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## **IJTEHĀD IN THE MODERN WORLD OF ISLĀM**

**A PROJECT AIMED TOWARDS THE SPIRITUALIZATION  
OF MAN, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY**

A study of the following few lines of the concluding paragraph of 'Allāma Iqbāl's sixth lecture in *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islām* has prompted me to write my present paper on "*Ijتهād* in the Modern World of Islām" wherein, as a student of Philosophy, I have attempted in my own humble way, to fulfill the cherished desire of this great modern thinker of Islām. Iqbāl writes:

Humanity needs three things today — a spiritual interpretation of the Universe, spiritual emancipation of the individual and basic principles of universal import directing the evolution of human society on a spiritual basis.<sup>1</sup>

### **Ideals and Teachings of Islām and Ground Realities of the Muslim World**

But before embarking on this supreme project I would like to present, in brief, the ideals and teachings of Islām, on the one hand, and the ground realities of the present day Muslim world on the other.

The Prophet of Islām, we know, urged mankind to clothe themselves with the attributes of Allah and, knowledge being one of the most important attributes of God, education, learning and wisdom were considered to be the greatest divine need. *Sūra al 'Alaq* revealed to the Prophet at the gate of the cave of Hira,

pertained to this acquisition of knowledge and wisdom. The Qur'ān says:

Read, in the name of the Lord who createth man from a clot. Read; And thy Lord is the Most Bounteous, Who teacheth by the pen, teacheth man that which he knew not.<sup>2</sup>

The Holy Prophet of Islām is unique among the religious teachers of mankind in emphasizing the role of knowledge. Continuous pursuit of knowledge, according to him, is the most important characteristic of a Muslim. There are a number of traditions attributed to him wherein he says:

- (a) The ink of a scholar is as sacred as the blood of a martyr.
- (b) Seek knowledge from the cradle to the grave.
- (c) Seek knowledge even if you have to go to China in search of it.
- (d) An hour of contemplation and study of God's creation is better than a year of worship.
- (e) Wisdom is the lost treasure of a *Mo'min* (a true believer) and he should pick it up wherever he finds it.

Allah asks the prophet to pray: "My Lord! Increase me in knowledge."<sup>3</sup> The Qur'ān not only repeatedly invites mankind to ponder and deliberate over its message but lays great emphasis on the use of sense-perception, reason and intellect as means of acquisition of knowledge and truth. The Prophet used to pray: 'Oh God, grant me knowledge of the ultimate nature of things.'

The Qur'ān enunciates four sources of knowledge, viz. (i) revelation, (ii) the self of man, (iii) nature and (iv) history. With the application of these sources, Islām emphasized the need to look for new and fresh horizons of knowledge in the world of phenomena as well as in the world of one's own inner self. The Qur'ān says: 'And in the earth are signs for those of firm faith as also in your own selves; will ye then not see.'<sup>4</sup>

While the knowledge of the phenomenal world is acquired through the faculties of sense perception and reason, knowledge of the self is acquired through inner reflection and intuition. The Qur'ān invites human beings to study and observe the phenomena of nature and read the signs of God in the alternation of day and night, in the starry heavens, the sun, the moon and other heavenly bodies that follow their appointed courses and orbits. "Allah is he who gave you mastery over all that is there in the heavens and on earth."<sup>5</sup> The prophet called the microcosm of the Self to be the gateway to the macrocosm of Ultimate Reality.

Thus, the Qur'ān and *Sunnah* became the fountainhead of knowledge and sciences for all future generations of mankind. It liberated humanity from the destructive powers of all pseudo-gods and brought man to the threshold of a new world where new vistas of knowledge awaited him to unfold in order to observe and experience the higher realities of existence.

The emphasis on knowledge and learning not only infused creative thinking among the Muslims but also aroused mankind in general from their dogmatic slumber about the nature of Ultimate Reality and human existence. Thus, the birth of Islām, as 'Allāma Iqbāl pointed out, was the birth of inductive intellect. Muslim Arabs gave to the world an inductive method of scientific research and investigation based on observation, experiment and measurement. Within no time great centers of learning like Baghdad, Cairo, Cordova, Granada, Seville, Samarkand and Bukhara came into existence and their professors and scholars made such outstanding contributions in the fields of philosophy, mathematics and the sciences of physics, astronomy, chemistry and medicine, which gave an entirely new direction to human thought. The Muslims soon became the standard-bearers of a dynamic civilization, and the truth of the Qur'ānic verse that it is a book that we have sent down to thee that thou mayest bring forth mankind from the depth of darkness to light<sup>6</sup> was fully vindicated.

The darkness of ignorance is one of the greatest evils from which the Holy Qur'ān emancipated humanity and led it towards

the light of knowledge and wisdom. It is generally believed that more scientific discoveries had been made during the 350 years of Muslim ascendancy than during any other period of human history. Inspired with a new spirit of inquiry and zeal for learning they introduced new methods of observation and experiment that paved the way for further scientific progress in Europe. Jābir Khwārizmi, Rāzi, Mās'ūdi, Al Berūni, Ibn Sīna, Ibnul Haitham and Omar Khayyām are just some of the few outstanding scholars in various fields of scientific investigation who made remarkable contributions in their respective fields.

We need not, however, be astonished by the extra-ordinary progress made in the sciences by the Muslims during that period of history. The Qur'ān, as I just pointed out, and as recently upheld by the French surgeon Maurice Bucaille,<sup>7</sup> contains a number of verses which were not only a source of general guidance for the Muslims of that period but anticipated some of the latest discoveries of the contemporary world of science.

Now let us cast a glance at the state of literacy and education in the Muslim world today. The percentage of literacy and education among the Muslims is perhaps the lowest in the world. There are rampant illiteracy, ignorance and superstitions in almost all the Muslim countries. This has brought disgrace to the good name of Islām. In the mass media of the world a Muslim is generally depicted as savage, uncivilized and fanatic. The evils of racism, tribalism, communalism, regionalism and sectarianism, born out of this ignorance and illiteracy, are prevalent in majority of these Muslim countries. Thus, the Muslims enjoy the worst possible image in the world. A long period of slavery has atrophied the vigorous exercise of their faculties. In our own times the cumulative efforts and resources of the Organization of Muslim Countries have failed to establish even a single standard seat of higher learning in any of these Muslim countries which may compete with the Western universities of Oxford, Cambridge, Harvard, California or MIT, in the fields of modern arts, sciences and technology.



## **Causes of Decline of the Muslims**

We can briefly fathom the causes of this tragedy which the Muslims suffered in almost all walks of human life during the last one thousand years. The greatest evil that had befallen the Muslims was the twin curse of monarchy, on the one hand, and feudalism, on the other. During the course of Muslim history there were no doubt certain benign and God-fearing monarchs as well as a number of upright and well-meaning feudals who were men of great erudition and learning and who had the welfare of the people at their heart. But, by and large, they suppressed the common man and in certain cases, in collusion with pseudo-*'ulemā'*, exploited Islām for their personal glory and self-aggrandizement. After shifting of the capital of Islām from Syria to Baghdad these monarchs in the garb of caliphs adopted the ways and life-patterns of the Byzantine and Sasanide imperial tradition with total disregard to Islām's democratic and equalizing spirit. Big *jāgīrs* and land holdings were distributed among the loyal tribal lords which ultimately became their personal fiefs. The kings became the shadows of God upon the earth and the pseudo-*'ulemā'*, who served as henchmen of these rulers, did not even hesitate to interpret Islām according to the wishes of these rulers for the sake of petty worldly gains. The Muslim masses and the budding intellectuals accordingly found it very difficult to see Islām in any other light than in the historical perspective prevalent at that time. The landed aristocracy always suppressed the common man's demand for education, because higher literacy rate could lead to greater awakening and an open society which could ultimately challenge their age old power structure. Therefore, as Mr. Iqbāl Mustafā, in one of his recent illuminating articles, has pointed out, millions of slaves toiled in the dirt to produce food for these privileged few not only for their daily requirements but for their luxurious life.<sup>8</sup> The only element thenceforward in Islāmic society, who were serious in practicing Islāmic ideals and principles in their pristine form were the early jurists, the philosophers, the scientists and the *ṣūfis*. But the manner in which some of these elements were persecuted by the monarchs or their collaborators

the feudal elite, is common knowledge. The educated middle class had neither the economic power nor the cohesive force to play any real independent role. Intense loyalty to one's tribe, sect or guild did not allow any tradition of local cooperation or initiative to break the ancient habits of lethargy and dependence. As a matter of fact the feudal mentality is a state of mind that is riddled with the germs of stagnation and decay. Further Shīreen Rehmatullah, in one of her recent articles, has also ably analyzed that "It is characterized by a power structure which enables the powerful to repress, control and direct the lives of the weak and powerless under their control for their personal benefits; other characteristics are concentration and perpetuation of power within blood relations, conspicuous show of authority and class distinction, inability to accept dissent, and such other patriarchal attitudes."<sup>9</sup> The entire belt of Muslim counties starting from Central Africa to Pakistan constituted, and in certain cases still constitutes, these feudal and tribal societies which, in collusion with the monarchy and the pseudo-'ulemā', never allowed Islāmic ideology and vision to find its proper and articulated expression in various social, educational and political institutions of the Muslim states. Unfortunately, even today our Muslim societies pay greater homage to these feudals who happen to wield political authority instead of those who have made contributions to the moral, intellectual and spiritual development of mankind.

Thus, with no definite programme for educating the masses a number of vices crept into the Muslim societies. Tribalism, racism, communalism and sectarianism, all being the products of illiteracy and ignorance, became rampant everywhere. Corruption, indolence and debauchery entered the life style of the monarchs and the so-called nobles. As a consequence, greed, ostentation, cruelty and oppression became the order of the day. Vengeance and violence that plagued the pre-Islāmic Arabic society, and against which the Prophet of Islām had launched a *jehād*, cut asunder the entire social fabric of Muslim society. Ethnic and sectarian hatreds intensified and made deep inroads in all walks of life. Among the common masses blind and shallow

ritualism (without knowing the why and wherefore of it) replaced the true spirit and essential morality of the Qur'ān which says that "there is no piety in sheer turning your faces towards the East or the West."<sup>10</sup>

In such a scenario all creative thinking, discernment and search for truth and knowledge aimed towards harnessing the forces of nature and ameliorating the lot of the suffering humanity which forms part of the dynamic vision of Islām was relegated to the background.

E. J. Brown in his *Literary History of Persia* gives a vivid description how the Mongol invasion beginning in the early 13<sup>th</sup> century gave a crushing blow to Muslim civilization with the sack of Baghdād and the murder of the last Abbaside caliph al Mu'taṣim, along with a number of learned scholars at the hands of Halāqū Khān in the year 1258 AD. Huge libraries containing millions of books on Islām and priceless collections of literary and artistic treasures were heartlessly burnt. It dried up, to a large extent, the source of Muslim intellectual activity and struck a deadly blow to the last semblance of Muslim unity which had hitherto subsisted in the vast Muslim empire. The prestige of the Arabic language which was considered as the chief vehicle of all Muslim religious and cultural activity henceforth became practically the language of the philosophers and theologians alone, and after the 13<sup>th</sup> century we seldom have occasion to hear of Arabic works produced in Iran.

No doubt there is much truth in this analysis but, as we shall prove in the sequel, we do not totally agree with the assertions of E. J. Brown, purely on philosophical grounds. Because after lapse of some 125 years, we find Tamerlane (1336-1405) to have embraced Islām and become the founder of a great Muslim empire and played an active role in rehabilitating the great Muslim civilization in Central Asia and Eastern Europe.

### **The Enemy Within**

As a matter of fact the Mongol invasion and the subsequent fall of Baghdād was simply a symptom and not the real cause of

decline of Muslim civilization. The vices of the Muslim society which we, in brief, have recounted above were actually the real causes of the downfall of the Muslims. As pointed out by Ibn Khaldūn the decline of every civilization always occurs owing to some inward failure of the particular nation or group and external forces simply become the last straw on the camel's back. They only prove to be the final *coup de grace*.

Therefore, the Muslims of the world should, instead of blaming the Mongol or any of the Western powers for their misery or catastrophe, trace the enemy within. We feel that the most potent cause for decline of the Muslims during the last millennium was their moral degeneration. Civilizations float on ethical bases and sink when those supports are withdrawn. The Prophet of Islām, being himself an embodiment of supreme morality, had laid the greatest emphasis on the cultivation of morals. Man being the vicegerent of God is the crown of creation. God created him in the best of moulds. To the real followers of Islām, the Qur'ān tells us that 'let there spring from you a nation who invites to all that is good, enjoining what is right, forbidding what is wrong.'<sup>11</sup> The Holy Prophet accordingly urged the Muslims to acquire the attributes of Allah because perfection of divine attributes in man will make him a perfect human being. It is only the moral deed that distinguishes man from the rest of creatures. Being the followers of the Prophet we were, therefore, supposed to set a high standard of conduct and attain moral excellence. But while the Prophet in conformity with the Qur'ānic injunction 'Hold firmly the rope of Allah and be not disunited',<sup>12</sup> stood for concord and unity, the Muslims are perhaps the most disunited group among the comity of nations of the world. The Qur'ān further lays down that if any one slays an innocent person it is as if he has slain the entire humanity. But more often than not, we fight and kill each other on the basis of nationality, sect and ethnicity. In the words of Edmund Burke, we behave like wild beasts, shut up in cage, to bite and claw each other for their mutual destruction.<sup>13</sup> The Iran-Iraq war and the Iraq-Kuwait war in recent history, and the ongoing war between



various Afghan factions makes a mockery of all such fraternal bonds and fellow-feelings.

Being held down to earth by worldly greed, Muslims fail to redeem solemn promises and hurt their neighbours. Kindness, sympathy, humility and simplicity, and a cheerful countenance were some of the sterling characteristics of our Prophet, but we are bereft of all these qualities. The Prophet of Islām championed the cause of the oppressed, the poor and the helpless, demolished false distinctions and introduced social justice in a stratified and class-conscious society. But is it not an irony that, while large segments of the Muslim *Ummah* are constrained to live in oppressive conditions steeped in poverty, ignorance and disease, majority of the Muslim rulers are leading a life of luxuries, debauchery and ostentation. There is a big gap between what they preach and what they practice. A long period of slavery has atrophied the vigorous exercise of all their faculties. Thus, there is hardly any vice or defect which has not become the insignia of the Muslim nations. Something seems to have gone radically wrong with the Muslim world. The Muslim *Ummah* is generally characterized today as "the sick man of the world". The tragedy, however, is that men of other persuasions are led to believe that the root of all these evils is the religion of Islām.

### **The Need for *Ijتهād***

Let me now declare in quite unambiguous terms that the greatest cause of the present plight of the Muslims is mostly their negligence towards *Ijتهād* which was really the most dynamic force in the arsenal of the religion of Islām. So long as the Muslims acted upon this important tenet of Islām they were the leaders of mankind in almost every sphere of life and activity. Therefore, unless they are not once again awakened about the urgent need of *Ijتهād* there is absolutely no hope of any future of the Muslims, and all attempts towards the renaissance of Islām shall go to the drain.

### **Finality of the Prophet**

The finality of prophethood as enunciated by Islām implies that prophecy had reached its perfection in the person of Muḥammad (peace be upon him), and thenceforward human beings were thrown back on their own resources to constantly use their intellectual powers for the achievement of ever-higher goals for the moral, material and spiritual advancement of humanity. The emphasis in the Qur'ān on the use of reason, inductive intellect and wisdom for the study of man's inner self, nature and history all bear testimony to this truth.

### **Dramatic Changes in Europe During the Last Two Centuries**

We are standing today at the crossroad of history. The last two centuries had been a period of great excitement and change in Europe. Advances in the fields of science and technology in Europe have completely altered the shape of peoples' lives all over the world. This was a period in which Feuerbach, Darwin, Sigmund Freud formulated their respective philosophies. Newton, Eienstein and Heisenberg completely revolutionized the thinking and life-patterns of mankind. Though Britain, France, Italy and the Netherlands had acquired almost total control of the countries comprising the Asian and African continents, the Muslim world was not yet fully aware of that unprecedented challenge of the West. Turkey, who fought on the side of Germany during the World War I, was defeated and the Ottoman caliphate, the last vestige of the unity of Muslims, came to a tragic end. The new colonial order now transformed the lives of the subject people to such an extent that all ingenuity and enthusiasm for progress and change came to a halt.

### **Revolutionary Changes During the Late 20<sup>th</sup> Century**

And now during the closing years of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century the Muslims are in the midst of a world revolution that affects all phases of human life. The whole human society is in a state of ferment. Changes are occurring at a dizzying pace. New vistas of inquiry and investigations are opened to human intellect. These changes are not only technical in nature, they have affected

man's ways of thinking, his values, his individual, social and international life, bringing him face to face with new and serious challenges.

In such a fast changing situation the scholars of Islām have unfortunately adopted an ostrich-like attitude by burying their heads under the sand. By dwelling upon superficial and trivial issues they have lost sight of the vital problems that beset mankind. Such an attitude has simply preserved an outmoded system of life based on inequity, falsehood and exploitation, and has only strengthened the hands of Western powers who are bent upon subjugating the people of Islām all over the globe. Our scholars do not realize that though the principles of truth, goodness, equality and freedom preached by the Qur'ān and our great revolutionary Prophet remain for ever constant and continue to guide us on the straight path, new challenges always call for new responses. Situations in the life of human generations are not always predefined. There may be situations that for them may be quite new and strange. When they encounter such situations they have no readymade recipe at their disposal. They have to assess the situation on hand, reflect on it and try to come up with their own solutions in the light of the universal principles of Islām. In the *Two Dogmas of Empiricism*, the renowned logician Quine says that any statement can be held true, come what may, if we make drastic enough adjustments elsewhere in the system ... Conversely, ... no statement is immune to revision."<sup>14</sup> Since Quine is asserting this truth in the context of the laws of the phenomenal world, we too have to apply the lofty and eternal principles of Islām for finding new methods, new approaches and new strategies for constructing new institutions and new systems of ideas in this fast changing world. And this is only possible by the exercise of the principle of *Ijتهād* which, as we said earlier, forms one of the most important principles of Islāmic faith.

### **History of the Principle of *Ijتهād* in Islām**

This principle of *Ijتهād* is, however, no novel idea in the history of Islām. The doctrine of *Ijتهād* has acquired its

significance as a systematic discipline from an important event that took place in the form of a dialogue during the life time of the Prophet. Tradition says that when Ḥaḍrat Mu'āz bin Jabal was appointed governor of Yemen, the Prophet is reported to have asked him as to how would he decide matters coming up to him in the new dominion assigned to him. "I will decide matters according to the Holy Qur'ān," said Mu'āz. "But if perchance you do not find any direct instruction in the book of Allah to guide you," asked the Prophet. Mu'āz replied, "I will then act on the precedents of the Prophet of God." Once again the Prophet asked, "What if you don't even find any such precedent?" "Then I will exert my reasoning to form my own judgement," said the intelligent companion of the Prophet. The Prophet was pleased with this answer and gave his praise to Allah for giving him such an intelligent and worthy governor. With the expansion of Islām to the vast territories constituting people with various cultural patterns, working out of systematic legal thought became an absolute necessity. Accordingly, both Arab and non-Arab scholars, like Imām Mālik, Imām Shāfi'ī, Imām Abu Ḥanifa and Imām Ḥanbal, exercised *Ijتهād* in the light of the Qur'ān and *Sunnah* and provided solution to almost every problem that existed during their times.

### **Closure of the Doors of *Ijتهād***

However, in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, the '*ulemā*' of Islām decreed that the gates of *Ijتهād* had been closed and the Muslims should henceforth practice *Taqīd* (emulation) of any of the above doctrines of law. This decision, we know, exercised a decisive blow to the dynamic spirit of Islām and was diametrically opposed to the idea of the finality of the Prophet, and brought all creative thought to a standstill. Centuries have now rolled by, and circumstances have almost completely changed, but conservative '*ulemā*' have clung to the decisions of these various schools of law.

However, the *bona fides* of those '*ulemā*' of Islām cannot be doubted. As a matter of fact they were deeply worried about the sense of despondency and defeat felt by the Muslims after the



fall of Baghdād — the centre of Muslim intellectual life up to the middle of the 13<sup>th</sup> century. The Muslims in general had lost their nerves and their confidence in themselves. Thinking their future to be destined to doom they became over-conservative and sought to preserve their identity and most precious possession — the Qur'ān and *Sunnah* by proscribing all innovations and advocating strict adherence to the letter of the *Sharī'ah*. The 'ulemā' of that time were also apprehensive of the ultimate motives of the *faiṣūfs* and over-rationalizations of the Mutazilites which they considered as the forces of disintegration. Treating the *Sharī'ah* as perfected in the works of these great jurists they regarded any departure from it as innovation and hence condemnable. To safeguard the survival of Islām the *Sharī'ah* was therefore to be treated as frozen. These conservative 'ulemā', however, did not anticipate that political tables could one day be turned and the Muslims could once again be a dominant force in Eastern Europe, South Asia and the Indian subcontinent, and new situations could develop demanding new solutions. It is really pity that even after gaining political ascendancy the 'ulemā' of the later centuries treated the decisions of a bygone age as something almost equivalent to the word of God which can brook no change. The *Sharī'ah*, therefore, for hundreds of years, unfortunately, remained a closed system. The original conception of Islām emphasizing the moral quality tended to be replaced by a ritualistic-cum-legal conception of righteousness which laid more emphasis on an outward conformity to legal prescription rather than to the essential inner morality of Islām.

### **Inbuilt System of Regeneration in the Muslim *Ummah***

It is, however, really a miracle that in spite of all the decline and degeneration of its followers the Muslim *Ummah* possesses within itself some sort of inbuilt system of regeneration and reform. Accordingly, we find men like 'Abdul Wahhāb (1703-1787), the Iranian reformer Jamāluddīn Afghānī, Muḥammad 'Abduh (1839-1889), Al Afghānī's Egyptian disciple Hassan Al Bannah of Egypt, and the great Indian reformers like Shāh

Walīullah of Delhi, Sir Syed Aḥmed Khān and ‘Allāma Iqbāl, who all raised the banner of *Ijتهād* in their knowledge and wisdom in the interpretation of *Sharī‘ah* in accordance with the demands of their age. Each one of them, in his own way, made ceaseless efforts to awaken the *Ummah* from its dogmatic slumber and infused in them a new spirit of *Ijتهād* in almost every field of Islāmic learning. But the Indian theologian Shāh Walīullah of Delhi (1703-1762) was perhaps the first among them to sense this new spirit. He was not only an authority on *Tafseer* and *Hadith* but also an impressive thinker. He realized the importance of cultural diversity and tried to reform the *Sharī‘ah* to make it more relevant to the conditions prevalent in India. He had seen the great Moghul empire crumble before his eyes. Therefore, among the aforesaid galaxy of scholars he was perhaps the first person to have emphasized the need of *Ijتهād*. His grasp on *Tafseer*, *Hadith* and Jurisprudence gave him a unique position among the scholars of his age. However, the historian of Islām is at a loss to understand why this great son of Islām who is reported to have completed his well known *Fayūḍul Ḥaramain* under prophetic inspiration, failed to take note of the tremendous advancements in the fields of philosophy, science and technology taking place during his times in the Western world, and their possible impact on the fate of Muslim *Ummah*. The only possible explanation that one can imagine is that while he was most of the time busy devising strategy to contain the Marhatta onslaughts from the South, he also concentrated most of his energies on the moral and spiritual regeneration of the Muslims of India. And, on the basis of our knowledge of the rise and fall of human civilizations, we firmly believe that the moral and spiritual resources are the greatest assets of any society. We are also aware how in recent times a leading super-power, with all its expertise in science and technology, and a huge stockpile of nuclear warheads, was relegated to a second grade world power for the simple reason that there was no moral or spiritual base on which it could sustain itself any more. The other possible explanation that can be imagined is that during the early days of Islām Muslims were generally considered as great sea-farers and

were expert in maritime trade. In the pursuit of their commercial activity they visited distant lands and not only delivered the message of Islām to the people with whom they came into contact, but also learned much about philosophy, science and technology of the people of those foreign strands. But during the centuries following the fall of Baghdād the Muslims became accustomed to a comfortable homely life and lost touch with the civilizational forces of the world around them. Obedience to the Qur'ānic dictum *سيروا فى الارض* (go and behold the world at large) for them hardly extended beyond the frontiers of the present day Middle East which was already sunk into poverty and ignorance. If any one in the spirit of adventure ever dared to cross these frontiers, being entirely unaware of the historical context of that fast developing civilization, could hardly appreciate the significance of the new knowledge. In such a stagnant and insulated society, it was, therefore, humanly impossible for Shāh Walīullah to care for the moral uplift of a decadent society, surrounded by its enemies from all sides, and also keep himself abreast with a distant civilization shaping place in the Western world.

The fall of the Moghul empire was therefore imminent. In the aftermath of the War of Independence of 1857 there appeared on the scene a liberal modernist Syed Ahmed Khān who aimed towards the social, educational and religious reform of the Muslims of India. He considered it his moral and religious duty to alleviate the sufferings of his fellowmen and restore their lost prestige. Realizing that the British had come to stay in India he tried to befriend them and, in an atmosphere charged with malice and revenge, he attempted to prove their innocence. Syed Ahmed Khān took cognizance of the scientific and technological advancements taking place in the Western world and was deeply impressed by them. He, therefore, established a model academic institution at Aligarh on the pattern of Cambridge. In matters of religion he advocated a purely rational approach and challenged the finality of the four well-known schools of Jurisprudence and emphasized the need for *Ijتهād*. While, according to him, we are no doubt bound by the teachings of the Qur'ān and the verified



sayings of the Prophet, which are applicable in all spheres of life, the Muslims of today, not being in the privileged position of the Companions, and having no direct contact with the Prophet, are not qualified to meet the challenges posed by the ever-changing present day world. Accordingly the inferred laws and regulations formulated by the earlier jurists, in the context of the conditions prevailing in their own times, can no more be applicable in the changed circumstances of our society.

But in spite of all his enthusiasm for the application of science and the scientific method in religion, Syed Aḥmed Khān, not being a scientist himself, could not appreciate the tentative nature of the findings of scientific theories which, when applied to religion, lead to some ridiculous conclusions. He, therefore, offered certain very grotesque interpretations of the Qur'ānic verses which he thought were strictly in accordance with the scientific truths. Thus, in spite of his very realistic approach in the social, educational and political fields, his attempt for the renaissance of Islāmic faith in the light of scientific knowledge could not make any significant headway.

But, by far, the greatest standard bearer of *Ijتهād* in the modern world of Islām was 'Allāma Muḥammad Iqbāl (1876-1938). After receiving his earlier education in India he left for England and Germany for his higher education. There he came into contact with various currents of Western civilization and was particularly influenced by the philosophies of Nietzsche, Bergson, Whitehead, Eienstein and McTaggart. Accordingly he decided to reinvigorate Islāmic thought in the light of modern philosophies and science. Like Syed Aḥmed Khān he made a distinction between Islām as revealed through the Qur'ān and Islām as it made itself manifest in the course of its history. Iqbāl was deeply shocked at the sight of the decadence of Muslim nations which he thought was largely because of their conservatism and in acquaintance with the true spirit of Islām. Though not a scholar of the old Islāmic theological tradition he emphasized that while Greek philosophy at one time very much broadened the outlook of Muslim thinkers, it on the whole



obscured their vision of the basic impulse of the Qur'ān. The empirical attitude which was the hallmark of the Muslims during the early centuries of the Islāmic era was totally neglected by them. The so-called *failasūfs* failed to realize that the spirit of the Qur'ān is essentially anti-classical, and lays emphasis on induction. Its spirit is action-oriented seeking to direct history on a spiritual value-pattern in attempting to create a dynamic world order, *i.e.* the ideal society of Islām. He thought that the universal message of Islām could alone save humanity from total destruction, but Islām had to be reconstructed in the light of the changed circumstances of the modern world. He conceived Islām as a universal religion which envisages all mankind as a unity. His ideal Islāmic society aims towards the development of a Perfect Man as the end of all creation and the purpose of existence. But unlike the superman of Nietzsche who saw himself as supreme and despised the rabble, the Perfect Man of Islām, according to Iqbāl, possesses the attributes of Allah and still remains the man of the masses.

As a philosopher and as a historian, and as a keen observer of human behaviour, Iqbāl thoroughly analyzed the problems of the Muslim world and came to the conclusion that the so-called resistance to change was not inherent in the intellectual foundations of Islām but was imposed on the Muslim society by a host of historical factors, the most important being the experiences and machinations of the despotic monarchs for the purpose of controlling their subject people. Apart from the vested interests of these monarchs some Muslim scholars too stifled the great vital force which shaped the dynamic ideal society of Islām by closing the doors of *Ijتهād*. Therefore, the key factor for bringing about the desired change is the establishment of the institution of *Ijتهād*. Iqbāl believed that if Islām was to have a future it must reconsider its stand on many of the practical problems and reformulate the old solutions that were no longer in tune with the new scientific and philosophic approaches of the modern age.

Poised, therefore, as we are at the threshold of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the survival of mankind depends on working out a philosophy of life to which all mankind can subscribe and which may serve as an essential instrument for the understanding needed for human survival. Luckily, the last two decades of this century have witnessed the emergence of a post-modern era in which humanity has come of age. Infantile insights of the past have lost their utility and can no more help create a system of thought and action by which men could live, work and hope in the face of the chaos and perils of their age. There can be no salvation of mankind in going back to a state which it has outgrown. Therefore, a new methodology, and a new approach commensurate with the demands of the contemporary situation shall have to be devised by the present day *mujtahid*. The methodology of any religious and philosophic system, we know is its most decisive aspect in the sense that it presents the system with a solid ground on which to build its entire supra-structure. And, here I feel that the method of phenomenological reduction presented in embryo by the Holy Qur'ān, and articulated by the German philosopher Husserl in modern times, serves as the securest guide to any meaningful *Ijتهād* in the modern world. The method of concentrating attention on the data of consciousness as they are presented to man's mind, and making a rigorous and exhaustive examination of these data, the proposal to set aside (bracket) all historically burdened methods of interpretation, evaluation and validation, provides us with the best approach to solve the crucial issues faced by the contemporary man. In order to restrict ourselves with what it appears it uses the method of complete intellectual suspense (*epoche*) and abstention from all pre-conceived judgements about the nature of what is ultimately true. This was the simple approach which, in the old, was adopted by the Prophet Ibrāhīm and later by the great *ṣūfī*-philosopher Imām Al *Ghazālī* (1058-1111) during the early 12<sup>th</sup> century. This device reduces facts to their original given-ness, unspoiled by all preconceived notions, uncorrupted by all prejudices and uncritically accepted "self-evidences". But in the frantic search for truth the jurist of Islām

has also to devise some faculty of knowledge which can provide him with a fool-proof criterion of certitude. Without such a criterion he may legitimately entertain grave doubts with regard to any experience or activity of life. And among those faculties reason has to remain as one of the most important universal factor. Devoid of reason the individual's own inwardness and caprice become the lone focus of truth and all objective content tends to vanish, communication between man and man becomes impossible, and all social dimensions of life seem to be violently excluded. Reason being the unbiased search for truth, the demand for reason is the demand for coherence and consistency. The Qur'ān invites mankind to brood over man's own inner self and the phenomena of nature and history and apply his rational powers to form incontrovertible judgements of truth.

Now, to achieve a veritable and unified outlook on life the *Mujtahid* has not only to be conversant with the revealed Book and the *Sunnah* of the Prophet, but he has also to be a historian of facts and an impartial observer of Nature. These five-fold data of our phenomenological existence, viz. the Qur'ān, the *Sunnah*, man's own conscience, history and Nature, serve as the basic material for laying an unshakable foundation of the edifice of human knowledge. But how to sift out this data as to reach *apodictic* certainty in the objective search for truth is now the most crucial task for the jurist of contemporary Islām. It is really a great tragedy that some of our Muslim scholars had not always been governed by their conscience and reason. The bondage of their particular orientation served as a self-incurred tutelage which sometimes cramped their spiritual powers and stifled their mental capacities. The outcome of their research was accordingly replete with all sorts of excesses which ultimately resulted in the formation of a number of sects and sometimes warring factions in the body of Islām.

As a matter of fact open-mindedness is fundamentally a matter of attitude which decries all parochialism, bias and prejudice in the search for truth. It is a predisposition of the human mind wherein the individual, by an act of choice, made

after an enlightened analysis, affirms an unflinching fidelity to what is only true and real. This exactly should be the task of the jurist of Islām who, as an autonomous person responsible to God, should always take a neutral stance in whatever he preaches and practices. This should really be the condition *sine qua non* of all true research.

It really needs a gigantic spiritual revolution to wean a man away from his long cherished and inherited views. The jurist of Islām, like a true *ṣūfī* and a philosopher, should, therefore, develop a universal focus by standing on independent grounds. The true *ṣūfī* being a seeker after truth shuns no science, scorns no book, nor clings to any one single creed. In their system of training the initiates are carefully prepared for the reception of difficult notions by means of special disciplines of mind and heart. By undergoing such a course of exercises his heart truly becomes the throne of God. The Qur'ān says: 'We know what his soul whispereth to him, and we are nearer to him than his jugular vein.'<sup>15</sup> Thus, the unveiling of divine gnosis, so necessary for a jurist, is dependent on his inner purity and moral excellence attained through renunciation of his selfish desires, passions and unlawful carnal pleasures. The Qur'ān says: 'As for those who strive in our (cause), We will certainly guide them to our paths. For verily Allah is with those who are the righteous.'<sup>16</sup> Again, in *sūra Infi'āl* the Qur'ān says: 'Oh ye who believe! If ye fear Allah He will bestow you with a criterion to discriminate (between right and wrong).'<sup>17</sup>

Thus, in conformity with the dictum that "one who truly knows his self knoweth his Lord," true faith, according to the *ṣūfis*, is to be sought in the inner life of man — in the inward depth of the self, where motives and intentions have their source. From the well-known episode of Moses and Khidr, as related in the Qur'ān, we can surmise that the external trappings of religion do not always correspond with its spiritual and mystical elements. The true *ṣūfī* lives in the full light of the vision; what others dimly see he knows with a knowledge which is sure, immediate and in its pristine form.



Creative thinking, commonsense discernment and a deep sense of mental discipline called as *furqān* (فرقان) in the Qur'ānic terminology is the fundamental principle on which the *ṣūfī* saint erects his whole edifice of purposive activity.

Everybody knows, and it is a fact of history, that the Prophet of Islām himself used to meditate and contemplate in the cave of Hira for the purification of his soul, and in search of divine guidance. After his ascent to prophethood he purified the minds of other men through education and expounded the wisdom of the Quran.<sup>18</sup> He, however did not abandon this world nor shut himself up in a desert or a mountain cave leaving the suffering humanity at the mercy of the ignoramus or the oppressors of society. The rough and tumble of Makkah and the market places of mankind were for him the true locale from where he aimed to change the course of history and the world. He only emphasized that it is the inward push of life — the spirit within — that works out any outer change in the lives of the individuals and the society. Accordingly, almost all the great *ṣūfis*, right from Junaid of Baghdād to Jalāluddīn Rūmī, Dāta Ganj Bakhsh, Shaikh Aḥmad Sarhandi, Shāh Walīullah of Delhi, and a host of others, centered all their energies towards the service of humanity by leading an active social life. Personal duties to God, according to them, were organically related to the public duties to the society. The battle of truth and righteousness, they thought, cannot simply be fought by meditation and contemplation alone, but by struggle and suffering which are its prerequisites.

History bears testimony that it was not through the efforts of great Muslim kings and emperors but by the teachings and the personal examples of these *ṣūfis* that millions of people all over the world, particularly in Africa, Central Asia, Indian subcontinent, Indonesia and Malaysia, came within the fold of Islām and became its ardent followers. By their devotion to the cause of Islām, and by the integrity of their character, they produced men of great learning and erudition who rendered yeoman service to the cause of Islām. During periods of great crises and turmoils they not only infused confidence among the

Muslims but also brought them worldly power and glory. By an open-minded, tolerant and objective approach on life they provided solutions to some of the most tricky problems of mankind. Toleration and love for humanity was their greatest weapon through which they conquered the hearts of even their arch enemies.

We personally feel that it is the imperative duty of the modern Muslim scholar, and for that matter, every conscientious man to adopt all methods to convey the truth to others for which he feels sincerely convinced after an unbiased and impartial inquiry. By precepts, preachings and personal example, he should try to win over others to his point of view and make them see the truth of his conviction. This, however, is possible only through reason and the cementing force of love and brotherly feelings.

In this way the contribution of the *ṣūfis* for the cause of Islām cannot be over-emphasized. However, there have been in the history of Islām pseudo-*ṣūfis*, as there have always been pseudo-*‘ulemā’* and pseudo-philosophers. In the garb of these *ṣūfis* these charlatans promoted their vested interests for the sake of cheap worldly gains, corrupted the whole institution, and brought bad name to all their noble endeavours. It would, however, be height of injustice to blame these great and venerable *ṣūfis* for the misdeed of these quacks and imposters.

Now, armed with the moral and spiritual powers of a true *ṣūfi*, and the rational approach of a logician, along with the five-fold data of our phenomenological existence, as explained earlier, the *Mujtahid* of Islām can embark on working out a new Islāmic world order in this novel and metamorphic phase of human history. Here, a trapped and troubled man is looking to him for a way out of many a painful predicament of the past. Old ways of thinking as well as old institutions have all virtually collapsed. But while the old civilization had hardly buried its dead, new civilizations have started dominating the entire world. These contending civilizational forces are so strong that they can reach and overtake any one without invasion or military

occupation of his land. They can subvert one's mind, convert him to their world-view and neutralize all his mental and spiritual powers. As a matter of fact this civilizational battle is already in progress on the world scene with great vigour.

The *Mujtahid* of Islām should also take note that the contemporary world which has become a global village is not likely to be attracted towards any system which does not claim to have a message for the whole mankind. Therefore, the Muslim world shall have to thrash out its options clearly whether it is going to be a dynamic and progressive world society, based on the principles of Qur'ānic revelation and its divinely given code or an insulated community, cut off from the rest of humanity, sunk into ignorance and poverty, afflicted by prejudice and all sorts of superstitions, with a beggar's bowl always in its hands.

In order that Islām may reassume its grandeur and progressive role the ideals and realities of Islām shall have therefore to be rediscovered, and set in modern setting jointly by the talents of world Muslim philosophers, scientists, sociologists, apart from the leading Muslim '*ulemā*'. We should come to realize that human institutions like human mortals die and decay but the principles of truth, goodness, equality, justice and freedom as enshrined in the Holy Qur'ān and in the teachings of the revolutionary Prophet of Islām, survive and continue to guide mankind for ever. As a book of knowledge the Qur'ān covers all facets of human life and meets the moral, spiritual and social challenges of all ages and all groups of mankind. But we should also bear in mind that while the Qur'ān is our supreme guide, the verified traditions and precepts of the Prophet are the classical elucidation of those Qur'ānic truths, because who could understand the Qur'ān better than the Prophet himself. The *Sunnah* of the Prophet is therefore the concretization and an instantiation of the Qur'ānic vision. In the Qur'ān Allah says: 'Verily in the messenger of Allah, *i.e.* Muḥammad (peace be upon him) you have an excellent pattern.' That is why the Qur'ān exhorts Muslims, on a number of places to follow Allah as well as his Prophet. Apart from these Qur'ānic injunctions

history bears testimony that the entire life and character (*uswai ḥasana*) of the Prophet presents him as an embodiment of highest morality. His emphasis on such moral qualities as freedom and justice, integrity of character, broad-mindedness and toleration, benevolence and hospitality, dignity of the human person, cleanliness and decent clothing, makes him the most progressive man of the world. The Jurist of Islām should, therefore, always keep his example in mind in each and every sphere of his research activity. The Prophet eschewed hatred and aggression and counselled patience, restraint, toleration and love in all dealings with mankind.

In *sūra* البقرة (The Cow) Allah emphasizes the importance of toleration by declaring that there is no compulsion in matters of religion.<sup>19</sup> Therefore, there is no room for any militant tendencies in Islām. Even within the pale of Islām the Prophet declared difference of opinion as a sort of blessing for his *ummah* in the sense that such differences become a source of further intellectual discussions and leads towards the clarification of concepts for a better understanding of the dogmas of religion rather than any source of friction or acrimony. The frightening rise in some modern Muslim societies of parochial and sectarian tendencies is therefore the very negation of Islām.

The modern scholar of Islām should accordingly embark on the serious and gigantic task of rethinking the fundamental concept of modern physical and social sciences within the aforesaid Islāmic framework. The Holy Qur'ān contains innumerable references wherein man is invited to brood over the marvels of nature in order to harness its forces for the material and spiritual well-being of man. Nature, we are told, is governed by unalterable laws, and it is by discovering these laws that man can subjugate everything in it and make it serve his ends. These laws are discussed in the Holy Qur'ān at a number of places and with such sophistication that the Qur'ān sometimes appears to be a most modern encyclopedia of modern sciences. In the Qur'ān Allah says that in very near future we will show our signs to them in the horizons of the external world and within themselves



until it becomes clear to them that it is the truth.<sup>20</sup> The truth of this verse was confirmed by a number of scientific discoveries which took place during the post-Islāmic era. These discoveries greatly facilitated the life of mankind and made significant contributions to human civilization. Inspired by the revolutionary teachings of the Qur'ān the early scholars of Islām made such sweeping strides in the fields of inductive logic, physics, chemistry, mathematics, optics, geography and medicine, within a century of the advent of Islām that even leading Western scholars are compelled to acknowledge the extra-ordinary contribution of these Muslim scientists.

This was made possible because they had learnt from the Qur'ān the scientific method of empirical investigation hitherto unknown to mankind. Briffault in his *Making of Humanity* admits that "The debt of our science to that of the Arabs does not consist in startling discoveries or revolutionary theories; science owes a great deal more to the Arab culture, it owes its very existence." As pointed out by us earlier, men like Jābir, Kindi, Ibn Sīna, Al Khawārizmi, Rāzi, Mas'ūdi, Al Berūni, Ibn al Haitham, Omar Khayyām and a host of others have immortalized their names in the history of science. Mathematics which was the favourite science of the Arabs was for Roger Bacon the door and key to the sciences. Even today many physicists have been so much impressed with the mathematical simplicity and the elegance of the laws of nature that they consider them to reveal the fundamental feature of existence. Leonardo de Vinci (1452-1519) once wrote: "No human investigation can be called real science if it cannot be demonstrated mathematically." This is probably more true today than it was during the 15<sup>th</sup> century. The Qur'ānic verses are also pointers to these secrets and eternal verities of Nature. Therefore, the scholar of Islām far from looking with suspicion, fear or distrust at the progress of scientific inquiry and accumulation of scientific knowledge, has reason to be much more excited about these investigations.

Modern sciences, we know, have scanned the outer recesses of interstellar space, penetrated oceans, revealed secrets about the bowels of the earth, harnessed mighty forces of nature, and invented fantastic machines. The major breakthroughs in the fields of physics, biology, medicine, psychology and economics have revolutionized the entire life pattern of man. Physics, in particular, has called for a total metamorphosis of our ideas about the building blocks of the Universe, about space and time, and the very language that describes their structure. Now we have not only concords flying across the continents, surpassing the speed of sound, with hundreds on board, but also space shuttles zooming through the dark void of Cosmos at unthinkable speed. One can gauge the temperature of the sun from eighty million miles. The advancement in modern computer technology that we see today is in fact an outcome of research and developments in mathematical logic, basic physics and engineering techniques, leading to the marvelous increase in the computing speed, accuracy and miniaturization. Softwares help the physicists in skipping lengthy and complicated calculations and advancing a larger goal of insight and understanding. He can draft a paper and send it by electronic mail to colleagues around the world. The result is that, by the time a paper is submitted to a journal, it will already have been scrutinized by the people most likely to detect its flaws. Scientists are also benefiting from the speed of a medium which allows them to transmit virtually unlimited data at the click of a mouse. Researchers have no longer to wait for expensive journals or time-consuming conferences to learn about the latest research in their fields. They can download material from electronic data bases on the World Wide Web section of the Internet ... Medical information is being disseminated to health professionals and patients via Web sets by universities, hospitals and pharmaceutical firms ... Specialized journals are available as data bases containing information on new medicines.<sup>21</sup> "An international team of scientists reported recently that they had identified all the more than 6000 genes that control reproduction, life and death in yeast cells, the relatively sophisticated single celled organisms used in

baking and brewing. The findings were entered into a computer database allowing scientists to draw upon the information. It is being thought that hundreds and thousands of genes can reside on a single chromosome with a cell. In this way researchers have gained insight into several genetic diseases, including hereditary colon, cancer, through study of yeast genes that regulate cell growth and DNA repair." The physics of nucleus has given rise to the most powerful sources of energy and the impact it has made over the lives of the people during the last fifty years can hardly be overemphasized. The application of laser technology in a number of fields including surgery has entirely revolutionized the science of medicine.

Thus, it would really be travesty of facts to deny the immense benefits mankind has derived through the numerous discoveries of science. Before the scientific era majority of the people were subject to such a large measure of drudgery and such wretched working conditions that they were hardly left with any opportunity for self-realization or spiritual development. The role played by science in eradicating hunger, disease and deprivation from a large segment of society in our own times is most admirable. Besides, science has given us valuable insights into reality and has provided us with useful techniques for controlling our environment. It has provided us with a method, an attitude of mind and a metaphysic.

We must, therefore, be clear that we cannot go beyond science and technology in the sense of getting rid of it. The various technical developments have become so much a part of the life of modern man that there is no going back upon them. We cannot smash the machines, the computers, aeroplanes and nuclear plants and go back to a pre-technological age. To disregard technique would not only be impossible but foolish and harmful. We have to live with our inventions once we have made them. The nuclear age has, for all practical purposes, come to stay.

But in their search for scientific knowledge the early Muslim scientists were wise enough to make a clear distinction between

the world of phenomena and the world of noumena. While the world of phenomena was to them the world of sense — perception, reason and science, the world of noumena was to them the world of eternal verities and the world of faith. Science is based on careful observation, measurement and experiments enabling theories to be constructed which connect different experiences from which emerge general principles of the phenomenal world. It is publicly verifiable in the sense that any one properly equipped can get the same results. With its precise, systematic and controlled observation, experiment and measurement, science gives us a picture of the physical world where regularity and order are the norms of things.

But though the scientist seeks understanding he never claims to achieve it completely in the physical realm. The game of science never ends. All its conclusions are tentative. No matter how much information a scientist has, he can never be certain of any of his conclusions. It was within the heart of modern science that Popper discerned the fallibility of all our knowledge. Newton's physics, for instance, was one of the most remarkable and successful scientific theories. It influenced a whole era of civilization and paved the way for the revolutionary discoveries of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Yet the theory was wrong. It was as we all know, soon falsified by Einstein's more impressive doctrine of gravitation and relativity. Many scientific researchers have found that by the time they had analyzed, written up and presented their data, their reports were a part of history and no longer applicable. Thus, the history of science is, in a way, a history of discarded theories. Although the aim of science is no doubt the search for truth, we can never lay claim to it. Our knowledge always remains provisional and conjectural because the best tested theory may turn out to be false.

While the institution of religion demands unqualified faith the institution of science makes skepticism a virtue. This is the glory and agony of the scientific method. But the religion of Islām, in which we believe, contains unalterable truths that can hardly be modified to fit any changing theory. So we should be



clear in our minds that no science can ever penetrate phenomena and enter into the essential nature of things. All our scientific principles can legitimately be employed only in the field of actual and possible experience. The nature and scope of science will inevitably be misconceived by the scholar of Islām, unless as much regard is paid to its limitations and bounds as is wont to be bestowed upon its achievements and prestige. Therefore, any attempt to make the religion of Islām respectable by interpreting the Qur'ān purely on empirical lines is an attempt to square the circle and shall inevitably lead to atheism.

Approximations, probabilities and the like are strictly incommensurable with one's boundless personal interest in eternal happiness. Scientific inquiry, therefore, cannot do the job needed for answering questions relevant to that dimension of life. As the method for dealing with facts, science is among the most important and creative intellectual movements in human history. But it is not a method for dealing with absolute Reality. Even the most outstanding discoveries of Copernicus, Darwin or Einstein can barely penetrate the surface of man's being and comprehend the verities of the noumenal order. So within its own limits science is, and must reign, supreme; it can be contradicted or superseded only by a better science. But any attempt to convert the scientific method into an all-encompassing philosophy of transcendental realities is an illicit extrapolation. There are regions where the persistent application of science as the sole valid form of knowledge leads to self-contradiction and self-stultification. While the world of phenomena is dependent on the world of noumena and seeks guidance and insight from it, it is not true the other way round because it would then mean the primacy of the human over the divine.

In the world of Islām also there has been, of late, a tendency aimed towards a wild admixture of theology with science. Several attempts have been made to bring the teachings of Islām in conformity with the latest developments in the fields of science. The aim behind all such attempts has generally been to achieve a reconciliation between science and religion. But in

practice it has been a reconciliation in which the religion of Islām is accommodated to science rather the other way about. In most of the cases it was no more than a rational justification of religious tenets, a disgusting form of apologetic which *ipso facto* considered science superior to religion. The result was that it was neither religion nor science. It proved harmful to both.

Again, in the earlier part of my paper, I had dealt at some length with the material benefits accrued to humanity by the development of science and technology. But as man now enters the portals of the 21<sup>st</sup> century he is suddenly awakened to the horror of his spiritual death due to the tragic influences of his technological environment. Instead of depending on the inward resources of his own personality science which he anticipated as the midwife of progress has ultimately turned out to be an angel of death. It was because the modern man's victory over nature could not match with any kindred victory over his own inner being. The patterns of man that had guided the West for the last several hundred years are breaking down.

The structure of the family, the nature of man's work and vocation, the ideas of personal identity, the financial and economic structures of the world are all cracking down. There are crises all around; the crisis of impending wars, crisis of ecology and pollution of environment, sexual promiscuity, pornography, divorce, drug and crime. The Western youth finds himself confused about himself, about his place in the society and about his future. Racist discrimination, exploitation of man by man, and of one community by another, is the order of the day. The present predicament of the Western man is an offshoot of his wanton desire for social, political and economic progress through his scientific and technological advancements alone. He lived under the illusion that material affluence would automatically lead to happiness and an enrichment of human life. He, however, did not realize that without a developed sense of the meaning of human life, so elaborately presented by the Holy Qur'ān, sheer weight of uncontrolled worldly knowledge inflicts a paralyzing influence on the human spirit. Consequently, in the

midst of unprecedented scientific knowledge and technological power he is now uncertain of his purposes, values and goals. Technology has now begun to pose a tremendous threat to man, his freedom and his inner development. The machines invented to serve his purpose have gone out of his control and gained so much power as to follow their own inherent laws in total disregard of the sacredness of the human person. This is the depth of folly and cruelty to which a spiritually starved man is capable. The Qur'ān bears testimony to such a possibility of man's fall in verse 5 of the *sūra Teen* (ثم رددنه أسفل سافلين).

So without understanding the material well-being of man, it can clearly be seen that it is not only wealth, high living standard or worldly power that constitute the meaning and purpose of human life. The West, as we pointed out above, may make tremendous strides in computers and genetic engineering. It can even uncover the breath-taking secrets of space, but all these achievements cannot arrest the decline of civilization unless they are accompanied by the moral and spiritual regeneration of man.

So the question of questions for the modern jurist of Islām today is: "How can man transform technology into a means to an end, instead of regarding it as an end in itself? How can we control nuclear energy instead of being controlled by it?" Our answer is that only through a spiritual rebirth brought about by a firm faith in Allah, as enunciated by the Holy Qur'ān pervading all aspects of man's phenomenal and transcendental life, mankind's menaced existence, his dehumanization and the destruction of his moral and spiritual values can be averted. The Qur'ān alone provides us with a system of values and a way of life which has the potential of supplying new visions not only to the natural and social sciences but to every aspect of human life and endeavour, whether it be in the physical, social, economic, political or spiritual realm. All these factors are bound together in an organic unity capable of meeting the challenges of our advancing civilization. The doctrine of *tawhīd* not only implies the unity of truth and knowledge but the unity of all life and humanity. It particularly emphasizes the unity of the internal life

of man, a co-ordination of reason, feeling, will and action, which requires complete control of one's passions and desires so ably enunciated by the great *ṣūfis* of Islām. The الصراط المستقيم (the straight path) is the only unitary path which integrates all human tendencies and activities into one integral surge towards the supreme goal of man's eternal felicity — the acquisition of divine attributes. This Divine-human encounter provides man with serenity, peace, courage and contentment in the face of grim realities of modern life.

A system which visualizes complete unity of science, philosophy and revelation, where reason and faith are co-extensive, and where the theoretical, spiritual and practical concerns of life are so resolved as to unite all peoples and all times in a universal vision, is the only road to salvation for the modern man. The teachings of the Qur'ān alone can guarantee this desired spiritual regeneration of mankind.

It is our firm belief that human beings are essentially decent. They can overcome the dreaded existence of this age only if technology is so tamed as to subserve their transcendental ends, where love of Allah and His Prophet, and love of humanity overcome the idolatrous worship of gadgets and things.

The creative movement of life in civilization always tends to express itself in laws, science, technology, art and religion. Who can, for instance, question the wisdom of adopting all those methods that lead to highest yields in agriculture or industry to meet the needs of an ever-growing world population. The machine itself is ethically neutral and the dormant forces of technology can be used for good or for evil purposes. Islām encourages us to harness the forces of nature and the development of technology for the benefit of mankind. Allah has made man his vicegerent on earth and everything in the universe is made subservient to him (Qur'ān, 14:32-33). It is only the worship of technology — the tendency of treating the vicegerents of Allah as 'inputs' and 'outputs' of a technological system which is the greatest affront to the dignity of the human person. It is man's irreligious approach, his false ideologies, his



unbridled greed and avarice which not only brings about the moral and spiritual death of man, but the death of all reason, science and progress. The Qur'ān which claims to be the healer of all the (physical, mental and spiritual) ailments of mankind guarantees a spiritual regeneration which alone can provide a guideline and direction to the judicious development of science and technology.

(1996)

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- 20 Al-Qur'ān, *sūra Fuṣṣilat* (41:53).
- 21 Arlene Getz, How Internet Prods Scientists to Action. *The Dawn*, December 18, 1996.