



Seesaw Struggle Between Islam And Western Modernity (Afghani, Iqbal And Fazlur Rahman)

Dr. Ghulam Shabbir, Assistant Professor, Head Center for Policy Studies, COMSATS University Islamabad, Pakistan, Email: shabbir1world@yahoo.com

Dr. Hafiza Umme Salma, Assistant Professor Department Islamic Studies, Institute of Southern Punjab Multan, Pakistan, Email: ummusalma8833@gmail.com

Dr. Maimoona Yasmeen, Associate Professor, Govt. Graduate College for Women Rawalpindi, Pakistan, Email: monakhalid.law@gmail.com

Dr. Sajid Mahmood, Assistant Professor, Department of Islamic and Religious Studies, Hazara University, Mansehra, Pakistan, Email: sajidzbi@gmail.com

Dr. Abdul Qadir Abdul Wahid, Ph.D Scholar, Faculty of Sharia & Law, Department of Law (IIUI), Pakistan, Email: abdul.qadir.vt3191@iiu.edu.pk

Zulfiqar Ahmad, Ph.D Scholar, Department of Islamic Theology, Islamia College University, Peshawar, Pakistan, Email: zulfikpk@yahoo.com

Submission: August, 08, 2020

Revision: August, 21, 2020

Acceptance and Publication: September, 25, 2020

Abstract

Islam since its dawn has a long history of conflicts and mutual accommodations with the Christian West. At the outset it expanded westward at the expense of Christendom and for almost 700 years being the master of its own destiny through Spain and Sicily enlightened Europe with its modern scientific outlook on life. However, in 15th century European renaissance, The Movement of Enlightenment transpired into scientific revolution and industrial revolution swung the tide in favor of Christian Europe that matured the colonization of Muslim Asia and Africa during 18th, 19th and first quarter of 20th centuries. It secured not only military but cultural and civilizational defeat of Islam. Since the dawn of the impingement of Western modernity on Islam, the Muslim world has evoked different responses to the epistemological and military hegemony of the West. This paper intends to delineate the history of Islamic response to Western imperialism. This is a qualitative research, to know from the lens of history what went wrong with Islam, what is needed to redeem and reset the balance with imperial West. Have Muslims become irredeemable prisoners of their own historic creations or sooner or later the situation is bound to be reversed in the light of pure Islam of

Quran and Prophetic model? This paper is intended to trace the dynamics of seesaw struggle between Islam and Western modernity.

Key Terms: Islam, modernity, imperialism, Western modernism, White man's burden, Manifest destiny, Epistemological hegemony, Secularism, Nationalism, Islamic modernism, revivalism, conservatism, fundamentalism, Quran, Islamic intellectualism.

Introduction

Evolution is an essence of life. History always moves forward with the burden of the past on its back and if be necessary, is so resourceful and capable enough to re-orient and redirect itself with resultant insight. "The world-life intuitively sees its own needs, and at critical moments defines its own direction¹." Generally, the history of civilizations is cumulative and evolutionary; it exhibits repetitive and cyclic patterns as well unless lessons are learnt, follies are set a right. On the one hand while the destructive side departs, the constructive side does leave a positive legacy for mankind. The evil legacies of earlier people do affect the performance of later ones, on the other. In either case, every civilization being a model and exemplar shoulders responsibility to successors. Thus, "the entire historic movement is like a spiral, not a cycle²". However, on the realm of history, religion being a basic constituent and potent cultural force of civilizations "is a road or path, initially moving from clay to God, and passing on man from depravity, unawareness, and stagnation, from the lowly life of clay and Satanic character, towards adoration, movement, visualization and the life of spirit and divine character³". The core of religion constitutes transcendental anchoring point, constructive deeds, and answerability, however, evolution of life and particular junctures of history define modes of its applicability suitable to particular social milieus. Though words interpret religious texts, communal performance interprets words, for interaction with the text is not complete without pragmatic test.

Human life is a simplest complex. Change is a historic phenomenon. Marxist view of history states that change in the means of production entails change of values. It portrays a partial approach towards actual forces and materieux of history and instead of holistic truth it is a semi-reality. Man is the carrier of faculty of creative knowledge. So human life due to inherent fecundity, ingenuity and creativity abhors sameness, and remains perpetually engaged to explore new avenues for the realization of its potentials. Human life is equipped with weaponry of inner dispositions to meet the challenges flung on its side creatively and ever ready to enter terra incognita not only to fulfill instinctive needs of survival but with an aesthetic sense keeps exploring finer and subtle modes of spiritual fulfillment as well. Indeed We created man with struggle oriented proclivities (90:4). "The natural law ordained by God has provided for each species a sharia (i.e. a course of conduct) which is transfused in the heart of each individual member of the species⁴". "The plant growing freely in the space, the animal developing a new organ to suit a new environment, and a human being receiving light from the inner depths of life, are all cases of inspiration varying in character according to the needs of the species to which the recipient belongs⁵." Thus life like a river always moves forwards with serpentine twists and turns, sometimes breaks rocks of hurdles on its way, sometimes passes from the sides, sometimes entering smooth planes of blessings and prosperities walks elegantly. The principle of change and variation is an eternal feature of life. Under the same, life traversed the thresholds of stone era, Iron Age, agrarian society, industrial revolution, corporate era, has entered

cyber age and stands ever on the precipice of new thresholds. However, when life shifts from one mode of production to other, Marxist understanding of history tells older values and ways of life become outdated and dysfunctional much faster than newer, more appropriate values and ways of life strike roots. Resultant social and cultural mutations are considered by people both threat and loss. Again, it is a partial view of reality. As capitalism and communism are two faces of the same coin i.e. materialistic philosophies of life hence thrive in spiritual vacuum. To religion, meaning and understanding of the eternal values in contradistinction to relative values remain unchanged their modes of fulfillment may change in view of categories of time, space and causation. It is only static view of tradition among conservatives that abhors change and is adamant to revisit, re-evaluate and reform tradition under new exigencies. Religion in essence entertains a dynamic view of tradition and accommodates change according to the contextual theology of the text. Religion addresses to mankind according to its prevalent social milieu, intellect and ratiocination instead of offering ready-made hidebound solutions. For in an ultimate sense the text (Scripture) and context (Universe) respond, echo, mirror, address and talk of each other, and of the One.

Quran states in the beginning mankind was a one community then it divided into various groups. Had God willed, you were on a single religion. It was the simple mind and the needs of primitive mankind that cohere all people into one organism, once the minds diversified and needs multiplied, mankind was apt to be split into different communities in its own interest to compete each other for the realization of potentialities. Historian state in cattle economy era there was no concept of land possession. When man learnt agriculture, on the one side it gave birth to the problem of possession, the production of agricultural surplus on the other. The locus of power shifted at least partly from the king or priest to the marketplace. The problem of social justice came to the fore. This was an age between 700 to 200 BC which historian termed the Axial Age because it was pivotal to the spiritual development of mankind. The most sensitive were troubled by the social injustice built into the agrarian society for the gulf between peasant and land-lord was ever widening and there was transformation in relations between land, labor and capital. The simple religion of primitive mankind stood radically polarized and was in unmistakable ferment and transition. In this Axial Age Abraham arose in the Middle East, Zoroaster in Persia, Hinduism and Buddhism in India, Confucianism and Taoism in the Far East to preach compassion as a great virtue to rid their societies of socio-economic and political exploitations stressing on the proposition of one God one mankind paradigm.

The societies of agrarian era were more stable of all eras, and they equally entertained long existence. The last of religions, Islam ushered in an age of inductive logic and empirical sciences. Thus, Prophet of Islam proved a bridge between an ancient and modern world. Revelation bestowed on him moral values; the spirit of his revelation put the foundation of modern world. Mankind at this particular juncture of historic evolution was mature enough that God spoke in distinct, unequivocal, final and ultimate terms that life could not for ever be kept in leading strings; and man for fuller realization of his potentials must finally be thrown back on his own resources. Although monotheism had been quintessential of religion from Adam to Muhammad yet Muhammad's monotheism was unique for from the very beginning it was organically linked up to social reform in such a finesse that defies description. If God is one, mankind is also one. Socio-economic and political inequalities quell human integration, a sine qua non of religion on the basis of grand ethical ideal of Tauheed. The elimination of social disparities for the attainment of social equilibrium and unity of mankind was essential

feature of Muhammad's monotheism. "What issued from his experience in the cave was not merely the demolishing of plurality of gods, but a sustained and determined effort to achieve ethically based socio-political order under God...Muhammad tried to strengthen and enfranchise the weaker segments of society as well as to divest the privileged of their prerogatives in the religious field (the clergy), in the political field (autocratic or oligarchic rule), and in the socio-economic field (undue economic or sex power) ⁶⁷". So, Muhammad's monotheism was a revolution against monopoly of religious elite, political elite and mercantile elite. For the troika is, had been and will remain the sheer major exploitative force of history. However, History and theology run parallel in Muhammad's moral program like two tracks of the train, which sometime converge and diverge but on the terms of his monotheism.

By the establishment of social moral order Muhammad put history on right track. His followers for about a millennium remained master of history. In Eastern hemisphere Islam won Persia militarily, politically and intellectually and spread westward on the expense of Christendom. Islam is the only religion which has a fourteen centuries' continuous history of seesaw struggle with Christian Europe marked by protracted and violent confrontation and fruitful, though often forgotten, collaboration. It includes seven centuries of Muslim rule in Spain, unsuccessful invasion of France, inconclusive occupation of Sicily, the long and bitter confrontation during Crusades, Ottoman occupation of Balkans. However, it is on the credit of Islam that the sun of its rule shattered the clouds of superstitions, obscurantism and brought Europe out of Dark Ages which only the rigged scholarship of racist Europe denies while the fact rings louder in the writings of honest European academia. However, no one is the darling community of God having prerogative of ever rule; powers rise and fall according to the patent set laws to which Islam like others is no exception. Knowledge steers the wheel of history and keeps its capitals shifting from East to West, West to East and community to community. The Muslims after becoming a spent force got sterile, dysfunctional; in such times history invites others to fill the gap for it abhors voids and vacuums.

For this gigantic shift and reshuffle, according to Karen Armstrong, in 1492 three momentous events occurred in Spain. The first of these events happened on January 2 when the united armies of King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella conquered the city state of Granada. It flushed Muslims out of Spain. The second event was the Edict of Expulsion between Ferdinand and Isabella designed and signed to rid Spain of its Jews. The third event was the voyage of Christopher Columbus, the protégé of Ferdinand and Isabella, in search of trade route to India or to some accounts building there base to conquer Jerusalem the nemesis of Crusaders, but culminated in discovery of America. While the first event led to the military might and political hegemony of Europe, the second led to the uniformity of European civilization, and third the voyage of Columbus marked the beginning of scientific and technological revolution because the campaign needed magnetic compass, knowledge of astronomy and technology of building ships and other essentials which were being discussed and improvised in the universities of Spain through the spark of Italian renaissance. The all three events laid the foundation of European renaissance.

Renaissance invigorates fresh blood of life in the long dead capillaries of Europe bringing its people on the brink of new world. The modern western culture took birth from the pain, toil and trial of late fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. On the plane of intellect so many all-embracing

currents and cross-currents especially during the Movement of Enlightenment brought forth fresh formulations of history and theology and democracy played the role of self-cleansing and self-correcting force. With broadened outlook Europe entered hitherto uncharted realms, geographically, intellectually, socially, economically politically, scientifically and technologically. She was ready to hoist her sails when the wind is fair to become the master of globe. Europe took her arch-rival the world of Islam by storm. From 18th, 19th till the first quarter of 20th century the whole of Muslim Asia and Africa was submerged in European imperialism on the moral principle of white man supremacy, the plea of White Man's burden or the Darwinian formula of the Survival of the Fittest (Britain), Mission Civilizatrice (France) or the Manifest Destiny (America), so on and so forth. "Modern imperialism was unique in history in that it was a complex and highly integrated system in which pre-industrial and pastoral civilizations were either destroyed (as was the case with the great civilizations of the Western hemisphere) or subjugated (as were the countries of Asia and Africa) to serve the needs of the mercantilist and industrializing Western metropolis. However, for the Muslims European assault was traumatizing development not merely in a sense that they had been the master of their destiny and were first time colonized to serve the history of others but because this encounter of Islam with the West was felt as deeply dehumanizing and alienating experience⁷".

Modernity is a historical phenomenon. The world life only by a befitting response to the challenges moves forward. Each community more or less opts for modernity for survival and progress and "if fails to face the realities of the present squarely- however unpleasant they be- it must become a fossil; and it is an unalterable law of God that fossils do not survive for long: "We did them no justice; it is they who did injustice to themselves" (11:101; 16:33 etc.)⁸". Each community or civilization has her own native challenges and responds according to her own social milieu. Thus Western modernity is product of its circumstances or it created the circumstances either bitter or sweet the world is benefitting and suffering from due to Europe's being on the helm of global affairs. However, in renaissance period the major outcome of Europe's serious soul search was that it was the church rule or religion that subjugated them for almost a millennium in the clutches of Dark Ages and is responsible for their all ills and backwardness. It was **mythos** of religion that kept their reason and scientific spirit suppressed. Religion is no more than sacred myths, superstitions and follies. Religion was considered "Psychological illusion to allow an individual to cope with the difficulties of life⁹", a tool to opiate masses by the monopolists; "the sigh of the oppressed creature, the sentiment of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless conditions¹⁰." The debate between the supporters of religion and pure reason intensified Max Plank said be it inscribed on the portals of the temple of science that 'irreligious' entry is proscribed here. For religious feel is the backbone of scientific research. W.C Smith writes "faith...is an essential human quality. One might argue that it is essential human quality; that it is constitutive of man as human; that personality is constituted by our universal ability, or invitation, to live in terms of a transcendent dimension, and in response to it. Certainly the human everywhere is, and from the beginning has been open to the quality of life in oneself, in one's neighbor, and in the universe that lifts one above the merely mundane and the immediate, and means that one may be always in part but is never totally simply a product or victim of circumstance. One does not merely react, but rather is open, both individually and in corporate groups, to sources of aspiration, of inspiration, of vision, of obligation, beyond what is given in one's immediate environment¹¹."

However, the major drift of European renaissance was reactionary, necessarily anti-religion, rather than a genuine response to challenges to secure creative integrative just and balanced mean. Psychological view of history tells us that when human instincts are suppressed for a long time they either boisterously tear apart social fabric like Huns, Mongols, Tartars, Vandals and Hyksos trampled the whole regions or by the transformation of mind and heart bring forth a better and superior civilization. The church had refused the reason her due status for almost thousand years. Now, reason had emerged with rebellious nature to settle score with religion. So the judgment of death penalty to religion on part of reason might be termed revenge not justice at all.

Hence, Descartes' proposition that "reason can stand on its own" and scripture is no more required gained wide currency in Europe and Cartesian approach for the solution of human affairs became order of the day. Humanism substitutes religion. Man is a party in conduct of his affairs, how he can be neutral or objective to social reality or right and wrong to which he is directly or indirectly a stake holder. We can safely assume that humanism is susceptible to human subjective desires. While religion establishes a principle that moral values cannot be made and unmade by man at his own whim or convenience and should not be misused or abused for the sake of expediency. However it is a historic phenomenon that monopolist segments of society always have been wary of religion's role to social reality for it strikes on their vested interests to strike social equilibrium which they deem intrusion. Consequently exploitative forces to ease their conscience succumb to a sort of humanism or a secular mode of life. And when they are told "Do not spread corruption on earth", they answer "we are but improving things!" oh, verily, it is they, they who are spreading corruption-but they perceive it not (2:11-12). They deny religion to be a social pragmatic proposition. The same was on play in European renaissance. In emerging scenario, religion was destined to be a casualty of, rather than a solution to, modernity. "The Enlightenment saw the human person as an autonomous center of knowing and judging in such wise that any sort of heteronomy was to be rejected. The implication of this view is that each person has the right to develop his or her own potential to the maximum, limited only by the parallel rights of other persons...Dependence of one upon another is-in this view-incompatible with human dignity¹²". Emile Durkheim rightly says "when man's moral vision is narrowed and the transcendental dimension is gone, then, from the universally objective moral point of view, it is immaterial whether one worships oneself as God or one's society or nation as God¹³."

Materialistic progress aside, on moral plane, European renaissance since beginning to end was headed in a wrong direction. So, Western modernity in essence, was a departure from **mythos (religious myth) to logos (Rationality)**. When transcendental hand-hold missed from the hand of Europe, an individual being law unto himself became demi-god, nation or race being the center of worship turned into full blooded god. Positivism demanded leave of God from socio-economic and political affairs. Materialistic democracy built the temples of secular state, secular law, and secular education on the basis of secular interpretation of the universe. Christianity had been a unifying force of Europe, now nationalism emerged as a divisive force on national, racial, ethnic and lingual lines. Religion recognizes the value of human person but also recognizes his imperfect nature and Western modernity all too well has affirmed this fact by nuclear arsenals, mass production and mass extermination (i.e. Auschwitz) and climate hazards, the premises on which Chomsky termed man an **evolutionary error**. The worst of all the outcomes of Western modernity was the binary typology of Occident vs. Orient, East vs. West on the pattern of the Greek who divided mankind in two camps, the

Greek and the other barbarians. The Western man was considered racially superior, his brain cell in size and potentials far better than the un-people of lesser existence, diminutive personality, of the East.

This hubris of racial superiority, science and technology, mastery of the nature translated into the colonization of the East particularly of Muslim Asia and Africa starting with Napoleon's occupation of Egypt in 1798 and satisfactorily concluding with the break-up of Ottoman Empire in 1922. This was not only a military assault but an intellectual, cultural and civilizational colonization as well, which dehumanized, individualized and secularized them to the point that alienation became a far too common problem throughout the colonized world. "Devaluation of the colonized civilization, debasement of its cultural heritage, and distortion of native realities has been part of the moral epistemology of modern imperialism¹⁴". Edward Said and others analyzed it as "Orientalism". Walter Mignolo states that hegemonic modes of knowledge often erode local forms of knowledge. Business megalomania seeks abolition of the products of others. Given the differential in power between the colonized and the colonizers, the coloniality of power renders the knowledge of the colonized into subaltern modes. This is because, Boaventura de Sousa Santos states that over time, placing the knowledge of the other in an inferior position results in "epistemicide" the destruction or murder of the knowledge of a particular social group. "Imperialism and epistemicide, observes de Sousa Santos, are part of the ineluctable trajectory of the Western modernity¹⁵."

The severity of this double edged sword of Western modernity against Muslim world can be imagined when Europe believes that Islam in a thousand years has twice endangered the existence of Europe once by the conquest of Spain by Arabs and secondly by the siege of Vienna by Ottomans. This is because all canons were directed to the Muslims. Rigged scholarship and academic orthodoxy of Orientalists employed by imperialism to safeguard its corporate interests termed Islam anti-reason, anti-science and anti-civilization Beduin phenomenon.

Sayyed Jamal al-Din Afghani rose as a genuine response to Western imperialism in the words of Nikkei Kidde, in Fazlur Rahman's view the father of "Islamic modernism¹⁶" who defended Islam on rational grounds and issued clarion call not only to the Muslims but to all colonized East to break the yoke of Western imperialism not only geographically but intellectually as well. His was an analyzed, coherent and consistent response as against traditional orthodox circles of Islam in spite of standing with them. "A general summons to the Muslim Community to raise their intellectual and moral standers in order to meet the dangers of the Western expansionism was issued by Jamal al-Din Afghani (1839-97), the first genuine Muslim Modernist¹⁷". He found nothing in the basic principles of Islam contrary to reason and science yet he aroused the Muslims to develop the medieval content of Islam to meet the needs of modern society and made a powerful appeal for the cultivation of philosophic and scientific disciplines by expanding the curricula of the educational institutions and for general educational reforms. Iqbal writes "perhaps the first Muslim who felt the urge of a new spirit in him was Shah Wali Ullah of Delhi. The man, however, who fully realized the importance and immensity of the task, and whose deep insight into the inner meaning of the history of Muslim thought and life, combined with a broad vision engendered by his wide experience of men and manners, would have made him a living link between the past and the future, was Jamal al-Din Afghani. If his indefatigable but energy could have devoted itself entirely to Islam as a system of

human belief and conduct, the world of Islam, intellectually speaking, would have been on a much more solid ground today.¹⁸

However, Afghani stands as a light house, watershed event and unifying force for the Muslims. He assumed a role of fearless charismatic leader not less ambitious than Abu Muslim Khurasani who rallied the pro-Abbasid forces against Umayyad and Peter the Hermit a formidable leader of Crusades or Napoleon Bonaparte who laid the foundation of modern Europe. He employed (13:11) first time in Islamic history for political awakening that became a rallying cry for the political emancipation of Islam. He attributed the Muslim's decline to their desertion of the tenets of Islam and injunctions of the Quran. For Quran and model of Prophet (PBUH) include all the prerequisites that ensure success, progress, religious and worldly felicity, intellectual grandiose, political ascendancy and moral refinement. Allah has promised them honor, victory, dominance and ascendancy. He employs host of the verses of Quran for political awakening of the Muslim World. "And power belongs to Allah, and to His messenger and to his believers (63:8)." "He causes it to prevail over all religions and Allah suffices as a witness (38:28). And to help believers is ever incumbent upon Us (30:47)." Afghani terms Quran an ultimate source of moral health "a guidance and a balm for that which is in the breasts (10:57)". Thus from his well of thought sprang a galaxy of Muslim leaders and intellectuals, freedom movements and intellectual currents to the extent that Jamal came to be dreaded in the Western capitals as the most "dangerous agitator" of the age. He inspired reforms and revolutions throughout the Muslim world. Be it Imam Shamil of Central Asia, Zia Gokalp of Turkey or Mufti Abdu and Rashid Raza of Middle East, Iqbal, Shibli and Abul kalam Azad of Sub-continent and Ali Shariati of Iran, Ikhwan of Egypt or Khilafat movement of India all took fires from the furnace of his thought and ambitions.

Afghani was in Paris when Sir Earnest Renan delivered an article for establishing a thesis that Islam is an incurable enemy of reason and science, that the originator of Muslim Sciences and philosophy were non Arabs of vanquished lands of Iran, Central Asia and Muslim Spain. Afghani invoked a new sort of humanism that the writer has hurt the millions of people who adhere to Islam, by calling them enemy of reason and science then refuted his thesis on case by case basis. He rectified Renan's knowledge of history that Ibn Khaldun used to write his name as Abdur Rahman al-Hadharmi for he belonged to Arab region of Hadhar al-mout. Averroes was also of Arab origin. Though non Arabs' role in the development of Muslim Science and philosophy is tremendous but the Arabs were pioneer and patron-in-chief of those sciences. Afghani argued that by writer's measure Napoleon should be termed non-European for he was of Arab descendants, who first settled in Italy then shifted to France. Such was the force of his arguments and humanism that Renan had to tender sorry.

The ripples of Afghani's statement were bound to touch the Muslim World irrespective of their geographies and borders. "If to state that Islam is not against reason and science was the task of Afghani, it fell to the Egyptian Muhammad Abduh and the Indian Sayyed Ahmad Khan to prove this statement¹⁹." Modern military training centers and institutes of science and technology had begun under Ottomans, Khaldives and others to combat Western imperialism yet all such attempts were proving fruitless. Afghani analyzed that actual force behind Western powers was of constitutional representative governments at home and the spirit of critical thinking in their educational curricula. He remarked that philosophy is a perennial governing soul of all sciences and no branch of knowledge

can survive without philosophy more than a century that is full hundred years. While there in the Muslim World philosophy is banned in educational institutions what fruits you can expect of such educational reforms and can the courage and spirit of man under despotic rule, be equal to the soldier who has a participatory role in decision making of his governments at home. Furthermore, he stressed that political emancipation must be a first step for colonized Muslim world towards independence, and then educational reforms compatible to our moral and spiritual ideals, for secular education under colonial rule can create only spooks.

Sir Syed neither well-versed in traditional learning nor modern education was a gifted visionary and well-entrenched in pragmatism. He concluded if restatement of Islam compatible to contemporary sciences and needs is not brought forward "Islam will become extinct in India²⁰". "Today we are, as before, in need of modern theology, whereby we should either refute doctrines of modern sciences, or undermine their foundations, or show that they are in conformity of Islam. If we are to propagate those sciences among the Muslims, about which I have just stated how much they disagree with the present-day Islam, then it is my duty to defend as much as I can the religion of Islam, rightly or wrongly, and to reveal to the people the original bright face of Islam. My conscience tells me that if I should not do so, I would stand as a sinner before God²¹". Highly impressed of European rationalism, for laying down the criterion of Conformity to nature to judge the content of Islam he fell back upon, not the orthodox interpretation of Islam, but the basic tenets of the medieval Muslim philosophers. On his recommendation the theological framework of Islam compiled by Shibli (Ilm al-Kalam) was no more than an attenuated carbon copy of Avicenna philosophy.

The lack of originality, intellectual prowess and tools along with naked recourse to expediency, and personal interpretation rather than a restatement of Islam forced Sir Syed to accept Western modernism lock, stock and barrel. Aligarh University proved hotbed of secular modernism, juxtaposition of secular and religious sciences rather than an integrative mean or organically linked up synthetic educational system of modern and traditional learning. An important development in Muslim India was an establishment of Osmania University Hyderabad in 1917, on recommendation of al-Afghani during his stay in India, to impart knowledge in Urdu. He argued that communities in thousand years can change religion twice or thrice but not language. Language is a bond stronger than religion, therefore Muslims and Hindus because of their shared past and language must be given education in Urdu to face Western epistemological imperialism squarely. However, with exception of OU, no such other institute was built on this line again yielding to expediency for English was playing a decisive role in jobs and OU in the very beginning could not overcome the quality of substandard curricula and English, it needed time to strike roots. Therefore, Hindus aside, the Muslim students of Osmania rushed to Aligarh University for better future. Long range goals often are prone to be sacrificed on the altar of expediency. The same happened to Muslim India. Had it been waited for the improvement of Osmania, others had followed the suit, Muslims and Hindus had joined hands to cultivate educational institutes responsive to native traditions and exigencies, the history of India would have been pretty different from the prevalent one.

Both Muslims and Hindus were headed in a wrong direction on that critical moment of history and built subsequent histories on the same wrong step. However, to the challenge of Western imperialism the world of Islam responded in three ways. The traditionalists sought solace in tradition oblivious

of socio-economic and political realities. The revivalist thrust of Muhammad bin Abdul wahab via Shah Wali Allah rekindled the fire of political Islam in Subcontinent, culminated in al-Ikhwan and offshoots in the Middle East, Sanusi movement of Africa. However, the Reconstructionist model of al-Afghani was yet far from realization for in given circumstances, intellectually speaking “he was centuries ahead of his community²²”. Abul Kalam Azad rose on the line of Ibn e Taimiyyah characterizing Western modernity like the jahiliyya onslaught of Greek thought on Islam and ultimately submitted to the Monism of Ibn al-Arabi. However, Sir Syed’s Secular modernity got wide acclaim, and we see due to the vacuum of the Reconstructionist, traditionalism and secular modernism thrived and throbbled in the very veins and arteries of the Muslim world. French sociologist Jacques Berque aptly remarked “Today are all too many militants and intellectuals, or proponents either of an authenticity with no future or modernism with no roots.²³” Thus, Sir Syed in deference of Western modernity and defiance of own tradition doubted and rejected a lion’s share of the cultural heritage of Islam and ultimately culminated in Ahl al-Quran school of Chiragh Ali, Ghulam Gillani Berq and Ghulam Pervez.

So far as Middle East is concerned Mufti Abdu a trained theologian on traditional lines concluded that faith and scientific reason do not conflict but work within their own domains. He presented the basic tenets of Islam in a modern garb to be acceptable to modern mind and pave way for further reformation and pursuit of modern knowledge. He invoked scientific outlook of Quran to think critically and intelligently, to investigate nature and interpret history in favor of reason and said both faith and reason in spite of their distinct roles and levels of operation must cooperate, while to Sir Syed reason was the overriding standard, hence in order to assert the autonomy of reason he not only rejected the doctrine of miracles, but revived emanationist doctrine of Muslim scholars and became irretrievable prisoner of “Hellenized idea of God-as a principle which “explains” this world, rather than a Creator who directs this world; as an intellectual formula rather than as moral and dynamic imperative²⁴.” How far it was from the full-blooded God of Quran Who is ever “in an intimate touch with history” (89:14).

However, the major contribution of Abdu lies in the fact that he flung open the door of long quarantined ossified madrassa tradition to fresh air to save it from putrefaction. His background of traditional learning won him hearts and minds from traditional circle. He along with Rashid Raza did a commendable job of presenting basic tenets of Islam in a modern cast. He in actual materials of his reinterpretation of Islam introduced no new ideas into the body of traditional Islamic ideas. His position resembles his contemporaneous Indian orthodox Shibli Nomani, for both assumed the task of making Islam compatible to the forces of modernity but ultimately fell back on tradition. Shibli accepts the blame saying “but those people who have been once as much as touched by traditional education, remain forever irreconcilably estranged from modern learning²⁵.” Shibli in his Safarnama quotes Abdu as saying to him, after bemoaning plight of al-Azhar, about the Egyptian product of Western education. “These are even more misguided²⁶”. He pointed perhaps towards the liberalism seeping into the body of traditional Islam under the influence of Western modernity. “Road to Mecca” states Once Muhammad Asad visited al-Azhar, and Rector pointing to the teachers and pupils busy in classes remarked “Look! These people are like Indian cows having printed papers in the streets”. Hence, al-Azhar seemed oscillating between traditionalism and Western liberalism in place of creative integrated mean that collapses the extremes to the middle. Thus Abdu, to his Western critics,

most of the time offered old ideas in new packing to which they point “it was only moving bones from one graveyard to another.”²⁷ “Abdu’s historical role was simply to fling open the doors and expose a musty tradition to fresh currents²⁸”. Muhammad Rashid Rida was Abdu’s immediate disciple and biographer. “Rida’s intellectual carrier symbolizes in some ways the political failure of the whole Islamic modernist movement. Without any particular shifts in doctrine his position evolved, under pressure of circumstances, from that of a liberal reformer to radical fundamentalist to orthodox conservative²⁹”. However, the factor which distinguishes Abdu from Sir Syed is that he admits the theoretical possibility of miracles which Indian reformer of Islam rationally rejects. He looks rather cautious, and says that any miraculous claim by a non-Prophet may be denied with religious impunity. Both want their community to get rid of superstitions, miracle mongering and mystic deliriums.

However, the efforts of such reformers should not be decried for in religious ferment, transition and polarization, they are always a necessary link and bridge to provide a leaven and fertilization of ideas for an eventual reformulation of Faith. They at least stirred the calm waters, wherefrom sooner or later, pearls of need and wisdom were bound to surface.

Hence, al-Afghani blossoms with elegant splendor in the mind and heart of Iqbal and equally flows in his magical poetry and write ups especially “Reconstruction of Religious thought in Islam”, the first ever philosophical statement of Islam in modern times. Islam emerges as a practical proposition in his viewpoint, and he issues clarion call to the Indian Muslims in British India for the establishment of free homeland to realize the socioeconomic and political ideals of Islam, the call becomes a rallying cry of Indian Muslims and transpires into Pakistan. Too different, was his weltanschauung and Islam’s matrix of reforms that Sir Syed fails to find place even in the footnote of his **magnum opus**. He, with a strong argument tries to establish that philosophy and religion seek same destiny the establishment of Truth with the only difference that religious experience encompasses the reality and the vistas of knowledge which are beyond the pale of reason. To him Intuition is only a higher form of intellect, and is organically linked with reason. This is a revolutionary statement in the history of Islamic mysticism which had been habitual of ever drawing cleavages larger and larger between Kashf (intuition) and reason, securing doubtless absolute infallible status of intuition throwing reason to the bottomless abyss of fallibility. When Iqbal says that reason and intuition are organically related, he finds an umbilical cord between the two, it means neither of the them can operate on its own, both must work together, a position much different from Abdu and Sir Syed, for the former sees different and distinct roles of faith and reason and begs cooperation between them, and the latter gives overriding importance to the reason.

Descartes, a great figure of modern philosophy, in order to shun the blind conformity to authority and secure the right of reason, prescribed the duty of every one to yield only to real and irrefutable evidence, yet he specifies in the reflections that he does not intend to talk about “the things which concern faith and conduct, but the speculative truth which can be realized only in natural light”. This allowance to Christian Faith was on the plea that “it concerns itself with obscure things”. Quite different is the case of Islam. Here, Faith is quite open to reason. “We shall show them signs in the Outer World and in their inner selves, until it becomes manifest to them that it is the Truth (41:53)”. It proclaims that bring your knowledge of the Text (Scripture) and context (universe) to the tribunal

of reason and if both do not echo, respond and mirror each other and talk of the One, then either you have misperceived the text or context, for harmony and reconcilability between the two is an irrefutable evidence of religious truth in Islam. Hence, in this framework Cartesian doctrine presents itself to us, as being less rigorous and less intransigent than that of the Quran. "Now, since the transformation and guidance of man's inner and outer life is the essential aim of religion, it is obvious that general truths which it embodies must not remain unsettled. No one would hazard his action on the doubtful principle of conduct. Indeed, in view of its function, religion stands in greater need of a rational foundation of its ultimate principles than even the dogma of science. Science may ignore a rational metaphysics; indeed it has ignored it so far. Religion can hardly afford to ignore the search for a reconciliation of the oppositions of experience and a justification of the environment in which humanity finds itself.³⁰" In actuality, be it a knowledge of secular sciences or religion, in the scheme of things, both have been geared to perennial struggle for finding truth which is always one step forward than theirs, and reason has been put into their service which is perceptive and formulative, for "reason is both intuitive and reflective³¹". The Truth dawns on perceptive faculty of reason; the formulative faculty formulates in words. Both faculties spring from the same root and complement each other. The one grasps Reality piecemeal, the other grasps it in the wholeness. Had it been realized at the outset the dichotomy of Kashf and reason would have never surfaced and history of Islam would have been pretty different.

Thus equipped with the metaphysics of Quran, knowledge grounded in faith and the fire of conviction Iqbal strikes the very roots, nucleus and materialistic bloody inners and innards of the modern Western culture and civilization.

"Humanity needs three things today- a spiritual interpretation of the universe, spiritual emancipation of the individual and basic principles of a universal import directing the evolution of human society on a spiritual basis. Modern Europe has, no doubt, built idealistic system on these lines, but experience shows that truth revealed by pure reason is incapable of bringing the fire of living conviction which personal revelation alone can bring ³²".

The reason being that the atheistic impulse of modern Western culture failed to realize that "religio-moral experience, although it certainly has a cognitive element, radically differs from other forms of cognition in the sense that it is full of **authority, meaning and imperviousness** for the subject whereas ordinary form of cognition is simply informative³³". A genuine religious experience quite transforms the subject who consequently is capable enough to transform the world around him. This is because the God of philosophers is impotent; of theologians a full blooded God Who according to Ibn Taimiyya's proverbial phrase "speaks and acts".

However, "Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam" in essence, is not reconstruction but issues forth broader contours and pointers for reconstruction of the medieval content of Islam. For Iqbal is basically a philosopher and despite having some rare insights in Quran was not a serious student of Quran which requires study of the chronological development and systematic analysis of Quran. His understanding of the Quran has been more concerned with the loom than the fabric being woven. First four chapters of his magnum opus are highly philosophical and recommend transformational change in the body of traditional Islam to the extent that he says "the only course open to us is to approach modern knowledge with a respectful but independent attitude and to appreciate teachings

of Islam in the light of that knowledge even though we may be led to differ from those who have gone before us³⁴". Here, we find a clue of radical reforms that could place Islam in a leading role; however, this momentum comes to a grinding halt in chapter 6, over amplified concern about the homogeneity of Islamic society makes him suggestive of adaptative or adaptable reforms that is adjusting Islam to social change rather than taking a lead. However, "in modern times, Muhammad Iqbal's Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam is the only systematic attempt. But, despite the fact that Iqbal had certain basic and rare insights into the nature of Islam as an attitude to life, this work cannot be said to be based on Quranic teaching: the structural elements of its thought are too contemporary to be an adequate basis for an ongoing Islamic metaphysical endeavor³⁵". Professor H.A. R Gibb's assessment that "nowhere in these lectures does he specify the moral imperatives of his system of thought³⁶" holds water because he fails to reconcile reason and dynamism, not on the plea that dynamism is opposed to rational purposiveness, for freedom of activity is so dear to him that any veritable purpose in the process of reality seemed him to threaten the same. And a system of thought whose gospel is just pure dynamism wherein purpose can have no real place can, ex hypothesi, specify no moral imperatives³⁷". But Professor H.A.R Gibb's statement that Asharite theology is more faithful to the Quranic matrix of ideas than Iqbal's thought tells that the writer is more conversant with the traditional view rather than the general tenor and spirit of Quran. Iqbal, with high philosophical fervor stated that modern Western thought is direct descendant of the glorious medieval intellectual culture of Islam, disseminated in the West, through Spain and Sicily. He says "The most remarkable phenomenon of modern history, however, is the enormous rapidity with which the World of Islam is spiritually moving towards the West. There is nothing wrong in this movement, for European culture, on its intellectual side, is only a further development of some of the most important phases of the culture of Islam. our only fear is that the dazzling exterior of European culture may arrest our movement and we may fail to reach the true inwardness of that culture.³⁸"

However, Iqbal's severe critique of reason in his poetry, is actually distrust of pure reason, Cartesian doctrine that reason can stand on its own without aided and abetted by the Revelation. But "born out of a violent spiritual break with its immediate parent, European medievalism, Western liberalism is law unto itself, and, will seek no negotiations with any spiritual system or moral ideology³⁹". As Morgenthau states capitalism and Communism is obverse and converse of the same coin .e. materialism yet communism in its classical statement is only a systematic and extreme orthodox form of Western modernity. Christianity in its own sphere of teaching and influence has been trying to adjust itself with secular currents of Western thought, at different levels, with different viewpoints and with varying degrees of success to seek working synthesis or at least some form of equilibrium.

But, in Islamic world, be it the Middle East of Abdu or the Sub-continent of Sir Syed, the initial modernist impulse split into two opposite directions. In the Middle East, legacy of Abdu culminated into two opposite strands of either pure Western intellectual developments or fundamentalism of his Syrian pupil Rashid Rida (1865-1935). The vacuum left by genuine modernism was apt to be filled by semi-reformist, semi-apologetic forces. The story of Muslim India is also same. Ali Garh College established by Sir Syed was intended to nurture an effective progressive modernism i.e. Synthesis of Westernism and Islamic values. But, he proved just below par, partly because lack of his intellectual credentials and prowess, partly because of political expediency. He surrendered department of theology and religion to his conservative critics. Thus Ali Garh became a channel of Western secular

modernity, resultantly brought forward class of apologetics suffused with Western secularism and in reaction the resurgence of revivalism, an emotional cry of 'back to pristine Islam.' Jamal al-Din al-Afghani being contemporary of Sir Syed hurled severe critique against him both leveling allegations against his intellectual deficits and political maneuvering of the Muslims in favor of Western imperialism. For his was a claim that any educational program under colonial masters without prior political emancipation is apt to produce spooks of imperial powers. He presented a lengthy article on the history and role of naturalists in which he circles Sir Syed and presented evidences of Sir Syed and his coteries doing the Job of Britain. He writes Sami Allah Khan, a close friend of Sir Syed was employed by Lord Northbrook as a private secretary to Egypt to waylay the hearts of Egyptian against Ottomans in favor of Britain.

On intellectual plane, secular modernism of Ali Garh invoked revivalist thrust of Shibli Nomani and Abul Kalam Azad. Shibli resented by the secular education of Ali Garh reverted to the orthodox stand of Islam, built Nudwat al-Ulama in Lucknu , intended to geared towards a blend of traditionalism and modernism, which in fact proved to be a center of an ultraorthodox Islam. Abul Kalam Azad stigmatized old scholastics as "Greece ridden" and modernists as "West ridden⁴⁰". This statement still inspires to the well- read, well taught and well committed young generation of Islam locked in identity crisis. They see their revivalist leadership engaged in safeguard of Islam against Western modernity on the pattern of Imam al-Ashari and Imam Ghazali who guarded Islam against onslaught of Greek ideas. They deem modernism of any sort, any hue and color, be it a genuine modernism of Afghani, Iqbal and Shariati or Western inspired secular modernism, as an intrusion, an onslaught on their tradition and puritanical ideologue.

However, had there not been a vacuum of genuine modernism, history would have taken a different curve. Genuine modernism in Islam, failed to take root for it requires deep study of both Islamic tradition and of European modernity to assimilate, amend and adjust itself to the new currents. It is a mean of two extremes, of accepting Western modernity lock, stock and barrel and opting for fundamentalism to swim against the currents of History. Genuine modernism requires loyalty, at the same time, to tradition and to history as well. To be in the mean of two extremes had never been a popular course of human conduct, if attained; something impels him to distort the equilibrium. History swings him either to one extreme or flings to the other. Hence, be it the Middle East or Muslim India, when legacies of Abdu and Sir Syed transpired into extreme secular modernism of the West, as a reaction the emergence of Muslim fundamentalism was a foregone conclusion. Thus the popular push of revivalism brings forward al-Ikhwan in the Middle East and Jamat-e Islami in Sub-continent with striking similarities of viewpoint, modus operandi, and modus vivendi. And it was perhaps natural that non-too-sober character of the initial modernism was bound to provoke a comparably non-too-thoughtful radical reaction.

Thus, the reins of Islam on the one hand were assumed by the secular modernists aware of history but oblivious of the fundamentals of Islam to whom Islam in the words of W.C. Smith is a thing of showcase to be appreciated and praised rather than a force for action, and by revivalists on the other having superficial knowledge of fundamentals and devoid of consciousness of history. But Islam will not transform by returning to the past or by becoming Western "Orientalists⁴¹". The both trends of Islamic thought, class of Muslim apologetic secular modernists and revivalists are apt to vying with

each other in the labyrinth of futile attempts. “The only remedy for this sterile scholarship is to try to replace orientalism with genuine Islamic studies that would be constructive and purposeful both for Islam and for Western scholarship. If Islam should have only a past and no future, Muslims, as such, will have little to live for, but Western scholars of Islam might also have little to live by ⁴²”.

However, in this long protracted war between imperial Western modernity and the East particularly Islam saw a short span of détente when in Russo-Japan war (1904-5) first time an Eastern power Japan defeated White Russia detoxifying the myth of white man’s racial superiority and set in motion the process of decolonization, as Tagore analyzed. After ceding power to locals as the Western need to justify domination over the “natives” lessened, a trend to understand each other without biases was expected to set in on both sides of the spectrum. “In France, the works of Louis Massignon encouraged the rise of “revisionist” which included scholars of Islam such as Jacques Berque, Maxim Rodinson, Yves Lacoste and Roger Arnaldez. In Britain and United States, their counterparts were to be found in H.A.R Gibb, Wilfred Cantwell Smith, and Norman Daniel⁴³”. A voice was raised from within Europe that fundamental weakness of both Western civilization and Christianity in the modern world: “is their inability to recognize that they share the planet not with inferiors but with equals. Unless Western civilization intellectually and socially, politically and economically, and the Christian church theologically, can learn to treat other men with fundamental respect, these two in their turn will have failed to come to terms with the actualities of the twentieth century. The problems raised in this are, of course, as profound as anything that we have touched on for Islam⁴⁴.” The European mind reached an unmistakable conclusion “if Muslims need to understand our Western tradition and institutions more thoroughly today, we in the West need to divest ourselves of some of our old prejudices⁴⁵.” However, when Western monetary institutions with the money of OPEC countries, struck neo-colonialism with exploitative economic policies on the South with the cliques of armed minority regimes in the Muslim world, unfortunately this welcome trend was overwhelmed by those with vested ideological interests.

In the midst of these developments, on intellectual plane, Islam got Dr. Fazlur Rahman (1919-1988), on its side to successfully present its thesis in terms of the current stock of Western philosophic discourse. His background of madrasa education, and expertise in Arabic and Persian languages provided him a handhold in tradition, while learning in modern universities and proficiency in English, Latin and French, gave him not only foothold in modern advance Western philosophies but wings to fly while being rooted in tradition. The legacy of al-Afghani, “the father of genuine Islamic modernism” that blossomed in Iqbal, sprouted into branches and leaves in Fazlur Rahman, to such an extent and finesses that defies description. In actuality, the task for reconstruction of religious thought, initiated by Iqbal, fructifies in his constructs. He was simultaneously committed to his faith and work because they were so intimately intertwined, so much so that it rings loudly in him that his goal in approaching modernity was “not so much to save religion from modernity- which is, after all, only a partisan interest- but to save modern man from himself through religion ⁴⁶”. Like Robert Lee, he deems modernity as a tiger to be tamed, not to be hunted. He took modernity both “as a challenge and an opportunity for the formulation of philosophic statement of Islam as a pragmatic social proposition both responsive to tradition and contemporary challenges because he was “an activist thinker rather than a mere theoretician⁴⁷”. His interpretation of Quran in a pragmatic framework is unique and places him “at the forefront of Muslim scholars⁴⁸” for to him “fully human interpretation

is expressed in actions, not in words; the interaction with text is not complete without its behavioral manifestations, the behavior is, in fact, the interpretation of the words⁴⁹”.

He wrote 10 books and 80 articles. “Islam” is a complete picture of Islam, particularly for Western audience, a critical appraisal of how it unfolded in 14 centuries at the stage of history. “Islamic Methodology in History” is a case history of Islam. “Major Themes of Quran” is a pragmatic contextual theology of Quran, knowledge kneaded in faith, a springboard that provides matrix of socio-economic and political reforms. “Islam and Modernity” portrays the prevalent intellectual traditions of the Muslim world, and states how an Islamic intellectualism can be induced that creates minds rather than propositions. “Revival and Reform in Islam” addresses the problem of fundamentalism, recourse to Islamic medievalism that is no more than a reaction to Western secular modernity. “Selected Letters of Sheikh Ahmad Sirhandi” is an antidote of mystic intuitionism, deliriums and miracle mongering, in fact a rational world affirming statement of Islam. “Prophecy in Islam” states orthodox stand regarding prophecy as well as the philosophic statement of Muslim philosophers and an impact of Greek thought on their viewpoint about the phenomenon of revelation in Islam. The writer also delivered a detailed account of the “philosophy of Mulla Sadra”. His work on psychoanalysis of Avicenna is also a worth-read. Dr. Fazlur Rahman’s uniqueness lies in the fact that in his books and articles, he tried to resolve concrete contemporary problems of man within pragmatic contextual theology of Quran rather than abstract metaphysics of Muslim philosophers and theologians.

To him, modernity was an openness to change rather than commitment to change as viewed in Western theater of thought and action. Having a dynamic view of tradition he concludes that tradition should not be abrogated or replaced but reformed. “Convinced that Muslim philosophers were headed in the wrong direction, I was “born” with a new impulse to understand Islam. But where was that Islam? Had I not studied it with my father? But then my father had transmitted to me a fourteen-century- old tradition, and my skepticism had been directed at certain important aspects of that tradition. I then realized that although Muslims claim their belief, law and spirituality are “based upon the Quran”, the Scripture embodying the revelation of Muhammad (570-632), the Quran was never taught by itself in any seat of traditional learning, but always with the aid of commentaries. A study of Quran itself, together with the life of Prophet, enabled me to gain fresh insight into its meaning and purpose, making it possible for me to re-evaluate my tradition⁵⁰.” “Soon thereafter, I came to believe that while traditions are valuable for living religions in that they provide matrices for the creative activity of great minds and spirits, they are also entities that ipso facto isolate that tradition from the rest of humanity. Consequently, I am of the belief that all religious traditions need constant revitalization and reform ⁵¹”. He analyses the tragedy “...the traditional-conservative alim...is rooted in a tradition; he bears the burden of it; he defends it and is a spokesman for it...for the traditionalist there is no new age in the real sense of the word. For him, the Quran has no other meaning than what his tradition has determined⁵²”. He lays procedure to move forward “ the first task, I submit to you, indeed the urgent task, is to re-examine the Islamic tradition itself. I would rather call it the Muslim tradition, which contains of course, many Islamic things, many un-Islamic things and many that may be on borderline. Let us invest our time, energy and money in the creation, not of propositions, but a mind...My plea, therefore, is that we create thinkers, those who have the capacity to think constructively and positively ⁵³”. He diagnosis a problem of immense intensity “Muslims have, by and large, become prisoners of their own historic creations, whether laws or

institutions. In order to set mankind on the right path and provide a positive orientation in the present morass, we must transcend much of historic Islam and rediscover real Islam, which is concretely ever-present in the Quran and its ethical principles. This is the challenge that Muslims must face, for the benefit of all mankind⁵⁴”.

He was aware of the immensity of tremendous initiative he takes, but his passion for providing practical solutions for the dilemmas produced by modernity and his passion for the Quranic text meant that he provided a bridge between Ivory tower thinking and uninformed pragmatism. He clearly draws lines between Normative Islam and historical one. “The first essential step to relieve the vicious circle just mentioned is, for the Muslims, to distinguish clearly between normative Islam and historical Islam. Unless effective and sustained efforts are made in this direction, there is no way visible for the creation of the kind of Islamic mind I have been speaking of just now. No amount of mechanical juxtaposition of old and new subjects and discipline can produce this kind of mind. If the spark for the modernization of the old Islamic learning and for the Islamization of the new is to arise, then the original thrust of Islam- of the Quran and Muhammad-must be clearly resurrected so that the conformities and deformities of historical Islam may be clearly judged by it⁵⁵”.

He tendered rebukes against Muslim philosophers and theologians for failure to elicit pragmatic moral élan from Quran which concerns to the concrete problems of life. The philosophers failed to discern difference between higher religio-moral cognition and intellectual cognition, while the theologians remained locked in abstract pure metaphysical thoughts like existence of God, His attributes, the world as creation of God, and Prophet Hood. Both philosopher and theologian most of the time remained irretrievable prisoners of pure metaphysics leaving all practical concerns to the domain of law. Rahman grasps the nettle firmly “the philosophers were intellectually clever, excelling in subtlety of argument, but their god remained a bloodless principle a mere intellectual construct, lacking both power and compassion. Although intellectually less skillful, the theologians were nevertheless instinctively aware that the God of religion was a full-blooded, living reality who responded to prayers, guided men individually and collectively, and intervened in history: “He speaks and acts” as Ibn Taymiya so poignantly put it⁵⁶”.

He unequivocally establishes that according to Quran man is a bearer of Trust (al-amana), that his foremost duty is to strike ethically based just social moral order on earth which eliminates socio-economic and political inequalities. “The impulse for social justice and the establishment of the recognition of the equal essential worth of men provided one of the most basic motivations for the launching of the Islamic movement⁵⁷”. The grand ethical principle of Tauhid states If God is one; mankind is also one, to Rahman it cannot be realized without elimination of socio-economic and political disparities. This is because instead of dancing around the golden calves of modernity Fazlur Rahman attends to Quran with the wide open ears and eyes of the heart and concludes “ but the bane of modernity, in the form of secularism, is far worse than that of either medieval Islamic Sufism or medieval Christian theology, since secularism destroys the sanctity and universality (transcendence) of all moral values- a phenomenon whose effects have just begun to make themselves felt, most palpably in Western societies. Secularism is necessarily atheistic. So far as the establishment of an ethically based social order is concerned-and this greatest desideratum of mankind today- the effects

of medieval Islamic Sufism, of the Christian obsession with theology, or of modern secularism differ little.⁵⁸

However, to Rahman, the establishment of social moral order on earth was an unmistakable stand of original Islam, and despite earlier religio-political split (Khariites, Shia, Sunni) each aspirant of power was unfailingly clung to the concept of Jamaah to strike egalitarian moral order. The earlier impulse of mystic Islam was also directed to the same; even the likes of Hasan Basri played a role of opposition. Later, it was only the culmination of mystic impulse into individual piety and the establishment of an orthodox, an institutionalized Islam under dictators that struck the dichotomy of state and religion. Hence in Ghazali's scheme both "kalam and law are related to spiritual life and thus personalized...this highly personalized religion does not see the need for a public reform of law through public, i.e. rational, system of moral principles derived from the Quran⁵⁹". The tenor of Quran speaks loudly "an individual may have some sort of Iman (faith) but it cannot be true and full iman unless it is Islamically expressed and worked out through a proper community⁶⁰". "The Quran sternly rejects any suggestion to the effect that goodness may exist at the individual level but may be compromised at the collective level⁶¹". The individual responsibility of every individual and the corporate responsibility of the Muslim community is the establishment of an egalitarian moral order. And who is niggardly in the execution of this task is niggardly towards his own self; indeed God is Self-sufficient, Muslims must accept the responsibility or God will choose another people to carry on the task (47:38). However, though the forces of history struck a dichotomy of state and religion in medieval era yet the rulers and the masses had not lost transcendental dimension. But as afore mentioned, secularism is worse than that for it denies all facets of transcendence, "secularism, in turn, must cut at the roots of Islam in both ways: by destroying the possibilities of the unity of the Muslim umma (community) externally and by relegating Islam internally to the position of a private creed and ritual as 'being something between man's heart and his God, as the secularist cliché has it⁶²".

But nationalism with its emphasis on national characteristics, not only torn apart the unity of Europe which Christianity ensured for centuries, has also made powerful inroads into the Muslim world. Nationalism has different though allied shades of meaning. First, it may be defined as a group aspiration for a certain community of mores, and language which cement cohesiveness of a group. A Turkish, Iranian, Egyptian and Pakistani peasant is a nationalist in this sense. But these peasants are also bound by a strong religious Islamic sentiment. There is nothing wrong in it for the two sentiments make an extra-ordinary liaison in face of external dangers or imperial forces. However, when this primitive nationalism under the influence of Western modernity was transformed into full fledged political concept, the idea of nation state, the sovereignty and interests of state stayed supreme and demanded paramount loyalty to state, here it came to a stark conflict with the ideals of Islam when nationalism in its logical extremes made secularism an official religion of the state. The modern Western scholarship assumed the role of the priest to defend and enhance the dogmas of secular values, national characteristics with Cartesian approach. The warp and woof of world structure is built on these lines. The Muslims are overstretched between loyalty to religion and to state, and being not rooted in religious tradition at defining moments are prone to oblige the latter because the Western rigged scholarship has at long last won coteries from the natives with media at their disposal. Rahman comes down hard on secular scholarship "the problem is that while modern scholarship works under the highly comforting conviction that it is unprejudiced and colorless, this

self- righteous lack of prejudice and this colorlessness is perhaps the most dangerous of colors, even if only because it is invisible...The secularist prejudice is apparently so innocent that its perpetrators are quite unwary. For this reason, secular scholarship can exercise indifference and even disdain toward religion without even being conscious of them-indeed, it can even be proud of such attitude as virtue, for that is “objective scholarship⁶³”.

To Rahman, social justice being the core of Islam must also be manifested in economic justice. He insists that eradication of poverty and responsible creation of wealth must be seen as “the foremost duty of religious men...as the jihad of modern age⁶⁴”, for neither the “laissez fair competitive” system of capitalism nor the “monolithic and totalitarian” system of communism can provide a suitable environment for an egalitarian economic system⁶⁵. He observed “the Muslim world is today passing through a period of rapid social change, and at the center of this change lies the problem of economic reconstruction and economic justice...Muslim nations, like other developing ones, have to make certain choices: the two gigantic and competing economic systems of the world-capitalism and communism- necessarily tend to draw developing countries into their respective orbits and accordingly orient their socio-economic policies...the irony of it all is that , while both claim to man all his due dignity, in either case the individual has become no more than a cog in the gigantic wheel of production (36)⁶⁶”. He, however, realized that problem lies in an orthodox viewpoint of Zakat and usury that stands in sharp contrast to modern imperatives of “development economy”. He believes that from the vantage point of Quran, “the verse (9:60) lays out the heads of expenditure zakat, covers all the department and activities of a modern welfare state: (1) the poor and the needy; (2) the civil service (literally, tax collectors; but then tax collectors were in the prophet’s days the only civil service, since his government was a simple, informal, and undifferentiated form of government); (3) diplomatic expenditure “to win goodwill for Islam; (4) to free Muslim war-captives; (5) to relieve chronic debts of people who cannot free themselves from debt; (6) expenditure “in the path of Allah”, a phrase which in the Quran means both jihad, i.e., defense and expenditure on social wealth, for example, health and education etc.; and, finally, (7) “facilitating travel”, I.e., communication expenditures⁶⁷”. Along with it, he proceeds further to say that to keep zakat efficacious at all times, its rate should remain subject to the categories of time, space and causation. It is negligence of these factors, that under a hidebound tradition, zakat became, in the course of time, necessarily defunct. Prohibition of usury was essential for public welfare; but the medieval lawyers of Islam, drew the conclusion from this that all forms of interest are banned despite an oceanic change in the fiscal affairs. It is an unconditional allegiance to the medieval content of Islam that obstructs their vision of Quran regarding economic justice, and many educated Muslims use Keynesian or Marxist arguments to support their position.

Fazlur Rahman keenly observed “like all great religions, Islam has apparently felt the impact of, and responded to, the manifold forces of modern life- intellectual, scientific and socio-political- since the dawn of the impingement of modernity on Muslim society. There is hardly a facet of the life of Muslim society which has remained untouched⁶⁸”. But his intellectual prowess and unceasing devotion to Quran allowed him to respond to modernity with a frankness and honesty which many feared to express. He said remedy lies in “historical systematic reconstruction” of Islamic theology, law, ethics, philosophy and social sciences. It was a giant leap forward toward developing a contextual Quranic theology based upon a historical, systematic investigation of tradition. He himself realized the

severity of task and immensity of tremendous initiative. “This approach is so revolutionary and so radically different from the approaches generally adopted so far in that it seems to bring under strictly historical study not only Fiqh [jurisprudence] and Sunna [customs or recommendation] of the Prophet, but the Quran as well, that not only the traditionalists, but even most of the modernists seriously hesitate to accept it⁶⁹”.

With ice of faith in his veins, he always saw the realities of external world with a cool logic, and employed Taqwa to the best of its meaning and his own dispositions to collapse extremes into middle positions, for “to him “middle road” is not only the best road, it is the only road. Many people think that to be “in the middle” is to be “humdrum” and banal and to be “in the mean” is to be really “mean” and “unoriginal” and “ungrand”. This is true if “the middle” or the “mean” is construed as something from which both sides are absent, as a negative mean, dry bones from which all flesh is gone. But this is not the mean of the Quran; what it has in mind is a positive, creative mean, an integrative moral organism. This is why it is not quasi-automatic but can be achieved only by all the alertness and power one can muster. It is that moment of balance where all sides are fully present, not absent, integrated, not negated.⁷⁰ It is a general rule that fact lies between two extremes. This is because, in his intellectual constructs, we see an unmistakable fusion of two extremes. He blends rigorous pragmatism with an intense idealism, intellectual prowess of philosophers with the faith or the dynamic nature of the living God of theologians, two streams of Eastern and Western intellectual traditions join hands in his calculus. He was fusionist par excellence. He judged history of Islam on the touch-stone of Quran and concluded that be it the first theatrics of religio-political split in Islamic history into Kharijism, Shiat and Sunnism, the war between qadrites and Jabrites, orthodoxy and mysticism, philosophers and theologians; the currents and cross-currents of history kept them steering from one extreme to the other, the only thing missing is an essential golden mean of the Quran. He insists that aim of Quran challenges each person to “unleash and maximize human moral energy” so that neither the power of God nor the free will of humanity is discarded “determinism and free will, potency and impotency, hope and fear are, in the human case, not contradictions but rather God-given tensions within whose framework people must work, should they violate either side of the tension and think themselves to be either omnipotent or impotent, they fall into a Satanic condition that the Quran calls Kufr..⁷¹”.

He was neither haunted nor unduly attracted by the West. However, his firm belief on the essential unity of mankind, human integration on the grand ethical principle of Tauheed, an ultimate destiny of mankind, kept him uniquely poised to build bridges between the Muslims and non-Muslims. Of course, Quran wanted Muslims to establish a political order on earth for the sake of creating an egalitarian just moral social order to eliminate corruption on the earth and reform the earth. To fulfill this task Quran created the instrument of jihad. But Quran also envisages, or at least called for an active cooperation between Muslims and “People of the Book” to establish **world moral order** (3:64). He says this is pretty different than “contemporary forms of “Ecumenism” where every religious community is expected to be nice to others and extend its typical brand of “salvation” to others as much as it can! For Islam there is no particular “salvation”: there is only success [falah] or failure [khusran] in the task of building the type of world order⁷²”. “This invitation (3:64), probably issued at a time when Muhammad thought, not all was yet lost among the three self- proclaimed monotheistic communities, must have appeared specious to Christians. It has remained unheeded.

But I believe something can still be worked out by way of positive cooperation, provided the Muslims hearken more to Quran than to the historical formulations of Islam and provided that recent pioneering efforts continue to yield a Christian doctrine more compatible with universal monotheism and egalitarianism⁷³". Dr. Fazlur Rahman though considered neo-fundamentalism in Islam as an intellectual disappointment and orthodoxy more uncompromising than its predecessors, yet he thought it to be a transitional phase that is ultimately bound to disappear giving way to genuine modernism in Islam. "Islam at present stands radically polarized and is in unmistakable ferment and transition. Medieval conservatism cannot, however, supply genuine and effective answers to today's problems. It appears largely to be reaction against Western colonialism. I am therefore confident of the eventual success of the pure Islam of Quran, which is fresh, promising and progressive⁷⁴".

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