

*Sharif al-Mujahid**

Jamal al-Din “al-Afghani” and the Regeneration of Islam

I. Introduction : Islamic solution to Muslim Degeneration

The fundamental assumption with Sayyid Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (1838-97)¹, as with all reformers in Islam, is that Islam is a world religion, suitable for all peoples, ages and cultural conditions.² It is, when rightly interpreted, capable of being adapted to human needs of every country and age, and lends itself to most liberal developments and beneficial results.³ For, the teachings of Islam include all those prerequisites that enable nations “to scale the height of perfection, realize truths and subtleties [of life and religion], and attain religious and worldly felicity.”⁴

With Afghani, these prerequisites are as follows :

1. The minds of the people should be purged of all false beliefs and superstitions. No other religion puts such an emphasis on this as does Islam ; this because the doctrine of the unity of God calls for rejection of such foolish and extravagant notions as idolatory, incarceration of suffering.⁵

2. The individuals in the community should feel themselves capable of attaining to all human virtues and excellences except that of prophecy (which is a divine gift). By recognising every one’s right to attain to the highest levels of nobility of character without any distinction of sex, race and wealth, Islam has made the excellence of men dependent only upon perfection of mind and soul.⁶

3. Beliefs should be based on “solid evidence and rational proofs since reason is man’s first drawing board”. One must not be satisfied merely with allegiance to the authority (*taqlid*) of his

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At the time of his death he was engaged on a great treatise on ethics, similar in plan to *Ihya al-Ulum* afterwards produced by al-Ghazzali. Unfortunately most of the works of this great author have been lost to us. Those surviving in addition to his history and *Tafsir* are :

1. A fragmentary compendium of his *Tarikh al-Rijal* which has been published as an appendix to the Leiden edition ;
2. Fragments of work on the diversity of opinion of the chief Jurists and.,
3. The first part of a compendium on the principles of law, entitled *al-Tabsir*.²⁸

28. Cf. M. J. De Geoeje, *Selections from the Annals of Tabari* (1902), Introduction F pp X-XI.

visible in his writings.

From the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* we come to know that the *Annals of Tabari* soon came to be dealt with in various ways. They were published in shorter forms with the omission of the names of authorities and of most of the poems cited. Then many supplements were written, e.g. by Ferghani (not extant) and by Hamdhani (partly preserved in Paris), 'Arib of Cardova made an abridgement adding the history of the West and continuing the story to about 365. Ibn Miskawaih wrote a history from the creation to 369 A.H., with the purpose of drawing the lesson of the story, following Tabari closely, as far as his book is known, and seldom recurring to other sources before the reign of Muqtadir. In 352 A.H. an abridgment of the *Annals* was translated into Persian by Balami, who, however, interwove many fables. Ibn al-Athir (d. 630 A.H.) abridged the whole work, usually with judgement, but sometimes too hastily . . . later writers took Tabari as their main authority.²⁷

His Works

In addition to his two monument works on Tafsir and history, namely 'Jami Al-Bayan 'An Tawil al-Quran' and *Tarikh al-Rusul wal Muluk wal Khulafa'*, Tabari composed many other works, a mention of which is to be found in the sources cited in the beginning. The names of certain important works are given below :

1. 'Kitab Basit al-Qaul Fi Ahkam Sharai' al-Islam'—a juristic treatise.
2. 'Tarikh Al-Rijal Min al-Ashab wa'l-Tabi'in.'
3. 'Kitab al-Qira'at wa Tanzil al-Qur'an.'
4. 'Kitab Latif al-Qaul Fi Sharai' al-Islam'—a monumental work on Fiqh.
5. 'Kitab Khafif al-Qaul.'
6. 'Kitab Ikhtilaf Ulama al-Amsar.'
7. 'Athar al-Baqiyah 'An Qurun al-Khaliya.'
8. 'Kitab Tahdhib al-Athar fi'l-Hadith'—An account of the traditions of the Prophet.

27. Cf. *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (Nineth Ed.) XXII, 4.

(one of them written by Tabari's own hand) in the library of Fatimite Caliph Aziz (latter half of the 4th century). Whereas when Saladin became lord of Egypt the princely library contained 1200 copies (Maqrizi 1.408). Only princes and rich men could own a book which in the time of Aziz cost one hundred dinars. We know that it had a place in most great libraries in other countries, for we find that it was used in all hands. Thus the fact that no complete copy can now be found anywhere and that the Leyden Edition rests on old volumes lying in various places, gives a striking image of what the east has suffered from barbarism²⁵."

The text of the Annals contains the history from the creation till the year 302 A.H. The work begins after an introduction with the history of Prophets and rulers etc. of the early period. Then comes the history of the Sasanian period, and of the period of our Holy Prophet and the first four Caliphs; the history of the Umayyads; and lastly the history of the Abbasids upto 302 A.H. From the beginning of Muslims era the material is arranged annalistically under the years of Hijra.

We get an idea of the length of time taken by the physical effort of copying such a work as either of his Qur'anic Tafsir and history from the story of some one who claimed to have taken the whole Commentary down from Tabari's dictation. It had taken eight years, from 283 A.H. to 290 A.H. The history he then tells us, was completed on Wednesday last but two of Rabi II, 303, having been continued to the end of 302. (26)

A striking feature of Tabari's works is the impartiality with which he proceeds. As is evident he was not a court historian. He was never ready to accept any material assistance from the state authorities. Although he had a modest competence an income from his estate in Tabaristan, he rejected all financial advantages and even refused lucrative official position offered him. Even he is said to have been hesitating in receiving any gift which was greater than he could match with a return gift. This strength of character is also

25. *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, op. cit. p. 4.

26. Cf. *Lectures*, p. 102.

the words of Margoliouth : "probably we are to regard Tabari as performing for history a task similar to what Bokhari and Muslim did for Tradition. The selection of really historical matter out of the quantity of material presented by the works of Mada'ini and others. Followed by the difficult and to some extent dangerous task of bringing the record upto his own time."²²

Rudi Paret observes : "Tabari's most important work is his history of the world (*Tarikh-al-Rusul wal Muluk*). The well known Leyden edition gives only an abbreviated text of the huge work which is said to have been ten times as long but even it fills 12½ volumes."²³ "Tabari procured the material" he says further, "for his history of the world from oral tradition, for the collection of which he had ample opportunity on his wide travels which were mainly devoted to the *talab al-ilm*, and in studies under celebrated scholars. He also used literary sources Tabari did not work up the material into a connected account of historical events. He was rather content to record the different, often contradictory, accounts, as they were handed down to him. He therefore declined any responsibility for the reliability of the traditions collected by him. But it is just in the conscientious unharmonised repetition of the collected material of tradition that the value of Tabari's work for modern historical research lies, especially when it is a question of reconstructing the events of the early period of Islam."²⁴

Certain remarks of R. Paret, pertaining to Tabari's selection of traditions, contradictory accounts given in the annals and repetitions termed as unharmonious etc. can be reviewed in the light of the opinion of De. Goeji who says, "Nevertheless the value of the book is very great. The author's selection of tradition is usually happy, and the episodes of most importance are treated with fulness of details so that it deserves the high reputation it has enjoyed from the first. This reputation rose steadily ; there were twenty copies

22. Lectures on Arabic Historians, p. III.

23. *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, IV, 578.

24. *Ibid*, IV, 599.

books have acquired. He was especially noted for his deep understanding of Quranic learning, Qiraat, the history of Prophets, Caliphs, kings etc ; and the diversity of the opinions of the jurists."

Do Goeji while writing on Tabari and early Arab Historian says :

" All these histories are more or less thrown into the shade by the great work of Tabari, whose fame has never faded from his own day to ours, and who well deserves to have this article on early Arabic histories placed under his name.²⁰

He goes on writing,

"The success of the annals and commentary was due above all to the author's personality. The respect paid to him by his contemporaries appears in various anecdotes preserved in his biography. His pupils had an unbounded admiration for his extraordinary knowledge, and what he said seemed to them the best that could be said. In truth, both his great works were the best of their kind, especially the commentary which in the judgement of all impartial critics has not been equalled before or since, in completeness, learning, and independent judgement. A contemporary says 'that it would be worth a journey to China to procure the Book'. So general was this view that the opinion of Tabari was quoted as a legal authority,²¹.

Thus Tabari occupies a unique position not only among the Muslim scholars of repute but also among the most eminent historians of the world. His great historical compilation *Tarikh-al-Rusul wal-Muluk*, the distinguishing features of which are completeness of detail, accuracy, and the truly stupendous learning of its author that is revealed throughout, and that makes the work a vast store house of valuable information for a historian as well as the student of Islam, is a standard authority of a high rank for early Muslim history. In

20. *Encyclopaedia Britannica*(Ninth Ed.) XXIII, 3.

21. *Ibid*, p. 4

Baghdad in the year 310 A.H., and his body was laid to rest in a house in Rahbat Ya'qub.

His Evaluation Particularly as a Historian.

Tabari's literary activity, as has already been pointed out was very enormous. He has composed valuable works in different branches of knowledge. Ibn Kamil tells us how Tabari divided his day : from noon till afternoon he was occupied with writing. After the afternoon prayer he would go to the Mosque and give lessons in the Quran until the 'Asr prayer'. After that he would give lessons in Jurisprudence and then he would return to his residence.¹⁷ Khatib Baghdadi pays him a tribute in the following glowing words :—

«وكان احد ائمة العلماء يحكم بقوله و يرجع الى رايه لمعرفة و فضله و كان قد جمع من العلوم ما لم يشاركه فيه احد من اهل عصره»¹⁸

“And he was among the leaders of the scholars ; disputes were decided on his dictates and due to his knowledge and erudition his opinion was held supreme. He had obtained skill at so many branches of learning that no scholar of his time could reach his intellectual level.”

Yaqut, on the authority of Abu Muoammad Abd al-Aziz b. Muhammad al-Tabari says of him :

«كان ابو جعفر من الفضل و العلم و الذكاء و ذو لحن على ما لا يبهره احد عرفة لجمعه من علوم الاسلام ما لم نعلمه اجتمع لاحد من هذه الامة و لا ظهر من كتب المصنفين و انتشر من كتب المؤلفين ما انتشر له . و كان راجعاً في علوم القران و القراءات و علم التاريخ من الرسل و الخلفاء و الملوك و اختلاف الفقهاء»¹⁹

“Abu Jafar was so erudite, well informed, intelligent and had such a great memory that every body acknowledged him. He is well-known in acquiring a great skill at so many branches of Islamic learning, that no other among the Muslims is known to have excelled him. And no work of the authors and compilers has won the fame and publicity as his

17. Yaqut

18 *Tarikh-e-Baghdad* ii, 163

19. Yaqut, xviii, 59

of knowledge in which they themselves had acquired a skill. One day one of these persons asked him a question about prosody ('uruḍ). Tabari had not previously devoted any attention to that subject, but was unwilling to plead ignorance. He got the questioner to put off his question for a day, and in the meantime borrowed the treatise of Khatib b. Ahmad, the classical authority on the subject. By the time, the questioner repeated his visit, Tabari had become a Matriician ('uruḍi¹⁵).

From Egypt he again returned to Baghdad and this time to settle there finally. During this stay at Baghdad he paid two visits to his home in Tabaristan, the second visit he paid in 290 A.H. He had to quit Tabaristan after his last visit, because the practice of maligning the three first Caliphs was rife in the province, and Tabari was afraid of personal injury owing to his views. The governor of the province sent his men to have Tabari arrested, but he was informed in time by a friend, so he escaped.

At Baghdad he became a man of great authority. He devoted himself to an extremely prolific and versatile literary activity and continued imparting a very useful instruction unto his pupils, who came from the remotest corners of the Islamic empire to hear him. Such was the esteem in which he was held that a famous theologian once said "Should you undertake the long journey to China, only to hear Tabari explain the Quran, it would be worth the trouble".¹⁶ He however, got into trouble with the Hanbalites owing to his remarks about Ahmad b. Hanbal, which sounded to his followers disrespectful, and due to his interpretation of certain Hadith related to 'al-Jalus 'Ala-al-'Arsh'. The enraged Hanbalites flung inkstands at him and pelted his house with stones, which were removed by the police. In order to console the uncompromising persons he had to compose a book wherein he wrote about his faith and expressed his praise for Imam Ahmad b. Hanbal. His monumental work 'Ikhtilaf al-Fuqaha' in which he had differed at certain points with Imam Ahmad b. Hanbal was not published till after his death. Tabari died at

15. Yaqut, xviii 56.

16. *Ibid.*, vi, p. 424.

before his arrival there. Tabari stayed for a time in this great centre of Islamic learning and kept himself busy acquiring more and more knowledge, with leading scholars of that place. His zeal for learning took him to Basra also. On his way to Basra, he stopped for a while at Wasit—the city populated by Hajjaj b. Yusuf. From Basra he proceeded to Kufa, where he learned different religious sciences with such luminaries as Abu Kuraib Muhammad b. al-Ala al-Hamdhani, Hammad b. al-Sarri and Ismail b. Musa etc. Abu Kuraib was authority on Hadith. Says Abu Jafar, “In the company of other students who desired admittance, I presented myself at the door of Abu Kuraib, who put his head out of a window and asked : which of you know by heart what he has taken down at my dictation ? All the students looked at me, and said doubtless you do. I replied in the affirmative, and I was able to reproduce the Tradition (i.e. could satisfy the rigid test of the Shaykh)¹³. Tabari obtained from Abu Kuraib more than 100,000 traditions.

From Kufa he again returned to Baghdad. This time he stayed there for a long time and took to the diciplines of law (Fiqh) and the studies connected with the Qur’an. Thence he travelled westward for Egypt. On his way he attended courses at Syrian coastal and border cities, and he reached Fustat—the capital of Egypt, in the year 253 A.H.¹⁴ In Fustat, at that time, Abu-l-Hassan Ali b. Siraj al-Misri, was the most erudite and renowned scholar and was the most hospitable as well. He found Tabari an expert, not only in almost all the branches of learning related to religion, but also having a great skill at poetry, Lughat, Nahv (Grammar), Literature etc. Tabari was able to recite before him, from his memory, the Diwan of Tirimmah, which Ibn Siraj had been searching for.

At Fustat he founded a law school of his own, having previously followed that of Imam Shafi'i. Yaqut tells a story about Tabari, which indicates that even while at Fustat, his reputation as a scholar had risen to the highest peak. There he was beset by the learned persons of all sorts, examining him in the different branches

13. Yaqut, xviii, 50.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 52.

Khatib Baghdadi⁴, Yaqut,⁵ Subki,⁶ Ibn Hajar⁷, Encyclopaedia of Islam,⁸ Encyclopaedia Britannica⁹ and De-Goeji¹⁰ etc. These sources convey the information that Abu Ja'far Muhammad b. Jarir al-Tabari was born at the end of 224 A.H. or in the beginning of 225 A.H. (838-839 A.D.) at Amul, the chief place of *Tabaristan*, whence he is commonly named al-Tabari. From his very early age he showed the greatest zeal for learning and exhibited an extraordinary intelligence. At the age of seven he learned the Qur'an by heart, at age of eight he led the prayer in Mosque and on reaching the ninth year of his age he started taking down the Traditions. He started his studies at his native town and upon the completion of his elementary education, he obtained permission from his father, who was a well to do person, to visit the great centres of Islamic learning, such as Ray and Baghdad, besides other places in Iraq and Egypt. He was only of twelve years when he left his native town in search of knowledge. First of all he proceeded to Ray, where he benefitted himself in Tafsir and Hadith etc., among others from such scholars as Muhammad b. Hamid al-Raḍi and Ahmad b. Hammad al-Dulabi. Says Abu J'afar. "We used to take down (Hadith) with Muhammad b. Hamid al-Raḍi. He would come out to us several times in the night to ask us what we had taken down, which he would proceed to read to ensure accuracy. We used to go to hear Ahmad b. Hammad al-Dulabi who lived in a village some little distance from Ray, and then run back like mad in order not to miss Muhammad b. Hamid's lecture."¹¹ It is said that Ibn Hamid communicated to him more than 100,000 traditions.¹²

From Ray Tabari proceeded to Baghdad where he intended to study under Imam Ahmad b. Hanbal, who however died shortly

4. *Tarikh Baghdad*, ii, 162-169.

5. *Mu'jam al-Udaba*, xviii, 40-95.

6. *Tabaqat al-Shafiyat al-Kubra* (Egypt) ii, 135-140.

7. *Lisan al-Mizan*, v, 100-103.

8. iv, 578, 579.

9. Ninth Edition, xxiii, 1-4.

10. *Selections from the Annals of Tabari* (Lieden, 1902) Introduction F. pp. x-xiii.

11. Yaqut, xviii, 49-50.

12. *Ibid.*

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A Critical Appraisal of al-Tabari's Contribution to Muslim Historiography

The third century of Muslim Era which saw the golden prime of the Abbasids was one of the most fertile period of Islamic learning. To whichever field we turn our attention we find standard works composed and we see scores of celebrated scholars serving the noble cause of knowledge. So great and copious was their literary activity, that even in an advanced age like ours a student of history and literature, while studying their lives and activities is thrown into a state of astonishment. It is told that Abu Ja'far Muhammad bin Jarir, whom we are going to discuss here, proposed to dictate a historical work to his students : the number of leaves which he at first proposed to cover was 30,000, as the students held that life would not be long enough for the composition of such a work he reduced the number to one tenth, 3000 leaves which corresponds fairly with the bulk of the work in the editions of Leyden and Cairo. This composition left him time for a work of similar bulk on Qur'anic Tafsir, which also is said to be one tenth of the amount originally contemplated. For the forty years of his later life the average amount which he wrote was forty leaves a day ; those who divided the leaves which he had covered by the days of his life from the cradle to the grave found that he had written fourteen leaves for each days of his existence.¹

Almost all the subsequent writers, while writing about Muslim history and Muslim scholars have given Ibn Jarir a very high place in their works. Some of the sources which have been consulted while preparing this article are : Ibn al-Nadim², Ibn-Khallikan³,

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1. Khatib, *Tarikh Baghdad*, ii, 163 ; Yaqut, *Mu'jam al-Udaba*, xviii, 44.

2. *Fihrist*, pp 326-28.

3. *Wafayat al-Ayan*, ii, 29-30.

than higher education. The former touches the general economic condition of the masses which form the backbone of a community, the latter only a few individuals who happen to possess more than average intellectual energy. The charity of the wealthier classes among us must be so organised as to afford opportunities of a cheap technical education to the children of the community. But industrial and commercial training alone is not sufficient. In economic competition the ethical factor plays an equally important part. The virtues of thrift, mutual trust, honesty, punctuality and co-operation are as much valuable economic assets as Professional skill. How many economic under-takings have failed in India through want of mutual trust and a proper spirit of co-operation. If we want to turn out good working men, good shopkeepers, good artisans and above all good citizens, we must first make them good Muslims.

careful study of the general economic situation in India and the causes which have brought it about. How much of this situation is due to the larger economic forces that are working in the modern world, how much to the historical antecedents, customs, prejudices and ethical shortcomings of the people of this land, how much, if at all, to the policy of the Government these are the questions which, in preference to other questions, must occupy his brains. The problem will, of course, have to be approached in a broad impartial non-sectarian spirit ; since the economic forces affect all communities alike. The ever-increasing land-revenue, the importation of foreign drink into country, the rise of prices, whether it is due to a wrong currency policy or the establishment of free-trade between an agricultural country and a manufacturing country, or to any other cause—these things affect the economic condition of Hindus, Muslim, Sikhs and Parsees all alike, and loudly proclaim that the public workers of all the various communities can, at least, meet on the common ground of economic discussion. The Muslim public worker, however has hitherto concentrated almost all his energies on the point of securing our due share in Government Service. The effort is certainly laudable, and he must continue to work until we have achieved our object. But he must remember that Government-service, as a field for the production of wealth, is extremely limited. It offers prospects of economic elevation only to a few individuals ; the general health of a community depends largely on its economic independence. There is no doubt that a few individuals in the higher branches of Government-service give a tone of honour and self-respect to the whole community ; but it is equally true that there are other spheres of economic activity which are equally important and more profitable. The process of change and adjustment to an economic ideal is certainly painful to a people whose tradition have been in the main, military, yet, in view of the change that is coming over the communities of Asia, principally through the economic energy of western nations, the ordeal must be gone through besides working for the removal of economic disabilities, if any, we must have a system of technical education which is, in my opinion, even more important,

is the principal, function of the woman. All subjects which have a tendency to de-womanise and to de-muslimise her must be carefully excluded from her education. But our educationists are still groping in the dark. They have not yet been able to prescribe a definite course of study for our girls ; and some of them are, unfortunately, too much dazzled by the glamour of western ideals to realise the difference between Islam which constructs nationality out of a purely abstract idea, i.e., religion, and westernism which builds nationality on an objective basis i.e. country.

I shall now proceed to offer a few remarks on the improvement of the general condition of the masses of our community. And in this connection the first point of importance is the economic condition of the average Muslim. I am sure nobody will deny that the economic condition of the average Muslim is extremely deplorable. His small wage, dirty house, and under-fed children are a matter of common observation in the towns where the population is mostly Muslim. Pass through a Muslim street in Lahore ; what do you find : And old silent gloomy street whose mournful quiet is relieved by the shrieks of ill-clad bony children, or by the subdued entreaties of an old woman in Pardah spreading out her skinny hand for alms. This is not all. Inside these unhappy dwelling there are hundreds of men and women whose fathers have seen better days, but who are now compelled to starve without ever opening their lips for appeals (for) charity. It is really this poverty of the lower strata of our community and not the Pardah system, as our young protagonists of social reform some times contend, that is re-acting on the general physique of our community. Besides this class there is the absolutely incapable who bring into the world children as incapable as himself, and by surrendering himself to laziness and crime spreads the contagion of these vices to others. Have we ever given a thought to these aspects of the social problem ? Have we ever realised that the duty of our Anjumans and Leagues is to work for the elevation of the masses and not to push up the individuals ? The most important problem before the Muslim public worker is how to improve the economic conditions of his community. It is his duty to make a

doing incalculable harm, and creating extremely intricate social problems. Nor is the higher education of women likely to lead to any desirable consequences in so far, at least, as the birth rate of a community is concerned. Experience has already shown that the economic emancipation of women in the west has not, as was expected, materially extended the production of wealth. On the other hand it has a tendency to break up the Physical life of Society. Now I am ready to recognise that the evolution of a society by resident forces alone is an impossibility in modern times. The almost total annihilation of space and time has produced a close contact among the various communities of the world, a contact which is likely to affect the natural orbit of some and to prove disastrous to others. What the larger economic, social and political forces that are now working in the world will bring about, nobody can foretell; but we must remember that while it is advisable, and even necessary for a healthy social change, to assimilate the elements of an alien culture, a hasty injudicious jump to alien institutions may lead to most abrupt structural disturbances in the body-social. There is an element of Universality in the culture of a people; their social and political institutions on the other hand, are more individual. They are determined by their peculiar tradition and life-history, and cannot be easily adopted by a community having a different tradition and life-history. Considering, then the peculiar nature of our community, the teaching of Islam, and the revelations of Physiology, and Biology on the subject, it is clear that the Muslim women should continue to occupy the position in society which Islam has allotted to her. And the position which has been allotted to her must determine the nature of her education. I have tried to show above that the solidarity of our community rests on our hold on the religion and culture of Islam. The woman is the principal depository of the religious idea. In the interests of a continuous national life, therefore, it is extremely necessary to give her, in the first place, a sound religious education. That must, however, be supplemented by a general knowledge of Muslim-History, Domestic economy, and Hygiene. This will enable her to give a degree of intellectual companionship to her husband, and successfully to do the duties of motherhood which, in my opinion,

may, at any time lose its individuality in the individuality of any of the surrounding communities that may happen to possess a greater vitality than itself. But there is, perhaps, a still more important reason for the necessity of a Muslim University in India. You know that the ethical training of the masses of our community is principally in the hands of a very inefficient class of *Moulvies* or public preachers the range of whose knowledge of Muslim History and Literature is extremely limited. A modern public teacher of morality and religion must be familiar with the great truths of History, Economics and Sociology besides being thoroughly conversant with the literature and thought of his own community. Such public teachers are the great need of the times. The Nadwa, the Aligarh College, the theological Seminary of Dewband, and other institutions of a similar type, working independently of one another, cannot meet this pressing demand. All these scattered educational forces should be organised into a central institution of a large purpose which may afford opportunities not only for the development of special abilities, but may also create the necessary type of culture for the modern Indian Muslim. A purely western ideal of education will be dangerous to the life of our community if it is to continue in an essentially Muslim community. It is, therefore, absolutely necessary to construct a fresh educational ideal in which the elements of Muslim culture must find a prominent place, and past and the present come in a happy union. The construction of such an ideal is not an easy task ; it requires a large imagination, a keen perception of the tendencies of modern times, and a complete grasp of the meaning of Muslim History and religion.

Before leaving this point I think I ought to say a few words on the education of the Muslim woman. This is not a place to discuss the ideal of womanhood in Islam. I must however, frankly admit that I am not an advocate of absolute equality between man and woman. It appears that Nature has allotted different functions to them, and a right performance of these functions is equally indispensable for the health and prosperity of the human family. The so called "emancipation of the western woman" necessitated by western individualism, and the peculiar economic situation produced by an unhealthy competition, is an experiment, in my opinion, likely to fail, not without

and that if the present state of affairs is permitted to continue for another twenty years the Muslim spirit which is now kept alive by a few representatives of the old Muslim culture, will entirely disappear from the life of our community. Those who laid it down as a fundamental principle that the education of the Muslim child must begin with the study of the Quran—no matter whether he understands it or not—were certainly much more sensible of the nature of our community than we claim to be. Economic considerations alone ought not to determine our activity as a people, the preservation of the unity of the community, the continuous national life is a far higher ideal than the service of merely immediate ends. To me a Muslim of scanty means who possesses a really Muslim character is a much more valuable national asset than a high-salaried, free-thinking graduate with whom Islam, far from being a working principle of life, is merely a convenient policy in order to secure a greater share in the leaves and fishes of the country. These remarks need not lead you to think that I mean to condemn western culture. Every student of Muslim history must recognise that it was the west which originally shaped the course of our intellectual activity. In the sphere of pure thought we are still perhaps more Greek than Arab or Persian ; Yet nobody can deny that we possess a unique culture of our own, which no modern Muslim system of education can afford to ignore without running the risk of denationalising those whose good it aims at securing. It is indeed a happy sign that the idea of a Muslim University has dawned upon us. Considering the nature of our community the necessity of such an institution cannot be doubted, provided it is conducted on strictly Islamic lines. No community can afford to break entirely with its past and it is more emphatically true in the case of our community whose collective tradition alone constitutes the principle of its vitality. The Muslim must of course keep pace with the progress of modern ideas ; but his culture must, in the main, remain muslim in character and it is clear that such a thing cannot be attained without a teaching university of our own. If you produce youngmen the groundwork of whose culture is not muslim, you will not be bring up a Muslim community, you will be creating a totally new community which having no strong principle of cohesion