

## THE MIRACLES AND THE RATIONALIST MUSLIM PHILOSOPHERS

Philosophy is the search for truth. It has rightly been said that man is a metaphysical animal. Al-Kindi was the first creative philosophical writer in Islam who explored the place of reason and faith in religion objectively. He was the first Muslim Philosopher who gave science its due consideration without devaluing religion. He was a scientist, philosopher and sincere Muslim who interpreted religion in the light of his scientific and philosophical knowledge. His approach was based on rational investigation through which he tried to prove an accord between philosophy and religion. According to him philosophy depends on reason, while religion on revelation. Logic is the method of philosophy, while faith is the way of religion which depends upon the realities mentioned in the Quran, revealed by God to the Prophet. He considered theology as a part of philosophy and believed that philosophical inquiry and Divine revelation received by Prophet Muhammad and fundamental Islamic belief can be demonstrated syllogistically.<sup>1</sup> He strongly believed in the orthodox view of creation, EX NIHILO. God is thus the sustainer of all that he has created. He alone is eternal. He believed in the unity of God and proved the existence of God with the help of teleological arguments.

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1. Fakhry, Majid; A History of Islamic Philosophy. London, pp. 76-78 & SHARIF, M.M; (ed) A History of Muslim Philosophy. P.425.

According to Al-Kindi, in philosophy human knowledge of particular and material things is gained through sense perception. This field comes under physics, while understanding and immaterial knowledge is obtained through rational cognition, which is the domain of meta-physics.

The rational attitude started by him was later supported by other Muslim philosophers such as Al-Farabi, Ibn-Scna, Ibn-i-Tufayal 'Ibn-i-Bajjah etc, etc, all believed in the identical nature of philosophical and revelational truth.

Al-Farabi adopted a moderate attitude towards the superiority of reason and revelation. His view about God combines both, Aristotle's First cause (not accessible to human reason) and God in religion. He believed in miracle as super-natural which works according to natural law. Prophets' having supernatural powers are associated with the celestial world from where the terrestrial world is managed. This relation and communication enables them to perform acts, called supernatural. It is through this communication that the prophet causes rain to fall, the moon to split asunder, the stick to be transformed into a snake or the blind and leperous to be healed. Al-Farabi like stoics tried to reduce to causality, matters beyond the habitual course of nature and even contradictory to it.<sup>2</sup> He fully believed in causality and determinism and referred to cause even for those effects which have no apparent causes. He favours sciences, advocates experimentation and denies augury and astrology. He elevates the intellect to such a high and sacred place where he could reconcile it with tradition, so that philosophy and religion may be got in accord.<sup>3</sup>

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2. Al Thamarat Al Mardiyah; Fi-Blad Al Risalat Al-Farabiyyah, Leiden, 1890 and SHARIF, M.M.;(ed) "A History of Muslim Philosophy" P.466.

3. Ibid. p. 468.

Imam Ghazali also believed in the creation of the world by God, EX NIHILO at a particular time. He considered philosophers as wrong when they applied the analogy of human knowledge to Divine knowledge. The Philosophers have failed in proving the fundamental doctrine of God's Providence and Omnipotence on the basis of the theory of causation and its logical necessity. He refutes the reign of inexorable causal necessity, which pervades the entire scheme of things. In "Tahafat", he asserts the reason that the relation between cause and effect is not a logical entailment and necessity but rather of a psychological necessity with no contradiction. So miracles of the prophets mentioned in the Quran are not logically impossible. His main difference with philosophers is in their sole reliance on reason for obtaining the truth.<sup>4</sup> Ghazali considers reason as important and essential in all matters other than religion. His only objection is that like Greek Philosophers Muslim philosophers are also applying reason in religious matter and that is not correct.

Ibn-i-Rushd gave importance to reason, his system though seems contrary to Ghazali's, is in fact the progressive stage of rationalizing process, where different opinions are rationalistically synthesized. His rationalistic attitude, considering the identical nature of philosophical and revelational truth, has its effects on the later Muslim thought. He proved his view with reference to Quran, where it directs the Muslims to use their reason.

By reason and science Ibn-i-Rushd meant the knowledge of causes. His two views, the theory of causation and the relation of philosophy and science to religion was not given any importance by muslim thinkers for a long time. In 19th century the challenge of modern science and society led Muslim thinkers especially Sheikh

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4. Ghazali, A.H., "Al-Munqidh Min Ad-Dalal".

Muhammad Abduh, Sayyid Ahmad Khan and Ameer Ali to rely on Rushdian lines.

## MYSTICISM IN INDO-PAK SUB-CONTINENT

Another prominent thought system which dominated from 13th to 17th century was mysticism, found among Hindus, Christians, Buddhists, Jews and Muslims with some similarities. In the early stages mysticism and sufism adhered to temperance and piety and showed rationalistic explanation of reality. In the second stage of sufism the ascetic tendencies developed into pantheistic trend. In the third stage, Ghazali started in systematizing the sufistic methodology. He criticised the rational faculty of Greek philosophy, and synthesised the truthfulness and usefulness of both orthodox and sufistic points of view into sufistic metaphysics in "MISHKAT AL-ANWAR". According to him human power of apprehension starts with senses, develops in reason which through inference and synthesis expands and reaches a high level. The knowledge of things that prophets and saints have is not possible through reason, rather through a higher faculty. The highest type of knowledge of God, His attributes and other higher type of knowledge is attained only through this faculty.

In the sub-continent of Indo-Pak sufism with its prominent ethical and moral aspect flourished till seventeenth century. The Hindus and Muslims inspite of living together retained their separate identities in all spheres of life, yet the interaction did involve mutual effect to some extent. The mughal Emperor Akbar tried at uniting the two nations, but failed. The result was Muslim identity crises, because among Hindus Pantheism prevailed and Muslim sufism was very much influenced by this sort of mysticism. vis sufism of Wahda-til-Wajood (Pantheism ) The Muslim society had to inculcate in themselves all the consequences of this sort of

sufism e.g. fatalistic attitude and worshipping dervais or mystics. A reaction was developed against this sort of religious mystic approach. Sheikh Ahmed Sirhindi was the arch-enemy of this sort of sufism. He preached pantheism (وحدة الوجود) against Hindu mysticism. In search of the Muslim identity, many reform movements and rationalistic doctrines were developed, hitting the very basis of sufistic spell of determinism, responsible for moral and practical stagnation of the Muslim.

Sirhindi rejected the sufi point of view of considering sainthood above prophethood. Giving the rationalistic analysis of mystic state of absorption, he proved it as below the state of prophetic experience because the world renounced by the sufis is affirmed at a highest level by the prophet. The spiritual journey when reaches the highest Divine Being, it requires the affirmation of its opposite, the non-being or the world. The saint by despising the world, stops at this stage, he can not move further, while a prophet by affirmation attains the highest stage.

Sheikh Sirhindi gave a rationalistic explanation of miracles. He believes in the causal order of the world. According to him God has given chance and freedom to man to act freely, to realize his own capacities and to understand the meaning and purpose of the creation of the world. At the time when Sheikh Sirhindi started the rationalistic approach of purifying sufism in the sub-continent, in the West the rationalistic movement was in full swing. The later thinkers of the sub-continent had the good opportunity to take advantage of Western modern thinkers and be influenced by them. Yet we see that the later Muslim thinkers of India especially Shah Waliullah retained his isolated identity from Western sources. The constructive purifying movement started by Sheikh Sirhindi in the seventeenth century developed into an organic rationalistic system of

Shah Waliullah in Eighteenth century. After purification of sufism and orthodoxy he synthesized these with jurisprudence

The liberal interpretation of Islam by Shah Waliullah did not flourish due to political instability in India. His successors directed their efforts only towards rehabilitation of political and social state of the Muslims; educational side was ignored. The result was not convincing. The true moral reform could be revived and revitalized with the help and background of modern knowledge and scientific technology of the time which was developed by the west and India was far behind in this respect.

In the eighteenth century Sayyid Ahmad Khan appeared as a social and religious reformer. In his case the Western influences are highly exaggerated because of his brought up in a religious Muslim family and his eastern conservative religious education. After Shah Waliullah, Sayyid Ahmad Khan gave new route and expansion to Islamic rationalistic movement with practical struggle and effort. In case of Sayyid Ahmad Khan we see a subtle change because he had faced difficult, highly degrading and depressing situation of the Muslim of sub-continent after the War of Independence. He gave up the idea of Hijrat to Eyp<sup>t</sup> and decided to share the troubles of his nation and to work for them. He considered it as his religious duty and national obligation to alleviate them and give them their lost prestige and position.<sup>5</sup> The revolutionary changes, social and political circumstances had disorganized the spiritual as well as the material life of the Muslims of the sub-continent. There was a complete dead-lock for the Muslims. At this critical cross road of history, there was the attractive materialistic naturalism of the West and the general enlightenment with the introduction of modern scientific knowledge on one side, while on the other side there were doubts, misgivings and several queer notions wrongly ascribed to

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5. Hafi, Altaf Hussain; Hayat-i-Javid, Lahore Academy Punjab 1966, P-155

Islam. Sayyid Ahmed Khan appeared on the scene at a time when the Muslim umma as a whole, and the Indian Muslims in particular, were morally and religiously despirited. They were under foreign subjugation. It fell to his lot to reason against the view points of Christian Missionaries of the advanced and advancing ruling British people on one hand and to struggle against the un-warranted thoughts, superstitions of Indian Muslims and Muslim clergymen and ulamas on the other. His approach was based on reason and rational investigation of Islamic dogmas, an attempt to understand the Quran and its teaching and to derive practical conclusion for human conduct and improvement of socio-cultural conditions.

## RELIGION

Religion is fundamental in human societies. According to Sayyid Ahmad Khan it is inborn in man. Bergson rightly states its inevitable necessity in these words, "We find in the past, we could find today, human societies with neither science nor arts, nor Philosophy. But there has never been a society without religion".<sup>6</sup>

Sayyid Ahmad Khan realized that the reformation and reconstruction of the Muslim society, necessitated a change in the religious attitude of the Muslim with emphasis on reason, understanding and practical principles for human conduct. Religion is innate, natural and rational. It deals with the conduct of man, who is capable of judgement by differentiating good from evil. He stated that

"Of all the innumerable wonders of the universe, the most marvellous is RELIGION. The foundation of which lies in the distinction between the acts of men, distinguishing them into good,

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6. Bergson, H; The Two Sources of Morality and Religion, New York, 1954, P.102

evil, indifferent; for, if there be no such difference, there can be no religion, et contra".<sup>7</sup>

He was aware that religious truth is sometimes different from scientific truth, because it is not derived through reason. The religious idea is innate, neither learnt, nor acquired "and is accepted, entertained and acquiesced in, independently of any evidence of its truth through the instrumentality of the external senses".<sup>8</sup> The influence, force and truth of religion is a universal reality. The heart is its base and belief in it is more certain than in objects perceived.<sup>9</sup> "Proof of religion being a reality, the very idea of it alone acts upon men's thought and determines men's action with a force.."<sup>10</sup>

Man is religious by nature. <sup>11</sup> From the very beginning, the religious idea, the idea of some Power, superior to him, existed in him. The proof is that, "in every age each clan, tribe, and nation, nay, almost each separate individual, formed on idea of religion, or rather of the object of it....."<sup>12</sup>

In primitive time man was incapable of understanding true nature of natural events and considered them as an act of some unseen power. So worship of different sorts began. In due course different religions among different people flourished and every one considered his religion to be true. Sayyid Ahmad Khan referred to Quran where God says, " I am with each individual in the

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7. Ahmad Khan, Sayyid; "Tasanif-I-Ahmadiya (Aligarh, 1887, P. 183 and Syed Ahmad Khan Bahadar, "A Series of Essay on The Life Of Muhammad And Subject Subsidiary There To". (Lahore. 1968), Preface. P.-3.

8. Abid. Pref. P.3.

9. Pani-Pati Ismail (ed). Maqallat-I-Sir Sayyid, VOL. XIII P. 251

10. Syed Ahmad Khan Bahadar: "A SERIES OF ESSAY ON THE LIFE OF MUHAMMAD," Preface P. 3.

11. MAQALAT. Vol.4(M'AZHAB Inshan ka Amer Tabaie Hai),p.<sup>260</sup>.

12. Ibid - Preface p.3.



appearance which he forms of me in his own mind".<sup>13</sup> The truths of religion are "primary and independent of man's belief. They are in nature. Nature is a law, and as a law necessarily implies a lawgiver",<sup>14</sup> and so through nature, man looks to -"..... God that supreme and perfect Being upon whom the existence of all other beings originally depends....."<sup>15</sup> He further stresses that, "Man, then, must look through Nature upto Nature's God". Finally he concludes that, "I have found Islam to be most undoubtedly the true religion, that is, its genuine and chief principles are in perfect harmony with that true one which I have defined to be true religion".<sup>16</sup> At another place he expresses, "A true religion is in conformity with human nature and nature in general because God is the Author of nature both in man and outside.....I am fully confident that the guidance which He has given us is absolutely in confirmity with our constitution and our nature and this is the only touchstone of its truth. It would be clearly absurd to assert that God's action is different from His word. All creation including man is the work of God and religion is His Word, so there cannot be any contradiction between the two".<sup>17</sup>

In Tahzibul Akhlaq<sup>18</sup> he explained a true and natural religion does not hinder the progress and development of man otherwise there was no necessity or need for creating him. Man is gifted with reason conscience and innate capacities to recognize and worship God. Man has a contradictory principle of good and evil and he has the capacity to subdue the evil. He is created for a noble purpose to

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13. Ibid - Preface p.4.

14. Ibid - Preface p.5.

15. Ibid - Preface p.5.

16. Ibid. Preface p.6.

17. Majmuah.. Lecture.pp.21-22. Maqallat'Vol.III p. 199. a'so, "Tafsirul-Quran'Vol.I "usul.p.14

18. Mazzamine Tahzibul Akhlaq Vol.11.,p.159. and 'Maqallat; Vol.XIII.P.40

do the good and avoid the evil. A virtuous life is the only true life of man. Those who have followed the wrong path, have deviated from the true and noble purpose of life.

Sayyid Ahmad Khan tried to reconcile modern scientific spirit with the traditional attitude of Islam. As a true and devoted muslim he could not repudiate the overwhelming superiority of faith to reason. Nor could he deny that scientific knowledge was essential for the community's progress. He tried to reconcile both and showed that religion is not opposed to science. Without religion and faith in God, man is incomplete. Man has supramundane destiny, the attainment of which is possible only through the instrumentality of religion.

In an effort to defend Islam as a religion, he separated the sphere of religion of the Indian Muslim and the temporal matters that is the culture and civilization. Both are different in nature. The religious principles pertain to spiritual conduct, are permanent and final.<sup>19</sup> The spirit of man, created by God does not change during his existence on earth. Quran and the proved traditions of the Prophet are infallible truths, they must be in accordance with the nature. The original and pure Islam i.e. the Quran is the word of God and Nature is His work. They infact are in full accord with each other and cannot contradict each other. There is no change in them.<sup>20</sup> He accepted Quran as the final authority in matter of judgment and identified religion in its purest form with the state of nature. His words are "Islam is nature and nature is Islam." True religion consists in belief in one God only, and all those who believe in the unity of God are muslims.<sup>21</sup>

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19. Maqalat-i-Sir Sayyid. Vol. v, 'Mazhab aur M's sharat, " pp 5.6 and Imquallat Vol. IX.p.10.

20. Maqallat Vo, p-234 and Majmuas i lectures p.298.

21. Ibid, p.41., and an artcils in Tahzib-al-Akhlaq, Islam is nature and nature is Islam

The ethical principles of Islam are well adapted to human nature, not a single word goes against human nature or capacity, nor any law requires a single thing which man cannot perform. Thus he interprets Islam as a natural religion.<sup>22</sup> He then distinguished two types of religious directives. The scriptural directives are directly given to the Prophet himself and the second kind of directives are inferred and deduced from the scriptures, by the scholars and justis according to demands of the age and then our scholarship. Only the second kind of directives are liable to fallacies and mistakes.<sup>23</sup> The temporal matters which deal with the social and cultural values keep on changing with the change of time and circumstances. They can be remodeled, changed or retained according to their utility, need and requirement. Therefore, they cannot be included in the permanent religious values. The result will be unfortunate and destructive. He expressed it in these words "The basis of human misfortune is the mixing of temporal issues with the eternal and unchangable religious issues".<sup>24</sup> Anxious to confine religion strictly to spiritual conduct and faith, he stated, "The fact is that from the early days of my early education I had held faith and the world to be the same ..... After much meditation and contemplation, and after understanding the argument for and against, and pondering well on the injunction of God and His apostle, a differenc appeared between the two... I am very pleased to confess and I believe that it is a great mistake not to differentiate between religions and worldly affairs and to treat them equally as religious injunction.<sup>25</sup> Differentiating religious commandment from social regulation, while quoting Hadith, he pointed out that the social decadence of the Muslim is due to the wrong conception of including both the religious as well

22. Ibid, pp.213-14 and Tafsir-ul-Quran vo. I p.37

23. Maqallat, Vol. XI, pp. 14 & 15. and Vol. XIII. p.35.

24. Maqallat-i-Sir Sayyid, Vol.V, pp.516.

25. Ahmad Khan, Sayyid, "Tasanif-i-Ahamdia"Part-I, Vol. I.p.136



as the worldly affairs into religion and neglecting the saying of the Prophet, "that you know the worldly affairs better than I."<sup>26</sup>

Although he himself was not able to keep religion and civilization apart, had he taken this step to its logical end, he would have never discussed the social issue like polygamy, slavery etc, in Quranic Tafsirs, essays and his emphasis that Islam has all those right things which leads to worldly progress, humanity, civilization and kind hearted perfection.<sup>27</sup>

In this effort his main motive was to purify the sources of religion from unnecessary rituals, irrational dogmas and blind taqlid, to save Islam from the contempt and [ridicule] of other religions, western writers and challenge of materialistic naturalism of the West by proving Islam to be quite inconformity with the reason and basic principles of modern sciences. The important task before him was the true assessment of some religious problems which were ture in themselves. But either they were wrongly interpreted or not expounded in rational terms. To secure this end he reconstructed the original and pure Islam, in which nongenuine elements, influences of Jews, Christians and impact of Greek Weltanschauing were imputed.. His endeavour was to disentangle Quran from the web of myths and fable, miracle mongering and magic, mis-interretation and to restore it to its pure form of divine massage, to guide man by appealing to his reason. In his religious thought he stood for rational approach. He claimed that Islam was a true religion. Quran is the only source of Islamic tenets. His efforts were directed to prove its conformity with the rational stand point of the scientific age.

## GOD

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26. Maqalat-i-Sir Sayhid, "Vol. IX. pp. 4 and 10. and Vol. XIII.p.37

27. Fazal Din. (ed) "Mazamine". p-173

Belief in God is the life-blood of religion. Sayyid Ahmad Khan expressed his view in these words, "It is axiomatic that there exists a God, who created the universe. He is one, independent, unbegotten and unbecoming. He is necessary, self-existent, undying and eternal. He is the cause of causes of the entire creation as it ever was and it ever will be" 28 The beginning of all creation is God. God has created every thing including matter. But why has God created the universe, what was the purpose of all creation and what was His first creation, is beyond the reach and comprehension of human being because of his limited knowledge. Man only knows this much that God

is the first creator as it is proved by the Holy Quran, that beginning of all creation is the utterance of the word "Be" by Him.<sup>29</sup>

The divine attributes are identical with the Divine Essence. The divine attributes are promordial, eternal and their manifestation is a necessity innate in the Essence for ever. He is existing (maujud) and so self-existent (wajib-al-wajud).<sup>30</sup> The rationalist and philosophers under Hellenic influence (علماء متکلمین) regard divine attributes as neither essence itself, nor other than it, while theologians considered them as essence itself and their manifestation a necessity innate in essence. Sayyid Ahmad Khan considers both views as merely a verbal altercation. He seemed to be inclined towards the later view, He states that the former view is not supported by conclusive arguments.<sup>31</sup> The belief in God's unity, His omnipotence and Omniscience are common among all muslim, the difference is in the nature of the attributes of God. Agreeing with Mutazilites and Philosophers, He believes that God's attributes are identical with his essence, on the other hand, like theologian He believes in all positive and negative attributes of the Divine Essence mentioned in Quran as true, but considers them beyond human comprehension, only derivative meaning can be attained. He believes in the unity of God, but denies the beautiful vision either in this world or in the hereafter, but admits the possibility of spiritual sight only after death, different from the physical sight.<sup>32</sup> He also

28. Sayyid Ahmad Khan, "Tahreer fi-usul-i-Tafseer" in Tafsir-ul-Quran Vol.I. Lahore. RAfa aum steam Press. Usul. I. p.3.

29. Tahzeeb-ul-Akhlaq Vol.II, p.184.

31. Usul. 7, p.5.

30. Maqallat. Vol.III. P-266.

32. Tahzibul Akhlaq, Vol.II, p-170.

agrees with philosophers on the cosmological proof of the existence of God, that He is the ultimate or first causeless cause of the universe.<sup>33</sup> The teleological proof of the existence of God is, his manifestation in the orderliness, design and beauty of the universe. For

Sayyid Ahmad Khan the existence of God is the logical implication of the Law of causation, he states, that everything in the world has a cause, Following the course of natural causation, each cause is linked with otherthing by chain of causation. This chain necessarily ends in the First Cause.<sup>34</sup> Thus to Sayyid Ahmad Khan Law of causation is another name for naturalism, with God as cause of the causes. This ultimate cause, which is actively existent, causeless, is God Almighty and Absolute, briefly called Jovoh, Allah, Khuda and God.<sup>35</sup> He further explains that the Naturalists believe God, as cause of causes, as an absolute, eternal and infinite. They argued in three ways, firstly from the very existence of God, that He exists. Secondly, from His eternity, that God's existence from present to unlimited past. There being no time of His origin. He existed all along. Thirdly, His existence in the infinite future i.e. immortality.<sup>36</sup> Sayyid Ahmad Khan was conscious of the theological difficulty arising from the Law of causation. He referred to the views of Muslim Philosophers and Ibn-i-Sina about the necessary causation

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33. Ahmad Khan, Sayyid, "Tafsir-ul-Quran", Vol.I, p-15. Usul I, p.3, and Maqallat-i-Sir Sayyid Vol.III, pp.239

34. Ibid. p.241.

35. Ibid. "Hua-Al-Mauj'ud", pp. 304-305.

36. Ibid. P.303.

leading to the Materialistic view and the eternity of matter. He also mentioned Al Ghazali's criticism of causation who considered it against religion and Ibn-i-Taymia's criticism who doubted the validity of the argument leading to materialism and atheism. According to Sayyid Ahmad Khan both are mistaken. They have confused the views of philosophers and materialists because of the undeveloped state of natural philosophy and sciences at that time. Modern development in the field of natural sciences shows the validity of the law of causation. The close observation of existent objects of the world proves that every cause is inextricably linked with other things and causes. This process of cause and effect in due course goes through a constant change and a new compound takes place i.e., the causes effect other causes, effects become the cause of other effects. This chain necessarily ends in the Last cause, the cause of causes. This natural process is related to creation and not against it, as mistakenly ascribed by Ibn Taymia. And the reply to the misconception of those who considered God inactive after the creation of natural laws is that, as every thing is caused, its existence ultimately depends on the First cause, if this connection is broken the whole Universe would perish and nothing would exist for one second.<sup>37</sup> Sayyid Ahmad Khan further elaborates his point with an example of a Tree, which develops from a seed with the help of soil, water, sunlight.<sup>38</sup> God, being the First cause, the whole creation took effect at His command and thus entered on its life. God's relation to His creation is that of a craftsman, who determines the Characteristics, functions and positions of the different parts of his machine, example is that of a watchmaker who co-relates the different parts of the watch and makes them function according to his will. So God created the universe and ordained its laws once for all. The nature is left to work out itself in obedience to the laws originally given by God. No deviation, no change, no adjustment in

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37. Ibid. P.283-285 "Kiya Nature Ke Ma'ni Se Khuda' Mua'tel Ho Jata Hai"

38. Ibid. P.239-241.

the established laws of the nature or His promise is possible, as that would imply a detraction from the perfection of His attributes.<sup>39</sup> God would never introduce any correction in to His creation later on which from the beginning reflected His omniscience and omnipotence. Elaborating this point in the Eighth principle of Exegesis he states, "All attributes of the Divine Being are infinite and absolute..... But so long as the present natural law exists no deviation from it or from His promise is possible..... The making of the promises He has made and the establishment of the universe on the basis of natural laws are proofs of His omnipotence, and fulfilling the promises made by His own volition is not inconsistent with the Divine attributes of absoluteness and infiniteness".<sup>40</sup> He, then sets forth a number of quotations from the Quran and states that these verses show that God has made promises and He is not going to break them." No change will you find in the habit of God."

48:23, 5:12&13, 9:6, 19:16, 2:74, 7:42,

41:45, 3:7, 73:18, 40:57&77.<sup>41</sup>

In the moral sphere, the absolute laws of right and wrong work. Man has the capacity to differentiate between right and wrong. This capacity is given to man by God once and for all, in order to realize the end for which he is created. As "Everything acts according to its nature" Sayyid Ahmad Khan while quoting the verse from the Quran states man is subject to the same law. Pain and pleasure are the logical result of the kinds of acts performed by man. Thus in moral as well as in physical sphere there is no need of God's interference. Thus finally he states that neither is the Quran contrary to the law of

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39. Ahmad Khan, Sayyid; Tafsir-ul-Quran.. Vol.I, Usul-5.

40. Ibid. p.5.

41. Ibid. Usul. p.5-9.



nature nor is the law of nature contrary to religion. There is nothing which is against Fitrat-allah.<sup>42</sup>

## Nature

Sayyid Ahmad Khan's view about nature is not systematic. At one point he has taken it in the sense of a physical universe of natural causation<sup>43</sup> which he has inherited from the nineteenth-century Naturalism. Thus it follows that only the laws of physical causation operate and nothing happens without sufficient cause for it. There is continuous chain of antecedent and inevitable consequence without any change. No doubt the world of nature is all around us with physico-chemical laws, but this is not the only law operating in the whole universe. There is human nature and supra-human nature as well. In the world of life, consciousness and mind physical laws are inapplicable. Man, for example, feels with regard to himself that his actions are not the result of invariable antecedent and consequent sequence, or that a particular pattern of behaviour is not purely externally determined e.g. the same stimulus will produce the same result in the physical realm but the same stimulus in the same man may lead to variety of responses. The inner stand point of the self<sup>44</sup> which is distinguished from the character of self, determined as it is by the heredity, environment and past causation while keeping in consideration the needs and motives of the agent supersedes the physical law of causation. Moreover, the nature of

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42. Ibid Usul. p.7., and Tabzibul Akhlaq. Vol. II, p.307.

43. Pani Pati; ed. Maqallat-i-Sir Sayyid. Vol. III. P-278.

44. Lillie, W., An Introduction to Ethics, p.54,".... the ultimate substance of mind is of a kind that allows a rather larger free play to its states or processes than do most physical substances". Prof. C.A. Campbell has suggested in Defence of Freewill, "there is also an inner stand point, and in it we do definitely give meaning to causation by the self. as distinguished from character of the self, determined as it is by heredity and environment and of course by past self causation.

mental causation is different from physical or material causation. Psychology and philosophy are unable to determine scientifically how mental causation works on body, (physiological causation/physical causation) though experience proves that mind acts and interacts on body in many ways which is beyond the grasp of reason. This takes us to another sphere known by mystics as spirit or soul, which lies beyond the order of physical nature. So the universe cannot be said to be identical with the physical world alone. The world of matter is the world of science. Sayyid Ahmed Khan being an admirer of Science, scientific knowledge and reason considered it a must for the progress and advancement of nations. Moreover, it was he who propogated the modern knowledge among muslim youth in Indo-Pakistan, because he considered it his duty to defend the religion of Islam and to show that it is in conformity with nature and rational standpoint of sciences and to reveal its original bright face.<sup>45</sup> According to him, greatness of western nations lies in their reliance on sciences. But scientific knowledge, though very important, is not the entire knowledge, nor is the whole universe controlled by scientific knowledge of cause and effect and there is no freedom of action . With these unalterable mechanical laws scientists reduce every complex phenomena into a simple one. Human mind and consciousness is reduced to physio-chemical process. The result was total denial of God and autonomy of moral values. It was because of Sayyid Ahmed Khan's uncritical acceptance of nature and natural laws, that he was accused of being a naturalist, ~~ah~~ahrayia or an atheist. But soon in a reply to a letter he clarified his belief in God, the status of the Prophet and the day of judgement.<sup>46</sup> But if we look at the different details of his naturalism, it follows that he was not systematic naturalist philosopher in a real sense. He uses naturalism for the deliberation of natural sciences. He discussed the

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45. Hali, Altaf Hussain; " Hayat-i-Javid". p.235., and Majmua Lectures, P.298.

46. "Maqallat". Vol. XIII. "Khuda, Rasool aur Qayamat Ke Muta'liq, Sir Sayyid Ke Aqa'id". p.52 and "Actiqade Billah".p.3.

three categories of natural scientists. The first category believes that the world is composed of matter and mechanical laws of nature operate in it. God is irrelevant so faith in God is utterly useless. They are atheists. The second group asserts that reality exists only in empirically verified facts or laws of nature. May be, God exists, may be he does not. They are called skeptics. The third category of scientists because of their intensive research in laws of nature, and on the basis of magnificent display of design in nature, believes in a world that is ruled by the laws of nature. God is the creator of these Laws. He is the Designer or Cause of all causes. They are true muslims, true naturalists and follow truthfully the principles of Islam.<sup>47</sup> Here Sayyid Ahmed Khan tried to graft his purely theistic views of nature on anti-theistic naturalism without bothering much about the logical inconsistency involved in it. In the instance of his scientific approach he saw an alliance between religion and science by pointing out that whatever one chose, it disclosed the power, wisdom and goodness of God. People are highly mistaken when they consider that natural sciences and religion are opposed to each other. They have two different sets of concerns, but they are not dialectically opposed to each other. Religion deals with ultimate cause i.e., The Creator and the creation of things, science explains the nature of existing things, it is concerned with observation and experiment and a search for connections among the data, e.g., how water came into being? How the clouds are formed etc etc., <sup>48</sup> He saw nature as 'the work of God' and defined religion as 'the word of God' and asserted that Islam being a natural religion there is no dichotomy between the 'work' and 'word' of god.<sup>49</sup> He sets forth many verses from the Quran describing nature as a sign of God's existence. "See they not the clouds, how they are created? And the heaven, how it is raised ? And the mountains, how they are fixed?

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47. Abid. Vol. III. pp. 277-276.

48. Abid. pp. 281-282.

49. "Usul".p.14.

And the earth, how it is spread out?" (88:17-20). He also cited the cases of the prophets who through nature, transcend to the spiritual reality behind,<sup>50</sup> for instance the case of Moses who longed and wished eagerly to see God, the reply was, "By no means canst thou see Me, but look upon the mountain". (7:43). The mountain contained nothing but nature and natural laws. Moses forgot, that God can not reveal himself to the naked eye or be seen; but His Divine presence/essence can be seen in nature and inspires faith in His Existence.<sup>51</sup> In the same way Abraham gained access to God by prophetic experience through immutable laws of nature. It was deep contemplation of nature, its manifestation which enabled him to reach the spiritual reality i.e., God. Emmanuel Kant expressed the same view when he said, "Two things will fill mind with evernew and increasing admiration;- the starry heaven above and the moral laws within."<sup>52</sup> Thus Sayyid Ahmad Khan identified Islam in its purest form with nature in an article entitled, "Islam is nature and nature is Islam". And believed that "neither the Quran is contrary to the Laws of nature, nor is the Law of Nature contrary to religion, there is nothing against Fitrat-allah".<sup>53</sup> His naturalmindedness takes us to Shah Waliullah's idea of evolution written by Sayyid Ahmad Khan in one of his articles. It explains how the different sets of laws are working in different spheres of nature. During the first period which was the lowest period of this universe, there was only inorganic matter. This stage of matter is without any consciousness and is purely controlled by external forces. Matter being the acme of the Laws of Creation, laws peculiar to the existence and working of matter were in practice. The mechanical laws operated the entire universe for a very long period perhaps million or billion of years. In the course of time, this stage i.e. inorganic matter received the

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50. "Khutubat". p.186.

51. Tafsir-ul-Quran, Vol.I.P.88.

52. Titus.HI. "Ethics for Today."

53. Tahzib-ul-Akhlaq Vol. II. p.307.

blessing of God and assured the form of organism. So matter with life came into existence. The second evolutionary stage of matter with different set of Laws related to growth and assimilation came into force, though the mechanical laws remained in practice. The evolution did not stop here. The organic matter received the blessing of God. The additional qualities of sensation started working in them, with the result of the appearance of animals with another set of laws more suitable for the natural development of this stage. This stage continued till it came to an end. Then animals received a strange blessing from God. Another set of laws came into being without annihilating the former laws. Man appeared superseding the previous grades. He was the highest manifestation of life in the world. He is given some extra qualities which are not shared by the lower grades. Man like animals has sensation, feeling and emotion, but his distinction is mind, consciousness and reason. It follows that these four different levels of being have different sets of laws, aptly applicable to each level. The laws of lower grades do not apply to the higher grades though the higher grades can use, guide and control them in accordance with the laws which govern them. So it follows, what is natural law for the higher grade is supernatural for the grade below, finally man is supernatural for all the grades or forms of life in the lower realm till it reaches the highest realm which works naturally with the whole of creation for its higher objects and ends, which seems supernatural to men. Looked at from this angle the miracle would appear as the guidance, influence or the effect of the causation of the highest grade on the existence of lower grade, i.e., man. Sayyid Ahmad Khan believes that the lower grades are subordinate to the higher grade and must be controlled by it. So the whole universe becomes a single system organized in a hierarchical form, starting from matter and ending

with God, the cause of all causes or the Final Cause. In the true sense, the realm of nature is not inconsistent with God.