a hundred times. That is why Prophetic ﷺ promised a reward equivalent to that of a hundred martyrs for such an effort.

As, the power of Almighty Allah is unlimited, so is the scope for progress in the realm of divine religion, which is full of unlimited opportunities and a vast table spread of feasts. But the major share of this feast is reserved for someone who is ready to sacrifice his very being for the noble cause of revival. This is not a stage for dignity and honors but a juncture of adversity and ignominy. To survive through such testing times is like walking up-to gallows.

But no doubt; none can achieve the intimate experiences of divine religion unless he is ready to endure all this for Allah alone; as described in the Quran[9]:

<div dir="rtl">وَمَا يُلَقَّىٰهَآ إِلَّا ٱلَّذِينَ صَبَرُواْ وَمَا يُلَقَّىٰهَآ إِلَّا ذُو حَظٍّ عَظِيمٍ</div>

"But no one will be granted such goodness except those who exercise patience and self-restraint-no one is granted it save those who are truly fortunate.]"

The Real Revivalism:

The renewal and revival of Islam in contemporary world; has erroneously been undertaken by some as enforcement of a particular system through political revolution. This interpretation of religion is sheer absurdity. The *Tajdid* in fact refers to revival of the essence of Islamic religion and not any political revolution. Here is a brief account of revivalist activities, which are required urgently and earnestly in the contemporary Muslim world:

1. Presently, a mere verbal proclamation of the article of faith, is taken, as faith itself. It needs to be emphasized that it is the contemplation and a deeper understanding of the article of faith, which is required rather than the utterance of a few words.
2. The Quran is invariably taken as a book of recitals, whereas what is needed is its introduction it as a book of contemplation and guidance, for humankind.

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[9] Al-Quran, 41:35.

3. In most of the religious seminaries, 'Hadith' is being taught as sub-ordinate to *Fiqh* of specific schools. The 'Hadith,' however, needs to be a permanent and primary subject in all *Madrasas*.

4. The religious worship has become ritualistic. The need of the hour is to revive the essential spirit of worship.

5. In contemporary Muslim world, certain movements were launched for establishment of political systems. This interpretation needs to rectified, as Islam in the real sense lays stress on individual reform and not on any political upheaval aimed at changing the social system.

6. The present day Muslims have forgotten their responsibility as *Dayees* group. They have applied *Dawah* title to social work and some other such activities. This is a gross misunderstanding. The *Dawah* and *Shahadah* activity in Islam demands a revival of the spirit of 'Calling people to God.'

7. The Quran repeatedly calls for following the example of Prophet ﷺ in all walks of life, *(ittibah-e-rasool)*, which has unfortunately turned into a mere lip service of loyalty, *('ishq-e-rasul')* to Prophet ﷺ. This un-Islamic concept of prophet-hood, needs to be replaced with the revival of original Quranic concept of Prophets ﷺ. (Al-Quran, 4:80)

8. The worship of One God, the most essential component of Islamic faith; has been diluted to the extent of worship of elders and ancestors. This grave situation needs redressed in order to revive the concept of *Tawhid* in letter and spirit.

9. Further, the battles of Prophetic period have been displayed out of proportion in almost the whole body of *Seerah* literature. Instead we have to produce such books in the modern world, on *Seerah* and Islamic history, as highlight the *Dawah* aspect.

10. The religion has turned into a formalistic and traditional structure. It is the urgent need of the hour to revive the Islamic religion revealed by Allah in the Quran and practices of the Prophet ﷺ as enshrined in the *Sunnah*.

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CHAPTER TWO

THE HIGHWAY AND THE STREETS

The Quran enjoins upon Muslims to establish the religion and not be divided in Surah Al-Shura verse 13[10]. The message is repeated in another Quranic verse thus[11]:

﴿شَرَعَ لَكُم مِنَ الدِّينِ مَا وَصَّى بِهِ نُوحًا وَالَّذِي أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ وَمَا وَصَّيْنَا بِهِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَمُوسَى وَعِيسَى أَنْ أَقِيمُوا الدِّينَ وَلَا تَتَفَرَّقُوا فِيهِ ...۵﴾

"...Allah has ordained for you the same religion which He enjoined upon Noah and which We have revealed to you, and which We enjoined upon *Abraham and Moses and Jesus; so that you should remain steadfast in religion and not be divided in it...*"[42:13]

﴿وَأَنَّ هَٰذَا صِرَاطِي مُسْتَقِيمًا فَا ـ تَّبِعُوهُ وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا ـ لسُّبُلَ فَتَفَرَّقَ بِكُمْ عَن سَبِيلِهِ ۚ ذَٰلِكُمْ وَصَّاكُم بِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ﴾

"*[He has enjoined], 'this is My straight path, so follow it; and do not follow other ways: that will lead you away from his path.' That is what He enjoined upon you so that you may take heed.*"[6: 153]

The religion (*Din*), here has been compared to a way. For any journey; there is a highway and then there are numerous streets around. Anyone who opts for the broader and clear highway is sure to reach his destination. On the other hand, those who, instead, take to streets for their journey, are at risk with every possibility of losing the way to the desired goal.

Similarly, there are some basic principles in religion unanimously agreed upon by everyone. There are some secondary and minor clauses drawn through reason research and speculation, with likelihood of difference among scholars

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[10] Al-Quran, 42:13.
[11] Al-Quran, 6: 153.

in interpretation of basic principles. The various differences among Muslim *Ummah*, in fact belong to this second category of legal opinions and not in the basic principles.

Allah (vide supra), enjoins upon the believers to be firm on the basic principles of religion referred to here as '*Din'* or the highway of religion; and not to get entangled in the minor details. In other words, they are advised to follow the agreed upon principles and to desist from futile discussions and debates on points of differences. The former way is described here as following 'highway' and the later as following 'streets'.

Following streets instead of highway is actually a case of 'shift of emphasis' from the essential to secondary or from the real issues to non-issues. For instance, the essential element in *Iman* or faith is the realization of God. Focusing on, verbal pronunciation of article of faith instead of its spirit, chanting of few words in place of remembrance of God, taking care of formalism in *Salat* instead of supplication with a softened heart, assessing religious acts quantitatively instead of their quality or addressing issue of faith as case of scholastics rather than an intimate relation with the creator, are all the cases of shift of emphasis. Similar is the case of obedience to Prophet ﷺ being pronounced as verbal loyalty, or case of shifting focus from actual reform of evils(in society) to malign the image of someone doing a righteous job.

These and many more such acts belong to the category of unwarranted shift of emphasis. The earlier nations also lost their ways because of similar indulgence in irrelevant debates. The Muslim *Ummah* is also fearfully heading to similar

disaster. For this reason alone, they are warned repeatedly, in the Quran and the prophetic *Sunnah* to desist from leaving the highway and indulging in debatable intricacies; which is bound to mislead them and take them away from divine benevolence. They will in that case be repeating the history of past nations and meeting the same fate.

The drawbacks of such a shift of emphasis can be, understood through a simple example. Suppose two persons, start a joint business. Now, they can either focus their attention on the essential aspects of business, like; to be punctual in timings, regular supply of commodities, customer care, relations with related departments and maintaining accounts etc. Alternatively, they can initiate unending discussion and debate about the wall paintings of the shop, size of signboard, choice of internal decoration, carpet or marble flooring etc. These are all in fact secondary issues and those who indulge in such things can never become good businesspersons.

Anyone would call it a stupidity in business. Nevertheless, when it comes to matters of religion, everyone is busy repeating the same folly. Muslims are invariably busy with non-religious matters with religious enthusiasm and that is the reason, the revival of Islam is nowhere in sight despite tall claims. Muslims have rather turned away from the Quranic injunctions mentioned above.

In the contemporary world, in most of the Islamic *Madrasas* for example, there is hardly any emphasis on quality of *Salah* being offered, whereas, there are perennial debates on its formalistic and legal aspects. In the Muslim congregations and

conventions, nobody focuses on the need to reform internal weaknesses while there are unending debates and lectures on external threats and conspiracies against Muslims. In almost all Muslim nations, hardly, we find any worthwhile movements of individual or social reform; however, there are ample examples of personalities busy with religious fervor in bringing political revolutions.

All these are cases of losing the righteous path and groping with trails. Moreover, those who do so, are destined to be misled and never to reach the destination. An impartial study of the Quran will reveal a picture of true Islam, quite contrary from the one prevalent among contemporary Muslims. One rather gets convinced that the Muslims have also fallen in the same pit as predicted in the Quranic verse above. In Quranic terms, Muslims today are following those tortuous streets, as a clear departure from the straight highway.

The essential Islam as presented in the Quran focuses on spirit while the version practiced by contemporary Muslims lays stress on its ritualistic aspect only. The Quranic concept of *Ibadah* or worship is, based on sincerity while with the Muslims today, what invites attention is its formalities. Similarly, the loyalty to Prophet ﷺ according to the Quran is measurable as the degree of one's obedience to Prophetic Sunnah; while in practice it is just verbal expression of love without parallel evidence in personal character. While the Quranic account of Islam is characterized by humbleness, the Muslims today exhibit conceit and pride as the hallmarks of Islam. In the same way, the calling to Islam through a sincere struggle is the wise counsel for final salvation, while Muslims

today invite everyone's participation in transitory national struggles. The Quran describes the sincerity in faith and righteous actions as the key to success in *Aakhirah*, the Muslims consider the verbal proclamation of faith as the only criterion. The Quranic concept of Islamic religion focuses on individual reform while the Muslims consider it a movement for confrontation with incumbent governments.

Thus, all these and many more similar examples in the Quran make it amply clear that, there is wide gulf between the essence and practices of Islam. While the essential Islam is *Aakhirat* Oriented, the practical one is oriented to politics. Whereas the Quran lays emphasis on following the straight path, the contemporary Muslims are still following streets of their own choices. This is a grave situation and Muslims must reform their attitudes. Moreover, in case they pay no heed to this aspect, they would be heading on a path away from divine benevolence, surely leading to a disastrous end.

Why this Quranic injunction:

The reason, why the Quran lays so much emphasis on basic principles of Islam is that it is always so that branches take origin from stem and not the vice versa. If somebody plants few leaves or branches and provides all necessary agricultural support like manure and irrigation; it would be a futile exercise and the leaves would wither and dry up soon, never growing into a tree. In contrast, if you provide a similar support to a seed, it gradually but surely grows into a tree with abundant branches and leaves.

Similar is the case with religion. If you direct all your energies on nourishment of branches or accessories, leave aside any real benefit to religion, the branches are also bound to wither in due course. However, if the hard work is, focused on the essential principles of Islam, it would not only make the stem stronger, rather the branches will also flourish. It implies that following a highway leads you to the destination, without losing the sight of by-lanes while by following the latter, one would get stuck up in blind streets, and deprived of the destination as well. That is like losing the tree as well as branches.

The Revivalist activity:

The contemporary Muslim world is engaged in various movements in the name of religion; but all of these are invariably, akin to following the streets or accessory aspects of Islam. The real job at hand, though a difficult one; must be to revive the essential principles of Islam. There is hardly any alternate solution to that.

The responsibility is a heavy one; because, it involves a campaign against one's own people. While such crusades against enemies make one hero or a leader, similar campaigns among own people strips one of the existing position too. Describing others as enemies and then sloganeering against them, takes one to pinnacles of popularity; but one who points out flaws within and invites attention for reform, loses the esteem even among own fellows not to think of the admiration by others.

The role of a revivalist, in itself demands such a heavy price. The revivalists of Islam, paid such prices in past, losing their esteem among contemporaries, and anyone treading on the path of revival will have to face similar situations in future too. The job was never easy in the past nor would be so in future till the Day of Judgment.

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REVIVAL OF ISLAM

Tajdid literally means renewal. The *'Tajdid-i-Din'* thus means to revive the original religion, removing the dust that gathers over it with the passage of time. The cause for this dust has invariably always been one: the human interpolation in the divine message. These human interventions, begin under the temporal motives, but get firmly established over the time, becoming sacrosanct and indistinguishable from the original text. People treat these intrusions sacred at par with the divine revelation. The Quran describes this phenomenon as deifying their scholars and monks:

"They have taken their learned men and their monks for their lords besides Allah....."[12]

These additions, in the original religions are introduced through two routes:

      i)   Externalizations or attempting to explain, the religious principles through human motives.

      ii)   Rationalization or logical explanations of religious teachings.

The first kind of fallacy is visible in initial chapters of Bible (Old Testament), where the formalities for sacrifice have been discussed in elaborate details (unbecoming of a divine text). These sophisticated rituals termed as burdens and shackles in

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[12] [Al-Quran, 9:31]

the Quran (7:156), have in fact nothing to do with the original *Shariah* of Moses. These were the deductions of later day Jewish scholars, incorporated into the sacred text. Similar in nature is the innovation of monasticism or monkhood in Christianity (57:27); a late manifestation of Christian spirituality, never preached by Jesus; that found its way into the sacred Bible. These, practices which were initially introduced merely as rituals, gradually crept into the principles of Judaism and Christianity, to the extent, the original divine religion was lost in formalism.

The second category of human intervention in divine religion is manifest in Christian concepts of trinity, redemption, logos, son of God. These beliefs; were, in fact never preached by Jesus and are even missing in the Bibles of Luca, Mathews, Mark and John. The concept of redemption was introduced by St. Paul however he doesn't advocate trinity as a basic belief. These were all, the handiworks of scholastic theologians that came into being much later. It so happened that when Christian faith spread beyond Syrian borders, the Christian scholars coined these terms to convince other nations particularly Egyptians and Greeks to enter the folds of this new faith. It was; an attempt to explain teachings of Jesus in the philosophical language of the addresses, and is termed as their imitation in the Quran [9:30]. These sayings of the Christian clergy gained sacrosanct currency even among rulers. During the rule of the roman emperor Constantine-I, the Christian church, through First Council of Nicaea introduced these innovative concepts among basic beliefs of Christianity. This also marked the beginning of solidarity of church and state

and exile of the puritanical Christian faith. As such, the contemporary Christian faith in vogue was once the scholastic theology of Christian scholars that merged with and finally eclipsed the original faith.

The Islamic faith; similarly, is today eclipsed like the religions of earlier nations. The first responsibility for revivalists would be to identify and dust out the impurities from the original faith; as no revivalist activity can achieve success unless human interpolations are removed from the religion (*Din*). The Prophet of Islam ﷺ had warned the Muslim *Ummah* to desist from such attempts in several Ahadith. His last address to Muslims as recorded in Muwatta of Imam Malik goes thus:

'I leave behind, two sources; and if you hold fast to these, you will not lose your way. These are Allah's word (Quran) and Sunnah of his Prophet.'[13]

However, in later period, as expected and predicted by Prophet ﷺ, people added extras to the Prophetic legacy. It gradually and innocently progressed to the level of add-ons that had ruined the previous nations. Nevertheless, there was a basic difference between the two examples. In case of other religions, the legal formalism, scholastics and spiritual formulations of later day had crept in the divine script becoming indistinguishable from the original text. In contrast, despite all, the Islamic primary text (Quran), is free of such interventions, making it possible for anyone to rediscover the original divine message.

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[13] Al-Muwatta Imam Malik: Book 46, No. 1628.

Here is a Hadith quoted by Jubai ibn Nafer on the authority of Auf ibn Malik. He said, once, we were sitting in the company of Prophet ﷺ when he turned his gaze towards the sky and said:

'The time is approaching when the Ilm (knowledge) will be lifted back'.[14]

One of the Ansars, namely Ziyad ibn Labid asked, *'O Messenger of Allah, will it be so that Ilm will be taken back from us, while the Quran is with us and we are sharing the Quranic knowledge with our women and children'*. The Prophet ﷺ remarked, *'I considered you among intelligentsia of Madina; Don't you see that the Jews and Christians continue to recite the Taurah and Bible, but their practices don't conform to the textual teachings'?*[15]

Once, when Jubair met *Shadad and* narrated this Hadith to him; he affirmed that Auf was right in transmitting these words. *Shaddad* further said, 'Do you know what does lifting of *Ilm*, imply? When Jubair replied in negative, *Shadad* explained, 'It means the essential spirit and reverence will be lifted, leaving no sincere devotee'.

When decadence befalls on those who have been bestowed with Divine guidance; it is not so that all forms of religious practices disappear. It never happened during history of mankind. Rather the religion is represented by ritualism alone while the devotion, sincerity and piety vanish altogether as described in the Quran (57:16). The religiosity of devotion is characterized by humble submission to divine message

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[14] *(Musnad Ahmad#219/4, Sunan Ibn Majah#4097)*
[15] Abdul Barr, *Jamia Bayan al-Ilm wal Fadhluhu* vol II, p-153.

through a tender heart; while the formalistic practices remain confined to external organs never touching the heart. The conscious experience of divine presence and the unexplainable inner spark is missing in the later.

A people of book; faces such a stage of spiritual decline when the divine religion is reduced to a technical art; measurable by human standards. Since the inner qualities, cannot be gauged, the religious scholars exhaust their energies in devising methods for exterior estimation of religious acts. As a result, these arts flourish widely with specialists of all such arts available all around, discussing and debating the tangential aspects of religion.

As a result, the scholars with knowledge and experience of quality religion become extinct. The spirituality characterized by tender hearts, closeness to God and perpetual consciousness of the Day of Judgment, get replaced by standards of spiritual acrobats. The 'Calling to Allah' as a sign of sympathy with humanity, takes the forms of polemic literature, lecturing, debates and even physical conflicts.

When, the people of book become so hard hearted; the only way to return to sincere devotion is through reform of the religion from impurities and revival of the purest religion contained in divine book and prophetic *Sunnah*. No manufactured formula, is expected to work at this stage.

Thus, the *'Tajdeed-e-Deen'* would mean, removing the temporal add-ons and reviving the puritanical Divine religion, leaving no human barriers in between.

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CHAPTER FOUR

FIQH

The compilation of Hadith took place much later than the compilation of Quran. When a body of Hadith literature came up; it was noted that despite consensus, there were occasional variations among the text of Hadith, narrated by different companions of Prophet ﷺ. For example; in case of five obligatory prayers, all the narrators were united on the number of units in each prayer, but they differed on, whether the Prophet ﷺ recited the word *Ameen*, silently or a bit louder.

It led to emergence of two opinions. The Hadith scholars or *Muhaddithin* treated this matter as subsidiary with possibility of more than one example or interpretations. The jurists or *Fiqh* experts adopted a more dogmatic stand, with only one appropriate possibility, in both the primary and subsidiary matters. As a result, the latter group initiated unending debates on such issues, to prove only a particular option as correct, thus asking for other opinions to be withdrawn.

However, the multiplicity of Hadith narrations resulted in multiple schools of *Fiqh* while trying to create a standard *Fiqh*. In such cases, a quotation from Imam Shafii is quite apt: *'my opinion is right with the possibility of being wrong, while other opinions are wrong with a possibility of being right'*. He believed that others too possess prophetic traditions as I do, and as such, the chances of its being right or otherwise is possible in both cases.

A more pragmatic approach would be to presume that in subsidiary matters, where the narrations differ; there is room for obedience of Prophet ﷺ in different ways without any factual difference in the spirit.

Thus, the *Fiqh* created complexities as pointed out by Shah Waliullah in his *'Hujjatullah al-Balighah'*, thus:

'The *Fiqh* was not compiled during prophetic period, nor were such debates prevalent, as initiated by Jurists (*Fuqha*) in later period. They, try to categorize each and everything with meticulous description of clauses and sub-clauses along-with valid proofs for each. Further they presume hypothetical situations and try finding out legal solutions for these, according to its nature whether serious one or with limited implications; and many more such examples. However, it was so during prophetic period that, Prophet made ablution and the companions followed his example, without categorizing various components into obligatory, preferable, allowed etc. Similarly they followed the prophetic example in prayers and *Hajj* too. This was the routine with prophet too, that he hardly ever described for example the different components of ablutions as obligatory, recommended, permissible or disliked or a necessity of quick succession in components etc. The companions also, rarely asked such questions. Abdullah Ibn Abbas RA, narrates that *'Prophet's companions were the best people I came across; they enquired only thirteen questions during the whole lifetime of Prophet ﷺ.'* [16]

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[16] Shah Waliullah *Hujjatullah al-Baligah*, vol. I

The word 'Fiqh' as understood today, finds no mention in the Quran or Sunnah. As a special science of Islamic law, it came up after the first century AH, with the spread of Islam beyond Arabian borders. The Muslim empire expanded from Chinese borders to frontiers of France. Many new races entered the folds of Islam and multiple new problems cropped up necessitating appropriate answers from Islamic law. Iraq emerged as the first centre of Islamic law. The jurists there responded to these questions through their understanding and interpretations of the revealed knowledge.

The Hadith literature had not yet, been compiled. As such, none of the jurists had the complete Hadith literature available to him, as we see in libraries today. That is why, the early Fuqha often changed their opinions on availability of relevant Hadith. We often find in old books of Fiqh, statements like:

'This is the earlier opinion of Abu Hanifah, but he had withdrawn later...'

'This was the opinion of Shafi when he was in Iraq, and here is his revised judgment in Egypt...'

'Here is one of the narrations from Imam Malik (or from Ahmad ibn Hanbal), and here is the other one..'

The actual campaign for compilation that gained momentum in middle of second century (AH) was in fact a response of the Muhaddithin (Hadith Scholars) to methodology of jurists in

Iraq. To paraphrase, the compilation of Hadith was a part of the movement to base the legal verdicts on *Hadith* and *Athar* instead of Ray or personal opinions. This is the main reason, we find, in earliest Hadith collections, the various traditions predominantly relating to legal matters only; for example the Muwatta of Imam Malik.

Even in the Hadith collections of later period, containing all kinds of *Ahadith*; the chapterization continued to follow the *Fiqh* pattern. It is because of this reason that Imam Bukhari prepared a blue print of his 'Sahih al-Bukhari' based on these *Fiqh* chapters before the actual collection. Therefore, we find certain headings with only a solitary Hadith or the Quranic verse under some while none under others.

As for *Fiqh*, its scope and significance continued even after compilation of Hadith. Though the principles of obligatory duties (*Ibadat*) were same with entire community of Prophet's companions, there were some variations in minor details. So it needed to be resolved as to which method be followed. So, there appeared two schools of thought, the *Muhaddithin* and the *Fuqha* or Jurists.

The *Muhaddithin* on one side believed that any of the companions could be followed. According to Asama ibn Zeyd; he once enquired from Qasim ibn Muhammad ibn Abu Bakr about reciting the Quran behind an Imam in silent-prayers *(Zuhr and Asr)*; and he replied: 'there is precedence for you among companions, whether you recite or don't recite'. Umar ibn Abdul Aziz is reported to have said: *'Every companion is an Imam and it is genuine to follow anyone among companions'*.

According to Muhammad ibn Abd al-Rahman Sairfi, he once inquired from Ahmad bin Hanbal, 'If there is difference in practice of two companions, should we do a critical evaluation and follow the better practice?, and he replied in negative. When I again asked as to what was the way out; he said, '*you may adopt and follow anyone you like*'. It is because of this reason that, there are differences among *Ulama* about exact school of law (*Masalik*) followed by earlier Hadith Scholars. In fact they didn't follow any particular *Maslik,* in the current usage of the term.

The *Fuqha* (Jurists); however had different opinions. As reported by *Abu Umar, 'Imam Shafii, Leyth bin Saád, Awzai, Abu Thaur* and some others believe that when there is difference of opinion in a particular case, both can't be correct; naturally only one has to be right and the other wrong. In such a situation, it is mandatory to assign precision and currency to one in accordance with the Quran, the *Sunnah, Ijma* and general principles of *Qiyas.*

In the matter of above debate; no doubt, the *Muhaddithin* were better placed; as the question of right or wrong is not always there, though it could be so occasionally. For example, Prophet ﷺ according to some traditions believed that some animals like rats were a deformed species from earlier human generations while there are other *Ahadith* wherein Prophet ﷺ described all species as pre-existing and not from any deformed human race. *(Abu Dawud).* Here it is apparent that only one statement could be correct and we are bound to follow one and leave the other. Similar is the case of children of polytheists. According to one set of traditions, the children

will follow their polytheist parents in hell (Ibn Kathir); while it has been mentioned, in some other traditions that, children are born innocents and if they die in infancy, they will go to paradise (Ahmad). According to another tradition recorded by *Tibrani*, when Prophet ﷺ was asked about the fate of children of polytheist parents; he said, *'They would be attendants to the paradise dwellers'.* As one child can't be present at two places; it is genuine to critically analyze the statements and find out the correct one.

However, as for the small differences in matters of worships; these, either, belong to very minor details or at least, do not pertain to the class of right or wrong choices, as discussed above. Here the difference, in fact, is indicative of multiplicity or more than one possibility and not the truth and untruth. It is because of this reason that we find examples of different practices in similar cases by same companion. For example, Imam Malik reported on the authority of Urwah, that Umar RA, while addressing from pulpit, recited a Quranic verse of Prostration, climbed down and prostrated; while audience followed him. Nevertheless, in a similar situation in the next Friday address he did not dismount for prostration. When people prepared for prostration, he asked them to remain seated. In another example even reported by Imam Shafi, Umar RA once entered the *Masjid* and offered two units of *Salah* before taking his seat. The next day, he offered only one unit and when asked about it; he replied, it was an optional one, and you may increase or reduce at will. Similarly, Umar RA is also, reported to have recited *Bismillah* silently at one occasion and aloud at the other while beginning a *Salah*.

Abdullah ibn Abbas RA knew it very well that Messenger of Allah ﷺ had once, in case of relentless rain, had asked companions to announce from *Masjid*, 'Pray at your residences' instead of 'Come for prayers!' So once, in a similar situation on Friday, he asked the caller to announce from *Masjid*: 'Pray in your homes' instead of 'Come for prayers!' the people were wonder struck to hear this. But Ibn Abbas RA said: 'The practice belongs to someone much superior to me (Prophet ﷺ); and I didn't like you to bother you out of your homes in such sludge.

A dedicated study of the life of Prophet ﷺ and his companions, reveals that Worship to Allah despite, being prescribed regularly, does not mean, in detail, a stereotyped repetition of certain formalities, as we find in compiled *Fiqh* literature of a particular school of *Fiqh* (*Maslik*). Though the worship had a definite structure; but there was no rigidity in its formal details. These differences grew occasionally out of exceptional circumstances. For example, the circumambulation of *Kabbah* (*Tawwaf*) with shoulders raised confidently (*Ramal*), though considered a *Sunnah* by most later-day scholars; but Abdullah ibn Abbas, described it a transient act of Prophet ﷺ in a certain situation. It so happened that, the Makkan polytheists teased Muslims, saying, *'you have turned frail due to fevers in Madina!';* and the Prophet ﷺ adopted this stance just in order to refute them, and that it was not a permanent *Sunnah*. *(Hujjatullah al- Balighah)*

Similar is another example arising incidentally out of a sincere desire for reward. As reported by *Tirmidhi, Abu Dawud* and Nasai; Rifaá ibn Rafei once offered prayers behind Prophet ﷺ

and had a sneeze. He loudly recited, the wordings *'Alhamdu lillah.....'.* After the prayers, Prophet ﷺ asked as to who spoke loudly; but everyone kept mum. When he asked the third time, Rifaa RA responded, it was me! The Prophet ﷺ said, by my lord in whose control is my life, thirty angels had rushed to take your words! *(Mishkat)*

Yet another incidence is here to explain the differences in minor details of prayers. The quality or essence of a prayer is the real thing in Islam and not only its outer form. Prophet ﷺ thus, ignored minor variations and emphasized the essence.

Asama bin Shareek RA reports that I accompanied Prophet ﷺ in *Hajj*. During the process, I saw companions coming to Prophet ﷺ with queries that they performed a particular act, in an order different from others e.g. a brisk walk between *Safa* and *Marwah* before *Tawaf* or another act of similar nature. Prophet ﷺ consoled them with words like, it is all right, no worries, doesn't make a difference, etc. But, at the same time he warned them and emphasized that, '*the real matter of concern is, if you dishonor or degrade another Muslim'*.[17]

The Quran repeatedly lays stress on performance of *Salah*; but it does not discuss minor details of the prayer. The prophetic way of performing *Salah* is recorded in the Hadith literature but it also reflects a variety of examples in minor details of the act. This is not a shortcoming, which needs rectification through a special art. Rather, it proves *Salah* to be a living activity, which cannot be a mechanically stereotyped act.

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[17] *Mishkat al-Masabih, Kitab al-Manasik.*

Fiqh thus made an unwarranted attempt to eliminate the diversity and enforce a stereotype format of prayers. It deprived the devotees of the spiritual experience of the act as a source of nearness to Allah or His presence in their individual lives; thus, focusing only on its external form. Even if the uniformity be considered necessary; the methodology adopted by the jurists to achieve the goal was far from ideal. They established their separate schools trying to find out the preferable way of performing the prayers. It so happened, that natural difference made it difficult to achieve similar results in all experiments. As a result, in order to find out one uniform way, many such ways came up; each school claiming its own way preferable over the others.

Musayb ibn Rafe, one of the successors of Companions, reports that in early period of Islam; any case with no clear injunctions in the Quran and *Sunnah* was referred to the rulers, declaring it a jurisdiction of rulers alone *(Sawafi al-Umra)*. The ruler in turn would, invite all the religious scholars to deliberate on the issue and come up with a unanimous proposed solution, to be implemented in the entire state by the ruler. The method was pragmatic and devoid of any discord. It was so because the political power was a guarantee for resolving the differences and implementation of the conclusion so drawn. The same was the formula applied in compilation of the Quran in early phase of Islam. Had it not been a political decision; the individual attempts at compilation would have created multiple problems.

Similarly, if there was at all a need to frame a uniform framework for *Fiqh* (Islamic law); the only way for a lasting

solution was the precedence of 'compilation of the Quran' i.e. the compilation by an institution under state supervision and not at individual levels. We find such instances in history too. For example, when companions differed on the number of units (*Takbirat*) in a funeral prayer, Umar RA the second caliph, officially fixed it at four leaving no room for differences or dissension. In another such attempt, Abdullah ibn Muqaffa had counseled Al-Mansur the Abbasid caliph, to work out and adopt a uniform legal system in entire Muslim empire.[18]

Fiqh, in its first phase of development meant only finding a preferred way of a particular act from different available traditions. But as the questions heaped because of expanding Muslim empire; the scholars took to deduction of new rules from existing legal corpus rather than searching every answer from the primary sources. This was in fact, the beginning of second phase in the development of *Fiqh*; passing from a period of preference to a period of inference or deduction. Shah Waliullah notes thus, in his *Hujjatullah al-Balighah*:

The compilation of *Fiqh* on this new methodology of deduction on questions of social and legal importance (*Muamlat*) was acceptable as emergence of new questions in every age and finding solutions based on *Qiyas* or *Ijtihad* is understandable. However extending this methodology to the sphere of worships (*Ibadah*); was undoubtedly an error in *Ijtihad*, which turned *Ibadah* into a set of lifeless stereotyped rituals instead of soulful living experience.

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[18] *Risalah al-Sahabah.*

The Prophet of Islam ﷺ had described him as a harbinger of a simple religion but introduction of intricacies in matters of worship (*Ibadah*) turned the simple religion into a complex art to be decoded by legalists alone. Like the intricacies in any art, the religious rituals also became subjects of complex formalism. Shah Waliullah, writes further in his *Hujjatullah al-Balighah*:

'Thus, every one focused on intricate details. Someone for example; was deliberating on 'Usul al-Fiqh' in detail, making elaborate discussions and classifications of different clauses and sub-clauses.'[19]

Because of all these, the debates; never seen during period of *Sahabah*, started on matters of worships as observable in following example:

Imam Shafii (150-204 A.H), when first visited *Kufa* and observed a Muslim praying in the *Masjid* in a different way, called him and said: *'Pray in the right way, to save your face from hellfire!'*

The young-man replied: 'I have been praying here in the same manner for more than 15 years in presence of Muhammad ibn Hassan (d.189 A.H) and Abu Yusuf (d.182), but they never criticized me as you did.' The two imams mentioned here were incidentally present in the premises of *Masjid* and the man approached them with the complaint and enquired if ever they noticed any shortcoming in his prayers. They asked him to go back to this new man inside (Imam Shafi) to ask him certain questions to assess his knowledge*. 'First ask him how does he start the prayers?'*

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[19] Shah Waliullah, *Hujjatullal al-Balighah*, p. 359.

Imam Shafi replied: *'I start my prayer with two Faraidh (obligatory acts) the intention and Takbir and one Sunnah, the raising of hands!'*

When the man conveyed his answer to the two scholars standing outside and awaiting the response; they exclaimed: *'the man appears to be among the men of knowledge!'*

It is however expected that a similar situation between two companions of Prophet ﷺ would never have initiated such a debate.

A similar incident relating to Imam Abu Hanifah is reported by Fadhl bin Musa. He narrates, "I accompanied him when Abu Hanifah once visited the famous contemporary *Muhaddith*, Ahmash (d.147) when he was sick. Imam Abu Hanifah while consoling the sick remarked: *'I would have visited you frequently had I not considered it a trouble for you!'* The host response was much unexpected. He said, *'You are never welcome with me whether you are in your own home or here!'* Fadhl bin Musa relates that on our way back home, Abu Hanifah told me: *'Ahmash never observed a fast or took a bath in the right way.'* It was so because Ahmash followed a different methodology in both the acts; remarks Fadhl bin Musa.[20]

It becomes evident again that such a response could never be expected in a similar situation, between two companions of Prophet ﷺ particularly in matters of secondary importance.

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[20]Abdul Barr, *Jamia Bayan al-Ilm wal Fadhluhu,* vol. II, p. 157.

Such debates led to the development of an art in the name of *Fiqh* not even known to *Sahabah*; for example that there are in ablution, four obligations, thirteen *Sunnah*'s and eight preferred acts. The *Fiqh* discussions about *Din*, occasionally led to some very unpleasant experiences. It is reported that Imam Abu Hanifah once told Al-Awzai that Alqamah was more knowledgeable than Abdullah bin Umar, barring his superiority as a Companion of Prophet ﷺ.[21] The other example of this kind is even more repulsive. Dhahak, a *Fiqh* expert, considered use of perfume as a condemned practice; and when told that companions used it frequently; he remarked: *'we know better than Companions of Prophet'.*[22]

It was a practice with *Sahaba* that; they avoided and discouraged such questions. However, with *Fiqh*, it became a common practice to curiously ask even presumptive questions and look for their possible answers. Here is another example recorded by Shah Waliullah:

'Someone asked Imam Khajandi, about a person who missed his prayers for two years when he followed Shafi School. Now that he is following the Hanafi School, how should he compensate his prayers; whether in accordance with Shafi or Hanafi Law?'[23]

Such discussions were unfamiliar to Companions of Prophet ﷺ. They would rather discourage such queries with the remarks*: 'do you want to turn Din of Muhammad into the Jewish law?'*

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[21] Shah Waliullah, *Hujjatullal al-Balighah*, p. 327.
[22] Abdul Barr, *Jamia Bayan al-Ilm wal Fadhluhu,* vol. II, p. 155.
[23] Shah Waliullah, *Hujjatullal al-Balighah*, p. 378.

But, in later periods such questions were boldly asked and proudly answered, considering *Fiqh* as a great domain of knowledge. Commenting on this, Shah Waliullah observes: 'the following period produced personalities who would not hesitate in answering such questions of trivial nature and believed that since *Fiqh* provides a solid base for Din, it needs to be studied and preached.[24]

This is the period marked by appearance of gulf between School of Hadith and School of Ra'y. A Prophetic Hadith narrated by Abu Hurayra RA was in common circulation those days wherein Prophet ﷺ, is reported to have said: *'My Ummah will follow the Book of Allah and my Sunnah for some time and then will start following Ray (personal opinions) and would lose the track.'*[25]

Qasim bin Muhammad bin Abu Bakr is reported to have revolted against School of Ray, saying: *'You are in habit of asking questions, we never asked from Companions, and are curious about things we were never inquisitional about'.*[26]

Such deliberations in *Fiqh*, led to sub clauses and legalities, never known to class of Companions and aroused discontent among visionary Islamic scholars. Baqiah ibn Walid reports that Imam Awzai (d.157 A.H), once said: *'O'Baqiah, The Ilm or knowledge is only that, which was transmitted by Companions*

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[24] Shah Waliullah, *Hujjatullal al-Balighah,* p. 352.

[25] Abdul Barr, *Jamia Bayan al-Ilm wal Fadhluhu* vol. II, p. 134.

[26] Shah Waliullah, *Hujjatullal al-Balighah,* p. 317.

of Prophet ﷺ and what is not transmitted by them is not Ilm at all.'[27]

Similarly Said ibn Jubayr (d.95 AH) a successor said: *'What was not known to Companions of Badr is not Din at all.'* The issue was reflected even in the poetry of the period; one of the poets noting: *'People digged, discovered and introduced things in Din (Islam) never preached by Prophet ﷺ.'*

Abdullah bin Musalma al-Qunbi reports that he once visited Imam Malik and found him weeping inconsolably. When asked about the reason he answered still sobbing: *'I have wronged myself and my case now lies with Allah! Would that I had not written a word or someone would lash me for every word I have written; would that I had never given my personal opinion! Would I have never given so many verdicts?'*[28]

Imam Malik, is reported to have said, that it was not a practice with our predecessors to declare a thing genuine or forbidden manifestly.[29] Abdullah bin Musalma Qarshi reports Imam Malik as saying that this practice continued until Imam Abu Hanifah appeared and the personal opinion became widespread among people. Khalid bin Nazaar has added that Imam Malik also said: 'Imam Abu Hanifah would not have damaged the Muslim Ummah with a sword than he did with his *Qiyas* and

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[27] Abdul Barr, *Jamia Bayan al-Ilm wal Fadhluhu,* vol. II, p. 29.
[28] Abdul Barr, *Jamia Bayan al-Ilm wal Fadhluhu,* vol. II, p.145.
[29] Ibid. p. 146

personal opinion.' Ibn Ainia says: 'The Kufa was serene till Abu Hanifah appeared.'[30]

Imam Abu Yusuf was the first chief *Justice (Qadhi al-Qadha)* in Muslim History. He served as Chief justice during the reign of three Abbasid caliphs; Mahdi, Hadi and Harun Rashid. In those days, the coveted post also held the powers of Minister of Law. As such, the period observed development of *Fiqh* in general and particularly the Hanafi School of law flourished significantly. The knowledge of *Fiqh*, in fact became an essential qualification for higher positions in government and administration; as reflected in the poetry of Mahmud Waraq (d. 845 C.E.).[31]

There should not be any doubt about the fact, that the founders of different schools of law were never intolerant to each other; contrary to the noticeable trend among later generations of their followers. However, the fact remains that dividing the *Fiqh* of worships into different sects could not have borne a different fruit. History stands witness that man has always been very emotional about his supernatural beliefs or in matters beyond the domain of reason. The differences in such matters often lead to permanent barriers among the groups.

Let us take the example of *Qissas*, retribution or vengeance in Islamic jurisprudence. Imam Shafi referring to the Quranic verse 22:60, infers that vengeance of a murder must be

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[30] Ibid. p. 147
[31] Abdul Barr, *Jamia Bayan al-Ilm wal Fadhluhu,* vol. I, p. 166.

executed exactly in the same manner as the offender had applied on the victim. E.g. If someone had drowned his opponent the offender should also meet the same fate. Similarly if a victim was burnt to death the offender also deserves to be burnt to meet the ends of justice. But the *Hanafi* jurists hold a different view. They rather prescribe a uniform and standard procedure for vengeance; irrespective of the method applied by the killer. Such differences in interpretation are natural and always existed between scholars and legalists; never leading to factionalism or hatred. However even minor differences in matters of worship for example standing up for joint prayer at the onset of *Iqamah* or a bit later; leads to separation of places of worship.

It won't be unfair to conclude that the major cause of discord among Muslims are the different ways of worships compiled in form of *Fiqh* literature of different schools; although the differences were quite insignificant in nature and importance. These differences in essence reflected only diversity in performance of minor details of different acts, at most with the possibility of superiority of one method over the other. The differences were not in major acts to necessitate any intellectual effort to resolve the issues.

It however resulted into yet another greater harm. The importance of subsidiary aspects of Islamic worships to the earlier *Fuqaha* was only to the extent that they made sincere efforts to provide a readymade format for Muslims to follow with ease. But here again, the experience of history prevailed over their benign intentions. People took worships as mechanical repetition of certain stereotype acts; inadvertently

shifting the focus from spiritual advancement to format of prayers, though in practice only.

The present *Fiqh* of Worships had a two-fold influence on Muslims in general; the sectarian differences and the stagnation of Islamic thought. The School of *'Ahle Hadith'* in fact, emerged to rectify this aberration only; however, it ended up with just being another, and rather harsher, sect within the realm of Islamic *Fiqh*. The reason for this was simple; they also followed the methodology of their predecessor jurists. They exhausted their energies on issues like whether to recite Al-Fatiha behind Imam or not; and how loudly should the *Ameen* be pronounced. They, instead of accepting the variety in performance of certain acts of secondary significance, also stressed on proving one method as correct and the others as faulty. To paraphrase, they campaigned to implement a superior *Fiqh* to the existing ones; resulting into emergence of new School of *Fiqh*, exactly on the expected lines.

The only pragmatic solution; out of this imbroglio, is to separate the matters of worships (Ibadah) from the social transactions or Muamlat as it existed before the second century AH. Wheras the Ijtihad is not only permissible but desirable in case of Muamlat; the research activity in matters of Worships needs to be restricted to the collection of authentic traditions only; the efforts of establishing preferences or deduction of inferences only being unwarranted activities. Wherever we find more than one traditions about a

particular act, it is enough to record them side by side without trying one to be superior to the other.

History tells us that Harun Rashid the Abbasid caliph, once planned to implement a uniform legal system in the entire Muslim caliphate, in form of Maliki *Fiqh*. However, Imam Malik; who was alive then, denounced the idea, counseling the caliph to maintain the status quo. He argued that Companions of Prophet ﷺ followed different ways in minor details of collective obligatory duties without a conflict, and that it should not be a matter of concern even now, or ever for that matter. As such, a choice available to public need not be, blocked in the name of ease of administration.

The validity of this argument can be, gauged from the historical fact that, despite minor differences in *Ibadah*, the companions always proved a united front; while efforts made in later period to implement a uniform legal system, created an unending series of conflicts and schism in Muslim *Ummah*.

The other remedial measure of utmost importance is the need for educational reforms in Islamic seminaries, the institutions, responsible for carrying on this malaise. The only concern for our contemporary *Darul Ulums* (seminaries) is, to prove their own respective Fiqh as the only one conforming to the Quran and Sunnah.

It was in 1330 A.H that Shaykh Rashid Rida Misri visited India and happened to pay a visit to *Darul Ulum Deoband* also. During the specially organized convention in his honor, he

enquired from one of the teachers there, as to what was the methodology adopted in the institution for study of Hadith. The teacher replied that Hadith scholar (*Muhaddith*) first teaches the knowledge content of a Hadith and then; if it contradicts with the *Hanafi Fiqh*, tries to reconcile the contents of Hadith with *Hanafi Fiqh*. When asked if the methodology is same with all Ahadith; Shaykh was surprised with the affirmative answer of the teacher. As reported by Maulana Muhammad Yusuf Nibori (1908-1977), he said: *'It is unfair and blatant prejudice to prove a Hadith to be Hanafi, without any proof.'*[32]

Maulana Anwar Shah Kashmiri, who taught Hadith at *'Darul Ulum'* during the days, when told about the conversation of Shaykh Rashid Rida with the teacher, took up the topic in his keynote address trying to prove that all the Ahadith are in accordance with *Hanafi Fiqh*. [33]

However, Maulana Anwar shah Kashmiri (1875-1934), towards the end of his ripe age; had realized the fallacy of this method in the study of Hadith. Maulana Muhammad Shafi (1897-1976) a student of Maulana Anwar Shah; quotes him as saying that:

'we exhausted our efforts in proving superiority of Hanafi Fiqh over others, but of no avail! At best, we can only prove our Fiqh right with possibility of being wrong or prove others being wrong with possibility of being right. In our Graves, the angels (

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[32] Muhammad Yusuf Nibori, *Nufhatul Anbar*, p. 71.
[33] Ibid.

Munkir/ Nakir), will not ask whether raising the hands in prayers was right or not; and whether it was preferable to call 'Ameen' loudly or a bit slower. We have wasted our lives on an issue of little concern in this world and the hereafter; and ignored the Prophetic mission of calling people to Allah. Alas! We have ignored the mission and are busy with debates on subsidiary and trivial non-issues.' [34]

We find a similar role of Hadith-Teacher *(Shaykhul Hadith),* in almost all Islamic seminaries, irrespective of the school of *Fiqh* these might be affiliated with. The graduates of these institutions pass out apparently as experts in Islamic knowledge, but in practice, they are more like experts in differences and conflicts. For them, the pinnacle of knowledge would be to prove themselves right compared to other schools of *Fiqh.* They thrive on minor points of details among different schools of *Fiqh;* creating multiple forums of unending debates and discussions among Muslim *Ummah.* Further, they present the trivial differences as real issues, making people believe that the worship is nothing more than repeating the rituals in a particular way.

The fact thus remains that no worthwhile reform is expected to be seen unless the process of producing such graduates from Islamic seminaries is discontinued. The conclusion that can be drawn about these *Madrasas* is; that they have transformed a

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[34] Mufti Shafi Usmani, *Wahdat-e Ummat,* p. 20.

united Muslim *Ummah,* into a badly divided house, as
mentioned in Quran:[35] ﴿إِنَّ ٱلَّذِينَ فَرَّقُوا۟ دِينَهُمْ وَكَانُوا۟ شِيَعًا ۖ كُلُّ حِزْبٍۭ بِمَا لَدَيْهِمْ فَرِحُونَ﴾

*"[Or] those who split up their religion and became divided into sects;
each oe exulting in what they have."*

Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal is reported to have described these
minor variations in rituals as a sign of vitality and immensity in
Islam. That is in essence the best explanation, because the
differences belong to forms of worship where variety is a
natural phenomenon. The presence of these differences
among Companions of Prophet ﷺ is a valid proof of their legal
validity. As such, the best explication would be to treat these
differences as signs of diversity and enormity in Islam; as
exemplified in approach of early Hadith Scholars
(*Muhaddithin*).

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[35] Al-Quran, 30:32.

CHAPTER FIVE

TASAWWUF

The *Tasawwuf* (Mysticism) as a specialized discipline of Islamic spirituality is unfamiliar in the Quran and *Sunnah*. The methodology of *Suluk* and *Tazkiyah* as compiled in books or as taught by the spiritual masters (*Shuyukh*) to their disciples, in the name of *Tasawwuf;* is no doubt an appendix to Essence of Islam. The present design of *Tasawwuf* is untraceable in teachings of Al-Quran and the Prophetic *Sunnah*.

The first person, known as *Sufi* in Muslim history was probably, Abu Hashim al-Sufi (d.150). However, the term *Sufi*, by then merely denoted someone, taking to piety and worships in excess of the commons, and the term was derived from *Suf* or woolen garments used by these devotees, in contrast to the customary outfits. It was followed by a phase in history when special guidelines, terminology and procedures were prescribed for followers of this path. By third century *Hijri*, the *Tasawwuf* had developed to a specialized discipline in Islamic Spirituality. There was a lot of fodder for this new discipline in traditions of asceticism, illumination and Vedanta philosophies of outer world. Thus a new discipline of spirituality came, which though had an Islamic tag; was in fact a parallel sect attempting to subvert Islam from within.

There is a school of *Tasawwuf*, called *Batiniyya* which appeared in Persia during third century. The proponents of

this ideology believed that the Quranic text has an overt or obvious meaning and a deeper or secret one; which is in fact the desired one, they believed. The Islamic scholars unanimously hold that such ideas were foreign to Islam and heretic (*Zandaqa*) in nature; propounded merely to cover-up the misdeeds of proponents. They proclaimed that *Sufis* do not follow any religion. One of them, when asked as to why he does not pray; replied that you continue with your recitations while we are engaged in our spiritual experiences. They further announced that the obligatory duties in Islam; are meant for common people, not the specially connected ones.

There was yet another school of Gnostics; who believed; that a seeker of truth towards the final stages of his journey merges with the Divine (*Halul* & *Fana fillah*). In other words, the God at this stage descends in his human soul leaving no distinction of human and divine. It was a manifestation of Pantheistic belief; that, everything is from God so everything is God. Yet another doctrine of *'Wahdat al-Wujud'* similar to the previous one, believed that nothing exists but God and man through his contemplation and spiritual exercises attains the stage when God acts or speaks through him. It was this belief that led Abu Husain Mansur al-Hallaj to proclaim: 'none is in my attire but Allah' and 'I am the truth'; costing him his life. The Islamic scholars (*Ulama*) declared his utterances as heretic and he, was executed in 301 A.H, during the reign of Abbasid caliph, Al-Muqtadir (908-932).

Similar are the other doctrines of *Tasawwuf*, who consider ecstasy, music and dance, as the mediums of closeness to Allah; even some of them believing that practice of sodomy

can bring them closer to Allah; quoting a fabricated Hadith in their support that *'I saw my Allah in the figure of a young-man'*.

However, these manifestations of *Tasawwuf* are not our subject of discussions, as, all these forms have been declared, by Islamic scholars, as 'Side-tracking from the straight path of *Sunnah*'. We would rather restrict to the practices of *Tasawwuf* popular among Muslims and even considered by many to be a straight course to salvation.

Types of Practices in *Tasawwuf*:

There are two popular ways in *Tasawwuf* to achieve the goal; one, the overindulgence in prescribed methods of Islamic worships, and the other one 'taking to some novel exercises' to gain spiritual experience. The former method according to Abul-Qasim, Junaid Baghdadi (d.297 A.H), was subject to its conformity to the Quran and *Sunnah*.

I. Exaggeration:

The *Sufis;* of early period (if at all they are to be labeled so), belonged, to this former class. They followed the Prophetic ways of Prayers, fasting and recitation of the Quran, however, with some exaggeration in quantity. For example Prophet ﷺ offered late night prayers (often 11 units), in addition to the five obligatory prayers; while these devote *Sufis*, took to prayers through the whole night. Whereas the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, used to fast for a few days every month in addition to the month of *Ramadhan*; these Sufis undertook perpetual

fasting (called *Sawm-i-Wisal*). While he used to recite Quranic verses for specific times; the early *Sufis*, started recitations all the time. Imam Nawawi reports that some of them even recited the Quran upto eight times a day (if it is to be believed). Such an exaggeration in obligatory worships is reported to have been discouraged in some prophetic traditions.

In one of the traditions recorded in *Sahih al-Bukhari* and *Sahih al-Muslim*, Anas RA said:

'Three men came to mothers of the faithful (wives of the Prophet ﷺ) and enquired about the Prophet's ﷺ schedule of worships. They were surprised to know about the limited hours of worship against their expectations. They whispered, we could not compare ourselves to Prophet ﷺ, as, Almighty Allah has declared him innocent. Then one of them resolved to offer prayers for the whole night; the other pledging to keep uninterrupted fasts and the third one determined to remain away from women and spend a life of celibacy. Now, the Prophet ﷺ entered the house and enquired whether they had resolved for such acts. He said: 'By Almighty Allah!, I am the most God-fearing and pious among you; still I fast sometimes and sometimes I don't, I offer prayers as well as sleep during nights, and even I have made Nikah with women as my Sunnah. Moreover, whosoever departs from Sunnah is not from me (my community).

According to another similar tradition, some of the companions of Prophetﷺ expressed their intentions to renounce the world, relinquish the women and take to

asceticism. When it came to the notice of Prophet ﷺ, he took up the issue in his address, taking strongly denouncing any such behaviour. He said the people who were, destroyed by Almighty Allah in earlier times, were ruined, because of their extremism. They put themselves to hardships and Allah treated them with a heavy hand. The ruins of their dwellings still stand to their witness, around the world. It would be better for you to Worship Allah alone, without assigning any partners to him, perform *Hajj* and *Umrah* and be straightforward so that, you; are also treated accordingly.

The literature that came up in defense of these devotees; has been summarized and analyzed by Maulana Abdul Hayee Lakhnawi (1264-1304 A.H) in his book published from *Halab* in 1966. But all these arguments are valid only if we presume in advance that their practices were in accordance with Islamic *Shariah* ; otherwise these explanations don't stand the test of reasonability. E.g. They say that it is because of the kindheartedness of Prophet of Islam ﷺ that he offered limited prayers lest it becomes obligatory for the Muslims *Ummah*. The argument appears feeble in light of the Quranic verse, 26:3 (also in 18:6 and 35:8), wherein Prophetic precedence of utmost agony for people not accepting Islam is vivified.

لَعَلَّكَ بَٰخِعٌ نَّفَسَكَ أَلَّا يَكُونُواْ مُؤْمِنِينَ﴾

"It may be that you will destroy yourself with grief, because they will not believe."[Al-Quran, 26:3]

The fact of the matter is that the benevolence of Allah, never demands his devoted men to accomplish spiritual feats like offering the morning *Salah* with ablution made in the evening, for an extended period of fifty years (as claimed by many); or for that matter to recite the Quran up to eight times a day. Allah never intends to put man to such physical trouble or to repeat certain mechanical rituals. What is essentially required of man is to develop and experience a feeling of innate love and grandeur of Allah in one's personal life. At the same a Muslim is required by Allah to spend his life in accordance with *Shariah* and invite people to Allah.

Even if the stories of extra devotion about later-day *Sufis* be true; these practices don't correspond to the Prophetic model of Islam, required to be followed by all Muslims, which are to date well preserved in form of the Quran and *Sunnah*. These startling feats narrated by later generations; in fact, have nothing to do with the Prophetic teachings. But one of the features of decadence is the loss of moral courage to censure such reports; leading to their justifications and appreciations instead of a critical evaluation and accountability. Gradually, they became sacrosanct to the extent that it became almost impossible to doubt their credibility. Although Ibn Taymiyyah (d.728) and *Dhahbi* (d.748); are known for their severe criticism of *Sufis*, even their own books are replete with descriptions of such exaggerations, without necessary critical evaluation. These legends having nothing to do with realities of Islam are even hard to believe for a common man. Unfortunately, most of our books are not immune to this trend.

<u>II. Innovation/addition:</u>

The second trend of spiritual practices, a more precarious one, is innovation in the traditional system of Islamic worships. Whereas the first trend belonged to exaggeration or transgression (*Ietda*) in Quranic terms (7:55), the second one was a case of innovation (*Ibtada*) as mentioned in verse 57:27 of the Quran. And both of these tendencies, even though with good intentions; are out-rightly detested in Islam.

The following Prophetic tradition; has been recorded in both, Al-Bukhari and Al-Muslim: *'anything innovated in our Din is rejected'. [Abu Daoud#4607 / An-Nasai#1579 / Ibn Majah#46 / Mishkat ul-Masabih#165]*

Imamzada Joghi Samarqandi (d.573 A.H), in his book *'Shiraátul Islam'* about Companions of Prophet ﷺ, notes thus: 'The companions' disapproved of anything, whether big or small, they had not seen during prophetic period.'[36]

The companions however adopted this hard stance in matters of worships (*Ibadah*) and not the social transactions (*Ma'amlat*); as the transactions depend on the circumstances that are never static and rather keep on changing. For this reason only, there is scope for new responses to changing situations, mentioned as inference (*Istinbat*) in the Quran (4:83) and *Ijtihad* in Hadith (relating to Muadh bin Jabl). However since the Ibadat or worships relate to the relationship of man with his eternal Lord; there is no question

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[36] Imam Zada Joghi Samarqandi, *Shiraátul Islam,* p. 9.

of any alteration in the Prophetic model. Although there is a scope of gradual implementation or some concessions in exceptional circumstances, there is no possibility of any presumptive addition in Ibadat. In case of *Ibadat*, rather, there are instructions for obedience to the Prophetic ways *(Ittibah not Ikhtirah)*. Abdullah bin Maghfal relates that once my father noted me saying '*Bismililah* loudly' during *Salah'*; and warned me against it saying: 'it is innovation that must be avoided '.

Islam allowed *Ijtihad* in Social transactions (*Ma'amlat*), in view of the changing circumstances; however, there is no such provision of addition or subtractions in case of worships (*Ibadat*) and Islamic spirituality. Here; following the prophetic precedence is the only way prescribed.

Abdul Barr has related a narration from Syed bin Musayb, saying that Umar bin Khatab RA, once said in his address: *'O people, the ways have been defined for you and the obligatory duties fixed. So follow the prescribed path and don't deviate from the righteous path.*[37]

Shah waliullah has enumerated about thirty cases of aberrations in Islam after the Prophet ﷺ. For example the tenth digression according to him was: 'Addition and innovation of words of devotional recitations over and above the ones recorded in Prophetic precedence; with an intention to seek closeness to Allah, His blessings and rewards. It also included the practice of adopting optional acts of devotion as

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[37] Abdul Barr, *Jamia Bayan al-Ilm wal Fadhluhu* , vol. I, p. 187.

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obligatory and preaching and propagating the same among masses.' Following is one of the traditions related by Shah Waliullah in this regard:

'*Darimi* relates from Hakam ibn Mubarak, on authority of Amr'bin Yahya referring from his father and grandfather who said: 'We used to arrive at the doorstep of Abdullah ibn Masud, before the morning prayer (*Fajr*) and then accompany him to *Masjid*. Once when we were still waiting for him to come out; Abu Musa Ashari also came and waited with us. When Ibn Masud RA came out, Abu Musa Ashari, whispered, 'O Abu Abdal Rahman! (Abdullah ibn Masud), I have noted a strange thing in Masjid, a good one to note!' When enquired by Ibn Masud as to what it exactly was; Abu Musa said you would see for yourself, if you reach there by Allah's permission. I noticed people sitting in groups with pebbles in their hands, waiting for the prayers and one of the group leader telling them to recite *Allaho Akbar* (Allah is great) a hundred times and they follow. Then the leader tells them to recite *La ilaha il-Allah* (there is no God but Allah) a hundred times and they follow him; again he tells them to recite *Subhan Allah* (Exalted is Allah), a hundred times and they follow him.

After hearing all this; Abdullah ibn Masud asked as to what was your response? Abu Musa RA said that I rather waited for you to come and guide us. He said, 'why didn't you tell them to rather count their shortcomings, instead of repeating these words on pebbles; and why didn't you assure them that none of their good deeds will go waste, even if they don't count it? At this, he relates, we followed him to *Masjid* and on reaching

the destination, he stopped at one of such groups and asked them about their practice. Their reply was that we count our recitation of the words of praise for Allah on these pebbles. To this, Abdullah ibn Masud said, 'you must instead count your sins and I stand guarantor that none of your good deeds will go unrewarded. He was very furious at their practice and remarked *'Woe to you O people! 'You have progressed to destruction so quickly, although the companions of Prophet ﷺ are still present among you in large number, Prophets garments have not worn-out, his utensils are still un-broken, and you have introduced innovations in traditional worships!'* By Allah! You are either following a *Din* (religion) better than that of Prophet ﷺ or else you are at the threshold of a gate of disobedience which is about to open.' They said, 'O Abu Abd al-Rahman, we intended only good from this practice'. Ibn Masud to this, remarked, *'there are so many who do something for good intentions but do not get a reward. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ told us that there would be many reciting the Quran, that it would not go beyond their voices and I doubt most of you might be from this class.*[38]

The same tradition has also been recorded by *Tabrani* and Abu Nayeem (in *Hulyatul Aulia*), with minor variations in wording. It is sufficient proof to show sensitive nature and dissent of the companions about even minor innovations in matters of worship; not to talk of the extent of superfluities making it a parallel sect within Islam. Not only this, even it has now become a specialized field with its experts and teachers.

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[38] *Adhalat al-Khafa an Khilafat al-Khulafa*, part-1.

<u>Descriptive Language:</u>

One of the early drives for *Tasawwuf* was to develop a '*Fiqh* of the Concealed knowledge' on the pattern of *Fiqh* of *Shariah* laws; with its own rules and principles. It was essentially an attempt to express a subjective experience in a descriptive language. However, the technical terminology can describe only the external or physical aspect of an object; as such any attempt at describing an intimate relationship of man with God, as a technical subject was bound to create division within the Islamic unity. It was just like describing love in mathematical language that resulted in a gulf between the spiritual experience and the external formats of worship. The *Dhikr* or contemplation got reduced to recitation and repetition of few phrases on rosary beads. Similarly, the contemplation on deeper meanings of the Quran (47:24) became merely recitation of Quran instead of reflection. It is because of this reason that, in addition to Allah and *'La ilaha, il-Allah'*, we find lot many, phrases having gained importance among the *Sufi* ways of *Dhikr*. On the other hand, some realities of greater significance like *Aakhirah* (*Mudathir*: 55), divine blessings (5:20), the signs of Allah (7:69) and frequent remembrance of death (as advised in Hadith) are altogether missing from the vocabulary of frequently recited words in *Sufism*. This is; because mere repetition of these words cannot create the same desired vivid experience; possible only through contemplation and reflection.

Thus; when the relation with God became a formal art, the ways and means of achieving this goal also became expressive. For example, the presumption that there are six points in

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human body, full of divine bounties. These were named; '*Lataif-e Sitta* or the six blessed points'. The first of these, was; the *Latifa-e Qalb*, or a point of heart in left side of chest just below the nipple; the second one, the *Latifa-e Ruhi* or spiritual point in right chest just above the nipple; the third one just below the umbilicus was named *'Latifa-e nafs'* or the point of desire and the fourth one called *'Latifa-e Sirri'* or the silent point, was located just in the middle of the chest. Similarly, the fifth one called *Latifa-e Khafi* or the hidden point was located in the forehead and the sixth one named *Latifa-e Akhfa* or the most secret point was presumed to be located in the brainstem. This presumption lead the experts to devise, a strange array of meditations and specific exercises to activate these points so the whole body gets focused on remembrance of Allah. Some peculiar, exercises were devised to achieve the desired concentration. For example; one of the prescribed bizarre exercises for calling *'La ilaha ill-Allah'*, goes like this. *'to close both the eyes and lips and try to push the breath, from below the umbilicus into the heart, to raise the word 'La' from below umbilicus to throat and then, transmit it to point two, calling Ill-Allah so forcefully, that it spreads from heart to all the points again.'* Many of such things, were devised with utmost obstinacy and then introduced as Para-Islamic or methods, supportive to the divine religion.

In fact, even the word supportive was nominal, in essence, presenting these exercises as alternate and better short cuts to the popular *Shariah* ways of gaining nearness to Allah. One of the holy men writes thus 'there are three ways of approaching the divine, one of these being the popular way of

prayers and recitation of the Quran (*Shariah* way), which is of course a very lengthy course to achieving the goal.' Another proponent of *Tasawwuf*, writes: 'it is a better and faster way of achieving self discipline and purification of soul.'[39]

These aberrations in fact resulted from a misunderstanding by these elders who failed to realize the difference between physical and subjective feelings. Activation of some special body-points and repetition of certain phrases might lead to inclusion of some involuntary voices in voluntary exercises; but these peculiar acrobats; have nothing to do with Islam, and is far from the desired goal of God-consciousness. It is utterly absurd and a vain proposition. Leaving aside the heartbeats and respiratory efforts, if someone repeats '*Haq Haq*' (Truth) in consonance with the sound of a machine for quite some time; it appears as if machine also sounds '*Haq Haq*'. But it would be fallacy to call this sound as remembrance of Allah. The *Dhikr* or remembrance of Allah is in fact an exalted psychosomatic experience achieved through conscious contemplation and encompassing the entire personality of a spiritual being. It is just like the memory of a departed loved one that becomes a part of his life and keeping him discontented everlastingly.

The addition of such theories in Islam was bound to introduce a more hazardous innovation, namely the preceptor-novice relationship. The ways to connect with Allah are enshrined in Quran and the prophetic *Sunnah*. However, when people discovered some novel and easier ways; the *'Ilm-e Safina'* or

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[39] 'Between Tasawwuf and life' 1963, Damascus, p-33

revealed knowledge was replaced by *'Ilm-e Seena'* or the secret knowledge known to the chosen few only. For example it is believed and claimed that, the *Samah* or the secret of musical ecstasy was transmitted directly from Prophet of Islam to Khawaja Muinuddin Chishti that led him to virtual journey to heavens (*Mi'raj*). It necessitated for seekers of truth to develop a close relationship with one having this secret knowledge and could transmit the same to novices. It also made obligatory for the *Shaykhs* or preceptors to upgrade their skills to the level that they could control the hearts of their novices and fill them with special bounties and blessings. It however, they believed, was not possible to achieve merely through performance of obligatory duties like *Sawm* and *Salah.* Hence, they took to more rigorous spiritual exercises and a class of such accomplished saints came up who could miraculously control the hearts of their disciples or transform them altogether. It is how the practices of Christian ascetics and Hindu yogis crept into the Prophetic religion of Islam in Islamic disguise itself.

At this point, the concept of priestly class got internalized in Islam; although Prophet ﷺ had clearly said: *'There is no asceticism in Islam'.*[40] The Quran equates this concept to treating people as God. There came up strange and exaggerated beliefs about these *Shaykhs* or precepts e.g.: '*Shaykh* in a people is like Prophet in an *Ummah'* or 'one who wishes to experience the presence of Allah must sit in the company of *Sufis'.*

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[40] *(Al-Silsilat ul-Sahihah#2021)*

The legends of miraculous performances of these saints were so eulogized and propagated that these became integral parts of many cultures languages and literatures. Many baseless and supernatural stories circulated among people like real facts and religious beliefs; often repeated in the congregations of these saints. By doing so, they were inadvertently projecting these saints as a class superior to the companions of Prophet ﷺ; as none of them exhibited such miracles. A few of such incidents in the life of *Sahabah*, as recorded in the traditions, are in fact examples of divine succor extended to them in exceptional circumstances. The doors of such divine assistance were open for *Sahabah* and in essence still open for Muslims if their footsteps are followed. The difference between the two can be understood from the truth that *Sahabah* through their exalted character had conquered all the evil forces of their times; while the contemporary saints, despite their claims of control over all creation, are so helpless that evil forces are trouncing Muslims all around and they can't offer any means of defense.

The cascade of priesthood didn't stop here only. The baseless stories relating to the miraculous feats of these saints often circulated as key feature of these congregations, made people so superstitious that they now consider these saints as a special class above the common masses; just like the prophets and angels. They got recognition as specially chosen people who could even exercise the divine powers; some of the privileges attributed to them being quite unreasonable. One of these new proposition was the special class of *'Aulia Allah'* in the contemporary world. These *Aulia;* are classified into two

categories: the *'Ahl-e-Irshad'* (tutors) and *'Ahl-e-Takveen'* (managers). The former category comprises of those chosen people who are responsible for guidance of people through reform and the ways to achieve nearness to Allah; the most exalted among this category being designated as *'Qutb al-Irshad'* or the grand master. The latter class on the other hand, is supposed to be more authoritative concerned with the management of global affairs including, for example, economics and defense against disasters. They are; believed to manage the world affairs through their secret powers under divine supervision; and the head among them is designated as *'Qutb al-Takveen'* or Chief Manager. The former category is thus comparable to the apostles of Allah and the latter to the Angels described, in Islamic terms, as managers or *'Mudabbirat al-Amr'*. The more astonishing fact is however, the ease with which such a major belief, not prescribed in the Quran and *Sunnah*'; was accepted by Muslims.

Although the early founders of *Tasawwuf*, might be sincere in their intentions, the contemporary Tasawwuf is in essence, the same innovation or '*Ibtida'* as mentioned in verse 57:27 of the Quran. The founders might have intended to introduce some supportive measures to the prescribed ways of worship (*Ibadah*) in achieving the essential goal of closeness to Allah. However, they probably forgot that it is fraught with danger of introducing polytheism or the worship of a class of men in place of the worship of one God. When the essential knowledge seeking nearness to Allah becomes so technical that it is not found in the Quran and *Sunnah*; the aspirants are naturally attracted to these presumably 'noble souls' believed

to possess special expertise in this field of secret knowledge. Further, by adopting these innovative methods, the spiritual masters, inadvertently entered the forbidden domain of God; as there is no place for any addition, in the matters of worship in Islam.

The two major modes of deviation during later part of Islamic History, are quite surprising: Closing the door of *Ijtihad* in *Mua'amlat* (social transactions), and the opening of these doors in matters of *Ibadat* (worships); although the Divine injunctions demanded a contrary approach. There were clear evidences in traditions, allowing exercise of *Ijtihad* in formulating responses to the changing social conditions; and the *Fuqaha* or jurists of the early period had exercised their *Ijtihad* in light of this very permission.

It was presumed and declared that nothing is left; for the scholars in later generations; although it was a deliberate and despicable overstepping, in Islam. How then, it was considered, rightful, by the Imams of *Fiqh;* to exercise *Ijtihad*, just in the second century AH; in presence of Book of Allah and the Prophetic *Sunnah*. But does it mean that their legal verdicts are superior or more comprehensive than the Quran and *Sunnah*, that none can exercise *Ijtihad* despite lapse of centuries and a sea change in social conditions since then?

For those who learnt Islam from Messenger of Islam ﷺ directly (companions); the concept of a priestly class within Islam was, strange and foreign. It was unimaginable for them; the seats of spiritual leaders, being occupied, by their successors like kingship. The companions of Prophet ﷺ could not think of any source of guidance besides the Quran and the Prophetic *Sunnah*. They could criticize Umar RA the second caliph, just

like a common person; and whenever they followed his instructions, it was not because of his personal veneration but the authenticity of his ordinance.

Similar was the case of 'Shield' of Ali RA, the fourth caliph, against a Christian. When the case; was presented before the appointed judge and Ali RA produced his servant Qanbar and his son Hassan RA as witnesses, the judge rejected the witness despite regards for Hassan RA. Ali RA questioned this stance reminding him that, Prophet ﷺ has prophesized the exalted status of Hassan and Hussain among people of paradise; the judge remarked: 'I have learnt it from you (Ali) that the witness of a son, in support of his father, is not valid'.[41]

In matters of personal following (*Taqlid*), the companions of Prophet ﷺ held the view that, if someone wishes to follow a person, he should follow the dead instead of treating any living person as his master or *sheikh*. The reason being; that nobody except prophets is infallible; and it is imminent for anyone to fall prey to the trap of *Satan*. H. Ali RA reportedly said, *"Beware of following personalities in your life as only Allah knows their final destination. It so happens; that a person performs good deeds, likely to take him to paradise and then falls in sins and dies in same state landing in hell. Similarly, a person known for his evil deeds is likely to take him to hell; but then with the grace of Allah, he turns to good and dies as a noble soul destined to be a paradise-dweller. So, if at all you have to follow someone, follow the dead (unlikely to change his position)."*[42]

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[41] *Kanzul Ummal*, vol. IV, p. 6.
[42] Abdul Barr, *Jamia Bayan al-Ilm wal Fadhluhu,* vol. II, p. 114.

ILM AL-KALAM
(Scholastic Theology)

The contemporary *'Ilm al-Kalam'* has proved a big impediment in the development of Islamic sciences. The Islamic *'Ilm al-Kalam'* was originally based on laws of nature. However, it was during Abbasid period that it was, put on the lines of Greek Philosophy. In fact, this deviation changed the status of *Ilm al-Kalam* from a useful adjunct to a detrimental factor.

'Ilm al-Kalam' in essence was an adjunct to the Islamic *Dawah* and education mission. It originally aimed at, conveying the eternal divine message in the language, terminology and idiom of the addresses. This significance of *'Ilm al-Kalam'* convinced Imam Ghazali (d.1111) to introduce scholastic theology as a supplementary subject in the religious syllabi of Islamic seminaries. He aimed at producing *Ulama* of religious sciences who are equally well versed with the contemporary trends and competent enough to represent Islam.

But *'Ilm al-Kalam'* is in fact an add-on discipline for presentation of eternal Divine message in ever-changing temporal idiom. Thus, the importance of the *'Ilm al-Kalam'* of a particular period obviously vanishes with the end of that era. Nevertheless, here again, like many other disciplines, the

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human weakness was at play. It so happens that when some prestigious names are associated with anything, it becomes sacred over the passage of time; to the extent that a stage arrives when it becomes a taboo to think of any reform or change in its format.

This is what happened with the *'Ilm al-Kalam'* of Abbasid period. It was so effective during the medieval period that those who had posed threat to Islam turned to be tame followers of Islam, instead. But now that the scenario has changed altogether, the *'Ilm al-Kalam'* of medieval periods has lost its contemporary relevance. The logic (*Kalam*) taught in the contemporary Islamic seminaries should rather be called illogical. It is so because, the medieval scholastics was based on such suppositions, which have been proved through scientific observation and experiments. In fact a discipline which came into being as a conditional requirement, secured permanent place in Islamic seminaries. Thus the Islamic system of education, though not the Islamic primary texts, followed the fallacious pattern of Christian religious education.

In fact, this background situation prevented Islam from utilizing the opportunity for its global spread, as a superior religious ideology. Our Islamic seminaries (*Madrasas*) are still engaged in producing graduates who could only be relevant in medieval times. So obviously, they are not in a position to represent Islam in a grossly transformed world. In other words, they are demonstrating practically that Islam, is a thing of the past, not compatible with the scientific age. Although some of the modern movements have tried to bridge this gap but in modified forms. E.g., some of these movements tried

present Islamic teachings in a political format. These movements though initially aimed at presenting Islam as an alternate superior model to the western views of 19th century; drifted considerably in practice. The proponents not only tried to present Islam as a political ideology; but also interpreted the Quran and the Prophetic *Sirah* in a way to justify their philosophy to the extent that, even the divine mission of Prophets was translated as establishment of political empires in different ages. In this way, their Scholastic literature rather ended up with re-interpretation of Islam, rather a misinterpretation. The Muslim followers of these ideologues were again; pushed to the stagnation where the religious *Madrasas* already stood.

Further, the relevance of this literature of 19th century ended with the Second World War; necessitating a newer *Ilm al-Kalam'* to address the intellectual requirements of modern man. But the proponents of this political ideology are still busy with their own literature, on the lines of Islamic seminaries teaching Greek scholastics. The reason for this is obvious: treating transitory *'Ilm al-Kalam'* as a permanent feature of Islam.

The history tells us that, the artillery factories set up in Syria and Egypt, for arms and ammunition for use during crusade wars are extinct now. It is so because, they lost their relevance once the conflict was over. Likewise; the Greek scholastics should have, by now, been removed from Islamic syllabi. The things introduced under special circumstances should change with the change of situation; however, we are yet to get rid of

the Greek philosophy and logic. The reason for this is simple: their inclusion in the Islamic religious books.

The period when these scholastics entered the Islamic world, corresponds to the compilation of various disciplines of Islamic knowledge. The Greek philosophy and logic appeared to Muslim scholars so captivating that they considered it the best idiom for compilation of different Islamic sciences. As a result, the Islamic literature was shaped and preserved following the Greek precedence; making the ancient logic as an integral part of Islamic libraries. The Muslim scholars get readily convinced to remove the ancient philosophy and logic from Islamic curricula; however, the problem remains as to who will then decode the medieval Islamic literature compiled in Greek-scholastics format. If the medieval philosophical content is removed from libraries, anyone could very well understand the message of the Quran and Hadith, as the divine revelation is independent of such technicalities. However, none can understand the medieval literature on *Fiqh* and *'Ilm al-Aqaid'* unless, he is well versed with Greek terminology.

The inclusion of Greek philosophy in Islamic knowledge; which even Greek have abandoned by now; resulted in development of prototype of contemplation on the Quran and derivation of *Fiqh* rules, quite different from the way followed by Prophet of Islam ﷺ and his companions. It, can be understood through an example:

The *Hanafi* scholars have postulated that *Al-Fatiha* should not be recited in congregational prayers while following an *Imam*. Maulana Rashid Ahmad Gangohi (*Deoband*) was, once

reminded of a Prophetic Hadith in this regard. Prophet ﷺ is reported to have once enquired the companions; if they recited the Quran in prayers behind an Imam; and they responded in affirmative. To this, the Prophet ﷺ said: *"Don't recite anything except Al-Fatiha"*. Maulana Gangohi defended the *Hanafi* stance, saying: "it only makes the recitation valid, but not obligatory". [43]

The example is sufficient to understand as to how the manner of religious arguments changed from simple in early Islam to the more philosophical in later periods. In light of this transformation, only such a person is qualified for the epithet, *'Aalim'* who could discuss Islamic matters in the technical language of philosophy and logic. Although this approach is quite sophisticated, the truth remains that, the original religion (*Din*) transmitted by Prophet of Islam, appears lost in technicalities. The Prophet ﷺ is reported, to have said:

"We are a simple Ummah" and *"I have been deputed with a simple religion."*

But, in practice; following the example of some Jewish and Christian religious leaders, we have turned a simple Islamic system into a highly sophisticated one. It can better be understood from the proposition that, any of the Companions of Prophet ﷺ, if alive today, would lack the requisite qualification to be appointed as *'Shaykh al-Hadith'* in our contemporary Madrasas, (God forbid).

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[43] *Nufhat al-Anbar.*

Even in purely dialectical terms, the conventional Greek method has lost its relevance today. The ancient reasoning; was based on presumptive logic, while the valid method of reasoning in vogue is the scientific one; based on observation and factual analysis. However, the Islamic literature forming part of syllabi in contemporary *Madrasas* is in the idiom of ancient Greek logic and the teachers also expound the things in same format; the pass-outs of these seminaries are misfit in the modern world in terms of their thought and expression. Though fully equipped with the ancient dialectics; they lack the proficiency to persuade modern man about the truthfulness of Islam. They often fall prey to inferiority complex or even if at all they try to preach Islam; their discourses are so obsolete that Islam appears archaic. They in fact lack the ability to offer any intellectual fodder to modern man badly in need of spirituality and a divine guidance.

According to the Quran, it is Allah who *"... governs all that exists and clearly does He spell out the messages..."* [44]

The first part of it refers to the management of universe through universal and eternal laws known to us as science, while latter part of the verse refers to the messages in the form of divine revelation (*Wahi*), the last and final version of which is preserved with us in the sacred text of the Quran.

The *'Ilm-al-Kalam'* in essence is the medium to understand the divine revelation through available tools of knowledge or knowing the unknown through known. It implies that Islamic

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[44] Al-Quran, 13:2.

concept of *'Ilm al-Kalam'* can't be ancient or modern; as the Quranic wisdom is immune to change while the human understanding is subject to change with time. The Islamic *'Ilm al-Kalam'* demanded to be based on the dialectics of Quranic wisdom; while it so happened that Muslim scholars of Abbasid period, based the whole edifice of *'Ilm al Kalam'* on man-made presumptive philosophy and logic; which was bound to lose its relevance with the turn of the centuries. This fallacy in fact led to the dichotomy of ancient and modern dialectics.

The Quranic dialect, actually, takes into account the whole universe. It explains the unknown realities through known phenomena. The Quran argues through universal laws, which are eternal and immune to change; thus, the Quranic *'Ilm al-Kalam'* is also eternal like the Quranic matters of belief. But when the *'Ilm al-Kalam'* was based on presumptive philosophy and logic, subject to temporal change, the questions of ancient and modern became unavoidable.

In the later part of 20th century, we are, well in a position, to take up the compilation of an eternal and universal Islamic, *'Ilm al-Kalam'*. In ancient times, the universe and the knowledge about universe were different. Whereas the Universe was a reality, our knowledge about it was merely presumptive. Now the two are becoming almost identical.

The same is true about the Quran as well. Earlier, the Quran and *'Ilm al-Kalam'* were two different subjects. While the Quran was based on firm and 'clear *Ayah'*; the basis for *'Ilm al-Kalam'* was merely presumptive logic. Today, however, the advancement in knowledge has made it possible to bridge the

gap between the two and compile a 'modern *'Ilm al-Kalam'*. It is the need of the hour, although none has attempted that yet.

The following steps are essential in compilation of a modern *'Ilm al-Kalam'* based on Quranic dialectics.

1. The Quranic concept of knowledge and the Quranic dialectics would be the first thing to be established. In ancient times, the rationalization depended on presumptive logic and philosophy; while with the onset of modernity, the method of valid argument shifted to inquisition, experimentation, and observation. Nevertheless, then, a new era ushered with Einstein's theory of relativity. It can be inferred, from the modern advancement in knowledge; that it is not possible for man, because of his limited faculties, to comprehend the ultimate reality through direct observation. It is, rather possible only through indirect evidences and method of deduction, inference and conviction. We cannot see everything; however, we can infer the presence of invisible things through indirect evidence.

   In the modern period, a new theory has been postulated, that, amazingly corresponds to the Quranic concept of knowledge. The Quran declared that man has been equipped with limited knowledge, so he should be content with (indirect) revealed knowledge; rather than insisting for a direct observation.

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لُونَكَ عَنِوَلِسَّةَ لُروحِّ قُل ا ـ لُروحُ مِنْ أَمْرِ رَبِّي وَمَآ أُوتِيتُم مِّنَ ا ـ لْعِلْمِ ۚ لَا قَلِيلًا

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"They question you, about the spirit. Say, "The spirit is at my Lord's command, and you have been granted but little knowledge."[45]

Thus, the human knowledge and the revealed knowledge converge on a common point. To paraphrase, the latest theory of scientific arguments has validated the Quranic dialectics. Thus the, foremost responsibility of Muslim scholars would be to compile the modern *'Ilm al-Kalam'* in light of this recent development.

2. The second important job at hand is to compile the Quranic knowledge about the past or 'The Archeological Survey of the Quran'. The Quran, at a number of places, makes mention of the old civilizations and prophets; termed in Quran as *'Ayam-Allah'* (14:5). These events in history of mankind are quite significant from Quranic point of view. These stand witness that 'there is a Creator of this universe, who sent his apostles in all ages and that different nations met their fates in accordance with the eternal, divine laws.

   It is although a domain of history, not religion, but the Quran mentions these events not from the historical point of view but, rather, as an overview and reminder for the future generations. Earlier, the historical record of these events, outside the Quran, was but scanty;

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[45] Al-Quran, 17:85.

making it difficult to compile these events in purely historical framework. Now that, advancement in research has unearthed lot many related facts; it is now possible and the project must be undertaken to compile these Quranic references in the idiom of modern history, for a more forceful transmission of the Quranic invite to humanity.

3. The third important initiative, awaiting Muslim scholars, is to compile the Quranic description of the structure and phenomena of the universe, (41:53) in the light of modern scientific knowledge.[46] According to the Quran, there many signs in the universe that point to the existence and powers of the Creator of Cosmos; as well as the phenomena and purpose of this vast universe. The Quran has repeatedly mentioned these signs to emphasize the core message of the Quran; albeit in an indicative way not the descriptive one. Now the advancement in scientific knowledge has decoded these signs largely; and it would not be exaggeration if we call science as the modern theology of Islam. However, these scientific discoveries relating to physical world and universal phenomena need, to be compiled, in the light of Quranic message.

4. Another significant aspect of Quranic verses called *'Ayaat Anfas*[47] is relating to human psychology. This aspect also remained neglected for a long time in the

[46] Al-Quran, 41:53.
[47] Ibid.

past. Although *Sufis* have touched upon the subject in detail; but their deliberations are more of presumptive than factual in nature; having lost the contemporary relevance. The modern knowledge of human psychology has made it possible to expound on the Quranic signs relating to this subject; to some extent if not completely. If accomplished, this new discipline will provide a scholarly support to the Quranic viewpoint.

5. Finally, I turn to another domain of knowledge, often not included in the conventional definition of *'Ilm al-Kalam'*; although it deserved to be the most essential component. This is, to present Islamic literature in the modern scientific idiom. There is an exhaustive body of Islamic literature available today, in the form of *Tafsir*, *Sirah* and common subjects. However almost all the books have been written in the light and style of conventional *'Ilm al-Kalam'*. Nevertheless, leaving apart their literary merit; it is unreasonable to present *Tafsir* and *Sirah* as *Ilm al-Kalam*.

The present age is the age of freedom of thought and expression. The modern man expects things, in clear terms, without any scholastic explanations; rather leaving the job of critical analysis to reader only. It is because of this reason that, despite abundance, the Islamic books continue to remain in demand. The modern world wants to know about Islam but of course in a reasonable scientific format not the philosophical one.

Unfortunately, enough, no Islamic language has so far adopted the scientific style; which may reflect factual presentation in simple language of the addressee.

A lot of Islamic literature has come up in the modern world; however, none has to my knowledge so far, prepared an introductory set of books on 'Introduction to Islam' based on simple, positive and factual presentation of the Islamic teachings and *Sirah* of the Prophet of Islam ﷺ'. There is a great scope for such books. I would rather suggest to, compile a set of books on 'Teachings of the Quran' Prophetic *Sirah*, Hadith, Life of companions and history of Islam (not Muslim conquests); purely in accordance with the modern requirements of simple and factual presentation. If such set of books is prepared and translated in all languages; I am sure, we would meet the requirements of a modern *'Ilm al-Kalam'* in presenting Islam to the contemporary world.

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CHAPTER SEVEN

REVIVAL & REFORM MOVEMENTS

The Islam's encounter with the modern world started in the mid-sixteenth century, with the Portuguese discovering new sea routes to become masters of the Indian Ocean and Arabian Sea. It interrupted the Arab trade with East Asia. The discovery of steam engine in the seventeenth and the development of science in the eighteenth centuries opened new vistas of power and progress for Europe. Afterwards; the opening up of the Suez Canal in 1869, connecting the Mediterranean sea to Red Sea; marked the complete supremacy of the West over Muslim world. It remained unnoticed during the early phase, when it influenced only the commercial and social aspects of eastern world. However; the Muslim leaders were startled by this stark reality only when they experienced the heat of Western political supremacy.

As an aftermath of the above development, the late nineteenth century witnessed a number of movements. However, almost all the movements arising in the Muslim world were reactionary in nature and none with a positive approach. Thus, most of the Muslim leaders emerged in reaction to the perceived external threat to Muslim polity. In fact, no positive response resulted from the assessment of this recent development and contemplation on Islamic teachings or life of the Prophet of Islam ﷺ.

Thus the Muslim response to Western Challenges, all reactionary in nature, can be studied under four major heads:

- Conflict and confrontation (independence movements)
- Defensive or Conservative approach
- Revival movements
- Rehabilitation and Consolidation

1. The Confrontational approach appeared in the form of independence movements. Muslim leaders from Jamal al-Din Afghani (d.1897) to Maulana Abul-Kalam Azad (d.1958) reminding them of the glorious past, made Muslims emotional through their speeches and writings. For example Al-Afghani, while in Egypt, raised the slogan: 'Egypt is for Egyptians'. Similarly, Sulayman Al-Baruni during the Italian rule over Libya (1911-1943), advised Libyans to: 'Die an honorable death, before you are humiliated and killed.' It was in fact, with minor variation in wording, the voice of all Muslim leaders. Thus, Millions of people lost their lives and properties worth billions, in order to get rid of the foreign rule. Today, all of these movements are considered successful in achieving freedom for their respective nations. However the reality remains that major factors for these liberations were: in-fights and weakness of the colonizers, the First World War (1914-19) and to a greater extent the Second world war (1939-45).

However, the success of these freedom movements failed to achieve the goals for which a huge 25 lakh people in Algeria and about 2 lakh volunteers in India sacrificed their lives. The Muslim world continues to

experience Western supremacy though in a modified form. If it was through military and politics in the past; now it is through economic and industrial control. This new form of supremacy is so powerful that even the political policies of Muslim world are no more indigenous in the real sense. Their policies are in fact, still manipulated and controlled by those western powers from whom they acquire the defense equipment or technology for their educational institutions.

They are still so powerful that, they can anytime, get Ahmad Dahlan (1966) or Shah Faisal (1975) killed; or crush the Palestinian movement through power play of Jordan (1971) and Syria (1976). They can at will, defeat the Iranian revolution (1951), or force Egypt to make a compromise with its enemy (Israel) for whom, Jamal Abd al-Nasir (d.1970), once remarked: 'We are descendents of Pharaoh and will drown you in sea' etc.

2. The Defensive movements appeared in the form of religious education networks (*Madrasas*). Maulana Shibli Nomani (d. 1914), during establishment of *Nadwatul Ulama* had once announced thus: 'the development for others is to keep moving forward; while for Muslims, the progress is to keep moving backwards till we reach the Prophetic period.' This approach led to establishment of Islamic seminaries (*Madrasas*) in many countries. The objective for these institutions was to teach the students Arabic and Islamic knowledge so they could approach the

Prophetic period, at least emotionally. They were thus expected to secure themselves from the currents of Modern world.

This movement was successful in the sense that an elaborate network of such *Madrasah* came up and each village and town got its own '*Aalim'* or graduate from these institutions. But as regards the development of Islamic thought; compatible with the modern scenario, the achievements are far from being satisfactory. Those who got jobs in same or similar institutions maintained the standards to some extent as an essential requirement. However, the majority who moved out of the *Madrasah* environment was hardly distinguishable from the pass-outs of the secular institutions; careerism being the driving factor for both.

There are two major reasons for this. The first was failure of the Muslim educationists to understand that a mere knowledge of the Islamic beliefs and practices was in no way sufficient to meet the requirements of a grossly transformed outer world. What was required, was in fact the ability to present Islam as a system compatible with the modern scheme of things. The new generation of *Ulama* coming out of these *Madrasas* though graduates in their own subjects found their knowledge in discordance with the environment they were faced with. Their studies provided them the Islamic information of the past but not the Islamic intellectual growth. Their possession

was thus inadequate to negotiate through the currents of modern day ideologies.

The second reason was the dissociation of religious education from social economy. It is an established fact the any educational system without firm economic foundations is bound to fall short in facing the stark realities of practical life.

3. The revival movements actually focused on the revival of the past glory of Muslim rule (and not the revival of Islam as a viable alternate ideology). These included like *Mashumi* of Indonesia, *Ikhwan al-Muslimun* of Egypt and *Jama'at-e Islami* of Pakistan. They propounded that all the woes of Muslim *Ummah* emerge from the lack of will to enforce Islamic laws in Muslim lands. They envisioned a come-back for the Muslims and solution to all their problems if they just implemented the Islamic law.

The way these movement interpreted Islamic teachings in favor of political terms, particularly in the early 20th century; appeared an ideal solution to Muslims in general providing a large audience to the new preachers. However, the fanciful proposition did not last long and proved a mirage, for a simple reason. These movements arising out of political interpretation of Islam soon came in conflict with the incumbent governments in their respective countries with easily predictable results. The Anwar Sadat regimen in Egypt (Est. 1971) had declared to crush to pieces any

opposition standing in its way. It was in fact a strategy with almost all Muslim rulers; and the opposition was invariably comprised of religious movements. As a result, these movements trampled with no future prospects in any Muslim land.

The ruthless attitude of the Muslim rulers was not the only factor responsible for the failure of these religious movements. It was more so because of the failure of the founders to read the ground situation. They had in fact expected an overwhelming support from the general populace in their journey to throne. They forgot the historical reality; that the governments are often, established in the light of popular trends of a particular era. As the current trend was secular and democratic all over the world, it was impossible for anyone to create an Islamic island without effectively combating the contemporary ideology.

4. From the Rehabilitation and Consolidation movements, I mean the ideologues who propounded to initiate useful re-construction activities in non-political domains, without conflict with the foreign rulers and preferably in reconciliation with them. However, unfortunately enough, this ideology got the least support from contemporary Muslims.
Mufti Muhammad Abduh has quoted an incident with his mentor Jamal-al-Din Afghani when they were in Paris (1884). Muhammad Abduh on one occasion told Afghani: "A conflict with French and German appears

futile, while we have an open field of preaching Islam in Europe and America with great hope of positive results. Why not to withdraw from political arena and invest our energies in field of education and Islamic preaching?" The revolutionary mindset of Afghani rejected the idea, saying: 'It would be an act of cowardice!'

During the whole period, we hardly find any worthwhile movement working in the positive direction. The Muslim leaders always nurtured fanciful thoughts believing: 'Don't follow the world, the world will follow you'. None could take cue from the pragmatic lesson from Hali (d.1914): 'Sail with the popular wind!' *(Chalo Tum Udhar Ko Hawa Ho Jidhar Ki!)*

We, however, find two exceptions to this general trend and both are infamous in popular terms; I mean Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan (d.1897) and Mirza Ghulam Ahmad Qadiyani (d.1908).

Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan (d.1897) believed that, although the British have blocked our advancement in politics; we can still make significant progress in other fields. He exhorted Muslims to avail opportunities in education, economics, science and technology. Mirza Qadiyani on the other hand, foresaw avenues in 'preaching of Islam'; that could be undertaken among the countrymen as well as the ruling lot. He asserted that it is one of the foremost responsibility of Muslims with the potential of leading us to political supremacy as well, which is nowhere in sight through conflict and confrontation.

Both the movements looked positive and promising initially; but failed to garner public support in their favor. There were two main reasons for this; the first one being, failure of Muslim leaders, obsessed with the anti-imperial sentiment, to adopt any alternate approach to confrontation. Anyone rising with, even genuine program was instantly dubbed as British agent. It can be understood from the example of 'Preaching of Islam' authored by T.W. Arnold, a veteran professor at Aligarh, who argued that spread of Islam owed its debt to 'Islamic Value System' and not the sword as alleged. However, our Muslim leaders, described him as an orientalist with anti-Islam intentions of writing this book like (blunting the killer instinct of Muslim sword).

The second factor was the failure of the proponents to plead their cause properly. It was a blunder; by Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan, to interpret the Quran in the light of 19th century western thought. It was a sufficient proof of his sincerity that he kept his personal mouthpiece *'Tehzibul Ikhlaq'* separate from Aligarh Movement. However; the distinction faded soon and a wrong approach (rational interpretation of the Quran) created doubts among common masses about his genuine mission.

Mirza Qadiyani on the other hand, committed a similar, rather a grave mistake. He propounded 'preaching of Islam' at a time when most of the *Ulama* were poised for an armed struggle (*Jihad*) against the British, and they misread the idea as an attempt to diminish the importance of *Jihad*. To this; Qadiyani reacted with an explanation, describing *Jihad* as only conditional and defensive rather than a permanent feature of

Islam. The *Ulama* in response passed an edict describing Qadiyani as a British agent.

And now, started the worst phase; Mirza Ghulam Ahmad Qadiyani, in an attempt to justify his stance, claimed that he received direct revelation (*Wahi*) from God and every word of his, was inspired one. It was an absurd statement, though not a strange one; as in the past, many scholars (including Shah Waliullah) claimed intuition and inspiration as synonymous. However, Mirza went a step further to issue another outrageous statement, claiming himself to be prophet of God; which is no doubt a heresy after the finality of Prophethood.[48]

مَّا كَانَ مُحَمَّدٌ أَبَآ أَحَدٍ مِّن رِّجَالِكُمْ وَلَـٰكِن رَّسُولَ اللَّهِ وَخَاتَمَ النَّبِيِّينَ ۗ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمًا

"Muhammad (ﷺ) is not the father of [any] of your men, but is Allah's messenger and the seal of the prophets. And Allah has knowledge of, all things."[33:40]

This strange development thus, lead to a situation where-in the energies required to be exhausted in the re-organization and consolidation of Muslim *Ummah*, were rather wasted in 're-interpretation of the Quran' and the claim of a 'new prophet' after Prophet Muhammad ﷺ . Thus, if initially the Muslim clergy was in the wrong, Sir Sayyid Ahmad and Mirza Ghulam Ahmad Qadiyani committed grave mistakes towards the end, leaving Muslim *Ummah* tangled in a blame-game.

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[48] Al-Quran, 33:40

CHAPTER EIGHT

COMPILATION OF ISLAMIC SCIENCES

Aqba bin Nafei (62 A.H) was a successor of companions who served as commander of the Muslim forces in Africa during the reign of Yazid bin Muawiyah. He extended his conquests in West Africa to the beaches of Atlantics, the *Asafi* town being his last halt. Here, he drove his horses into sea water and exclaimed, *"if I knew of any country abroad, I would have waded through to ensure that man worships none but Allah!"*

The people, who believed in Allah and learnt the Quran from Prophet ﷺ directly, were enthusiastic about conveying the divine message to the whole world, braving all odds. A student of history would note with surprise that, the commitment faded away in the later centuries. In the recent past, following the Muslim decline, there came up many movements to revive the past glory of Muslim rule; but unfortunately none to 'convey the divine message to the world'.

Although the later-day Muslims recited the same Quran that inspired Companions of Prophet ﷺ; it did not ignite the inner spark, in later generations. The reason for this is simple: while the earlier generations learnt Islam from the Quran directly; the core message of Quran, in the later periods, was obscured by an array of human interpretations.

The Quran is, in essence, a book of guidance for humanity, containing broader principles about all aspects of human life. What is required is to make the things clearer and easier for better understanding of masses as mentioned in the Quran:[49]

بِا ۔ ﴿لْبَيِّنَٰتِ وُٱوَأَنزَلْنَآ اۤلَيْكَ ا ۔ لِذِّكْرَ لِتُبَيِّنَ لِلنَّاسِ مَا نُزِّلَ لَيْهِمْ وَلَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ﴾

"[We sent them] with clear signs and scriptures. And We have sent down the reminder to you, to enable you to make clear to mankind what has been sent down to them, so that they may reflect upon it."[50]

The accomplishment of this injunction and the requisite clarity was obviously notable in the *Sunnah* of Prophet ﷺ. However, in the latter periods, the interpretations of the Quran became more and more technical, in departure from the prophetic tradition of simplicity. As a result, the simple Islam of prophetic period was replaced by a more sophisticated one based on technical terms of *Fiqh*, Scholastic hair splitting and *Sufistic* yarn and woof. The early Muslims had resented this trend describing it a replica of Jewish and Christian tradition, instead of the prophetic precedence. However, this new version of technical Islam continued to flourish as it suited the requirements of rulers and masses alike. As a golden principle; the extended periods of history, turn everything into sacred and this parallel version of Islam was no exception. It was made so sacrosanct; that, none could imagine that an opinion mentioned in the *Fiqh* literature could have an alternate explanation in the Quran and *Sunnah*. Similarly, it became unimaginable for Muslims to find anything illogical in the

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[49] Al-Quran, 16:44
[50] Al-Quran, 16:44

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scholastics based on Greek logic. At this stage, the Quran instead of a source of guidance; was reduced merely to a source of 'blessings and recitations'. Even the exegetes invariably, attempted commentaries of the Quran either to seek divine blessings or to find support for their particular viewpoints in *Fiqh*, *Kalam* or *Tasawwuf*.

It would be fair to conclude that, the worst outcome of add-ons to Islam was, the Muslims losing a direct affiliation with Quran. It was so because the additions, like *Fiqh*, *Kalam* and *Tasawwuf*, turned simple Islamic faith into a sophisticated one. The things explained in natural way in the divine book were made so complicated through presumptive hair-splitting and technical terminology that these could be understood by, specialist professionals only. All this resulted in transforming a simple divine religion into a complicated subject that required special expertise to understand, not just the study of divine book alone.

For example, if someone wants to know the matters related to *Salah* (prayer); he would hardly think of turning to the Quran for the purpose, as the specific *Fiqh*-books are already at his desk for the purpose. If someone wishes advancement in Islamic spirituality, he would never opt for contemplation on the Book of Allah for the purpose. He would rather approach any 'saint' with full conviction, considering him an expert in the field. Similarly, if one wishes to take to Islamic *Dawah*, he would readily delve into scholastic theology, rather than seeking guidance from the Quran itself.

The Quran was in fact, revealed for humankind to seek guidance through contemplation on its signs.[51]

﴿كِتَٰبٌ أَنزَلْنَٰهُ إِلَيْكَ مُبَٰرَكٌ لِّيَدَّبَّرُوٓا۟ ءَايَٰتِهِۦ وَلِيَتَذَكَّرَ أُو۟لُوا۟ ٱلْأَلْبَٰبِ﴾

"This is a blessed Book which We sent down to you [Muhammad], for people to ponder over its messages, and for those with understanding to take heed." [38:29]

However, the attempt to turn Quranic teaching into a technical subject, reduced the scope of contemplation (*Tadabbur*), leaving it as a book of recitation to be completed in few days or weeks. People preferred to approach their saints and priests to learn the religion, restricting the wrapped copy of the Quran to a remote corner of the house as a source of divine blessings only. It was on the expected lines, as the intricacies they wanted to learn, in the name of religion, were of course, not to be found in the Quran.

Thus, the consequences of neglecting the Quran or rather getting neglected by the Quran encompassed every aspect of our lives. Allah has in fact described the necessary injunctions in the Quran,[52] forming a live source of inspiration and intellectual growth of a devote Muslim. However, we have forgotten to seek guidance from the Quran on matters of religion or those relating to Muslim *Ummah*. A dispassionate study of the Quran reveals that the most crucial question, Allah wants man, to know; is about the purpose of his life and accountability he is bound toface, after leaving this world.

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[51] Al-Quran, 38:29.
[52] Al-Quran, 17:22-39.

Likewise, the real mission before Muslim *Ummah* is to convey the divine warning to the entire humankind about this imminent and inevitable event. Unfortunately, we hardly find any Islamic movement specifically committed to this sacred mission.

The contemporary revival movements,; although founded by Islamic scholars of the Quran, unfortunately followed the methodology of *Fiqh*, *Tasawwuf* or Scholastic theology; thus leading Muslims away from the righteous path of the Quran. Among these proponents, those who knew scholastic theology adopted the method of debate and discussion. Similarly, others adopted *Sufi* approach of teaching and preaching for the propagation of divine message and yet others; with juristic bent of mind envisioned Islam as a system of governance and exhausted their energies in establishment of Islamic governments for implementation of Civil and criminal laws of Islam. This approach was so gratifying to the masses that the real mission of Islam (vide supra) was no more appealing for them. Now the Muslims focused their attention on only two priorities; liberal donations for constructions of *Masjids* and *Madrasas* or else dedicating their possessions to the so-called holy-men. As these are the only noble causes before them, they cannot be expected to co-operate with any other worthwhile mission of Islamic *Dawah*.

A dispassionate survey of Islamic libraries will demonstrate a widely prevalent gulf between the 'Revealed Religion' and the 'Compiled religion'. The revealed religion of Islam preserved in the Quran and *Sunnah* is a simple and living force that inspires the hearts and enlightens the minds. But the same religion

when studied from compiled books, offers little more than pointless discussions. There is no food for hearts and minds in these voluminous treatises. The Quran does contain *Fiqh* in its pages, but that is unlike the *'Kanzul Daqaiq'* of Abul Barkat Nasafi. Similarly, the Quranic spirituality is world apart from *'Ziaal-Qulub'* of Imdadullah Mahajir Makki; and The Quranic dialectics have nothing in common with the *'Shams-e Bazigha'* of Mulla Jeevanpuri.

This in no way diminishes the importance of Compilation of Islamic knowledge; however the desired methodology was unfortunately, not followed. It should have been like a simple reminder rather than a technical discourse. We, in practice made the religion complex; although Allah had revealed it as simple to understand and follow.[53]

﴿وَلَقَدْ يَسَّرْنَا الْقُرْآنَ لِلذِّكْرِ فَهَلْ مِن مُّدَّكِرٍ﴾

"We have made it easy to learn lessons from the Quran: is there anyone who would receive admonition?"[54:17]

The Quran introduces itself as a message for contemplation, and the elucidation is permissible only to the extent, of serving the purpose of counseling or a reminder.[54]

﴿كِتَابٌ أَنزَلْنَاهُ إِلَيْكَ مُبَارَكٌ لِّيَدَّبَّرُوا آيَاتِهِ وَلِيَتَذَكَّرَ أُوْلُوا الْأَلْبَابِ﴾

"This is a blessed Book which We sent down to you [Muhammad], for people to ponder over its messages, and for those with understanding to take heed." (Al-Quran, 38:29)

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[53] Al-Quran, 54:17
[54] (Al-Quran, 36:69,38:29,39:39)

Further; the *Sunnah* of Prophet ﷺ, clearly demonstrates the way, how the Quran should be expounded and explained; as it was the main purpose of his deputation.[55]

<div align="center">﴿وَيُتِ كُوَ وَأَنْزَلْنَآ الَيْكَ ا ـلِذَكِرِ لِتُبَيِّنَ لِلنَّاسِ مَا نُزِّلَ الَيْهِمْ وَلَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ﴾</div>

"[We sent them] with clear signs and scriptures. And We have sent down the reminder to you, to enable you to make clear to mankind what has been sent down to them, so that they may reflect upon it."[56]

The Prophet's *Sunnah* also reveals that the job stands accomplished with perfection, with little scope for any other additional arts or any addition of injunctions to those enshrined in the Quran and *Sunnah.* As Imam Ghazali (d.1111) places the figures for Quranic injunctions at five thousands; there is no point in increasing the score to five hundred thousand through deductions and speculation. The compilation of Islamic knowledge thus implies, the explanation and elucidation to the extent that makes remembrance and reminder easier to perceive and adopt. The Quran impresses upon its followers to hold fast to the divine injunctions and to contemplate on the signs mentioned in its pages. What is appreciable is further explanation of certain points to bring home the importance of divine message but not any addition of legal or technical terminology to overtax or complicate it.

The point; can be understood through an example. There is a Masjid with limited space and every increasing rush of people to raise another storey, as there was no lawn or adjacent piece

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[55] Al-Quran, 16:44.
[56] Al-Quran, 16:44

of land available. Now if the management approaches an Islamic legal board *(Darul-Ifta)* to seek permission for offering prayers on the rooftop under special circumstances; the Mufti or jurist would rather prepare an elaborate report with intricate clauses that apply to this case in deciding the final verdict. Although turning every little problem into a legal issue is not appreciable in any way. In fact; this was the conventional Jewish approach, before Islam and Allah deputed his apostle (Prophet Muhammad ﷺ) to reverse this trend making the religion simple and practicable. If such a question came up during the period of Prophet ﷺ and his companions, the expected simple answer used to be, 'it is no legal issue and you may evolve your own response according to situation.'

There are many such examples in Hadith and *Sirah* books when questions about such non-issues were discouraged. But there is no such consideration with the contemporary legal advisors (*Muftis*). For a *Mufti* today, every problem is a legal one and he surely discovers some clause from the huge legal corpus to address the question.

During the early period of Islam, the Quran referring to Jews declared:[57] ﴾ ... وَيَضَعُ عَنْهُمْ إِصْرَهُمْ وَالْأَغْلَلَ الَّتِي كَانَتْ عَلَيْهِمْ ... ﴿

"...who will relieve them of their burdens and of the shackles that weigh upon them....."

It refers to the self-imposed burdens of their legal intricacies and exaggerations in explanation of Torah, making the religion complex for common people to follow. Thus, the Prophet

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[57] Al-Quran, 7:157.

Muhammad ﷺ, was deputed to ease these burdens for them through a new Islamic *Shariah* a purer, simpler and easier one. Today, unfortunately enough the Muslim *Ummah* has also under a similar self-imposed burden of legal intricacies and exaggerations. The Muslim experts in *Fiqh* and *Tasawwuf*, have introduced all those superfluities in Islam, which were introduced by Jewish scholars and mystics in *Shariah* of Moses. The most important job at hand is to purify Islam of all such add-ons as a precondition for revival of Islam.

Turning a simple divine religion into a procedural art; initially appears satisfying or at least harmless, however; it is hazardous in its consequences. It fills one with complacency taking away the sensitivity and kindness from hearts. The divine religion as enshrined in the Quran and *Sunnah,* is based on the idiom of good tidings and warnings or reminder and remembrance. Thus, the two styles of ritualism and counseling are just opposite to each other and are bound to bear different fruits when applied.

The language and way of the Quran and Hadith is simple; very well matched with human nature; just like water for a thirsty soul. This natural style invites man to the facts and meaning of the text; while the technical knowledge distracts the reader to technical details and superfluities. Whereas the Quranic way encourages contemplation and reflection, the technical method prepares one for unending debates and discussions. The Quranic approach awakens the imaginative instinct of man to the extent that, presenting oneself before Almighty Allah for reckoning, appears to him the only matter of concern. Contrarily, the technical discussions distract man from genuine

issues to superfluous details and hairsplitting. Thus, these apparently legitimate fields of knowledge, in the end, prove detrimental for the actual purpose of Prophets and the divine revelations.

In the given situation, the only way to revive Islam would be to reconnect people to the Quran for a direct guidance, instead of seeking assistance through the supportive literature. For example; the necessary instructions for *Salah* (obligatory prayers), are present in the Quran, with further details in Hadith and the examples of *Sahabah.* So a special book on Salat if at all necessary must contain the matter drawn from these sources only. Nothing else must be included, not even the cases of superiority of one detail over the other. This is because, the differences among Companions of Prophet ﷺ, display only the diversity of lawful approaches; rather than grounds for dissension on the basis of validity or superiority of anyone method over the other.

A visit to Islamic libraries reveals that most of our encyclopedia on *Fiqh*, *Kalam* and *Tasawwuf* have been compiled in such a technical language and such a large number that the original Islamic text gets eclipsed. As a result, practical knowledge of Islam has gotten corrupted in the same way as happened with the olden religious scripts; with the only difference that the 'original text' here remains protected under divine supervision (Al-Quran, 15:9). It is thus impractical for anyone to get the clear picture of 'True Islam' through these secondary sources. For a reconstruction of the Islamic thought, it is mandatory to establish the Quran, Hadith and the practices of *Sahabah'* as the only authentic sources of Islamic knowledge; not the ones

forming integral parts of *Madrasah* syllabi. Thus the first step towards 'Revival of Islam' would be compilation of the *'Ulum al-Quran'*, *'Ulum al-Hadith'* and *'Athar* of *Sahabah'* in such a simple way; making the archaic styles of *Fiqh*, *Tasawwuf* and Dialectics as things of the past. This is because a 'Revival of Islam' is possible only when the human interpolations are weeded out of the puritanical divine religion.

The compilation of Islamic knowledge cannot be expected from individuals only. Rather, a dedicated institution is mandatory, with capable scholars of the Quran and Hadith in sufficient numbers and with adequate facilities. Such an institution with a committed team of scholars can achieve the desired goal of compilation of essential Islamic knowledge in a simple but systematic way, within a period of ten years. This will provide an intellectual base for the actual 'Revival of Islam.' If the Muslim *Ummah* wishes to be raised as *Ummah* of Muhammad ﷺ on the Day of Judgment; they will have to discharge the designated obligation of presenting the 'Prophetic guidance' before the mankind, in its pure and unadulterated form. As of now, although inadvertently, the Muslims are concealing the facts; and it needs to be understood well that for any religious people the 'concealment of divine knowledge' from mankind is such a crime that invalidates all apparently good deeds.

The reason demands this job of compilation to be accomplished by an official team of scholars; so that it becomes authentic and acceptable for the entire Muslim *Ummah* to follow. During the *Khilafah* of Abu Bakr Siddique RA, the Quran was collected and compiled under state

supervision and the remnants were destroyed under the same very logic. Had the Quran been compiled at individual level; there would have erupted unending series of dissensions.

A similar strategy was planned by Umar bin Abdul Aziz (d.720), for compilation of Hadith. He had ordained the governor of Madinah, Muhammad bin Amr bin Hatham and other equivalents to collect and compile the authentic Ahadith and *Sunnah* of Prophet ﷺ. However, he didn't survive long to see the project being accomplished under his official supervision. As a result the responsibility was undertaken by committed scholars at individual level; out of a spirit of seeking divine blessings. The ideal would have been for these Hadith scholars to persuade the contemporary Caliphs to take up the project under official supervision with a team of *Muhaddithin* (Hadith scholars) doing the job on the lines the Quran was compiled by Zaid bin Thabit RA and his team under Abu Bakr Siddique. If an authentic collection of Ahadith would have been compiled right then; removing the unauthentic ones, under state supervision; the Muslim *Ummah* would have been saved from disastrous outcome.

The same, Abu Bakr Siddique model was ideal and applicable for the Compilation of *Fiqh* as well; rather than taking up the job at individual levels, founding separate schools and creating tens of sub-divisions among a united *Ummah*.

Exactly on the same lines; we can undertake the compilation of Islamic knowledge in modern times, through a team of dedicated scholars who could accomplish the project with a missionary spirit. It needs to be reiterated that the individual efforts are not expected, to bring the desired results.

A set of Islamic books so prepared; is necessary, for revival and propagation of Islam in the contemporary world. Here is a proposed blue print for compilation of Islamic knowledge:

Quran: The compilations on following aspects:
- A simple translation of the Quran in all languages
- The Quranic account of Prophets and old nations; in light of modern knowledge and principles of Historiography
- The Nature and Universe as depicted in the Quran, in the light of modern knowledge
- Teachings of the Quran subject-wise.

Hadith:

Compilation of Authentic *Ahadith* subject-wise (leaving aside the weak and fabricated traditions)
- Ahadith relating to *Tafsir*
- Ahadith relating to Events
- Ahadith relating to Duties
- Ahadith relating to Counseling and Reminder

Sirah:

- Simple biography of Prophet according to events (not just battles)
- Complete Historiography of *Sahabah* (not just battles)
- Complete Historiography of Islam (not just battles)

Supportive Literature:
- The Revealed Books (Historical perspective)
- Directory of Islamic Personalities
- Islamic Encyclopedia
- Index of the Hadith Collections (vide supra)
- Comprehensive history of the Preaching of Islam (Patterned on Sir Arnold's book: Preaching of Islam)

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CHAPTER NINE

REVIVAL OF ISLAMIC EDUCATION

Sir Arthur Keith (1866-1955); during his 'Study of Egypt', has noted thus: *"The Egyptians were conquered; not by the sword, but by the Koran."*[58]

The above observation of the English Scholar about the ideological power of Islam in Egypt; holds good, even for the region in Africa and Asia; known today as the Muslim World. One may ask as to how so many different nations parted away with age-old religious traditions and languages of theirs to embrace Islam. The simple answer would be *'through Islamic education system'!* The early Muslims from Arabia, fanned out in all directions, and the first thing they established in new lands was a network of Islamic *Madrasas* (seminaries). These *Madrasas* focused on providing knowledge of Arabic language, the Quran and Hadith to the students; and the pass-outs in turn would propagate the same knowledge in their respective localities. This *Madrasah* education system with an elaborate network of such satellite institutions was the key factor in transforming the culture, religion and languages of the major part of the known world, within a span of just 100 years.

The Quran is an everlasting miracle. It is the medium of communication between God and man or a meeting point for the two. The Quran is loaded with innate power to inspire the

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[58] Sir Arthur Keith, A new Theory of human Evolution, London, Watts & Co.1950, p.303.

hearts and enlighten the minds. The exalted themes and the superior literary style are so prevailing that anyone who studies the Quran with understanding, surely submits to its truthfulness. Similarly, the exemplary life of Prophet ﷺ and his companions is an exceptional phenomenon in the history of humankind; capable of transforming human lives.

Thus, the *Madrasas* of early Islam connected the new entrants to these live sources of guidance simply through knowledge of the Arabic language. They experienced a transformation within; once they started the study of the Quran, Hadith and the living examples of the first generation Muslims. The Quran aroused their natural capability of accepting truth, which got impetus through study of the revolutionary lives of Prophet ﷺ and his companions. It is how a generation of committed missionaries came up, whose only aspiration was to live and die for Allah.

In the present times, the number of such institutions have multiplied many folds; however, the desired results are nowhere in sight in contrast to the early Islam. This is so because the infrastructure of contemporary Madrasas is quite different from that of the institutions established by companions of Prophet ﷺ and their successors. These seminaries teach Islam as a ritualistic art; whereas in the early period it was a revolutionary force that transformed man spiritually as well as socially.

The Quran in the present day *Madrasas* is virtually taught as a subsidiary subject. The *Sirah* of Prophet and *Athar* of his companions, known as *'Khair ul-Qurun'* or best part in the

history of humankind; no more form an essential part of their syllabi. The *Ahadith* and *Athar* (sayings of Prophet and his companions), are merely touched upon during elaborate discussions on sub-clauses of *Fiqh*. Further, the technical subjects included in the syllabi like, syntax or logic for example, are so old-fashioned that hardly any useful outcome can be expected; except for ossification of thought or hairsplitting discussions.

An Islamic institution; is expected to be always, abuzz with the thoughtful discourses on attributes and blessings of Allah. However, our religious educations have touched such an abyss of decadence that day in and day out, the teachers and the taught are busy with admiring the greatness of their elders, living or dead. In such a scenario, how can one expect great lessons; or people of enormous commitment to divine cause or the ones with lofty characters, to emerge from these centers? Likewise, one should not expect any revolution to emerge that could encompass the globe as witnessed in the seventh century.

Let us take the example of a zoo where people are strolling and enjoying; and suddenly an announcement is flashed by the management that 'A lion has come out of the cage'! There would be just one expected response from everybody: to run for safety of life, without a second question. All thoughts and expressions will now focus on just one point, Lion; making the knowledge about and fear of lion barely distinguishable!

This example is sufficient to understand the significance of Religious knowledge. The Islamic knowledge, is expected to

connect man with God; or in other words elevate his way of thinking to the level to be aware of Allah and establish with Him the requisite relationship. Such a realization, will evoke a response similar to the one mentioned above but with much greater intensity; because the creator of lion has infinitely great powers. One can think of killing a lion or running for safety to a nearby house; but none can escape the seizure of God. The institutions of Islamic learning must in essence create an environment where the knowledge of Allah and fear of Allah become synonymous. It follows that, a place where fear of God does not prevail upon the whole atmosphere; can be anything but an institute of Islamic learning. The Quran stipulates 'fear of Allah' as an essential quality of an *Aalim* or religious scholar:[59]

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ وَالدَّوَآبِّ وَالْأَنْعَامِ مُخْتَلِفٌ أَلْوَانُهُ كَذَٰلِكَ إِنَّمَا يَخْشَى اللَّهَ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ الْعُلَمَٰٓؤُاْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزِيزٌ غَفُورٌ

".. Only those of his servants, who possess knowledge, fear Allah..."

There are some more statements on the subject; e.g.:

'The most learned among you is one, who fears Allah the most.'[60]
'The knowledge is not to narrate much but knowledge means fear of Allah'[61]
'A Faqih is one who fears Allah' (Mujahid)[62]
'The one who fears Allah is the only true Aalim or learned scholar (Ataa).[63]
'The Aalim is one who fears Allah without seeing Him' (Hassan Basri)

[59] Al-Quran, 35:28.
[60] *Tafsir Nasafi.*
[61] Ibn Masud as quoted by Abdul Barr in *Jami al-Bayan al-Ilm,* vol. II, p. 25.
[62] Ibid. p. 49.
[63] Ibid.p-49

If the present-day, Islamic seminaries are examined with this yardstick, none proves up-to the mark. The reason for this is simple; these *Madrasas* (seminaries) or *'Darul-Ulums'* (houses of knowledge) were not founded on the 'Fear of Allah.'

Rather, they just teach the sub-specialties of some subsidiary branches of Islam and produce experts on these specialties only; thus missing the whole, in search of parts. As such; they might be successful in their own objectives but utter failure as regards the real knowledge of Islam.

Imam Malik, is reported to have said: 'The reform of Muslim *Ummah* will require the adoption of same strategy, which worked in early phase of Islam'.

This statement is quite apt and relevant in the present times. The early Islamic period witnessed a revolution emanating from the Quran and the life of Prophet ﷺ. The two sources, if applied, can still work together to produce similar results. Thus, the best starting part for 'Revival of Islam' in the contemporary world would be to revive the Islamic seminaries of first century, with the Quran and Prophetic *Sirah* as the basis of education, and not the later-day subsidiaries.

The need of the hour is thus to revive the traditional *Madrasas* of early Islamic period, for a serious effort of Muslim reform. The syllabi for these *Madrasas* must be simple and non-technical as the one suggested here:

The propose curriculum for *Madrasa Education:*

Stage I: Arabic language and the Quran

Stage II: Hadith, *Sirah*, History of *Sahabah* and the
History of Islam (in Arabic)

Stage III: Modern Languages, world religions,
Modern Philosophy, Applied Scientific knowledge

Stage IV: Dissertation on a specified Islamic topic.

Such a high-quality *Madrasah*, if established would be a great contribution to modern world.

For this pattern of *Madrasah* education, we don't need to compile new books. The Arabic language can be taught through a fair selection from the classical Arabic books. Likewise books on modern languages, science etc. can be selected from the existing literature on the subjects. However, availability of efficient teaching staff with requisite missionary spirit appears a hard proposition. Although a bit difficult, this impediment can be overcome through a visionary and non-sectarian approach. Further, handsome salaries can ease the problem of efficient teachers in respective disciplines.

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THE UNFAMILIAR RELIGION

As narrated by Abu Hurayra RA, the Messenger of Islam ﷺ is reported to have said:

'Islam initiated as something strange, and it would revert to its old position of being strange; so good tidings for the strangers.'[64]

How, Islam was unfamiliar in its early phase can be understood from many examples in Quran and Hadith. For example, when Prophet ﷺ invited the Makkan pagans, to worship Allah alone; they wondered, how, he has replaced so many gods with just one God.[65]

أَجَعَلَ الْآلِهَةَ إِلَٰهًا وَاحِدًا ۖ إِنَّ هَٰذَا لَشَيْءٌ عُجَابٌ

"Does he make all the deities out to be one God? This is indeed, a strange thing!" [38:5]

The polytheists of Makkah; had a belief in God but in addition, they had allotted exalted position to their elders, whom they worshipped in the form of idols. When the Prophet ﷺ negated their right to be worshiped; it was a strange proposition for Makkans. Similarly, in the pre-Islamic period, the pagan custom allowed no share for women in inheritance. When the Quran declared that a man would get a share equivalent to two women (4:11), it again sounded strange to the Arabs.[66]

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[64] Sahih al-Muslim # 372.
[65] Al-Quran, 38:5.
[66] Al-Quran, 4:11.

<div dir="rtl">يُوصِيكُمُ﴿ ۖ اللَّهُ فِي أَوْلَادِكُمْ ۖ لِلذَّكَرِ مِثْلُ حَظِّ ا ۔ لْأُنثَيَيْنِ ...﴾</div>

"Concerning your children, Allah enjoins you that a male shall receive a share equivalent to that of two females..." [4:11]

The companions even enquired from Prophet ﷺ, as to how it was possible; while the women neither can ride nor can combat an enemy.[67]

In fact, the religion of Islam has again become unfamiliar in the contemporary world, as was prophesized in the Hadith narrated by Abu Hurayra RA. The Tawhid or oneness of Allah is strange for Muslims today. They only know of a *Tawhid*, where their elders also share the divine greatness. They are accustomed to a religion where, their elders are also regarded as infallible at par with prophets.

Similarly, they know of a *Shariah* of their own making; the one they have adopted according to their choices. The *Shariah* that could control their vain wishes is strange to them. For example, they are unfamiliar with the *Shariah* that enjoins, simplicity in social event; observing *Sunnah* in cases of *Nikah* and *Talaq*, share for women in inheritance; or to observe *Shariah* rules in matters of social transactions etc.

Such a *Shariah* is quite strange for them today, and in fact, the scenario is same for all aspects of personal and social life. The Muslims today are accustomed to (rather addicted to) a distorted version of Islam far from the essence of one revealed to the Prophet of Islam ﷺ. They proclaim the Oneness of Allah

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[67] *Tafsir Ibn Kathir*, vol. I, p. 458.

but unaware of the His realization in personal lives. They know the ritual aspect of Islam, hardly appreciative of its spiritual aspect. They have acquired expertise in debates and discussions, negligent of their obligation to spread the word of God. They know to boast of their relation with the Prophet ﷺ, having little concern for showing obedience to him or adopting his example in their personal lives. Likewise, the Muslim leaders are well versed with blaming others for their own faults; least aware of the fact that, such problems arise out of internal decay rather than conspiracies or aggression by others.

In such a scenario, the ideal revivalist activity would be to, familiarize the contemporary Muslims with the original Islam; that has unfortunately, become, strange for them. They need a reorientation of heart and mind to be receptive to the Islam of Prophetic period.

An Example from Prophetic life:

The 'Revival of Islam' is not synonymous with re-assertion of Muslim polity at global level. It means affirmation of the Islam of Prophetic period, in its simple pure and pristine form. Here is a Quranic reference to make the point clear:[68]

﴿وَلَمَّا جَاءَ عِيسَىٰ بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ قَالَ قَدْ جِئْتُكُم بِالْحِكْمَةِ وَلِأُبَيِّنَ لَكُم بَعْضَ الَّذِي تَخْتَلِفُونَ فِيهِ فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُونِ ۞ إِنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ رَبِّي وَرَبُّكُمْ فَاعْبُدُوهُ ۚ هَٰذَا صِرَاطٌ مُّسْتَقِيمٌ﴾

"When Jesus came with clear signs, he said, 'Now, I have come to you with wisdom, I order to make clear to you some of the things about which you dispute: therefore fear Allah and obey me! For, Allah is my Lord and your Lord, so worship Him: That is a straight path."[43:63-64]

Here the word '*Hikmah'* implies essence of the religion.

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[68] Al-Quran, 43: 63-64.

The Jews (Sons of Israiel) had lost the essence of religion revealed onto Musa AS, for *Bani-Israiel* to follow. They were content with following the stereotype rituals only, as the complete religion. Isa AS (Jesus); was deputed by Almighty Allah to reorient them to the original faith; as recorded in the authentic verses of Bible too. In these terms, Prophet Jesus was the Revivalist of religion revealed to Prophet Moses AS. This is a clear example to understand as to what a revivalist activity is; and how it can be accomplished.

The revivalist activity means revival of the essence of a religion. Any distortion in a religion starts with losing of its spirit first; leaving behind few ritualistic manifestations among its followers. It is akin to a corpse after the soul has left it; and obviously it's not a persona. Likewise, a religion in rituals only, is no more a religion in the sight of Allah, after losing its essence. At such a juncture, the revivalist activity demands revivification of the true spirit of religion among masses, making it a living whole. Such an activity will turn the lifeless religiosity into a dynamic and vital force.

The contemporary Muslim world is full of ritual festivity; lacking in the spirit of prophetic period. They are engaged in verbal phraseology, missing the God- realization in their words and deeds. There is apparent multiplicity of activities in Muslim world; none to attract divine approval. The religion today is a nut with no kernel inside, a shell without a seed. Now it is for the revivalists to revive the spirit of original faith; making it a divine fruit with fragrance and flavor, equally filled with a never-ending store of somatic and spiritual sustenance.

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MUST READ BOOKS

By
MAULANA WAHIDUDDIN KHAN

- *'Mazhab Aur Jadid Challenge'*

- *Islam Aur Science*

- *'Al-Islam'*

- *Marxism Tarikh Jise Radd Kar Chuki Hai*

- *Socialism Ek Ghair Islami Nazriyah*

- *Islam: 'Daure Jadid Ka Khaliq'*

- *Paighambar- e- Islam*

- *Tajdid-e- Deen*

- *Khatoon-e Islam*

- *Uniform Civil Code*

- *Azmat- e-Quran*

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