

**THE LIFE AND ACHIEVEMENTS OF MUJADDID  
ALF-I-THANI  
(THE ORIENTALISTS' VIEWPOINT)**

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Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi (upon whom be Allah's mercy) popularly known as Mujaddid Alf-i-Thani is considered as the founder of Mujaddidiyyah branch of Naqshbandi order. He is one of the most famous Muslim saints (Sufis) of India. He is revered by the followers of Islam due to his religious knowledge, piety and strict observance of Islamic Shari'ah. In contrast to the mystics of other orders, Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi and his disciples penetrated into the ruling class to combat with the customs and ways alien to Islam.

Shaykh Ahmad was a descendant of Umar the Great (God be pleased with him). He was born in Sirhind in 971 A.H. Sirhind is really Sahrand, which means the forest of tigers. It is related that in the days of Firuz

Shah Tuglaq (752-790 A.H.) once the royal treasury was passing through this forest under the imperial guard. A saint Sahib-i-Kashf was travelling along with treasury. When the caravan reached the spot where Sirhind is now situated, the saint had the inspiration that a very great saint will be born at the place. The news reached the king. He ordered the construction of a town there and entrusted the work to Imam Rafi-ud-din, the ancestor of Shaykh Ahmad.

While the construction was in progress, Shah Bu 'Ali Qalandar

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of religion. The difficulty of studies in this field is compound by the facts that there is very little academic material available on Islamic philosophy, and much of it remains to be translated from their original languages. Even if translated, many of the issues in modern philosophy have changed over time and it is not clear how to relate the medieval discussions with the modern ones.

the philosophical implications of these researches in physical science.

The research in physics has broadened our conception, and given us better material to work out an Islamic philosophy. Relative to western philosophy, the field of Islamic philosophy has remained largely dormant for the past few hundred years. The rigor of intellectual thought in Islam has been lost and contemporary Muslim thinkers are faced with the enormous challenge of reinterpreting and integrating the tremendous intellectual achievement of the west with that of earlier Islamic thinkers and the Qur'an. This attempt is of crucial importance to any new Islamic intellectual renaissance. With the rise of western science and philosophy, serious new challenges have been raised to the very fundamental principles of epistemology, metaphysics, and ethics, espoused by the classical thinkers of Islam. These issues need to be addressed, as Allama Muhammad Iqbal, perhaps the first modern Muslim philosopher to deal with these problems in any comprehensive manner, writes:

*With the reawakening of Islam, therefore, it is necessary to examine, in an independent spirit, what Europe has thought and how far the conclusions reached by her can help us in the revision and, if necessary, reconstruction of theological thought in Islam*<sup>15</sup>

The current undertaking will by no means meet the challenge put forth by Iqbal. However, it will, attempt to at least lay out some of the issues in Islamic epistemology, metaphysics and philosophy

doctors or religion must explain it, as no events could take place against the will of God. We can infer from Newton's law of motion that "Every body remain at rest or continues to move unless external force act upon it". It means that nothing can be set in motion unless there is some external force. Scientists are silent about the ultimate cause of external force. They admit that proof of the first cause is beyond their observation and experiment. Materialists say evolution ends where the Qur'an begins.

It is different from change or movement because it implies improvement and development. This again implies some standard of judgment with reference to which we may say that the change is for the better or that is evolution. I think that Quranic concept of evolution necessarily implies wisdom in the real postulates and implications of an evolutionary theory etc.

Other places where science has entered the domain of philosophy lie in physics and mathematics. Theory of Relativity has much changed our old scientific conception of the universe. Instead of Newtonian conception of force we find a law of universal laziness; every event seems to follow the principle of least action. Again matter is not understood as solid and separate pieces, they are series of events. Mind and body come very closely to each other.

Such and so many other advances in science are to be taken very seriously by the Islamic scholars. If we have to develop an Islamic philosophy, we have to take into consideration what are

and when it was completed adorn with a special status by issuing the command of “KUN”.

All researches and observations of scientists regarding evolution cannot be brushed aside by a single declaration that concept of evolution is against the Qur’an. If the evolution really happened, it must have been set in motion by God. It is beyond imagination that anything can happen against the will of God. If we look at the evolution as one of the processes of creation, which God has used to complete the creation, then everything will be easy to understand. While the Qur’an speaks of six days, which were taken for creation of the universe, then naturally this would have been a very long period. The Qur’an speaks of six great periods of history marked by special events. What happened in these days is left to the imagination of man. The theory of evolution is simply an explanation of happening, which occurred during these six days. It is the religious teacher to explain away the inconsistency between the theory of evolution and accounts of creation given by the Qur’an.

The Qur’an is full of explanations as how things came into existence. The Qur’an speaks of gradual development of the earth, skies and the heavenly bodies. It also speaks of how vegetation and life emerged on earth. The Qur’an elaborately speaks how the creation of man began and when it was completed. It speaks of four stages of development in the creation of man. Therefore, if you deny something, it does mean that that thing does not exist. If something happens, which is lays the established belief then

phases or by His impersonal act and then by His personal act coming into existence of the physical body is an impersonal act of God but when that body is granted certain status it is personal favor of God to the body. These two phases are clear from the following Quranic verse.

*then formed him and breathed His Ruh into him and gave you hearing, sight and hearts. What little thanks you show!*<sup>12</sup>

According to these verses, creation of man is completed in four stages. The first three stages may be regarded an act of God. The fourth stage is that of a distinctive man, into whom God's spirit is breathed. This view is also supported by the following verse.

*The likeness of 'Isa in Allah's sight is the same as Adam. He created him from earth and then He said to him, 'Be!' and he was*<sup>13</sup>

It is clear from this verse that substantial body of man is created first and then a distinctive feature is given by the command "KUN" likewise in the case of heavenly bodies the same process has been adopted by the verse.

*In two days He determined them as seven heavens and revealed, in every heaven, its own mandate. We adorned the lowest heaven with lamps and guarded it. That is the decree of the Almighty, the All-Knowing.*<sup>14</sup>

The act of creation of seven firmaments within two days is an impersonal act of God and the act of adornment and guarding is personal favor of God to His creature. Thus we may infer that God first sets in course of creation and lets it evolve through the ages

Thus, the Qur'an explains those things about which scientists plead ignorance. It can, therefore, be said that where the explanation is offered by the theory, there has always been a perilous debate on the point whether man is a creation or a product of evolution. A religious person thinks that if he accepts the doctrine of evolution the existence of God will be denied. I cannot understand as to how the evolution denied the existence of God. If God has control over everything then what happens in the universe will be subject to direct control of God. It is only God's authority how to do a thing. He may create anything within no time by authority of command or He may create it by any process He likes. In the Qur'an, there are so many verses, which prove that not all things have been created by issuing the command "KUN". According to the Qur'an creation of the earth, skies, heavenly bodies, and vegetations and life there on have been completed within six days. If God decides to bring into existence a thing in a particular manner, then who are we to question it.

We cannot presume and have no authority to say that God has created man in a specific manner. God may create things in any manner He likes. The Qur'an elaborates two modes of creation: one by command "KUN" and the other by way of evolution. When it describes the creations of the earth, skies and heavenly bodies within six days then naturally it meant to say that things have not been created in a moment by pronouncing the command "KUN". According to the Qur'an God has created things in two



*Those who have iman (faith) and whose hearts find peace in the remembrance of Allah. Only in the remembrance of Allah can the heart find peace.*<sup>10</sup>

However, while pragmatists make truth a petty of an idea which it may gain or lose, for Islam truth is permanent value of a belief. It is only we who may fail to discover it. Truth is always there. Whenever the usefulness of a truth is hidden from our eyes or our incomplete experience fails to conceive it's practically we who make a wrong judgment. Islamic researchers have to find the element of truth in the pragmatist philosophy and to discover how far it agrees with the Quranic conception. We have to define truth in our terms and form our own point of view. We have to define such concepts as "verification", "practicality" and "usefulness" and give there to a wider and more precise meaning. An allusion must be made to those theories of science which are of fundamental importance and which have brought science close to the domain of philosophy. Islamic philosophy must today deal with evolution. The old mechanical conception of evolution does not satisfy modern philosophy. Creative and emergent evolution are valuable attempts to meet its difficulties but the Islamic philosopher has to make a great advance upon these. Evolution must give a place to values. It must maintain the dignity of man as a moral and social being. Qur'an says:

*"When I have formed him and breathed My Ruh (spirit) into him, fall down in prostration to him!"*<sup>11</sup>

One of the important characteristics of Islamic philosophy is that its primary concern is with life and man. The philosophy of our day also understands its close connection with life. Absolute Idealism in spite of being a very consistent philosophy has given rise to many reactions in the opposite direction. Pragmatism, Existentialism, and Dialectical materialism are more closely related with man and his problems, and Realism presents a view of reality, which is, in sense, near to common sense view of the world. In this respect, the trend of modern philosophies is favorable to Islamic philosophy. Only a conscious attempt needs to be made for a proper development of Islamic philosophy. Pragmatism opens possibility of putting religious beliefs to test. If certain ultimate questions about the nature of the universe cannot be proved we should not as a logical result make a negative judgment about them. The importance of belief is to be understood by its consequences.

The Qur'an exhibits the satisfaction that it gives to the soul of the individual and the happy life that it brings to the society as a proof for truth. Falsehood left to itself is bound to fail. It is only truth that can work. Qur'an says:

*Say: 'Truth has come and falsehood has vanished. Falsehood is always bound to vanish.'*<sup>8</sup>

*"No misfortune occurs except by Allah's permission. Whoever has iman (Faith) in Allah – He will guide his heart. Allah has knowledge of all things".*<sup>9</sup>

metaphysical ideas and why Revelation must be taken as an indispensable important element of our method.

Nearby to it is the problem of Revelation itself, which is the most important basis of philosophy. Observe from one angle is the only basis; as it is the point of difference between Islamic and non-Islamic philosophy. The Qur'an holds that the prophet has some direct touch with reality denied to others. Thus, the fundamental difference between the position of a prophet and others is that the prophet has an extraordinary experience, which others can not have....He sees the reality of heaven and Hell with his own eyes, he hears the Godly message which he teaches, with his own ears. The Qur'an asks us to believe in him due to his honesty, sincerity and his zealous preoccupation with the welfare of others and the tortures and sacrifices he undergoes for larger human ends and it bestows reliable authority on the prophet. Here our point of view is completely opposed to all the philosophic approaches. We understand the importance of Reason; still we feel its incompetence. We add to it one more source of knowledge, with an attitude of faith towards it, though its guidance is not to be conceived in rigid terms. How do we arrive at this conclusion if at all it is justifiable?

Revelation as an important phenomenon of nature is to be understood. What does it mean, and why reliable? Muslim philosophers and thinkers have done some precious work on this topic in the past and it is of great value for those who attempt to work on this problem.

2. Rational
3. Intuitional
4. Revelational

It shall combine the merits of all the four and make up the deficiencies of each. To understand fully the attitude of an Islamic researcher let us say: He started as a free thinker under the guidance of Reason which led him to the conclusion that there is some basic guidance from God under which he has to carry on his work. They are not antagonistic to each other; rather they are mutually complementary. As we, pointed out it is through Reason that we arrive at the conclusion that revelation is a necessary basic guidance. The Qur'an points out that in the external and internal worlds there are Ayat i.e. hints, which lead man to the belief that there must be some basic guidance from Allah (God). Not only prophet-hood but also existence and the attribute of the God, the need of the Day of Judgment and other important basic concepts are argued in a special way. What is the reasoning of Qur'an is a question for students of philosophy as well as for a student of the Qur'an. The Qur'an in its own words, has given the most powerful reasoning for its metaphysical concepts, and no more influencing argument is possible in this field by any theory whatsoever.

Is this reasoning a logical explanation or is it a suggestion from certain clear points, or is it an intuition of reality through intellectual sympathy with the objects, or is it something quite different from all these? It is an important question, because without it we can not understand how Qur'an claims its basic

suitably skilled method though it is somewhat different from that of Bacon's. It is empirical due to its stress on observation and verification. However, it has also deduction as a necessary content. In the beginning of the last century, Bergson compiled and elaborated intuition as intellectual sympathy with the object as an attempt to view the whole of mobile reality as different from analysis. It from outside or judging it through fixed and separate concept and symbols the allusion thus obtained cannot be expressed but is at once converted into symbols etc. through intellect.

*"Intuition once attained, must find a mode of expression of application which conforms to the habit of our thought and one, which furnishes us in the ship of well defined concept with the solid points of support which we so greatly need"*<sup>6</sup>

It is obtained after all the scientific knowledge in the topic and then placing ourselves at the heart of the subject.

*" So immense a mass of the facts must be accumulated and premature ideas which observers may telling have put in their observations will be certain to neutralize each other "*<sup>7</sup>

Thus intuition of "self" is obtained after gathering of all numbers of psychological analysis. Now such may be the method towards which modern philosophy may tend, if it combines the merits of analysis and verification, deduction and induction. Islamic philosophy makes to it a valuable addition- Revelation. Thus, our method is all at once.

### 1. Empirical

command of reason. Its essential is derived from reason, its contents are applied to reason and in addition, they are to be understood in the light of reason. They are more of the nature of basic principles on which Islamic philosophy is to be energized and in this, they have an advantage over the assumptions of other philosophies, which have their source either in the nature of the philosophers or in external influence upon them of others.

Methodology is a practical question for Islamic researchers in all sciences. This, the Islamic philosopher has to elaborate. Should we start quite free minded and, having formed a theory return to Qur'an and Sunnah for justification and Fatwa? Alternatively, should we first study Qur'an and Sunnah with empty minds, draw theories, and then come to the laboratory to test and develop our hypothesis by observation and verification? Both the methods have clear deficiencies. The only true and natural method seems to combine Reason and Revelation in such a way that we may go through the scientific facts and study developed human knowledge with Qur'anic mind and study the sacred writing in the light of all scientific facts and human experiences.

A great deal of the thinking in the beginning of the present philosophy was loyal to method. Descartes gave philosophy a method, which was largely extract from explanations in geometry and logic. Bacon's importance, on the other hand, lies in developing a method, which was being used in all physical sciences and which was later on used in all social sciences and even in philosophy. The scientific method is now understood to be the most

that the realist's criticism may be legitimate. Really speaking both Idealists, and Realists have based their philosophy on unproved assumptions. When Idealists say that there is no reality outside experience, they have no basic for this except that we can approach *reality only through our experience. On the other hand the Realists* established their view on an assumption, which seems to be at a greater distance from truth. They are not satisfied with the view that an outside reality exists but say that it is same with our sense, and that this reality is not changed through our experience of it.

Islam agrees that there is an external world independent of our experience. We experience only a part of it, and that part of it which remain un-experienced but which is significant to human life is revealed to the prophets and converted in terms of the ordinary experience of man, in ordinary human language. The most important question, however, is that of method. How many knowledge of reality is possible? Qur'an says:

*Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth. The metaphor of His Light is that of a niche in which is a lamp, the lamp inside a glass, the glass like a brilliant star, lit from a blessed tree, an olive, neither of the east nor of the west, its oil all but giving off light even if no fire touches it. Light upon Light. Allah guides to His Light whoever He wills and Allah makes metaphors for mankind and Allah has knowledge of all things.*<sup>5</sup>

Here Islam differs from all modern philosophies and it has to engage in war on all sides. Reason has to work under the basic guidance received from God. This guidance is not opposed to

upon metaphysics and look upon the function of philosophy to generalize the result of science or to analysis the important concepts.

Islam also declares that human intellect has limitations and it can not know the whole reality:

*When beforehand they had rejected it, shooting forth about the Unseen from a distant place?*<sup>3</sup>

*Yes, indeed! Everyone in the heavens and everyone on the earth belongs to Allah. Those who call on something other than Allah are not really following their partner-gods. They are only following conjecture. They are only guessing*<sup>4</sup>

However, the Qur'an believes that divinely guided intellect at least, can form such an idea of reality, which is necessary for a good life.

Revelation describe the reality, concealed from human vision, in a manner which can be best understood by the reason, which cannot, as a matter of fact, understand inexperienced reality fully. This places Islam in a unique position which is to be understood and elaborated and numerous difficulties arising from it are to be solved.

Is there any external reality? A sister problem is that of the existence of an external outside our experience. To many the position of the absolute Idealists who declare that reality is whole of experience and that there is nothing outside experience can logically be refuted and it is only from the practical point of view



to ignore others. Only God knows the whole reality all at a time. Thus Islamic philosophy may be understood as an attempt to combine all the elements of truth in the present philosophies and a continuous attempt to develop a comprehensive and more precise solution of the problems of philosophy under the guidance of the knowledge absorbed from God. It is an attempt to solve by help of both Revelation and Reason, the basic problems of life that change their outfit with every change in life, but remain the same. By Revelation, we mean in the word of God (contained in the Holy Qur'an). These word though containing the same spirit and fundamentally conveying the same essence extend their meaning for the reader with the change in the mental horizon of man and with an advance in knowledge of scientific facts. Thus Imam Razi would understand, with the scientific background of the medieval age, the meanings of the same ayah( verse) differentially and in more improved form than an ordinary badavi of the prophet's time. Reason is the intellectual initiative of man and this, when Revelation helps it, forms the Islamic approach to the problem and results in an Islamic philosophy.

For our comfort, we may take the first problem, as "Is knowledge of reality possible"? Kant's analysis of theoretical reason led him to deny the possibility of metaphysics. In the process of knowing our mind make a division of intuition i.e. (perception) and understanding upon the raw material of the external world and the thing in itself always remain un-known. The positivists following the same tradition have turned their backs

significance and value of reason guided by revelation, and the potentialities of Reason blindly grouping on there own? After this primary task has been achieved the Islamic researcher would be equipped to undertake a critical study of other school of philosophy fruitfully.

Then we must remember that Islam is not simply of philosophy that is, it is not merely concerned with ideas. It is a system based upon the practical considerations of conduct. Its primary concern is to make people lead the good life. But since the good life can not be separate from the correct thought; it has vouchsafed that basic on which an extensive code of conduct could be planned. What is the ethical view point of Islam? How does Islam escape the reasoning slight difference of the problem of good and evil? How could the Islamic approach be distinguished from that of other schools of philosophy? These and other such questions need be answered.

There is misunderstanding about the nature of Islamic research in philosophy. Sometimes it is understood that such an attempt shall logical result involve the rebuttal of all modern philosophies. I believe that Islamic philosophy shall change the very approach to problems, and a search, it shall bring more than a Copernican revolution. But Islamic philosophy is not a reactionary philosophy, it should synthesis all that is worthy in modern thought. As a matter of fact, the main defect with human thought is that it is one sided, it is governed by the environmental effect. Thus if a philosophy takes into account one element of truth it is suitable

What is the correct use of the powers of reflection? What are the methods and grounds of knowledge obtained because of this reflection? What is the nature of the knowledge of what is?

Such questions bring out a peculiarity of Islamic research to the fore. The assignment of the Islamic researcher is two-fold. He has to develop an independent critical attitude towards the achievements of modern knowledge on the one hand, and on the other hand seek to absorb and understand the Islamic spirit. Any success in the first task is possible only when a bit of progress has achieved in the second.

So before we start dealing with the limitations of the methods of modern schools of philosophy, or the scientific method, whose importance is so high in the intellectual form of the world, or fall into the tantalized error of acceptance any one of the recent methods and extend it in an inconvenient manner. To suit our own purpose, it would be far more desirable to go with an unprejudiced mind to the Qu'ran, and search an answer through these questions. These answers may be certifying by any school of philosophy or any group of scientist. However, this does not logical result means that both are identical. The Qu'ran has a method of its own. It also claims to give as the way by which he could arrive at these conclusions. So before we set out to justify the Islamic viewpoint, we must first understand that viewpoint and instead of seeking to establish it by the recent methods of philosophy or of science, we must gain a close awareness with method of the Qu'ran the human reason is being subjected? Is there any difference between the

word of God, we come across an appeal to the Reason of man. We are told that people who deny are those who do not exercise the faculty of Reason and the facilities of sight and sound. Would we be right in concluding that ultimately the perception of Revelation also depends upon the Reason? Verses like the following deserve special attention.

*But as for those who have clear evidence from their Lord followed up by a witness from Him – and before it the Book of Musa came as a model and a mercy – such people have iman (faith) in it. Any faction which rejects it is promised the Fire. Be in no doubt about it. It is the Truth from your Lord. But most people have no iman.<sup>1</sup>*

Does Revelation only approve and make clear what the mind had already vaguely perceived and understood? Proceeding on the next stage of our inquiry, we must stop a while to consider another aspect of the discussion related to Reason. Is the universe a purpose? If so what is that purpose? How can man know that purpose? Is purpose reconcilable with the concept of Mechanism? The Qur'an appears to be of the view that powers of reflection if they are properly used lead not only to the cognition of reality, but also to the knowledge of the present and how is it related to the knowledge of what is absent? Knowledge of the purpose of creation. People who so reflect cry out

*Those who remember Allah, standing, sitting and lying on their sides, and reflect on the creation of the heavens and the earth:*

*'Our Lord, You have not created this for nothing. Glory be to You! So safeguard us from the punishment of the Fire.'<sup>2</sup>*

of reason in the light of Revelation .Must the Muslim philosopher have faith and demonstrate it with Reason? Otherwise, could he make Reason his guide and end in Revelation. In the light of what has been indicated about the inclination of modern schools of philosophy, if we make faith a starting point, would it be in the nature of a hypothetical starting point, something beyond the experience of man? When we say that we are conscious of God and that this consciousness is applicable adequate starting point for philosophy, does it suggest that we are to turn over the process of thinking, starting with the object of our understanding rather than the experience itself?

Otherwise, could we claim that every experience is related to an object? The existence of a reality or an object without a similar experience or consciousness is beyond the range and sphere of influence of human knowledge. God as an objective reality would have connotation for us if He were not present in the consciousness of man. This consciousness of God in man called faith and without transcribing any belief of corrects thinking, we could start with faith.

Since Revelation means to deal with matters that are beyond the range of Reason the importance and true status of this faculty of the human mind is suitable to be minimized. We have to be on our guard against this danger.

According to the Qur'an the various outlooks of natural phenomena are signs of God for the Reason of man to reflect upon, understand, and arrive at a perception of reality. Repeatedly in the

perform the same short sighted error as the scientists of the 18<sup>th</sup> century who denied the existence of non-physical reality.

Answer to this question would depend upon the fundamental thoughts not only of the Muslim philosopher, but also of the Muslim scientist. Science thinks over itself to be ethically neutral; but it had certain working postulates of its own. These postulates take into explanation a very inadequate range of human understanding and since the integrative progression of neither religion nor philosophy is acceptable to go against this tremendous specialty, the scientist is susceptible to continue ethical neutral to ethical denial. How could a Muslim scientist bring together his faith with the ethical neutrality of science?

The cultural, moral and intellectual system of Islam is based upon a cosmology conjugated from Revelation. This fact establishes a unique factor in philosophical thinking and gives Islamic thought its special quality. The student of western philosophy must have to comprehend the significant need of a set up factor in metaphysical thinking, be deficient of that which has produced so much dissimilarity and discrepancy, contradiction and fluctuation in western thought. Revelation ends the state of ambiguous fluidity by the condition that Islamic philosophy has fundamental postulates and starting points. However, the undertaking of the Islamic researcher is none too easy. He has to give the metaphysical theory of Islam a point of view and philosophical explanation in terms appropriate to the philosophic understanding. Secondly, he has to come to a decisive the position