

Islam and the Modern Age

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Zakir Husain Institute of Islamic Studies
Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi

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Editor

PROF. FARHAT NASREEN

Assistant Editor

DR. MOHD SAYEED ANWAR



Zakir Husain Institute of Islamic Studies
Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi 110025

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Editorial

*'I used to have the urge to defend myself every time my ideas were attacked. People disagree with you all the time at work, at home, at the gym. When you're concerned with defending yourself, you're not accepting different points of view. You're not allowing others to be free. And a big part of freedom is to accept that others are also free. Remember, freedom is to do what you want and be as you are. You can't do that if you're constantly defending yourself.'*¹

We are truly happy to present the Volume 111, Issue No. 1, February 2026 of the *Islam and the Modern Age*. Most respectfully we deliver our heartfelt thanks to Professor Mazhar Asif, the honorable Vice Chancellor of Jamia Millia Islamia. His encouragement and guidance in the publication of this and the past issues of the *Journal* are absolutely priceless. Professor Asif is a highly regarded scholar and having him as the chairman of our editorial board is indeed a matter of good fortune. We also thank the Registrar of Jamia Millia Islamia, Professor Md. Mahtab Alam Rizvi for his generous support. His administrative efficiency emboldens us to invest in academic endeavors. The Editor-in-Chief, Professor Habibullah Khan is at the very core of this publication. His brilliance lights the path of our pens. The Assistant Editor, Dr. Mohd. Sayeed Anwar's hard work hides behind every word of every article. I thank each member of the team which made the publication of this issue possible.

In this issue the multidimensional aspects of knowledge that emerge from Islam have been interwoven with multiple threads of modern thought. The assortment of articles harmonizes the persistent dialogue between the sacred text, the scientific, emotional, cultural, lingual and architectural vessels, and the socio-cultural realities of the people who navigate them. It has meticulous studies spanning across ideas on morality in the pre-Islamic Arabian society, scientific ideas in Arabia, the mystical landscapes of an early Persian Sufi text; set against the

backdrop of the Quran. The very first article which is on moral values on Arabic poetry sets the tone of this issue. It brilliantly captures the importance of writing about morality and ethics in our times and then masterfully weaves the early Arabian narratives around these important issues. Another article explores the Quranic theology and its practical applicability on the socio-political philosophy of medieval times. The tussle between the ideas of *mulukiyat* and *khilafat* have always been very engaging and political theorists have debated over them with great passion in the past as well. We have a write-up on the history of the evolution of Indian architecture. Furthermore, we have an intensely analytical article on the interconnection between the Ibrahimic chain of religions. Herein the boundaries and the boundlessness of Islam are explored with expertise. The last article deals with the resilient history of the Khoja community of India. Written with methodical precision, it provides a comprehensive and authoritative account of the community's historical trajectory. All the articles come from a place of deep thought and rigorous examination.

These contributions manage to push and expand the boundaries of knowledge and offer their readers a nuanced view of how ideas evolve, migrate, and anchor themselves within distinct cultural landscapes. They form an enriching intellectual arc for the modern readers. We thank our authors!

Most importantly we thank our readers. We are here because they are here.

FARHAT NASREEN

NOTE

1. Cf. Darius Foroux, *What it Takes To be Free*, Penguin Random House, Gurugram, 2019, p. 73.

Where and Why Muslims, Christians, and Jews Differ and Distrust Each Other?

On the night of 14 June 2026, the world breathed a collective sigh of relief, at least to some extent. It felt as though the stifling grip on the economy and our lives had finally begun to loosen, freeing people from a long period of suffocation and uncertainty. However, a final agreement between America, Israel, and Iran still seems distant. But why is that so?

It can be analyzed in many ways.

Israel and America openly waged war not only to destroy Iran's atomic capabilities but also to change its hardline regime, which claims to rule according to Islamic principles. But the question is, was that the only and sufficient reason to wage such a devastating war, one that strangled the world economy for months and sent the prices of gasoline, petroleum, and many other essential commodities soaring beyond the reach of ordinary people across the globe?

It was not merely a war of aggression or a struggle for regional and global hegemony. If we look more deeply, we find many other causes that are not immediately visible to ordinary people. One of the most widely acknowledged reasons is the mistrust and lack of respect that followers of three great faiths, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, often have for one another in the name of religion and belief.

To understand this phenomenon, we must delve into the history of the three Semitic religions that trace their origins to the same Abrahamic tradition. The followers of Islam, Christianity, and Judaism all maintain that they are the true inheritors of Abraham's faith—a faith centered on belief in one God, whom Abraham worshipped throughout his life. He also taught his followers never to accept any form of duality or partnership with God.

As time passed and Abraham's era receded into history, many new

faiths and religious traditions emerged to guide humanity. Among the most prominent were Judaism, associated with Moses; Christianity, centered on Jesus Christ; and finally Islam, which follows the teachings of the last Prophet of God, Muhammad (peace be upon him).

Unfortunately, whenever a new faith emerged, even if its followers believed it was divinely ordained, adherents of earlier faiths often opposed it as false or fabricated. Judaism rejected Christ's message and became one of its strongest opponents. According to Christian belief, this opposition became so intense that attempts were made to put Jesus to death because he had introduced teachings that differed from prevailing Jewish interpretations and beliefs.

A similar pattern occurred with Islam. It faced strong opposition from both Jewish and Christian communities, and attempts were made to eliminate the Holy Prophet Muhammad simply because he brought what was perceived as a new religion and a new faith. Yet Islam never claimed to be an entirely new concept of worship. Rather, it presented itself as the continuation and completion of the same divine tradition that had previously manifested through Judaism and Christianity.

The Quran recognizes the divine origins of the Torah and the Gospel and mandates respect for foundational prophets, including Abraham, Moses, and Jesus. It also teaches its followers to respect all prophets and messengers who came before Prophet Muhammad.

F. E. Peters, author of *The Children of Abraham*, observes in his widely acknowledged work that Judaism, Christianity, and Islam all worship the same God. Jews refer to God as "Yahweh" or "Elohim"; Christians as "God the Father"; and Muslims as "Allah." All three believe that the same God created humanity, made a covenant with Abraham, sent instructions and warnings through prophets, and permitted reward and punishment according to His will. While these three major faiths share many similarities, they also differ significantly in theology, practice, and worldview.

Incidentally, all revealed books, the Torah, the Bible, and the Quran, discuss creation and share similar narratives concerning Adam, Eve, Noah, Abraham, Jacob, Moses, and many other prophetic figures. For example, both traditions recount how Sarah was unable to bear children and consented to Hagar having a child in the hope of securing an heir for Abraham. Hagar gave birth to Ismael, Abraham's firstborn son. Later,

Sarah asked Hagar to leave Abraham's household out of jealousy. Hagar and Ismael wandered into the desert of Arabia but survived through divine intervention. God promised that Ismael would become the ancestor of a great nation, which many associate with the Arab people.

Arabs traditionally believe that both Abraham and Ismael helped build the Kaaba in Mecca, which is regarded as the House of God. Abraham later had a second son, Isaac, born to Sarah according to God's promise. The descendants of Isaac came to be associated with the chosen people and the Promised Land.

Thus, it establishes that these three religions have the same origin and roots.

However, Muslims believe that both Judaism and Christianity underwent alterations over time and that aspects of their original messages became distorted through human intervention and transmission. This belief is often cited to explain differences between biblical accounts and parallel narratives in the Quran.

Globally, Muslims number approximately 1.6 billion people. Roughly one in every five or six individuals in the world is Muslim. Judaism has about 13 million adherents, while Christianity has approximately 2.2 billion followers.

Despite their common origins and many shared characteristics, differences among these faiths have often led to animosity and deadly conflicts. Their followers have not only challenged one another's theological claims and authenticity but have frequently regarded themselves as the sole legitimate inheritors of God's message. Throughout history, such beliefs have contributed to wars and efforts to suppress rival religious communities.

The Holy Quran teaches believers to respect and believe in all prophets, messengers, and divine scriptures to make the human society homogeneous and uniform:

"Say, 'We have believed in Allah and in what was revealed to us and what was revealed to Abraham, Ismael, Isaac, Jacob, and the Descendants, and in what was given to Moses, Jesus, and to the prophets from their Lord. We make no distinction between any of them, and we are Muslims [submitting] to Him.'" (Quran 3:84)

"Say, 'O People of the Scripture, come to a word that is equitable between us and you—that we will not worship except Allah and not associate

anything with Him and not take one another as lords instead of Allah.” (Quran 3:64)

The primary theological divide between Islam and Christianity concerns the nature of Jesus. The Quran explicitly rejects the doctrines of the Trinity, the divine sonship of Jesus, and the crucifixion as understood in mainstream Christian theology.

“O People of the Scripture, do not commit excess in your religion or say about Allah except the truth. The Messiah, Jesus, the son of Mary, was but a messenger of Allah... Exalted is He above having a son.” (Quran 4:171)

Likewise:

“The Jews say, ‘Ezra is the son of Allah,’ and the Christians say, ‘The Messiah is the son of Allah.’ That is their statement from their mouths... May Allah destroy them; how are they deluded?” (Quran 9:30)

The Quran also teaches that Jesus was neither killed nor crucified but was raised to heaven by God:

“And they did not kill him, nor did they crucify him; but [another] was made to resemble him to them. And rather, Allah raised him to Himself.” (Quran 4:157–158)

While Judaism shares Islam’s strict monotheism, the Quran differs from mainstream Jewish theology by affirming Jesus as the Messiah, rejecting the idea of divine favor based solely on lineage, and criticizing what it regards as deviations from original teachings.

“O believers! Take neither Jews nor Christians as guardians—they are guardians of each other. Whoever does so will be counted as one of them. Surely Allah does not guide the wrongdoers.” (Quran 5:51)

The tensions between Muslims, Christians, and Jews did not begin with recent events. Their shared history is marked by repeated struggles, wars, and cycles of violence that have caused immense human suffering. The establishment of Israel among Arabs on Palestinian land in 1948 by Christian imperialists and the 1967 Arab–Israeli War later on significantly widened these divisions, leading to further territorial occupations, including regions such as the Golan Heights in Syria, which remain disputed to this day.

In more recent conflicts—including the Gaza crisis and broader geopolitical confrontations involving Iran, the United States, and Israel—the divide has grown increasingly pronounced. What is particularly striking is that these conflicts are often framed and justified

through religious narratives. Political leaders and state actors have, at times, invoked religious language to characterize these struggles as morally justified or even divinely ordained. Such interpretations have, in certain cases, transformed geopolitical conflicts into perceived civilizational or theological confrontations.

An especially compelling and troubling aspect of this phenomenon is the tendency among different groups to interpret contemporary conflicts through the lens of eschatology—the belief that these events are signs of an approaching final divine reckoning. Each tradition, drawing upon its own sacred texts, has at times viewed these struggles as part of a larger sacred narrative.

Consequently, there remains a significant gap in public understanding regarding both the differences and commonalities among these three faith traditions. Even among their followers, knowledge is often incomplete or shaped more by inherited narratives than by critical study and engagement. For those outside these religions—such as followers of Buddhism, Sikhism, or Hinduism—the complexities can be even more difficult to comprehend.

Therefore, the need of the hour is to study the basic teachings of these religions not only from a theological perspective but also through political, social, and economic lenses. Today, many of these conflicts appear to be driven more by political and economic interests than by religion itself, although rulers and political leaders often seek to justify their actions through religious language and symbolism. Such tendencies should be discouraged, and people should be encouraged to understand these differences, their historical roots, and the consequences of narrow interpretations more openly and critically through their own knowledge and wisdom.

Moral Values in Arabic Poetry of Pre-Islamic Era

ABSTRACT

Arab society in pre-Islamic period was mostly of Bedouin people. There were cities like Makkah, Yathrib and Taif but mostly it was desert. The Bedouins travelled from one pasture to another in search of fodder for their livestock and food and water for themselves. But these Arabs preserve and continue with their moral values. They were famous for their hospitality, generosity, courage, honour and loyalty. The poetry of these Arabs was a record of their values. Their poetry included themes of wisdom, justice, loyalty and bravery. They praised heroism, truthfulness and moral rectitude. They kept promises even when they fought wars. There are many other values which their coming generations respect and follow proudly. These moral values were more strengthened after the advent of Islam.

Keywords: Arab Society, *Jahilia*, Bedouin Culture, Traditions, Islam

The Arabs say, 'الشعر ديوان العرب' ('Poetry is the record of Arabs'). Every community has its own characteristics. Every group of people has its own points of strength or of weakness. This is reflected in its literature, be it poetry or prose.

Arabs have been proud of their poetry since we have found them saying poetry. When they fought wars in pre-Islamic era, they spoke about them in poetry. When they travelled from one place to another in search of good pastures, they spoke about it in their poetry. When they saw their King, Amir or Sheikh they admired and appreciated him. When they were angry, they abused bitterly. The issues they spoke about in their poetry, vary from praise to slander, from pride to satire, from description to love and many other issues of poetry.

As known, there is always a tussle between good and evil, virtue

and vice in each group of people. The Arabic poetry is a reservoir of pearls of wisdom and moral values which Arabs have acquired, and they appreciate those who possess them and abuse those who are devoid of them. In his introduction to his book *Tabaqat Fuhoool al-shoara*, Mohammed Ibn Sallam al-Jumahi (757-846 AD) says: To the pre-Islamic Arabs, the poetry was repository of their knowledge, their ultimate reservoir of wisdom, they benefit from it and it was their last haven or resort.¹

The nations of ancient civilisations had their books that contain teachings in religion, morality, literature and philosophy. The pre-Islamic Arabs had no books to their credit. They had only their poetry which was their culture, history and literature. This was explicit in the saying of Umar Bin al-Khattab when he said: "Poetry was the knowledge of a nation that had no science other than poetry."²

The Arabs' poetry travelled across tribes in the whole Arabian Peninsula. The Arabs narrated it in their meeting places, clubs and souks, and during their pilgrimage to Makkah. These *Qasāids* (the *Jahilia* poems) were like newspapers and magazines of nowadays. Their poetry was like the media of today. It was spread like wildfire among Arab tribes.

The Arab poets were spokesmen of their society. The poet was influenced by his society around. His emotions represent the emotions of people around. But it is surprising to note that the natural environment of *jahilia* - a desert environment - lacked good. There was less rain, therefore more draught. Scarce water, less pasture. In this kind of environment, where a common man rushes to acquire money, tries to take advantage of available things and steal the opportunity to have something and becomes selfish, we find the Arabs, instead, compete each other in generosity, rather feel proud to feed the poor and needy, and give shelter to those who lack it.

The poet Tarafa bin al-Abd طرفة بن العبد (543-569 AD) says:

نحن في المشتاة ندعو الجفلى لا ترى الأدب فينا ينتقر
 بجفان تعترى نادينا من سديف حين هاج الصنبر
 كالجوابي لا تنني مترعة لقرى الأضياف أو للمحتضر
 ثم لا يحزن فينا لحمه إنما يحزن لحم المدخر

In these verses, the poet says that they invite people to banquets

during the days of hunger in winter. The host does not discriminate between the invitees.³

The Arab man has acquired high values and good qualities from the society and environment they lived in. To them the tribe is very important. They remembered their lineage because it gave them honour and pride. This continuity was in character and good qualities between the sons and their parents and grandparents. This continuity was in ethics and moral values. Zuhayr bin abi Sulma زهير بن أبي سلمى (520-609 AD) says while admiring Harem bin Sinan⁴:

فما كان من خيرٍ أتوه فإِنما
توارثه آباءُ أبائهم قبلُ

Whatever good they did was actually what the fathers of their fathers got in heridity and passed it down.

Acquiring high values was something every Arabian would aspire for and try to follow them in his life. This is vividly spread in their poetry. The fathers advised their sons to follow these values so that they become good models for others. The poet Amr bin al-Hathar عمرو بن أمّارة (Died 676 AD) says:

إن المجد أوله وعور ومصدر غبه كرم وخير
وإنك لن تنال المجد حتى تجود بما يضمن به الضمير
بنفسك أو بمالك في أمور يهاب ركوبها الورع الدثور

The beginning of nobility is difficult, the result is honour and goodness. You would get nobility only after sacrificing what is dear to your heart, your life or your wealth in the deeds that an apprehensive and careful person is afraid of.

The famous Arab poet Tarafa bin al-Abd (طرفة بن العبد) expresses this sense this way:

والمجد نُنْمِيهِ وَنُتَادُهُ
والحمدُ في الأكفَاءِ نَدَّخَرُهُ

It is the glory and nobility that we increase and keep with, and it is the appreciation that we keep among equals.

The Arabs were very much apprehensive about their honour. They may give up their life but not the honour. Addressing his wife, Umme Hassan asking her to leave him to sacrifice himself, the pre-Islamic poet Urwa Bin Ward عروة بن الورد (520-600 AD) says:

أَحَادِيثُ تَبْقَى ، وَالْفَتَى غَيْرُ خَالِدٍ
إِذَا هُوَ أَمْسَى هَامَةً فَوْقَ صَيْرٍ

When a man dies, the man does not remain, but the talks about his good deeds remain.

Another poet al- Mothqab al-Abdi (553-587 AD) advises his son before his death:

لَا يِبَالِي طَيِّبُ النَّفْسِ بِمَا
عَطَبَ الْمَالُ ، إِذَا الْعِرْضُ سَلِمَ

A good fellow never cares if his wealth is gone, when his honour remains.

Welcoming a guest warmly before providing him food better than that of the host, is a quality preserved by Arabs and they are proud of. This is a continuous practice since pre-Islamic era. The famous Arab poet whose name has become a household name even today, Hatem al-Tayee (died 605 AD) says:

أَضَاجِكُ ضَيْفِي قَبْلَ انْزَالِ رَحْلِهِ
وَمَا الْخَصْبُ لِلْأَضْيَافِ أَنْ يَكْثُرَ الْقَرَى

I amuse my guest and make him laugh before letting him get down from his vehicle. Offering enough food only is not a good hospitality.

The moral values that an Arab always wishes to maintain are many. The Arabs never feel humiliated because as respects his own-self. To him disrespecting ones own-self invites others to disrespect him. Hatem al-Tayee (حاتم الطائي) says:

وَنَفْسُكَ أَكْرَمُهَا فَإِنَّكَ إِنْ تَهُنَّ
عَلَيْكَ فَلَنْ تَلْقَى لَهَا الدَّهْرَ مُكْرَمًا

Respect yourself because if you disrespect your own-self, you would find none to respect you. In another place, mentioning his character and behaviour, the poet says:

وَأَغْفِرُ عَوَاءَ الْكَرِيمِ ادِّخَارَهُ
وَأَعْرِضُ عَنْ شَيْمِ اللَّئِيمِ تَكْرُمًا

I forgive the honoured on his weakness because I want to keep him with me. I ignore the bad habits of the disrespectful because I want to save my honour.

After the 2012 Delhi gang rape incident there has been a debate how the men should behave in the society, or how women could manage to survive in this male-dominated society. There was really an uproar in the public about the continuity of rape or sex-abuse cases. The public took serious interest in finding solution to this problem and proposed methods to overcome this problem. Here we see Antarah Ibn Shaddad (525-608 AD) the *Jahilia* poet, how he deals with the woman of his neighbourhood taking full care of her sanctity. The poet says:

وَأَغْضُ طَرْفِي مَا بَدَتْ لِي جَارَتِي
إِنِّي أَمْرُؤُ سَمِيحُ الْخَلِيقَةِ مَا جَدُّ
حَتَّى تَوَارَى جَارَتِي مَأْوَاهَا
لَا أَتَّبِعُ النَّفْسَ اللَّجُوجَ هَوَاهَا

When the lady of my neighbourhood comes out, I keep my eyes down because I am a well-mannered person and a noble one. I bow my eyes down till the lady of my neighbourhood reaches her destination and disappears. I do not follow the insisting desires of my self.

These are the characteristics of the Arabs in pre-Islamic era and they were maintained, rather improved for the better after the advent of Islam. These high values actually remained there in the Arab society. These moral values in fact make a person of good character. These values highlight the status of the society. Abu Tammam (805-845 AD) has referred to this point in one of his couplets.

ولولا خلال سنّها الشعر ما درى بناء المعالي كيف تؤتى المكارم

Had there not been the characteristics that poetry built, the people of honour and dignity would never have known how moral values are acquired.

The Arabs acquire these values from their childhood, because it is easy to acquire high values in the childhood rather than acquiring them in old age. Another less known poet says:

إذا المرءُ أَعْيَتْهُ المروءَةُ نَاشِئاً
فمَطْلَبُهَا كَهْلاً عَلَيْهِ شَدِيدُ

If a man can not acquire human qualities in his childhood, acquiring them in an old age is almost impossible.

The Arabs are very responsible for their duties. Defending their land and honour is one of their responsibilities. Their honour is rather more precious to them than that of their position and wealth. Samaw'al ibn Adiya (500-560 AD) starts his poem with these words:

إذا المرء لم يذْنَسْ من اللؤم عَرَضُهُ
فكلُّ رداءٍ يرتديه جميل

If the honour of a person is not discredited due to meanness, then any cloth he wears is beautiful.

The famous veteran poet Hassan Bin Thabit (554-674 AD) opines that the lost wealth can be compensated but not the gone honour. He says:

أصونُ عرضي بمالٍ لا أدنُّسُهُ
أحتالُ للمالِ إن أودى فأكسبُهُ

I safeguard my honour giving my wealth. I do not let my honour to be impure. When the wealth is gone I try to earn it and I get it.

The Arabs never broke their promise. They keep the promise, come what may. This is illustrated in a story of Basus war. Harith bin Abbad (464-570 AD) was the leader of Bakr tribe in their war with Taglib tribe led by Mohalhil who killed the son of Harith. In Basus war, Harith managed to arrest Mohalhil who was unknown to Harith. Harith promised him to set him free if he told who was Mohalhil. Mohalhil first ensured the promise and then told him that it was him. Harith was annoyed but set him free to keep his promise.

The ethics and moral values the Arabs had in pre-Islamic era were enhanced and strengthened by Islam. They were not degraded. They were rather appreciated and welcomed. They were given right direction if they were misused in the society. The Prophet Mohammad (saws) appreciated good values of that period. He rather rewarded better to those who practised them. When Hatim Tayee's daughter Saffana was arrested alongwith the people of her tribe and brought before the prophet (saws) in Madinah, she addressed the prophet Mohammed saying: Would you mind setting me free, I am the daughter of the leader of my tribe. My father used to protect people, release prisoners, feed hungry, host the guests, give food to poor, spread peace. He never turned away any needy. Then she said, "I am the daughter of Hatim

Tayee. Prophet Mohammed (saws) was impressed by her dareness and said, These are the characteristics of Muslims. Her father loved moral values. Allah also loved moral values. She was dropped home where she reported the incident to her brother Adi Bin Hatim and asked him to join Mohammad (saws). He came to Madina and declared his embracing Islam before the Prophet (saws).

The prophet (saws) himself had declared the he was sent to complete the moral values.

«إنما بعثت لأتمم مكارم الأخلاق».⁶

NOTES

1. Tabaquat Fuhood Al shoara Edited by Mahmoud Shakir I, p. 24.
2. Tabaquat Fuhood Al shoara Edited by Mahmoud Shakir I, p. 24.
3. Deewan Tarafa Dar Beirut. pp. 55-56.
4. Harim ibn Sinan al-Murri, chief of the Banu Dhubyan tribe, one of the leading figures of the Arabs in the pre-Islamic era, and the most generous Arabs known for their hospitality was one of those who managed to end War of Dahis and al-Ghabra that lasted 40 years.
5. Fi Tareekh al-Adab Al-Jahili Dr Ali Jundi, p. 436.
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Arabic Language and Science

INTRODUCTION

Arabic language was the language of tribes, existed in various dialects. It is historically known that a shared poetic language existed before the advent of Islam. Poetry was found one and a half century ago before the revelation of the Holy Quran. The Holy Quran was revealed in 7th century C.E. It had a great and lasting impact on the development of Arabic language and various kinds of Literature. The Quran transformed the language from a number of dialects into standard, sophisticated and widely used language. The Holy Quran presented a vast number of new words, concepts and expressions in to Arabic lexicon. It opened the door to give new and depth to the meaning of existing words in various literary forms, which has religious, philosophical and scientific importance. The Quran has unparallel linguistic elegance and clarity that established a definite standard language of literature and eloquence. Its influence may be noticed in various areas of literature and life. This became the linguistic bench mark for all future Arabic literature and scholarship.

To preserve the dialect of Quran and its text from any kind of corruption, sciences of language existed, as well as the Quran inspired to gain knowledge to develop new information and invent sciences for the benefit of life.¹

SCIENCES OF INTELLECTUAL DEVELOPMENT

It's certainly true that the Abbasid Period (c. 750–1258 CE) is widely regarded as the “Golden Age of Arabs,” marked by a culmination of intellectual and literary developments. Islamic tendency towards

learning and its teaching to acquire knowledge stressed quest for knowledge. Consequently, the Arab society possessed the faculty of learning so brilliantly that other nations could not compare and could not claim equality with them. As P.K.Hitti has precisely observed:

*“...but what has rendered this age especially illustrious in world annals is the fact that it witnessed the most momentous intellectual awakening in the history of Islam and one of the most significant in the whole history of thought and culture, the awakening due in a large measure to foreign influences.”*²

There is no doubt, that their intermingling with the Greeks, the Indians and the Persians were a great factor in the advancement of their intellectual phenomenon, but the Arabs left their predecessors behind very far. Hitti says:

*“In only a few decades Arab scholars assimilated what had taken the Greeks centuries to develop.”*³

As we know, the Arabs did not have the knowledge of all branches of Sciences, but they inherited a few kinds of literature from their ancestors. These were however gestures. Nicholson classified the sciences which were native and which developed under the influence of foreigners. He wrote:

*“Muhammadian writers usually distinguish the sciences which are connected with the Koran and those which the Arabs learned from foreign people. In the former class they include the traditional or religious sciences (al-Ulumal-Naqliyyan awi’l Shariyya) and the linguistic sciences (Ulum i-Lisani- i-Arabi); in the latter the intellectuals or Philosophical sciences (al-Ulum-al-Aqliyya awi-l- Hikmiyya), which are sometimes called “The Sciences of the Foreigners” (Ulum al-Ajam) or The Ancient Sciences” (al-Ulum al Qadima).”*⁴

The general scope of this division can be illustrated as follows:

I. The Native Sciences

1. Quranic Exegesis (Ilm ul-Tafsir) 2. Quranic recitation (Ilm-ul-Qiraat) 3. The Science of Prophetic Tradition (Ilm-ul-Hadith) 4. Islamic Jurisprudence (Fiqh) 5. Scholastic Theology (Ilm-ul-Kalam) 6. Grammar (Nahw) 7. Lexicography (Lugha) 8. Rhetoric (Bayan) 9. Literature (Adab)

II. The Foreign Sciences

1. *Philosophy (Falsafa)* 2. *Geometry (Handasa)* 3. *Astronomy (Ilm-ul-Nujum)* 4. *Music (Musiqui)* 5. *Medicine (Tibb)* 6. *Magic and Al Chemistry (al-Sihr wal Kiimiya)*⁵

As a result with the expansion of Islamic Arab dynasty, relations of Arabs with others created a new phenomenon of culture, civilization and knowledge among Muslims. Its scope was limited before the advent of Islam, but widened with emerging philosophy and exact sciences through translation works of Greek and Indians. Greek works of philosophy, literature and sciences were transferred to Syriac languages and Syriac versions were later translated in to Arabic. Indian works were translated in to Pahlavi and then to Arabic. During Umayyad and Abbasid period a number of translators were involved in rendering the works from foreign languages in to Arabic language. Ibn al-Nadeem mentioned about the translators and translations in his book *Al-Fihrist*.⁶ Shibli Nomani wrote an article in 100 pages.⁷ Brockelmann described works of 19 translations and references in the book of History of Arabic Literature.⁸ Najeed al-Aqiqi gave historical information about the Orientalises who translated the works from foreign languages in to Arabic and vice versa.⁹ Among the translators Qusta ibn Luqa, Hunayn ibn Ishaq and Thabit ibn Qurra etc. were notable. The translations supported the advancement of sciences done by the scientists across the Islamic world. It is not possible to give the detailed achievements of sciences but the broad areas of sciences covered such as Medicine, Physics, Chemistry, Mathematics, Astronomy, Geography, Cartography Algebra, Trigonometry, geometry and Agronomy.

SOME PROMINENT SCIENTISTS

For practical purpose scientists achieved their goals, as Astronomy was invented to the use of knowledge of Qibla, to travel to accurate city at night and other purpose, Al Battani (850-922) could determine the length of solar system and learn movements of sun, moon and planets. Al-Kindi discussed widely on chemistry, in his book '*Kitab Kimiya-al-Itr*', Astronomy-'Scientific Weather Forecasting', Optics in the book 'On Rays', Medicine in 'The Medical Formulary of *Agrabadhin*', and

his works often combined mathematical principles with physical and astrological observations. Al-Zarqali (1008-1087) could present a more accurate astrolabe and a water clock in Toledo. Nasir al-Din al-Tusi (1201-1274) presented an important revision of Ptolemy, 2nd century celestial model.

In the field of **Botany and Agronomy**, scientists made their contribution to the study of nature and examined plants. This kind of study led to the growth of pharmacology. Among the scientists, the contributions of Abu Hanifa Dinawari (815-896) to the study of plant are very important. His book *Kitab-al-Nabat* (Book of Plants), gives the knowledge of plants and is popular in agriculture. The book was written in six volumes, but only volume 3 & 5 have been recovered and volume 6 is found in quoted passages. The book is in alphabetical order. The recovered book provides details of 637 plants in alphabetical order from *sin* (س) to *ya* (ي). It indicates that the whole book has the study of many thousands of plants. He has pointed out the stages of growth of the plants with fruits and flowers. Zakarya al-Qazwini (1203-1283) wrote his *Ajaib-al-Makhlukat* (The wonders of creation), He described many topics, but mentioned about realistic botany and fantastic accounts also. Two scientists Mohammad bin Ibrahim al-Bassal and Ibn al Awwam al-Isbili wrote books *Diwan-al- Falahat* (The Court of Agriculture) and *Kitab-al-Falahat* (Treaties on Agriculture) respectively. Bassal's book was practical and systematic. It described 180 plants. It mentioned leaf and root-vegetables, herbs, spices and trees. Abu'l Khayr al-Ishbili (11th century scientist) gave details of olive trees and crops like cotton very minutely.

Mathematics was borrowed in Arabic from Greece, India, Mesopotamia and Persia. In medieval Islamic Period Muslim Mathematicians collected all information and knowledge from foreigners and developed into branches as Algebra, Geometry and Arithmetic. All branches were important. Algebra had some practical application. Geometry played the role in the development of Astronomy, which was borrowed from Persia. Indian astronomers were invited to explain rudimentary and trigonometrical techniques. Greek works were translated in to Arabic, but Islamic Mathematicians made contributions to the most sophisticated parts of Geometry. Al-Khwarizmi (8th-9th centuries) adopted Hindu-Arabic numeral system and developed

Algebra as well as presented it as an independent discipline. Avicenna (980-1037) developed mathematical techniques such as casting out nine etc. Al-Farabi (870-950)¹⁰ described in his book '*Kitab ihsa al-ulum*' (The Enumeration of the Sciences), a comprehensive survey of contemporary scientific knowledge, spiritual crafts and Natural secrets and geometrical figures. He classified various sciences including philology, logic mathematics, physics and chemistry in his works. Omar Khayyam (1048-1131) is known for his contribution to geometry. Jamshid al-Kashi (1830-1429) is famous for his works on theorems of trigonometry.

Medicine: In the history of development of medicine, achievement of Islamic scientists was highly appreciated. Their works in theory and practice gave the world a new dimension in the field of health care. Physicians borrowed knowledge of medicine and traditional medical information from Greece, Rome, Syria, Persia and India. They did not merely copy foreign knowledge; rather, they critically observed and examined it, conducted their own research on diseases, and presented new findings for the well-being of society. Their inventions in medicines and surgical instruments remained as a part of medical system for centuries. Al-Razi (854–925/935), who distinguished between smallpox and measles and investigated the causes of fever, wrote an extensive work in thirty-two volumes on various medical theories and critically rejected the doctrines of Galen and other earlier authorities. Al-Zahrawi (936-1013) is famous as a great surgeon. He wrote his legendary book *Al-Tasrif* (Medical Knowledge) in 30 volumes based on medical symptoms, treatments and pharmacology including description of surgical instruments and pioneering procedures. Avicenna (980-1037)¹¹ one of the most renowned personalities in the history of Islamic Medicine, wrote the important medical book "The Canon of Medicine". He has presented basic research on all of medical and clinical issues. Ibn al-Nafis (1213-1288) presented a book on medicine as commentaries on Galen and Avicenna's works. It took place in Avicenna's Canon. Ophthalmology was also the important scientific development in the golden days of Arabs. Hunayn ibn Ishaq's (809-873) work *Ten Treaties on Eye* was much influential until 17th century in the west. Abbas ibn Farnas (810-887) presented his own idea of lenses for magnification and improvement of vision. Ibn al-Sahal (940-1000) could discover the

laws of refraction known as Snell's Law. Ibn al-Haytham (Al-Hazen 965-1040) gave new ideas regarding optics and vision rejecting Greek and Aristotelian views in his Book of optics. His experimental ideas and scientific vision were very much advanced. Al-Biruni's work is also on scientific topics which includes his book 'Kitab al-Jamahir fi Maarifat al-Jawahir (on mineralogy), '*Maqalid ilm al-Hayah*' (on astronomy), and '*Ifrad-al-Maqal fi amr al-Silla*' (a treatise on shadow). Pharmacology as a subject advanced in Islamic medieval Period. Advancement of research in Botany and Chemistry assisted in the development of Pharmacology. Muhammad ibn Zakaria Razi (865-915) and Abu al-Qasim al-Zahravi (936-1013) presented ideas of chemical compounds and preparation of medicines by sublimation and distillation. Methods of preparation of medicines and drugs for ailments are described in their works. Al-Biruni (973-1050)¹² described in his book *Kitab al-Saydalab* (The Book of Drugs) in detail the properties of drugs and the role of Pharmacy. Ibn Sina (Avicenna) presented methods of preparation of 700 drugs. Ibn-al-Baytar (1197-1248) presented in his book *Al-Jami fi al-Tibb* a thousand samples and drugs based on his experiments on plants of different areas. There were other scientists who made contributions in this field. In the field of Physics, Scientists of the Islamic medieval period also made contributions. Apart from optics and astronomy their research on statistics, dynamics, kinematics and motion were very valuable in science. It is difficult to give descriptions of principles and theories regarding Physics as described in the works of Abu Rayhan al-Biruni (973-1048), Athar al-Baqia (Surviving Monuments), *Tarikh al-Hind* (History of India), Ibn Sina's great work *The Shifa* (The Remedy - is on Physics and Metaphysics), Abul Barakat al-Baghdadi (1080-1164), Banu Musa and brothers – Jafar Muhammad, Ahmad and Al-Hasan (9th Century)'s ¹³works have immense value.

INFLUENCE ON EUROPE

Works of Muslim scientist influenced the Europe as their books were translated in European languages such as Italian, French, German, English etc. We find the details of translations in the book *Al-Mustashriqun* (the Orientalist) by Najeeb al-Aqqi. Major translations came into existence in 12th century. i.e. before and after the renaissance

in Europe. Europeans acquired knowledge of Arabic language and observed institutions, *Madrasas*, libraries, hospitals and courts during golden age of Arabs and afterwards for some centuries. Works of Muslim scientists laid the foundation for the experimental science with their contribution to the scientific method and experimental method and also to the quantitative approach to scientific inquiry. It brought a scientific revolution in early modern Europe. Ignac Goldziher (1850-1921) and other orientalist recognized the influence of Muslim scientist on European early scientific development.

According to semantic point of view, use of language in the development of science in the Islamic medieval period has a great significance. All aspects of semantics used in Arabic language in sciences could not be described here in this space.

It is noteworthy that the role of Arabic language was very important. Vocabulary of Arabic language was very rich as it was used in the tribes spread in the Arabian Peninsula. Usage of many words and phrases were different in the tribes. Use of language as literature was limited to poetry. The Quran gave a new scope to use the words of Arabic language in new meanings and broad horizon for invention of sciences related to religion – Tafsir, Hadith, their commentaries, *Fiqh*, its principles, Scholastics (*Kalam*) and sciences of language – Grammar, Phonetics and Lexicography as well as other sciences – Biographies, history, geography. Pure sciences – Astronomy, Agriculture, Agronomy, Arithmetic, Botany, Chemistry, Mathematics, Medicine, Physics, Pharmacology and Zoology. Each discipline, subject and topic requires appropriate use of words, sentences, phrases, terminologies, significance of words according to expression of meaning, thoughts, ideas and context of the content. It was also a great task for the scientists to adopt suitable words to express correct meaning of the findings of research and experiments what they had done with great toil in their endeavour for society and life. Arabic language is a scientific language. Each word has its root and it has basic sense and meaning, formation of words, verbs, nouns, adjectives etc have accurate scientific rules as per use of language in the tribes. At the same time it is flexible to use the words in new meaning and idea. Scientists have coined thousands of new words and terminologies in new meaning, keeping in mind the basic roots and basic meaning of the words. I cannot give detailed study of the words and terminologies used in the particular subject. However,

I have mentioned here some of the lexicons on different subjects, which will give the idea of the words used in new meaning and new terminology in the Islamic medieval dynasty.¹⁴

- * أبو خير الاعرابي و أبو حاتم السجستاني – الحشرات
(Abū Khayr al-A‘rābī and Abū Ḥātim al-Sijistānī – Insects)
- * أبو عمرو الشيباني ، الاصمعي ، أبو حاتم السجستاني – النحل و العسل
(Abū ‘Amr al-Shaybānī, al-Aṣma‘ī, and Abū Ḥātim al-Sijistānī – Bees and Honey)
- * أبو عبيدة – الحياة و العقارب (Abū ‘Ubaydah - Snakes and Scorpions)
- * ابن الاعرابي – الذباب (Ibn al-A‘rābī - The Fly)
- * احمد بن حاتم ، أبو حاتم السجستاني ، الاخفش الأصغر – الجراد
(Aḥmad bin Ḥātim, Abū Ḥātim al-Sijistānī, and al-Akhfash al-Aṣghar – Locusts)
- * كتاب الابل (The Book of the Camel)
- * ابن الاعرابي – البئر (Ibn al-A‘rābī - The Well)
- * كتاب الخيل (The Book of the Horse)
- * خلق الانسان (The Creation of Man / The Disposition of Man)
- * أبو زيد بن اويس الانصاري – المطر (Abū Zayd bin Owais al-Anṣārī – Rain)
- * الاصمعي – الدورات ، النباتات و الشجر ، الوحوش
(Al-Aṣma‘ī - The Revolutions/Cycles, Plants and Trees, Wild Beasts)
- * أبو عبيد – (The Classified Rare/Unusual (Vocabulary))
* الغريب المصنف (Abū ‘Ubayd - The Classified Rare/Unusual (Vocabulary))
- * ابن البيطار – الجامع المفردات الادوية و الأغذية
(Ibn al-Bayṭār - The Comprehensive Book on Simple Drugs and Foodstuffs)
- * نضر بن شهيل – الصفات (Naḍr bin Shumayl - The Qualities/Attributes)
- * ابن السكيت – الالفاظ (Ibn al-Sikkīt - The Words/The Vocabulary)
- * الهمداني – الالفاظ الكتابية (Al-Hamadānī-The Vocabulary for Writing)

MODERN PERIOD

During the 20th century there was a movement in Europe that standard Arabic, i.e. the language of Quran was not capable to fulfil the needs of modern period and sciences. It could not accommodate modern development. On contrary, it proved that Arabic language has always been contemporary. We have seen that all branches of knowledge, arts, science and technologies could be produced in Arabic language in all times. Academies of Arabic language in Arab countries rejected the forfeited movement and proved that the Arabic of the Quran is ideal form of language that is used in formal writing, education, media, science and technology in the modern period. Academies prepared lexicons of all branches of sciences, education and media. In this regard I am giving a list of few lexicons to consider Arabic as a living language with its flexibility and beauty.¹⁵

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MOHAMMAD MUSHTAK (TIJARWI)

Salāf and *Salaf al-Ṣāliḥīn* in Early Persian Sufi Texts

With Reference to *Kashf al-Mahjūb* (Al-Hujwīri) and *Tab-
aqāt al-Sūfiya* (Al-Hirawī)

The term “Salāf” refers to those who have passed — events that have occurred, matters that are settled, or people who have lived before. It is important to note that the word “salāf” is not inherently used in a positive sense in the Holy Quran. In the Qur’an, the word “salāf” appears eight times different forms; in seven instances, it carries a negative connotation, while only once is it used positively. Here are some verses of holly Quran:

Whoever refrains—after having received warning from their Lord—may keep their previous gains, and their case is left to Allah? (Al-Quran, chapter Al-Baqra, verse 275)

Do not marry former wives of your fathers—except what was done previously. (Al-Quran, chapter Al Nisa, verse 22)

Nor two sisters together at the same time—except what was done previously. (Al-Quran, chapter Al Nisa, verse 23)

Allah has forgiven what has been done. (Al-Quran, chapter Al-Maida, verse 95)

Tell the disbelievers that if they desist, their past will be forgiven. (Al-Quran, chapter Al Anfal, verse 38)

And We made them an example and a lesson for those who came after them. (Al-Quran, chapter Al Zukhruf, verse 56)

They will be told, “Eat and drink joyfully for what you did in the days gone by. (Al-Quran, chapter Al Ha’qqah, verse 24)

In the opposite meaning of “salāf,” the Qur’an uses the term

“Khalaf.” Just as the meaning of “salāf” is generally fixed — referring to those who have passed — the word “Khalaf” is employed in multiple senses, such as “those who come after,” “those who remain behind,” “those who differ,” or “successors.” In the Qur’an, the term “Khalaf” is, for the most part, used with a positive connotation. From the same linguistic root emerges the word “Khalifah” (Caliph), which is mentioned in various places in the Qur’an. Similarly, the word “Ikhtilaf” (difference or divergence) is also derived from this root.

The word *Salaf* has also been used in its literal sense in the Hadiths. In one narration from Sahih al-Bukhari, it is mentioned:

I heard Allah’s Messenger (SAWS) saying, ‘The period of your stay as compared to the previous nations is like the period equal to the time between the ‘Asr prayer and sunset. (Bukhari, 557)

Similarly, there is a tradition in Sahih Muslim:

I do not see the appointed time except that it is drawing near, so fear God and be patient, for indeed I am an excellent predecessor for you. (Muslim, 2450)

Both “salāf” and “Khalaf” in the Qur’an are used in their literal senses; they are not technical or terminological terms. Based on the Qur’anic usage, one can attempt to understand their referents, but the Qur’an itself does not provide enough support to assign them fixed technical meanings. Thus, neither the specific meaning of “salāf” nor the categorization later developed around it can be strictly derived from the Qur’an or Hadith. Observing this usage in the Qur’an, it seems that later scholars, when they sought to use “salāf” in the sense of the “elders” or “pious predecessors,” added the qualifier “salih” (righteous) or “salihin” (the righteous ones). In other words, the “salāf” worthy of emulation and following are those who were righteous; not every predecessor is necessarily worthy of being followed.

At this point, an important question arises: Who exactly are the “salāf al-sālih” (the righteous predecessors)? Is every individual or group from the past to be considered among the salāf al-sālih, or is there a need for a clear delimitation? It is evident that some boundaries must be set. The primary criterion for being among the salāf al-sālih is the proximity and nearness to the Miškāt al-Nubuwwah (the Lamp of Prophethood); the closer one is to the prophetic light, the higher their status among the

righteous predecessors. Therefore, some scholars restrict the term *salāf al-sālih* exclusively to the *Sahābah* (Companions of the Prophet). For instance, ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Abbās on multiple occasions designated the Companions as the true exemplars of the *salāf al-sālih*, as reported in *Sunan al-Bayhaqī*. Similarly, ‘Abdullāh ibn Mas‘ūd himself among the most eminent Companions, called for strict adherence to the way of the *Sahābah* and identified it as the true path of the *Salaf*. In *Jāmi‘ Bayān al-‘Ilm*, he is reported to have said:

Whoever wishes to follow a way should follow the path of those who have already passed away, for the living are not secure from tribulations. Those (who should be followed) are the Companions of the Messenger of Allah, the best of this Ummah — purest of hearts, most profound in knowledge, and most straightforward in practice. Allah chose them to accompany His Prophet and to establish His religion. Therefore, recognize their virtue, follow in their footsteps, and cling as much as you can to their manners and ways, for they were truly upon the straight path.

In a similar spirit, ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd al-‘Azīz once pointed to the *Sahābah* and the *Tābi‘īn* (Successors) and advised: “Choose for yourselves what your righteous predecessors (*Aslāf*) chose, for they made their choices based on knowledge.” After the passing of the *Sahābah* and *Tābi‘īn*, the tradition of the “*Qurūn Mashhūd Lahā bi’l-Khayr*” (the generations testified to for their righteousness) gradually became the standard framework for defining the concept of the *Salāf*.

A renowned scholar of the later period, Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 728/1328), wrote regarding the *Salaf* and their understanding:

It is self-evident to anyone who reflects upon the *Qur’an*, the *Sunnah*, and the unanimously agreed positions of the various schools of *Ahl al-Sunnah* that the best era of this Ummah is the first generation (the *Qarn Awwal*), then those who succeeded them, and then those who followed after them. These generations excelled in actions, statements, beliefs, ideas, and all virtues. Numerous authentic reports affirm this from the Prophet himself. It is also firmly established that these generations were superior to those who came after them in every virtue — in knowledge, in practice, and in the resolution of complex issues. Denial of this reality can only come from someone arrogant toward self-evident truths, someone whom Allah has decreed to be misguided despite possessing knowledge. *Fatawa*, Vol. P. 157)

In the contemporary period, the eminent scholar Ibn Bāz (d. 1420/1999) provided a clear definition of the Salaf al-Sālih:

They are the people of the preferred generations — the Companions (Sahābah), the Followers (Tābi‘īn), their Followers (Atbā‘ al-Tābi‘īn), and those who followed their path and adhered to their methodology. (Usul Manhaji alsalaf Ahlul Hadith, PP.170)

Thus, the scope of the term *salāf* expanded considerably: it encompasses not only the earliest generations (the Sahābah, Tābi‘īn, and Atbā‘ al-Tābi‘īn) but also later individuals and groups who faithfully adhered to their way. Based on the explicit statements of scholars like Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn Bāz, as well as the evidence from classical Arabic usage, it can be said that the term “*salāf*” generally applies to all the Companions, the Tābi‘īn, and the Atbā‘ al-Tābi‘īn, and in particular to any later groups or individuals who followed their path with excellence.

In Islamic tradition, the ultimate standard and benchmark for the *Sirāt al-Mustaqīm* (the Straight Path) and the true guidance is the way and conduct of the Salaf al-Sālihīn. Following and emulating the *Salāf* is considered a guarantee of being upon guidance. While there are many aspects and dimensions to imitation (*taqlīd*) and following (*ittibā‘*), it is in the tradition of *taṣawwuf* (Sufism) that the most complete concept of obedience and adherence can be seen. In *taṣawwuf*, it is taught that one must accept the instructions of the *murshid* (spiritual guide) without questioning it, submitting fully to their guidance. Hāfiz Shīrāzī famously expressed this spirit of complete submission in his oft-quoted couplet:

“Ba-may sajjādah rangī kun gar atpīr-i-mughāngūyad
Kihsālikbī-khabarnabūdzarasm wa rāh-i-manzilhā”

“Stain your prayer mat with wine if your spiritual guide commands it, for the true seeker is never heedless of the customs and paths of the journey.”

Even today, this couplet is frequently cited in discussions on Sufism. The formal development of Sufism began toward the end of the second Islamic century. From that point onward, *taṣawwūf* became an integral part of Islamic tradition. The first person historically known as a *Sūfi* was Abū Hāshim al-Kūfī, who passed away in 763 CE. Following him, the Sufi tradition rapidly grew and became a vital part of Islamic

sciences and spirituality. Prominent scholars and experts in various Islamic sciences also pursued the Sufi path. Among the great masters of Sufism, there were many whom Ibn Taymiyyah referred to as *Mashāyikh al-Islām* (the elders of Islam) and *A'immat al-Hudā* (the leaders of guidance). (Fatawa,) The early literary tradition of *tasawwūf* began in Arabic. Many significant works were composed on Sufism, such as:

- *Kitāb al-Sidq* (The Book of Sincerity)
- *Al-Luma' fī al-Tasawwuf* (The Flashes on Sufism)
- *Al-Ta'arruf li-Madhhab Ahl al-Tasawwuf* (Introduction to the Way of the People of Sufism)
- *Tabqatus Sufia*
- *al-Risālah al-Qushayriyyah* (The Qushayri Epistle) Etc

By the beginning of the fifth Islamic century, Persian had become widespread across much of the Islamic world. During the rule of dynasties like the Saffārids, Sāmānids, Ghaznavids, Ghurids, and Seljuks, Persian flourished and became the dominant administrative and literary language. Consequently, important and enduring works of Sufism were also produced in Persian. Among these are:

- The *Rubā'īyyāt* and *Malfūzāt* of Shāh Abū Sa'īd Abū al-Khayr, famously known as *Asrarur Tawheed fī Maqāmāt-i Abū Sa'īd*
- *Ṭabaqāt al-Sūfiyyah* and the Qur'anic exegesis of Shaykh al-Islām 'Abdullāh al-Anṣārī
- *Kashf al-Mahjūb* of Shaykh Abū al-Hasan Ali al-Hujwīrī
- *Hadīqat al-Haqīqah* and the *Dīwān* of Hakīm Sinā'ī
- *Kīmīyā-yi Sa'ādat* (The Alchemy of Happiness) of Imām al-Ghazālī

Later figures such as Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī and Farīd al-Dīn 'Attār also made monumental contributions, establishing distinct methodologies and perspectives within the Sufi tradition in Persian Language.

Without spending too much time on preliminaries, this study aims to briefly examine how the term *Salaf* is used in *Kashf al-Mahjūb* and *Ṭabaqāt al-Sūfiyyah*: what meanings are intended by it, and how the idea of the "Way of the Salaf" (*Madhhab al-Salaf*) is understood and conveyed in these works. *Kashf al-Mahjūb* is an extremely important work on *tasawwūf* (Sufism). It is considered the first formal and

systematic book on Sufism in the Persian language. Notably, it also holds the distinction of being the first major work on Islam and Sufism produced in the Indian subcontinent. Its author, Shaykh Abū al-Hasan Ali al-Hujwīrī (1009–1077 CE), was born in Ghazna (present-day Ghazni, Afghanistan) and spent a major part of his life in Lahore. He was a close disciple of Imām Abū al-Qāsim al-Qushayrī. In *Kashf al-Mahjūb*, Shaykh al-Hujwīrī follows an approach similar to that of his teacher in *al-Risālah al-Qushayriyyah*, though *Kashf al-Mahjūb* has a distinct feature: it includes a detailed discussion on the various Sufi orders (turuq), which was the first formal documentation of such lineages. He devoted an entire chapter to this, titled:

Bāb fī Firaqihim wa Madhāhibihim wa Āyātihim wa Maqāmātihim wa Hikāyātihim (Chapter on the Groups among Them, their Doctrines, their Signs, their Stations and their Stories).

The Sufi orders mentioned in this chapter are, for the most part, no longer extant today. However, their inclusion indicates that the formation of Sufi orders had already begun during his time. The methodology of *Kashf al-Mahjūb* places supreme importance, after the Qur'an and Sunnah, on Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq (raḍiyAllāhu 'anhu). Shaykh al-Hujwīrī even asserts that the safā (purity) and sidq (truthfulness) that Sufis lay claim to find their most perfect model in Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq himself. Following him, he accords importance to the other three Caliphs ('Umar, 'Uthmān, and 'Alī), then to the first six Imams of the Ahl al-Bayt, then the Ashāb al-Suffah (the People of the Bench), followed by the Tābi'īn (Successors), the A'immat al-Ijtihād (leading jurists and scholars), the Atbā' al-Tābi'īn (Followers of the Successors), and then to the later Sufi masters. From among these, he presents the lives and exemplary states of select individuals, focusing on their inner purification, and sincerity of intention, devotion to dhikr and supererogatory prayers, and acts of honouring fellow Muslims.

Notably, he dedicates a detailed discussion to the life and qualities of Dhū al-Nūn al-Miṣrī. In Sufism, the imitation (iqtidā') of the forebears (aṣlāf) and their complete following (ittibā') holds immense significance. The people of taṣawwuf are particularly devoted to adhering to their predecessors, their shaykhs (spiritual guides), and the founders of their respective Sufi orders. Their approach is marked by greater reverence and loyalty compared to others. In *Kashf al-Mahjūb*,

Shaykh Abū al-Ḥasan al-Hujwīrī uses the term *Salaf* precisely in this sense: the forebears are necessarily worthy of emulation.

Throughout his book, Shaykh al-Hujwīrī emphasizes the necessity of following the forebears and accepting their sayings without objection. From the time of the Companions (*Sahābah*) up to his own contemporaries, he consistently refers to these figures collectively as the *Aslāf* or the *Salaf al-Sālih* (the pious predecessors). However, it is noteworthy that the specific term *Salaf* appears only six times across the entire work. The first major usage occurs in contrast to the ‘*Ulamā*’ al-*Zāhir* (the outward scholars). He writes:

For this reason, some groups have come to believe that *tasawwūf* is merely a method that aids in the observation of the inner self and outward rectification. Others think that Sufism and Sufis are meaningless entities, mere names without any reality. Indeed, some jesters and even certain scholars of outward sciences (*Ulama Zahir*) have entirely rejected *tasawwūf*, despite being veiled in deep layers of heedlessness and blindness, remaining content with their narrow and superficial inquiry. The common people follow them blindly, and as a result, they remove from their hearts even the desire for inner purification. In doing so, they have abandoned the way of the *Salāf* and the noble Companions. (Kashful Mahjoob, Ed. Dr Mohammad Husain Tasbeehi, Islam Abad, 1995, p.41)

Then, quoting an Arabic line of poetry, he says:

Inna al-Safā Sifat al-Siddīq, In aradta Sūfiyyan ‘alā al-tahqīq

(Indeed, purity (*safā*) is the attribute of al-Siddīq (Abū Bakr al-Siddīq); if you truly seek to find a Sufi in the real sense, then know that the essence of Sufism was fully embodied only in him.”)

At another point, Shaykh al-Hujwīrī uses the terms *Ṣahābah* and *Salaf* in the context of explaining the true nature of *tasawwūf*. He mentions that a great Sufi Abū al-Hasan al-Qushanjah once said: “Initially, *tasawwūf* was a reality without a name, but today it has become a name without a reality.”

Explaining this statement, al-Hujwīrī writes that during the time of the *Sahābah* and the *Salaf*, the term *tasawwūf* was not in use; however, the reality of *tasawwūf* was fully present within every individual. That is, the *Sahābah* and *Salaf*, in terms of their spiritual states and

practical conduct, embodied the true essence of tasawwuf. (Kashful Mahjoob, ibid, p. 54)

In another passage, Shaykh al-Hujwīrī compares the Salaf with later generations. He reports that someone asked Hamdūn al-Qassār: “The words of the Salaf had great impact, but why do the words of people in our time lack such influence?” Hamdūn replied: “The Salaf spoke for the honour of Islam, the salvation of their own souls, and to earn the pleasure of Allah. Whereas we speak of worldly gains and assert our reputation as eloquent speakers. Thus, our words are deprived of true impact.” (Kashful Mahjoob, p. 178)

A famous Sūfi, Abū ‘Uthmān al-Hīrī, is also mentioned by Shaykh al-Hujwīrī. He describes him as “the Imām among the Salaf” (Muqaddam al-Salaf) and “the finest successor among his own predecessors” (Az Salafe Khud Khalafā’). In this way, he merges the qualities of both *Salaf* (predecessors) and *Khalaf* (successors) in a single personality, suggesting that every individual is, in a sense, both a Salaf and a Khalaf depending on their place in the chain of tradition.

Generally, Shaykh al-Hujwīrī consistently uses the term *Salāf* without any qualifiers. However, in one instance, he employs the phrase *al-Salaf al-Sālih* (the righteous predecessors). In a detailed chapter discussing *Samā’* (listening to music or recitations melodiously), he writes:

“A group of Shaykhs have declared it disliked (*makrūh*) to listen to and recite poems, odes, and even Qur’anic verses in a musical manner. They avoided it themselves and prohibited others from engaging in it. Among them was a group that, in following the Salaf, deemed music and singing unlawful (*harām*) and collected evidence supporting its prohibition.” (Kashful Mahjoob, p. 590)

Shaykh al-Hujwīrī devotes an extensive discussion to *Samā’*. At one point, he explicitly records that the doctrine of the Salaf was to consider *Samā’* involving musical instruments as forbidden. He supports this view with the statements of the Salaf, indicating that, since they regarded such *Samā’* as impermissible, later generations following their path also viewed it as forbidden. Thus, it is clear that in Shaykh al-Hujwīrī’s thought, the sphere of influence of the Salaf and *Aslāf* is very wide. In summary, his concept of the Salaf can be outlined as follows:

The *Sahābah*—particularly the *Khulafā’ al-Arba’ah* (the Four Rightly Guided Caliphs)—the *Ashāb al-Suffah*, followed by the *Tābi’īn*,

the leading jurists and scholars (A'immat al-Fiqh), then the Atbā' al-Tābi'in, and all those who followed their path are considered the Salaf and al-Salaf al-Sālih. Their actions are binding proofs (hujjah) for later generations, and their opinions can be used to determine rulings on matters where there is no explicit text or conclusive judgement—such as in the case of Samā', where Shaykh al-Hujwīrī adopts precisely this method. Although Shaykh Abū al-Hasan al-Hujwīrī includes all individuals from the Sahābah down to his own time within the category of the Salaf, he never uses the term *Salaf* in isolation when referring to the earliest generations. Instead, he often couples it with the term Sahābah wa Salaf (the Companions and the Predecessors). This suggests that, in his view, the rank of the Sahābah is significantly higher than that of other predecessors: while the Sahābah are indeed Salaf, the term *Salaf* alone seems too narrow to fully capture their unique status. Thus, whenever he mentions the Salaf, he makes a point to specifically mention the Ṣaḥābah as a distinct and elevated group.

Turning now to Shaykh al-Islām 'Abdullāh al-Ansārī who authored works in both Arabic and Persian. His Arabic treatise, *Manāzil al-Sā'irīn*, holds a central place in the Sufi literature and on the stations of the spiritual path. The later scholars such as Ibn Qayyim and many others wrote extensive commentaries on it. In Persian, his renowned work is *Ṭabaqāt al-Sūfiyyah*, which he modelled after Abū 'Abd al-Rahmān al-Sulamī's *Ṭabaqāt al-Sūfiyyah*. In this book, al-Ansārī divides the Sufis into six generations (Ṭabaqāt): The first generation begins with figures like Abū Hāshim al-Sūfī and Dhū al-Nūn al-Misrī, and the sixth generation concludes with 'Alī ibn Ahmad al-Hanzalī. In *Ṭabaqāt al-Sūfiyyah*, Shaykh al-Islām al-Ansārī restricts his discussion to the imams and spiritual forebears of the Sufi path, starting from after the generation of the Sahābah and Tābi'in. Although the Sufis themselves regard all the Sahābah and Tābi'in as their predecessors and spiritual exemplars, authors of Sufi biographical works generally begin their accounts with figures from the generation after the Tābi'in, the Atbā' al-Tābi'in.

While general Sufi literature highlights the model and example of the Sahābah and Tābi'in and calls for adherence to their ways, the biographical works (*tadhkirah*) of Sufis typically do not directly document the lives of the Sahābah and Tābi'in. Instead, they commence

with personalities from the second Islamic century. This indicates that Sufi biographical writers assigned the *Sahābah* and *Tābi‘īn* an exalted and untouchable status as the primary *Aslāf*, and only began recording the lives of those who became specifically known under the name of *tasawwūf* after them. In *Tabaqāt al-Sūfiyya*, the term *Salaf* is mentioned only in few places. In the account of Hamdūn ibn Ahmad, it is stated that he said:

“Whoever studies the lives of the *Salaf* will realize the deficiencies within himself and see how far he lags behind those great personalities.”

Through this brief remark, it is indicated that the actions of the *Salaf* represented the desired standard, and that their lives and teachings serve as the yardstick against which one should measure one’s own deeds. However, *Tabaqāt al-Sūfiyya* does not provide an explicit definition of who the *Salaf* are. Shaykh al-Islām ‘Abd Allāh al-Ansārī’s other work, *Kashf al-Asrār wa ‘Uddat al-Abrār*, which is essentially a Qur’ānic commentary (*tafsīr*), discusses the concept of *Salaf* in detail. In this work, he attempts to define the meaning of *Salaf*, identify its referents to a certain extent, and clarify the status of the *Salaf* within the framework of Sharī‘ah. For instance, while discussing *bid‘ah Hasanah* (commendable innovation) and *bid‘ah sayyi‘ah* (blameworthy innovation), he writes:

A blameworthy innovation (*bid‘ah sayyi‘ah*) is when mere speculations of theologians (*mutakallimūn*), philosophers, and astrologers concerning the essence and attributes of God are propagated, while the *Sahābah* (Companions), *Salaf Sālihīn* (pious predecessors), and the teachings of the Qur’ān and Sunnah are neglected.

At another point, he addresses the question of whether following the *Salaf* constitutes mere *taqlīd* (blind imitation) or *ittibā‘* (adherence with understanding). He writes:

“However, the reference to the Imams of the *salāf*, such as Imām Aḥmad, Imām al-Awzā‘ī, and others from that group, does not constitute mere *taqlīd* (blind following). Rather, it signifies a representation of the *salaf*’s adherence to the Qur’ān and Sunnah, as well as a warning against injustice (*ẓulm*) and innovation in religion (*bid‘ah*). Anyone who follows the *Salāf*’s understanding and interpretation of the Qur’ān and Sunnah should not be accused of *taqlīd*, for *taqlīd* implies the acceptance of a statement without evidence – whereas,

in this case, acceptance is grounded in evidence. Indeed, following a pious predecessor implies following him, just as the follower in the second row of prayer is considered to be following the imām, not directly, but by following the row in front of him – yet it is still regarded as following the imām. In the same manner, adherence to the Imams of the salāf constitutes following the Qur'an and the Sunnah. The Ṣaḥābah (Companions) witnessed and accepted it directly, and thereafter the lay and common people heard and accepted it. Thus, it becomes evident that this is similar to following Salāf, and that such acceptance is based on evidence rather than mere imitation. In this regard, Imām al-Shāfi'ī stated: "Do not merely quote me (naql) and then mix it up with what is proven." Hence, I accept your assertion, but I accept the evidence—not merely the wording—and act upon it. In other words, one should not accept anything lacking evidence, for only that which is supported by proof is worthy of acceptance, and whatever is endorsed by the Qur'an and Sunnah ought to be followed.

As for the second category—where the permissibility of taqlīd is debated—this pertains to religious rulings concerning ṣalāh (prayer), ṣawm (fasting), ḥajj, and zakāh, which are established through mutawātir (mass-transmitted) narrations. While some permit taqlīd in these matters, others do not. The correct position is that taqlīd is not permissible in these areas, as every individual acquires 'ilm ḍarūrī (essential knowledge) regarding them. Furthermore, these rulings constitute the essence of imān (faith), and belief in them is analogous to belief in Allah and His Messenger. These are matters of the ḡhayb (unseen), and in such cases, taqlīd is categorically impermissible."

These few examples from early Persian writings have been cited here to demonstrate how early Sūfī authors in their Persian works used the terms *Salāf* and *Aslāf*, how they situated adherence to them within the general teachings of the faith, and how they derived guidance on non-explicit matters based on their sayings and actions while placing deep trust in their understanding of explicitly stated matters. In fact, these early Persian sources contain even more significant information on the subject, and it is entirely possible, through further study, to examine how these texts—which remained influential across Central Asia for centuries—contributed to shaping a particular type of Muslim consciousness and training of thought.

CONCLUSION

The early Persian Sūfī writings offer profound insight into the evolving conceptualization of *Salaf* and *Aslāf* within Islamic tradition. Through the works of luminaries such as Shaykh Abū l-Ḥasan al-Hujwīrī and Shaykh al-Islām ‘Abd Allāh al-Ansārī, it becomes clear that reverence for the *Salaf* was not merely rhetorical but foundational to the articulation of religious authority, ethical standards, and spiritual authenticity. Al-Hujwīrī, while affirming that the term *tasawwuf* did not exist in the early generations, demonstrates that the essence of *tasawwuf* — sincerity, humility, and absolute devotion — was fully embodied by the *Sahābah* and the *Salaf*. His careful distinction between the *Sahābah* and the broader *Salaf* reveals a deep awareness of the unique status of the first generation, whose piety surpassed even the most celebrated figures of subsequent eras. Similarly, al-Ansārī’s works such as *Kashf al-Asrār* rigorously define the *Salaf*, emphasizing that adherence to them is grounded not in blind *taqlīd* but in conscious acceptance of the evidences transmitted through the Qur’ān and Sunnah. His reflections underscore a critical principle: that true Islamic practice is anchored not in innovation (*bid‘ah*) or intellectual speculation, but in the illuminated paths of the early community whose understanding remains the normative standard. Moreover, by distinguishing between justified adherence (*ittibā‘*) and prohibited imitation (*taqlīd*), al-Ansārī articulates a nuanced vision of religious authority that safeguards both fidelity to revelation and intellectual integrity. The analysis of these early Persian Sūfī texts illustrates that the *Salaf* were perceived not only as a historical phenomenon but as an enduring moral and spiritual ideal. Their lives served as a tangible measure against which later generations could assess their own shortcomings. The *Salaf* were, thus, both the custodians of the pristine message and the exemplars whose legacy demanded careful emulation. Importantly, these works reveal that Central Asian Muslim consciousness — shaped by such Persian texts — internalized a vision of Islamic life deeply rooted in the past but dynamically engaged with the needs of the present. Future studies may further explore how this literary and intellectual heritage shaped the broader trajectories of Islamic thought across centuries and regions.

FAZZUR RAHMAN SIDDIQUI

Qur'anic Theology and Socio-Political Thought in the Medieval Era

ABSTRACT

There are basic differences between Qur'anic views of the human kind and the views propounded in the philosophical and political writings of others over the centuries. Islam, like the other schools of political thoughts and philosophies, emphasizes social life but it does not end here but rather takes it as its high moral duty to attend to social problems and to strive for the benefit of all human beings. This concern for social reform and promotion of social idealism constitutes the core of Islamic religion which necessitates the formation of an Islamic polity. Throughout the history, there has been a contestation among thinkers and scholars of different ideological hues over the formation of socio-political system and the debate continues to persist today as well. In the light of the above, this paper tends to examine the emerging nuances of social-political thought in the medieval era. This paper will also delineate the writing of a series of prominent scholar and offer a brief about their views on governance, politics and society and it would argue how they were informed by the teaching of Qur'an and the Prophetic saying.

INTRODUCTION

There are basic differences between Qur'anic views of the human kind and the views propounded in the philosophical and political writings of others over the centuries. Islam, like the other schools of political thoughts and philosophies, emphasizes social life but it does not end here but rather takes it as its high moral duty to attend to social

problems and to strive for the benefit of all human beings. This concern for social reform and promotion of social idealism constitutes the core of Islamic religion which necessitates the formation of an Islamic polity.

The formation and execution of law for social life is equally important in Islamic teaching. In Islam, the goal of law is not only to bring about social order and discipline, but beyond this to maintain social justice. In absence of justice, the social order would not be durable and would lose the opportunity for desired growth and development and hence, the goal of man's creation and social life would not be realized.

Social Laws in Islam are meant to be moulded in such as to prepare the ground and context for the spiritual growth and eternal felicity of the mankind. There should not be inconsistent with spiritual development, for, in the view of Islam, the life of this world has a fundamental role in human destiny despite its short duration.

The issue of evolution of social system in Islam is not so similar to the dominant manner we see in the modern world. The accepted theory in the most current societies is that the laws should be legislated and approved by the people themselves or their representatives. But from the Islamic perspective, the broader principles of societal laws should emanate from the Qur'anic and Prophetic teachings.

In the light of Islam, all human beings have been created equal; no individual enjoys any inherent right of sovereignty and guardianship (Imam/Caliph/*wilayah*) over others. No race, nationality, geographical location, class, and other discriminatory factors confer any right of sovereignty on any individual or group. God, the Almighty, is the Master of the universe, and it is He Who is the Sovereign over all creatures. All are equal before Him, and none enjoys any preferential right of sovereignty over the others. This idea finds a recurring echo in several Qur'anic verses like Almighty says,

"Say: 'People of the Book! Come now to a word common between us and you, that we serve none but God, and that we associate not aught with Him, and that none of us shall take others as Lords apart from the God'.¹

Another Qur'anic verses claims, "They (the Jews and the Christians) have taken their rabbis and their monks as lords apart from God".² It further claims that,

"Verily, His are the creation and the command (*'amr*)".³

To reinforce it further , the Qur'an reads,

"Submission to the will of laws of Allah is the source of all freedom. It liberates the mind; soul and behavior form the evil influence of the world. All himself says that "And We have not sent you but as a mercy to the world".⁴

The question of freedom is equally important in the teaching of Islam. The Ulama and the jurists have struggled with the question of freedom and pointed out that if man is deprived of the freedom, he or she will fail to reconcile its relationship with Him because almighty has granted men the freedom which allows him to choose his course in life, man is answerable to Allah for his actions. "Surely We have shown him the way: he may be thankful or unthankful."⁵

Political freedom in Islam is a means of leading mankind to justice, goodness and peace. It guarantees and protects the political rights of all. Freedom does not mean to satisfy all his instincts. Nor does it mean to give into the pressure of lusts and desires. Behaviour should be guided always by our insane sense of what is right and should not be motivated by our desire for pleasure or immediate gratification.

Fore explanatory purpose and periodical division of Islamic discourse, we can draw a divisionary line between different parts or segments while debating the content of Islamic socio-political thoughts . The first segments begin with an era of revelation and the Hadith and the second is the era of interpretation and elucidation of Qur'anic text and the Hadith at the hand of theologians and jurist. The third and the last part is the complete overturn through the writing of modern scholars on the subject. The first two segments will be dealt with in the present chapter while the last phase will be the subject of the next chapter when I will discuss the issue of encounter between Islamic world and the western imperialism triggering the debate of political Islam in modern era of 19th and 20th century.

With these preliminary remarks, now I will turn to Qur'anic and theological context of present day political Islam what can be termed as political theology of Islam. The political theology of Qur'an is expounded by those who believe in Puritanism of Islam and supremacist philosophy. It seeks statehood, political power, and mastery. Islamists of today present this sordid past as their manifestation of the future unlike those who are the follower of Qur'anic dictum: one section believes in

the Qur'an of "To you your religion and to me mine".

The ensuing section will reflect upon the ideas of societal norms as derived in the light of Qur'an and Hadith and will also put forward the views of the prominent exegetes and commentators of Hadith regarding role of Islam in the political spheres. If one sees the origin and journey of modern socio-political norms painstakingly, will find that the protagonist of today's Islamic ideology draws upon the Qur'an as much as they draw upon its colonial context.

QUR'AN, EXEGESIS AND SOCIOLOGY OF ISLAM:

There are certain Qur'anic principles which the ideologues of modern-day socio-political philosophy have taken as a catalyst to legitimise the religious context of Islamic revivalism. There are plentiful references related to power, authority, and the organization of the state in Qur'an. But these references do not provide a well-defined explanation for the linkage of Islam with the politics. There are several politically charged terms defined in different ways by different jurists in different historical periods. These terms represent possibility of the political orders and do not prescribe any political principle. Even *Sunnah*, the second most important and authentic source of Islam have very little to say on the issue of governance and the state.

But before deliberating further on the subject, I would like to highlight some fundamental teaching of the Qur'an about the relation of mankind with the God and from where the basis essence of political teaching of Qur'an emanates.

The core of the relationship between Islam and social system emanates primarily from the dictum that 'sovereignty is for God' alone and people on earth are vice-regent of God alone as men rule themselves in name of God. There are scholars and jurists who view the impossibility of the fulfilment of the Qur'anic injunction without the command of political power. There are numerous scholars who view the political Islam of today as an extension of the Qur'anic teaching and an effort in the direction of realization of divine objectives.

One of the renowned scholars of Islam, Ahmad Schalabi says that Prophet was both ruling and teaching his people in his era.⁶ He further argues that foundational principle of Islamic teaching of commanding

rights and forbidding wrongs could not be fulfilled without acquiring power and establishing a state, and to achieve a just society, an agency like state is very much required.⁷ The welfare of man lies in a community and community needs a ruler to command them and the worldly inspired ruler cannot help mankind achieve the revealed objective as enshrined in the Qur'an.⁸

Prophet had come with such a religion that was meant to put the things right in order. In Makkah, Prophet was constrained by the pagan power of Quraysh but in Medina, he had acquired the power to execute the rulings of God. In the words of 10th century Islamic jurist al-Tha'libi:

"God had allowed Mohammad to unite Prophethood and kingship so that he could accomplish his mission in the form of execution of laws".⁹

The Qur'anic orientation of politics stem from the fact that claims Qur'an to be primary source of knowledge. The core of Qur'anic concept of humanity emanates from the single verse of the Qur'an that underlies, "He created you from single person; created of like nature, his mate, and from both scattered countless men and women".¹⁰ The concept of resurrection is a major part of the Islamic creed from which emerges the origin of political thought of Islam and all other Islamic values.¹¹ Islam as religious phenomena is a result of various cause and some of them are related to the assumption that Islam is a universal moral system. Others are related to assumption that Islam is mainly the legal and ideological system that has evolved step by step.¹²

Qur'an says man is created from single sound soul so no one among the children can claim sovereignty over others and unity of human origin is shared by messages and Prophet both. Supreme source of authority is the creator himself.¹³ The core of Islamic polity in the light of Qur'an and the Hadith is centred on the belief that religious laws are not inherited in the nature of the things nor it is deduced from nature of social relationship.¹⁴

Unlike the modern notion of power, in classical injunction of Islam, God alone possess absolute attributes and absolute power and unquestioned sovereignty belongs to him alone where legislation is his prerogative alone. Islamic belief is a system of normative values which acts as a criterion for identifying the major social objectives which

evaluating social institution and justifying the claims of then legitimacy. This faith justifies political powers and use of force in obedience.

Unlike western philosopher like John Locke and other who claim that sovereignty emanates from the ownership while Qur'an says that it is not the source from which the values and sovereignty are derived. Rather, the supreme sovereignty and authority of defining the norms are the prerogative of divine laws only.¹⁵ There are plenty of references in Qur'an about the sovereignty of God, "To Allah belongs the dominion of heavens and the earth and Allah is all powerful"¹⁶

There are plenty of references in the Qur'an highlighting the claims: "To Allah belongs the dominion of heavens and the earth and all that is in them and He has the full power over everything".¹⁷ "Are you not aware that the dominion of the heavens and the earth belongs to Allah".¹⁸ "O Allah Lord of all dominion! You bestow dominion on whomever You please and take away dominion from whomever You please and You exalt whom You please and abase whom You please. In Your hand is all good".¹⁹ "Allah's is the kingdom of the heavens and the earth".²⁰

Qur'an presents a different view of the origin of human society namely of sovereignty and political legitimacy. Adam's Prophethood established the principle of human submission to divine sovereign.²¹ There are frequent references to power, authority and the organization of the political community in Qur'an. There are number of politically infested terms in the Qur'an that represent possibility of the political orders and do not prescribe any political principle itself. There are abundant of reference in Qur'an highlighting the political injunction of Islam as Qur'an says,

"Believers! Obey Allah and obey the Messenger, and those invested authority among you ; and if you were to dispute among yourselves about anything refer it to Allah and the Messenger if you really believe in Allah and the Last Day ; that is better and more commendable in the end".²²

In the true political model of the Qur'an, sovereignty and legislation is the domain of Allah and even messengers had no legislative powers or command of obedience. The sovereignty of God is exercised by Imam whose legitimacy itself derived from his obedience to the Qur'an and Sunnah and his appeal to Muslims. The legitimacy of any other ruler

with a territorial jurisdiction is derived from his following of the Qur'an as well as his following of the Imam through which such ruler would symbolize his appeal to the whole of *Ummah*.²³

In Islam, there is a catalyst difference between legitimacy and legality and the legitimacy can be measured only in the term of satisfaction and contentment the subject feel.²⁴ This is the legality which creates a sort of bond between the ruler and the ruled and the biggest source of lack of legitimacy is the absence of justice.

Necessitating the power and politics for the supremacy of religion of Islam, Qur'an claims, "Allah has promised those of you who believe and do righteous deeds that He will surely bestow power on them in the land as He bestowed power on those that preceded them, and that He will firmly establish their religion which he has been pleased to chose for them".²⁵

Highlighting the linkage between authority and religion, Qur'an further asserts,

"Allah will certainly help those who, were to bestow authority on Him in the land, establish Prayer, render alms, enjoin good and forbid evil."²⁶

In Islamic politics, main thrust is to establish the religion of God and with the intent of executing the divinely edicts, there is a necessity of a state and state as an entity is the long- drawn political culmination. Qur'an is very categorical in laying down that He has sent the Prophet to establish the justice on the earth. "Indeed We sent our messenger with a clear signs and sent down with them the Book and the Balance that people may uphold justice".²⁷ Prophet had already begun this mission of spreading the words of God in Makkah only but he succeeded after he landed in Medina and established a state there.

Another Qur'anic principle conducting the principle of Islamic politics is derived from the fact that Qur'an necessitates the establishment of some sort of authority for the welfare of religion) and there can be no no state in absence of the Imam.²⁸ One may resort to the statement of Joseph to the Pharaoh where Qur'an mentions the story of Joseph and Pharaoh explain the relation between the justice and politics in Islam, Joseph said: "Place me in charge of the treasure of the land. I am a good keeper and know my task well".²⁹

Allegiance is the another core of political principle of Qur'an where the Prophet was reported to have said, "Who dies without allegiance to someone, he dies like an ignorant and in another Hadith, he says that there has to be one ruler or master if there are three or more than that.³⁰The second Caliphate is reported to have once said that there would be no Islam without group, no group without state and no state without obedience".³¹

The sovereignty and power are neither a divine delegation nor an inheritance but depends on the contract between two parties and here one can see Islam predates the principle of social contract as expounded by John Lock (d.1704) and Rousseau (d. 1778). Under this social contract, community surrenders some of the freedom to the authority in exchange of good governance and collective welfare. Qur'anic origin of social contract is not derived from some philosophical underpinning but simply based on real practical experiences. The Aqaba agreement was first of its kind when Prophet entered into an agreement with the people of Medina and it was the true suggestive of the first contract between two consenting sides.³²

Prophet sought a series of allegiance from his companions at the eve of treaty of Hudaibiyah to strengthen the principle and the core objective. The principle of allegiance is the compliance and obedience. Allegiance is not confined to Prophet alone but God himself promises this allegiance to those who are noble and do noble task will be made Caliphate.³³

Even the first Caliph Abu Bakar did not become the ruler until he had sought the allegiance form the people. Same was the case with Umar and Uthman who had not become the Caliphates merely after his nomination by respective predecessor or collegiate, but they had also to seek the allegiance of the companions of the Prophet and the wise and matured people.

Explaining the enthronement of Abu Bakar or Umar, one prominent medical scholar points out that merely with the support of their respective tribes, they would not have become the sovereigns in Medina without the aid of Companions and people of wisdom and knowledge.³⁴

In this regard, Imam Ahmad Ibn Hanbal is very candid in his judgment when he says that nomination of Imam is not the prerogative of his predecessor but he should enjoy the allegiance of the subject

and there should be open agreement between two sides. Another 10th century Jurist Al-Mawardi goes to the extent of saying that if a person possess all the noble qualities to becomes an Imam but if he fails to secure the allegiance of people, he cannot be selected as an Imam and on similar not, Imam Ahmad Ibn Hanbal claims that it is for the people to pose their trust in the Imam and without it, he cannot be elected to be an Imam and so people are the real and true arbitrator.³⁵

Prophet is reported to have told one of his companions, Abu Zar that you do not ask for Imamate because you are weak and the Imamate is a trust and faith and on the Day of Judgment, one will have to face ignominy except those who has fulfilled the duty.³⁶ Unlike in today's situation, the Imamate in Islam is not to accord majesty, solemnity and dignity but to bring justice and order and of course it is a cumbersome task.

Qur'an not merely talks of allegiances or contract but exhorts that there should be fearless contract between the master and the subject. The allegiance should not contain any coercive element and should be devoid of any intimidation. Qur'an commands that "Let there be trading by mutual consent".³⁷ The greatest Jurist of his time, Al-Mawardi opines that there could be no allegiance without the consent of '*Ahlul Halli Wal Aqdi*' and the approval of people of rational and wisdom were must.

Echoing about the subject of the authenticity of allegiance, 13th century, Hanbalite Ibn Banna al-Baghdadi exegesis and Jurist Ibn al-Jauzi says that revolt of Imam Hussain against Yazid was right because the allegiance he had achieved was full of mockery of the principle of allegiance.³⁸ Ali is reported to have told his inmates that his allegiance would not be fulfilled unless it is received from all the Muslims.³⁹

Similarly Qur'an is quite candid in its injunction that the people are the real source of authority as God says in the Qur'an, "And the People were told: Will you join the assembly"⁴⁰ Consultation is equally important part of political principle of the Qur'an. Caliphate Umar says that Emirate is all about consultation as claimed in Qur'an too. ".....and take consent from them in matter of importance. And when you are resolved on a course of action put your trust in Allah".⁴¹

Consultation in the Qur'an is the basis of governance and it was an obligatory act. There is other reference in Qur'an about the consultation "Most of the secret conferring is devoid of good, unless one secretly

enjoins charity, good deed, and setting the affairs of the men right. We shall grant whoever does that seeking to please Allah a great reward".⁴² "Who obey their Lord and establish prayer; who conduct their affairs by consultation, and spend out of what We have bestowed upon them".⁴³

Jurists of Spain (Andalus) were very particular about this feature of Islamic politics and Ibn Atiyyah has called consultation as one of the pillars of *Shariah* and one who does not seek the opinion of Ulama is worth be removed from the power.⁴⁴ From the principle of consultation emanates another Qur'anic principle of freedom and political freedom was one of the principles of political discourse in the phase of the revelation. If God can not force on to surrender to the will of God, how one ruler can make his subject to obey his dictates⁴⁵ Prophet is reported to have once said that highest *Jihad* is to speak truth in the presence of a oppressor. One of the pioneers of Egyptian nationalism, Saad Zaghloul claimed that right is above power and nation is above government.⁴⁶ It is a belief that man's mind and rationality does not move without freedom and conviction.⁴⁷

Given the growing application of religion in modern day identity politics of Muslims, Mr. Ali Dashti, an Iranian scholar in his book, '*The Twenty-three Year*' argues that the further the prophet's death receded into the past, the greater became the tendency to treat the religion as a mean rather than as an end.⁴⁸ It has thus been shown that how Qur'an claims the authority to rule and lays down the Islamic principle of the governance. The Qur'anic philosophy of governance and social organisation emanates from its exclusive epistemology of knowledge of the human being, its own vision of the cosmology and its own mechanism of worldly affairs.

THEOLOGICAL ELUCIDATION, CLASSICAL ISLAMIC PHILOSOPHY AND MODERN-DAY SOCIAL DISCOURSE

The real issue of social and political foundation arose only after the death of Prophet. It was then when the Muslims needed to innovate and improvise about the nature and form of the government and society.

The transformation of post-prophet phase has been explained by Hasan Askari in the following words:

"This was a beginning of shift in the social process from polytheism to

monotheism, from rules by customs to rule by law, from natural relationship based on blood and race to moral and spiritual association and from natural monarchy to power delegated by God. In Arabic terminology, it means a movement away from *shirks* to *tawheed*, from *Jahiliyyah* to *Shariah*, from *asabiyya* to *taqwa* and from *mulk* to *wilayah*".⁴⁹

With the end of the prophecy of the Prophet, the role of guiding the community passed on to his pious political successors or to the members of Prophet's household. This was the phase of the process of theorization of socio-political ideas at the hand of series of Jurists who framed the political ideology of Islam in the light of Qur'an and those formulations were not devoid of local, regional, political, ethnic, tribal and racial considerations. Political doctrine of Islam developed by Jurists was derived from the cultural norms too dating back to the antiquity era. Political theologies-theories crafted during the period of Muslim empires were aimed at salvation.

In order to explain and interpret the Prophetic tradition, there arose a discursive tradition in Islam and Ulama became its custodians and they were also seen as true heir of the Prophetic charisma and discursive tradition were raised to the stature of sub tradition. So the Ulama and their tradition acquired a new power within the Islam that later received a status of qasi-sacrosanct too. The guardians of the political theology were the religious scholars and the Ulema. The political theology according to Jan Assmann is, "ever-changing relationship between political community and the religious order or between power of authority and the salvation."⁵⁰ The requirement of reverence and respect for religious figures, specially the persons of Prophet, became the part of substantive theological values, commitment and spiritual practices for Muslims Ulama and the theologians became the gatekeepers of Prophet's legacy.

The Qur'anic template of Islamic societal norms is followed by the second segment of the discourse that was introduced with the transformation of Caliphate from consultation to an era of monarchical rule. The era of Umayyad saw the grave retreat from the classical teachings when the wrong interpretation of the text started replacing the real text of the Qur'an. This era of propagandist interpretation stretches from last days of Umayyad to declining days of Ottoman Empire. This interpretative or theological phase of Islamic discourse was laden

with nepotism, lobbying, treachery, political manipulation. Hereditary rule had become the order of the day and completely depriving the free choice of election and people making false claim about Prophetic preference in favour of single person. Umayyad, Abbasids and Alawite came along with different interpretation of the Qur'an, Prophetic gradation and the Hadith.

This second phase of interpretation and elucidation of Qur'an and Hadith was coupled with an emergence of novel philosophical school in Islam. Political philosophy refers to a set of political consequences that are inferred from fundamental metaphysical-moral issues. The political writings of Al-Farabi are a typical example of Islamic achievements in this field. By definition, political philosophy should remain independent of any particular religious system or set of beliefs, as it is based upon metaphysical and rational foundations. However, Islamic political philosophers formed deeply rational grounds for many Islamic doctrines before applying these as religious-philosophical premises in their political formulations. To deny the validity of Islamic political philosophy is to ignore the philosophical and ideological aspects of political issues. Many philosophical problems in politics have a close relationship with religion. And there are many Islamic teachings that offer, either directly or indirectly, suitable answers to some essential questions in political philosophy.

The philosophical teaching of Islam is further combined with the exposition of Islamic ethics and political jurisprudence in post-Caliphate era and the Political ethics (morals of politics) refers to a series of writings from Muslim scholars, who have attempted to advise and guide rulers to a successful and just method of government. These prescriptions were usually accompanied by stories of previous kings and rulers. They were collections of Islamic teachings, Greek philosophy and some elements of Persian literature. Examples of these include "*Siyasat Nameh*" (Book of Government) by Nizam al-Mulk (1020-1092), and "*Nasihah al-Mulk*" (Advice to King) of al-Ghazali (1058-1111) and others.

Muslim jurists (*fuqaha*) adopted the method of political jurisprudence (or "*fiqh ul-siyasi*") to explicate and define the Islamic social system and juridical aspects of political affairs. They discussed the duties of

rulers over their subjects, the means for appointing and the grounds for dismissing of political leaders, the personal qualities that an Imam or Deputy (caliph) should possess, and the relationship between different elements of the government to one another. Political jurisprudence overlaps political theology in several areas, such as the discussion concerning leadership. However, political jurisprudence is distinguished by its methodology and the large scope of its subject matters.

For the theologians and the jurists of post-caliphate era, it was the issue of Imamate or Caliphate instead of governance, *Shura* instead of modern-day legislative assembly, *Ummah* instead of modern nation-state, allegiance instead of modern-day electoral practice, *Shariah* rather than modern day penal code was close to their hearts. Their entire political model was based on these themes and they drew the legitimacy for their views from its scant reference in the divine revelation.

The linguistic origin of the word “Caliphate” may be traced back to the institution of the deputyship of the Prophet.⁵¹ In Muslim usage term, “Caliphate” for which the term Imamate is loosely referred as synonyms, refers to an overall leadership of the community in spiritual as well as temporal affairs.⁵² The name Imam is derived from the comparison of the Caliphate with the Imam of prayer, since the Caliphate is followed and taken as a model just like the prayer leader. Therefore the Caliphate is called the greater Imam. Since the primary duty of the Imam or Caliphate is to ensure the strict observance of the religious principles and to implement the legal provision contained in the Islamic *Shariah*, so the Imam is a political ruler with the objective of preaching and consolidating the Islamic edicts and ethics on the land. Caliph does not share the authority with anyone else as he represents the Prophet and his book of Qur'an, so he directly or indirectly implementing the word of God on the earth.⁵³ Abu Jafar al-Mansur went so far as to presume that he was God's power on Earth.

It was perhaps Abu Hasan al-Mawardi (991-1058) who for the first time in the Islamic history theorized the notion of *Imamah* or *Imamate* and laid down a comprehensive view on the issue of political authority in Islam. He lived in an era when Islamic political doctrine had completely come under the influence of Greek rationality and philosophy. His commentaries on Islamic polity were confined into one of his famous book, *Al-Ahkam al-Sultaniyyah wa al-Wilayat ud-*

Diniyyah. He strongly pleaded for the establishment of institution of *Imamah*. He regards *Caliphate* is being derived from the divine laws rather than reason. According to him:

“Imamate is a succession to Prophet to protect the religion and run the worldly affairs smoothly”.⁵⁴

He also asserted that reason cannot be the source of guidance in every sphere and all walks of life as leadership cannot be deduced from reason only.⁵⁵ He argued that obligation to commanding right and forbidding wrong is well rooted in revelation and reason as well.⁵⁶ His caliphate is replacement of Prophet and for him, former is necessary to maintain religion and administer worldly affairs.⁵⁷ Al-Mawardi, the pioneer of the political Islamic thought also stipulates that establishment of Imamate is a must and the creation of Imamate is mandatory because its absence might lead to the anarchy.⁵⁸

For al-Mawardi, caliphate is the keystone of the political system, which he puts in the following words:

“Establishment of *Caliphate* is an obligation and common duty on the part of Islamic community and it is as important as seeking knowledge and waging *jihad*”.⁵⁹

In his words, there is conjunction between the religious order and political order. Muslim political theology was directly related to idea of prophecy which in turn was a pathway to salvation. He also envisaged that Imam must be from the tribe of Prophet, Quraysh, and must possess physical, moral, and spiritual qualities.⁶⁰ People who choose the Imam must be the men of justice, wisdom and wise. They must know the priority of the common people and should enjoy the confidence of the masses.⁶¹ He does not explicitly deny the right of the subject to refuse the obedience to an impious Imam.⁶² The imams can be chosen either by elders or by outgoing Caliph himself.⁶³ *Bayah* (The oath of allegiance) to the Imam on the part of people is must to accord him the legitimacy but according to al-Mawardi; no one can be forced to express his allegiance.

Highlighting the significance of the institution of Imamate itself, the 13th century renowned sociologist and philosopher, Ibn Khaldun exhorts that the establishment of an Imamate is a necessity as enshrined in the legal system of Qur'an and he finds it more a religious requirement than the rational requirement.⁶⁴ He further elaborates that

establishment of the elaborate political system is necessary to govern this world judiciously and is equally required for the welfare of this world and afterword. In the eyes of Ibn Khaldun, a comprehensive system is bound by certain Islamic norms and values and he acts as successor to the Prophet and Caliphates does not take away the right from others as he is bound by the Shariah.⁶⁵

Caliphate, as defined by Tahir-ul-Qadri, denotes an Islamic rules or government and in the literal sense of the term, Khilafat may be defined as *Niyabah* or *Amanah* (Trusteeship and Sovereignty) respectively.⁶⁶

The issue of vicgency has been discussed in section 'Nour of the Qur'an' where Qur'an says that He will surely bestow upon them the right of trust to rule as He granted rule to those before them.⁶⁷ Khilafat in relation to government would indicate the rule of man on earth as God's vicegerent.

There are host of scholars and Islamic thinkers who have maintained the views that it was God himself who appointed the Caliphate and bequeathed his authority to him as illustrated in the following verse which was very popular in the classical period.

He became the Caliph
Or rather, the Caliphate
Was destined for him
Like Moses
Who was destined
To approach God
Hisham, God's chosen one
For the people
For whom darkness withdraws
From all over the earth
The sky to which they look
Praying for rain⁶⁸

One can also understand the high-esteemed stature of the Caliphate in the classical phase of Islam by browsing these lines of a jurist, Abd al-Hakim al-Sialakuti when he says,

"I have made this work a gift to the one chosen by God for eternal sovereignty, favoured by the supreme super... the propagator of the true faith, the founder of the principle of the Holy Law, the shadow of God in the two lands, the

saviour of Islam and of Muslims, the builder of God's nation, the successor to the Prophet, graced with the divine support and victory".⁶⁹ This theory is quite similar to the idea propounded by Thomas Hobbes when he says that the power of the King is sacred and divinely ordained.

There are other set of scholars who expound the views that sovereign derives his authority from the Muslim community (*Ummah*) which designates and confers sovereignty on him. Al-Hutay'a seems to hold this view claiming that, "You are the Imam to whom, after his companion, Men entrusted the rein of authority. In choosing you it not you they favours, it was for their own sake that they did so."⁷⁰

Here one needs to be careful about the distinction between the Kingship and the institution of the Caliphate. In the case of the Kingship, natural authority means to cause the subjects act as required by the rational and intellectual desire of the ruler, being oblivious to the facts of the Divine teaching or edicts of the *Shariah*. While the main thrust and objective of the institution of the Caliphate is to make the masses act as required by the religious ethics and Qur'anic morality.

According to one Hadith attributed to Abu Hurayra that claims that disobedience to Imam is equivalent to disobedience to God.⁷¹ While Qur'an says that "I shall appoint a deputy on earth"⁷². There is another verses claiming, "It is he who made you the inheritor of the earth".⁷³ Ahmad Schalabi has categorised three kinds of government: Islamic, political, and natural. By Islamic he means where *Shariah* is the overwhelming force and by political, he means where democratic that is based on human rationality and acts in the interest of the world alone and by natural government he means oppressive and where self-pleasure is the law.⁷⁴

One of the renowned legal experts of classical era, al-Qurtubi finds that there was no diversity of opinions among the group of Imam over the establishment of the rational political system Had the institution of Imamate been not an important, the post-Prophet era would not have witnessed a series of intense discussion and the dialogues over the issue of succession of the Prophet.⁷⁵ Ibn Hazm, great 11th century Andalusian scholar of Islamic jurisprudence of Zahiri school goes to the extent of propounding that in the absence of Imamate or the Islamic authority, the religion of Islam cannot survive.⁷⁶

Another Islamic jurist and great expert of Qur'anic exegesis, Imam

Ghazali holds the views that establishment of an Islamic kingship is highly required for the welfare of the world and world after. Islamic governance is essential for the happiness in the life after death and this has been the true objective of our Prophets and existence of Imamate is a religious obligation and in no way, it can be neglected.⁷⁷

He also propounded the case of application of religion teaching in the political mobilization and the structure of the nation. For instance, Imam Ghazali claims that world cannot be ruled without an authority and that authority must be based on the normative teaching of Islam.⁷⁸ This contextual underpinning of Islamic politics was contested by scholar like Abdel Razeq who linked the issue of governance to the subject of rationality. Meanwhile he conceded the fact that organization of Muslim political community is prescribed in the religion and of course Prophet presented a modal but there was no religious sanctity of it.

Meanwhile there are some ardent thinkers who claims that political governance of people in the light of Islamic normative and ethics is one of the greatest obligations of the religion of Islam as there can be no proper fulfilment of religious obligation in the absence of Imamate and God himself entrusted the mission to the community of commanding the rights and forbidding the wrongs. Many thinkers of the medieval era laid down that the question of Imamate or Emirate should be taken as a religious obligation and this is the thing which brings one closer to the God.⁷⁹ For many, there can be no religion without the state and he further argued that men's interest can be served only in community and the community could survive only on the behest of the ruler. Similar views were held by successive thinkers in 15th and 16th century who put that the discussion over the succession of Prophet immediately after his death and appointment of collegiate by Umar underlines the importance of Imamate in Islam and how Islam is interlinked to a sort of normative politics.⁸⁰

Al-Izz Ibn Abd us-Salam, a 14th century expert of Islamic *Shariah* in the Ayyubite era of Egypt maintained that all the Ulama of his time had reached the consensus that Islamic sovereignty is one of the most valuable manifestation of obedience and a just governance is the most reward able task.⁸¹ These arguments are evident of the facts of the level

of political consciousness among the companions and subsequent generation of the jurist for whom the politics was an act of obedience to God.

The question of Imamate was directly linked to the *Ummah* and Imamate was meant to lead the *Ummah* in order to preserve the core teaching of Islam and Islamic heritage. Medieval scholar and theologians were very much concerned with the preserving the unity of the *Ummah* and the classical *Ummah* stands in sharp contrast to the modern –day notion of nation-state.

The *Ummah* (community) was a community linked by bond of faith, belief, feeling, thoughts, aims, purpose, loyalty to Allah and arbitration according to *Shariah*. This term *Ummah* has different shade of meaning and has covered a journey from a religious group to a people to a nation to association of believers (the Muslim community in Makkah) to a complete and organized social, economic and political system (in Medina).⁸²

When the tem *Ummah* used to mean people, it refers to socio-religious association of individuals gathered around a common leader. This meaning of *Ummah* was broad and the emphasis was directed at the religious, moral, and ethical aspect of life. At the early stage of Medina, the term *Ummah* assumed another meaning when for the first time, the term referred to a sizable group of people united by common bonds of religion, shared experience and common aspiration as well as it became the part of geographical and institutional arrangement that transcended *Ummah* into a nation.

Like imamate or caliphate, the *Shariah* remained core essence of medieval Islamic civilization, hallmark of social and moral life and a key component in the fabric of Islamic thoughts. The entire social and behavioural code of Muslim emanates from the edict of *Shariah* and to quote Nathan Brown and other who argue that in much of the Islamic history, *Shariah* is better understood not as a code in modern sense of the term but as an ongoing discursive tradition articulated in and through practices associated with the educational and judicial institutions.⁸³

Most of the Muslims believe that *Shariah* is God's law and it is taken as reflection of God's will for human kind and *Shariah* therefore must be in its purest sense, perfect and unchanging.⁸⁴ The traditionalist and fundamentalists differ on the subject like Salafists take the saying and

action of first three generation of Muslim as part of *Shariah* in contrast to the established meaning of *Shariah* which merely confined it to the deed and statements of Prophet.⁸⁵ There are muddles assumption that scholarly interpretations are as sacred as the Qur'an and Hadith itself.

Shariah is derived from ten sources like local customs, Qur'an, Sunnah, independent opinion, public interest, reasoning, consensus, presumption of continuity and old law of culture and scripture.⁸⁶ *Shariah* was the core object of theological exposition for the Jurists of medieval era. Even today, it has remained the most important tool of reference for those aspiring for new polity. *Shariah* is a legal framework within which the most private aspects of life are regulated in a Muslim majority society.⁸⁷ *Shariah* has become the governing tool of fundamentalism and its followers believe that God's divine global command is to apply *Shariah*. It is an informal institution of political Islam which is defined by one of the founding father of political Islam in the 20th century in the following words, "Islam wishes to destroy all states and governments anywhere in the face of the earth which are opposed to the ideology and programme of Islam".⁸⁸

Allegiance and *Shura* are the two component of classical writing which are very often cited by the modern day political Islamist to accord a comprehensive nature to Islamic political system. The case of *Shura* constitutes the core of Islamic governance and acts as a replica of modern day democracy. Prophet was very much fond of seeking opinion on all matter of political and social importance except in the case where revelation was very categorical and obvious.⁸⁹

If al-Mawardi is credited with laying down the intellectual foundation of political Islamic discourse, there are others like Ibn Sina (d.1037) Imam Ghazali, (1058-1111) and others further enriched the Islamic discourse on politics and their writings have become a catalyst for the present generation of Islamic revivalism.

The notion of Philosopher King of al-Farabi matured further with Ibn Sina who was more attracted to Neo-Platonism of Philosophy. He based his theory of state on the empirical generalization that it was in the nature of human being to complement one another.⁹⁰ He was of the views that a lawgiver or ruler must possess the combination of theoretical wisdom, justice and prophecy, which make him earthly king or God's Deputy on the earth.

He saw the reality of human life not only in the presence of human government but also for Islamic religious polity. Ibn Sina proposed that the prophet was superior to any philosopher because he was not dependent upon human reason.⁹¹ For him, the religion was more concerned with the social affairs and therefore to be a successful ruler; lawgiver must possess all the quality of Prophet. In his proposition, Muhammad is presented as combination of philosopher and Prophet who combine the theoretical wisdom, justice and prophecy.⁹² For Ibn Sina, the ruler, to ensure obedience to him must act exceptionally well that would make him earthly king and God's deputy on earth.⁹³ According to him, *Imam* should be capable of exercising independent judgment in legal matter (*Ijtihad*) that is the feature of higher Caliph.

In Ibn Sina, we can see the Greek rationality synthesizing with Arabo-Islamic political thoughts. Their political writings mainly emerged under the intense influence of the syncretism—synthesis of Greco-Arabic ideas. He was more influenced by the Platonic and the Aristotle philosophy of rationalism and logic. He analyzed the issue of state and kingship through the prism of philosophical and rational eyes of Greek rather than through puritan Islamic doctrine.

It was Imam al-Ghazali, the greatest theologian of Seljuk period and a crucial and emblematic figure in the religious philosophy, provided a new orientation to philosophy of Islamic polity and society. A genius of the Shafi School of Islamic jurisprudence—penned his masterpiece, *Ihya ul-Ulum al-Din* (Revival of the Knowledge of Religious Science) covering all aspects of social and religious life. Acquisition of Knowledge is central to his political philosophy and superior to worship and legal observance.

He insisted that knowledge was the substitute for the charismatic authority of the Prophet in the post Prophetic community era and thus he exhorted that knowledge is equal to prophecy.⁹⁴ Knowledge stimulates Prophetic authority since it is the only trace left after the departure of Mohammad and there is close relation between prophecy and knowledge as has been mentioned in a Hadith: "The learned are heir to Prophet".⁹⁵

He categorizes politics into four different compartments: Prophetic, Deputies, learned and of preachers.⁹⁶ Imam Ghazali asserted that even single person, rather than being appointed by his predecessor should

elect the Imam. His election must be followed by *Bayah* on the part of *Ahlal-hal waal-Aqd*. Imam must distinguish himself by observance of the laws and ought to have knowledge of *Ijtihad*.

For him, the legitimate power emanates from the ruler only and in his absence, all public office would be illegal and invalid.⁹⁷ Imam al-Ghazali called for development of new political jurisprudence to meet the demand of new social and political situation.⁹⁸ For al-Ghazali, the obedience to ruler was more important than questioning the legitimacy of his authority. Any ruler is better than anarchy and chaos⁹⁹. Commanding right and to forbid wrong is obligatory on the part of ruler in the light of the *Qur'an* and in this regard, consensus and common sense are also very important.¹⁰⁰

Taqi al-Din Abu al-'Abbas Ahmad ibn 'Abd al-Halim ibn 'Abd al-Salam al-Harrani al-Dimashqi, who is better known as Ibn Taymiyah . He was a jurist consult, a theologian and the most influential scholar of the late Hanbali School. He had grown up in an environment, which was plagued by series of intellectual and political crisis where Mutazilites were at forefront to have recourse to Greek philosophy buttressing the position of Islam.

Like all political reformers, he also referred to the Qur'an and Hadith for his ideological formulation and his political ideas were mainly inspired by the vision of *Shariah*. He pleaded for rediscovering the original teachings of Islam and called for individual judgment in the interpretation of religious doctrine. His religious mission was based on presenting the correct meaning of Qur'an and religious laws and he himself puts in in the following words: "I have examined all the philosophical and theological methods and found them incapable of curing ill or quenching any thirst. For me the best method is the Qur'an".¹⁰¹

His most important political treaty is *Al-Kitab al-Siyasa al-Sharaiyyah* (The Book on the Government of Religious Laws) written in 1311-15. He argued in favour of moulding the politics in colour of all embracing and adaptable *Shariah* and for him application of *Shariah* in matter of governance was an Islamic project and that must be taken with all seriousness.

Unlike his contemporary Islamic thinkers and modern -day Islamists, Ibn Taymiyah's idea of Islamic state was not inspired by

Prophet's rule in Medina. He argues that Prophet did not establish any Islamic state and according to him, Medina State was a Prophetic state rather than an Islamic state since the institution of prophecy was a divine arrangement.¹⁰² He did not believe in the assumption, unlike his adversaries that institution of Imamates was the first faith of article but rather he claimed in *Minhaj ul-Sunnah* that faith and not the state was the foremost consideration in religion. For him, state was a necessary culmination of acceptance of faith and not the vice versa.

But despite all theses reservations and limitation, Ibn Taymiyah did not ignore or belittle the importance of a political agency but regarded it as an instrument of highest necessity for the fullest realization of aims and objectives of the religion. The existence of public authority is inbuilt in the social structure of human life. Reason and religion both necessitates the establishment of a moral authority with the sole intention of establishing the rule of God on the earth.

He believed in the dire necessity of a state but refuted the claims of others that creation of a state is the principal aim of prophecy. He argued that creation of state was a part of Islamic teaching and the propagation of Islam could not be subordinated to the creation of the state. He insisted that religion of Islam must be taken in totality where it encompasses politics, governance, authority, and state itself. To put the argument in his own words: "Purpose of authority in Islam is meant to enforce the words of God on earth, to achieve happiness and prosperity, establish justice and accept his superiority in the governance of his subject".¹⁰³

For Ibn Taymiyah, the purpose and mission of an Islamic polity is rooted in the subordination to the sovereignty of God where ultimate judgment belongs to His will only. In his schema, state is the part of divine system of justice and ordained for affecting it on the earth. On the issue of Caliphate, he differs from his predecessors and never treated this entity as an Islamic institution and it could never become the part of his model of Islamic polity. Instead of using the term, *imamah* or Caliphate, he designated this political body as *imarah* (Government) and while discussing the qualification of ruler; he focused on *wilayah* instead of Caliph or imam.

CONCLUSION

We have seen that how the ideas and the concepts of Islamic socio-political system in medieval period crystallized with the passage of time. A good deal of literature on the subject evolved and grew under the shade of different sectarian schools that had its own socio-political and historical context. We have seen how the idea of Caliphate, Imamate and Shura meant different things for different scholars and thinkers and each connotation has its own historical, societal, and political and linguistic context. We have also observed that how the meaning and the interpretation of political thought throughout the medieval period as propounded by array of ideologues went through various phases and each phase had its own distinctive idea about socio-political norms.

It can be concluded that medieval political and social thought were significantly informed by the teaching of Quran and Prophetic sayings but meanwhile a large number of literatures was also influenced by Greek philosophy and western rationality which were not so much in resemblance with the Greek political thought than Qur'anic underpinning or Prophetic statements.

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35. Hakem Al-Mutairi, pp. 20-21.
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Al-Ṭafsīr al-Maẓharī and the Isrā'iliyyat

INTRODUCTION

Al-Ṭafsīr al-Maẓharī is a commentary that its esteemed author presented to readers after nearly thirteen years of extensive study, deep contemplation, and profound reflection on the Qur'an. This exegesis was completed during a phase of the author's life when his scholarly and spiritual abilities had reached their peak and had become well-established. Furthermore, for over half a century, he had compiled a vast intellectual and literary treasury as part of the Islamic revival in India. He had closely observed and studied the various events and revolutions occurring across the Indian subcontinent for an extended period.

Additionally, for many years, he held the position of Chief Judge (*qādī*) in Panipat, during which he had the opportunity to engage extensively with Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*), Hadith, and other Islamic sciences. Due to this esteemed position, he developed an exceptional ability for decision-making. Certain indications suggest that *al-Ṭafsīr al-Maẓharī* was his final grand scholarly work. After its completion, although he wrote smaller treatises, he was unable to produce another major book.¹ The early scholars (*mutaqaddimun*) established that a commentator (*mufasssīr*) must possess expertise in at least fifteen different disciplines to engage in the science of exegesis.² Therefore, to assess the scholarly and research level of any *tafsīr* or its author, it would be appropriate to evaluate all these sciences. However, in our opinion, since most of these disciplines are auxiliary (*al-'ulūm al-āliyah*) rather than primary, it is more fitting to analyze *al-Ṭafsīr al-Maẓharī* based on its engagement with the higher sciences.

A prominent feature of this *tafsīr* is its treatment of *Isrā'iliyyāt*—narrations of Judeo-Christian origin that had found their way into Islamic exegetical and historical literature. While many earlier commentators

transmitted such reports at length, often without scrutiny, Panipatī adopted a cautious and selective approach. He deliberately shortened, critiqued, or altogether omitted accounts that conflicted with the Qurʾān, authentic ḥadīth, or sound reason, thereby protecting his *tafsīr* from legendary embellishments and unreliable traditions. His emphasis on concise narration, rational balance, and spiritual insight marks an important departure from earlier commentary styles and highlights his methodological independence. This balanced yet critical stance toward *Isrāʾīliyyāt* reflects broader currents of reform and renewal that were emerging in eighteenth-century Indian Islam. It demonstrates how exegetes like Panipatī, while rooted in classical tradition, were also conscious of the need to safeguard *tafsīr* from distortion and to align interpretation more closely with the essential sources of Islam. As such, *al-Tafsīr al-Maḥḥarī* not only preserves the scholarly heritage of its time but also anticipates later movements that sought to purify and renew Qurʾānic exegesis in the modern period.

THE AUTHOR (D. 1225/1810)

Qāḍī Muhammad Thanaʿullāh ibn ʿIzz al-Dīn Panipatī was one of the eminent scholars of eighteenth–nineteenth century India, best remembered for his celebrated Qurʾānic commentary *al-Tafsīr al-Maḥḥarī*. He was born in Panipat, a historic town in northern India that produced a number of influential scholars and Sufi figures. He belonged to a family of learning and piety, and from an early age he was trained in the traditional Islamic sciences, particularly in *tafsīr*, *ḥadīth*, *fiqh*, and *kalām*.

Muhammad Thanaʿullāh Panipatī came under the intellectual influence of the reformist movement spearheaded by Shāh Walīullāh al-Dehlawī (d. 1176/1762), whose emphasis on a revival of the pristine sources of Islam—Qurʾān and Sunnah—left a lasting imprint on the religious landscape of India. As a jurist (*qāḍī*), Thanaʿullāh combined legal training with a deep commitment to the scriptural sciences. His works reflect both his grounding in the Hanafi legal tradition and his appreciation for Ḥadīth-based scholarship, which was a hallmark of Shāh Waliullāh’s intellectual legacy.³

The most enduring contribution of Qāḍī Thana'ullāh Panipatī is his multi-volume Qur'anic exegesis *al-Ṭafsīr al-Maẓharī*, named in honor of his spiritual master Mīrẓā Maẓhar Jān-i Jānān (d. 1195/1781), a renowned Naqshbandī Sufi of Delhi. This *tafsīr* is considered one of the most important Indo-Muslim commentaries of the Qur'ān. It is characterized by a balanced methodology: a careful engagement with transmitted reports (*riwāyāt*), a respect for the science of ḥadīth, and an awareness of linguistic, juristic, and theological dimensions of the Qur'anic text. Unlike many exegetes of his era, Thana'ullāh sought to integrate the rigor of Ḥadīth criticism into *tafsīr*, thereby safeguarding the Qur'anic commentary from unreliable narrations, including weak and fabricated reports.

In addition to his *tafsīr*, Thana'ullāh Panipatī authored works in jurisprudence and theology, though many of these remain less well-known compared to *al-Ṭafsīr al-Maẓharī*. His position as a *qāḍī* (judge) also meant that he was directly engaged with applying Islamic law in practical contexts, a role that further enhanced the juristic insights reflected in his writings. He was also closely associated with the Sufi tradition, particularly the Naqshbandī order, which helped shape his spiritual outlook and ethical orientation.

Thana'ullāh Panipatī passed away in 1225 AH / 1810 CE, leaving behind a legacy that bridged the worlds of *tafsīr*, Ḥadīth, *fiqh*, and *taṣawwuf*. His *al-Ṭafsīr al-Maẓharī* remains a significant reference for scholars of Indo-Islamic intellectual history, not only because of its exegetical content but also as a window into the synthesis of traditional learning, reformist impulses, and Sufi spirituality in the late Mughal and early colonial periods of India. Through this work, he ensured that the rich Indo-Muslim scholarly tradition continued to engage meaningfully with the Qur'ān, grounded firmly in the science of Ḥadīth.

IMPORTANCE OF ḤADĪTH IN ṬAFSĪR LITERATURE

The science of Qur'anic exegesis (*ilm al-tafsīr*) has, since the earliest period of Islam, been inseparably linked with the science of Ḥadīth, for the Prophet Muhammad himself is regarded as the first and most authoritative interpreter of the Qur'ān. The Qur'ān declares:

*And We have sent down to you the Reminder so that you may explain to mankind what has been revealed to them.*⁴

Classical exegetes such as al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923) cite this verse as proof of the necessity of the Prophet's explanations for understanding divine revelation. He remarks in his *Jāmi' al-Bayān*:

Since there is no way for anyone to know its interpretation except through the explanation of the Messenger.

Consequently, Ḥadīth reports constitute the primary source of *tafsīr* after the Qur'ān itself, and the tradition of *tafsīr bi'l-ma'thūr* rests heavily upon authenticated Prophetic narrations. Ibn Kathīr (d. 774/1373), in the introduction to his *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Azīm*, states:

*The most authentic method is to interpret the Qur'ān by the Qur'ān; what is general in one place is explained elsewhere, what is brief is expanded in another place. If no tafsīr is found in the Qur'ān, then we return to the Sunnah, for it explains and clarifies the Qur'ān.*⁵

The importance of Ḥadīth in *tafsīr* is further underscored by the practice of the Companions (*ṣaḥābah*) and Successors (*tābi'ūn*). When confronted with ambiguous verses, they sought clarification from the Prophet or transmitted what they had heard from him. Al-Suyūṭī (d. 911/1505) writes in *al-Itqān fī 'ulūm al-Qur'ān*:

*The most authentic form of tafsīr is that which is transmitted from the Messenger of God, for he is the one who clarifies God's intent in His Book.*⁶

Similarly, al-Zarkashī (d. 794/1392) affirms in *al-Burhān fī 'ulūm al-Qur'ān*:

*The path to knowing the interpretation of the Book of God is through transmission and hearing from the Prophet, then from the Companions, then from the Successors.*⁷

Moreover, Ḥadīth provides not only exegetical clarifications but also *asbāb al-nuzūl* (occasions of revelation), legal rulings (*aḥkām*), and theological explanations. For example, reports on the verse of *tayammum*⁸ detail both its context of revelation and its juristic implications. Al-Ṭaḥāwī (d. 321/933), in *Sharḥ Mushkil al-Āthār*, demonstrates how apparently conflicting narrations can be reconciled in order to preserve coherence in *tafsīr* and law.

The role of Ḥadīth in tafsīr literature is both foundational and indispensable. Classical exegetes consistently placed Prophetic reports at the centre of their methodology, ensuring that Qur'anic commentary remained rooted in revelation rather than conjecture. As al-Suyūṭī summarizes:

*Whoever seeks tafsīr without recourse to ḥadīth has gone astray.*⁹

This interconnection between tafsīr and ḥadīth underscores why later exegetical works such as *Al-Taḥf al-Maẓharī* cannot be fully appreciated without reference to the broader framework of Ḥadīth sciences.

AN OVERVIEW OF ISRA'ILĪYYAT

The term *Isra'iliyyat* in the discipline of Qur'anic exegesis and ḥadīth sciences refers to a body of narrations of Jewish and Christian scriptures origin, primarily derived from the Torah, Talmud, Midrash, and Biblical traditions, which entered Islamic discourse through early converts to Islam such as Ka'b al-Aḥbār, Wahb ibn Munabbih, and 'Abd Allāh ibn Salām¹⁰. These reports usually address stories of earlier prophets, the history of Banū Isrā'īl, accounts of creation and cosmology, as well as eschatological themes¹¹. Their presence in early Islamic scholarship reflects both the Qur'anic acknowledgment of earlier revelations and the practical reality of Muslim interaction with the *Ahl al-Kitāb* (People of the Book). The Prophet Muḥammad himself permitted the narration of such material under specific conditions, as reflected in the Ḥadīth: *Convey from the Children of Israel and there is no harm.*¹²

Muslim scholars, however, were not uncritical in their reception of these traditions. They developed a methodological framework dividing *Isra'iliyyat* into three categories: (a) those that are acceptable, when they conform to the Qur'ān and Sunnah; (b) those that are rejected, when they contradict established revelation or Islamic creed; and (c) those that are neutral, which may be narrated for historical or exegetical context without affirmation or denial¹³. This classification, grounded in both Qur'anic guidance and Prophetic instruction, illustrates the nuanced balance scholars maintained between openness to cross-cultural transmission and safeguarding the integrity of revelation.

The role of *Isra'iliyyat* in *tafsir* evolved over time. Early exegetes such as al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923) often incorporated large quantities of these reports as supplementary explanatory material¹⁴. By contrast, later scholars such as Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 728/1328) and Ibn Kathīr (d. 774/1373) strongly emphasized caution, stressing that the Qur'ān and authentic Sunnah alone constitute authoritative sources of knowledge¹⁵. Ibn Kathīr, in particular, frequently rejected fabrications and highlighted problematic elements within *Isra'iliyyat*, especially when they involved anthropomorphic depictions of God or morally objectionable portrayals of prophets¹⁶. This critical engagement reflects the broader Islamic epistemological principle that while historical reports may enrich narrative detail, they can never rival the divine authority of revelation.

IMPORTANCE AND STATUS

Isra'iliyyat refers to exegetical literature influenced by Jewish or Christian traditions. Since Jewish elements are more dominant, these narrations are generally attributed to Israel (i.e., the Jews).¹⁷ Due to 19th and 20th-century research, even in Europe, it has become widely accepted that the Torah and the Gospels have been altered.¹⁸ This is why both the Qur'ān and Ḥadith emphasize caution when dealing with Jewish narrations. The Qur'ān explicitly alleges the Jews and Christians of tampering with their religious scriptures and declares them unreliable (Al-Baqarah: 67-97). Because of this, when Umar (RA) was seen holding a page from the Torah, the Prophet strongly disapproved and expressed displeasure.¹⁹ However, since their scriptures contain both authentic and false reports, the Prophet advised Muslims to adopt a neutral stance, saying:

*“Do not affirm nor reject the reports of the Jews and Christians. Instead, say: ‘We believe in what Allah has revealed to His Prophets.’”*²⁰

As *Isra'iliyyat* expanded over time, some scholars misused this hadith to justify incorporating Jewish narrations. Another hadith narrated by Abdullah ibn Amr ibn Al-As (RA) states that the Prophet said; *Narrate from the Children of Israel, there is no harm in it.*²¹

EXPANSION OF ISRA'ILĪYYAT

While this hadith allows reporting from Jewish traditions, it should have been understood in light of other conditions of Hadith transmission. Had this approach been followed, *Tafsīr* books might have been protected from an influx of *Isra'iliyyat*.

During the era of the *ṣahābah* (RA), strict caution was exercised regarding such reports. This is why many scholars disagree with the claim that Abdullah ibn Abbas (RA) initiated the expansion of *Isra'iliyyat* in *tafsīr*.²² Ibn Abbas (RA) remained within the limits set by Islamic teachings regarding Jewish narrations. However, the trend of incorporating Jewish traditions into *tafsīr* peaked during the era of the *Tabi'un* and *Tabi' al-Tabi'in*. This was because, by that time, many Jewish scholars had converted to Islam, bringing a vast collection of their historical and religious beliefs with them. They unintentionally introduced these narratives as a way to support and explain Islamic teachings.

The renowned historian and sociologist Ibn Khaldun attributes the rise of *Isra'iliyyat* in Islamic literature to:

- The natural simplicity and lack of knowledge among early Arabs.
- Their eagerness to learn after embracing Islam.
- Their turning to the People of the Book (Jews and Christians) for knowledge.²³

Regardless of the reasons, Jewish traditions quickly penetrated Islamic literature, particularly history and *tafsīr*.

- Hadith scholars worked tirelessly to protect Hadith sciences from their influence.
- However, history, stories, and *tafsīr* remained heavily affected by *Isra'iliyyat*.

KEY FIGURES IN TRANSMISSION OF ISRA'ILĪYYAT

The integration of Jewish (Isra'ili) literature into Islamic scholarship is primarily attributed to four key figures. Most of the Isra'ili narrations in Islamic works are traced back to these individuals:

1. Abdullah ibn Salam (RA)
2. Ka'b al-Ahbar (RA)
3. Wahb ibn Munabbih (RA)
4. Abdul Malik ibn Abdul Aziz ibn Jurayj (RA)²⁴

These scholars were themselves trustworthy (*thiqāt*) and the material they transmitted was likely documented somewhere. However, the sources they relied upon had already undergone centuries of distortions and alterations. Although these figures transmitted knowledge with sincerity, over time, additional material was incorporated into their narrations. Consequently, *Isrā'iliyyat* ultimately proved detrimental to the *Tafsīr* (exegesis) of the Qur'an. The main issue with Isrā'ili narrations is that they often misdirect the focus of scholarly research, leading to erroneous interpretations. This is why *Isrā'iliyyat* is considered a major obstacle in the correct understanding of the Qur'an.²⁵

ISRA'ILIYAT AND THEIR CLASSIFICATION

Isrā'iliyat in italic (narrations of Jewish or Christian origin) are categorized into three types based on their content and reliability:

- (a) Narrations Endorsed by the Prophet (PBUH)
These are reports that have received validation from the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). An example is the story of Khidr in connection with Prophet Musa (*al-Kahf*: 60-82). Such narrations are considered acceptable.
- (b) *Narrations That Contradict Islamic Beliefs or Laws*
Any reports that are in clear opposition to Islamic beliefs or legal rulings are entirely unacceptable.
- (c) *Narrations neither Confirmed nor Rejected by the Qur'an and Hadith*
These narrations are neither explicitly supported nor denied by Islamic scriptures, and they do not contradict core Islamic beliefs and teachings. This category has been the most contentious, leading to significant scholarly debate.²⁶ Regarding such narrations, the Prophet (PBUH) advised: "Do not confirm or deny the People of the Book."²⁷

This third category has been the most prevalent in exegetical

literature, with some scholars incorporating a mix of authentic and dubious *Isra'iliyat* in italic.

The first scholar to systematically include this type of narration in Qur'anic exegesis was Imam Ibn Jarir al-Tabari. He compiled a vast collection of *Isra'iliyat* in italic using references from various Christian and Jewish scholars. His work became an authoritative source for later exegetes. However, a key distinction between Tabari's *tafsir* and subsequent commentaries is that he provided complete chains of transmission (*isnād*) for each narration, allowing scholars to assess their authenticity.²⁸ Later exegetical works, however, often omitted or shortened these chains, making verification difficult.

While Ibn Jarir al-Tabari exercised caution with *Isra'iliyat* in italic, later scholars like Al-Nishapuri (d. 724 AH) expanded their use significantly, incorporating numerous narrations without critically distinguishing between authentic and weak reports.²⁹ Due to his limited expertise in Hadith criticism (*ilm al-rija*), he struggled to differentiate between reliable and fabricated accounts. The *tafsir Ma'alim al-Tanzil*, despite being regarded by Ibn Taymiyyah as a balanced and moderate exegesis,³⁰ was also influenced by *Isra'iliyat* in italic. Even Al-Baghawi, whose *tafsir* was among the primary references for later scholars, could not completely avoid incorporating such narrations.³¹

In the realm of *Ṭafsir bil-Manqū* (exegesis based on transmitted reports), the call for a cautious approach towards *Isra'iliyat* in italic was indeed raised by Imam Ibn Taymiyyah. However, it was his renowned student, Allama Ibn Kathir (d. 774 AH), who practically implemented this idea to some extent.

While it cannot be claimed that *Ṭafsir Ibn Kathir* is entirely free from *Isra'iliyat* in italic, it does contain critical evaluations of such reports.³² This approach played a significant role in fostering a more analytical perspective towards *Isra'iliyat* in italic, leading to a constructive reaction against them. Another major *tafsir* of the same era, "Jami'al-Ahkam al-Qur'an" by Al-Qurtubi, exhibited an even stronger rejection of *Isra'iliyat* in italic compared to Ibn Kathir. However, Allama Jalaluddin al-Suyuti (d. 911 AH) remained largely unaffected by this movement. In his *tafsir*, "*al-Durr al-Manthur*", he freely included *Isra'iliyat* in italic without hesitation. The author of *al-Ṭafsir al-Mazhari* is intellectually linked to

the three aforementioned scholars (Baghawi, Ibn Kathir, and Suyuti), and thus, he has benefited from their commentaries. However, *al-Ṭafsīr al-Maḥḥarī* adopts an even more cautious stance towards *Isrā'iliyat* in italic than any of these three. In fact, it can be said that within the realm of *Ṭafsīr bil-Manqul*, *al-Ṭafsīr al-Maḥḥarī* takes the opposition to *Isrā'iliyat* in italic a step further than *Ṭafsīr Ibn Kathir*. Qazi Sahib (the author) successfully advanced this movement, whose ultimate goal—according to Ameen Al-Khuli—is to cleanse Tafsīr literature of *Isrā'iliyat* in italic.³³

The cautious approach of *al-Ṭafsīr al-Maḥḥarī* towards *Isrā'iliyat* in italic can be characterized by the key aspects discussed here.

HARSH CRITICISM

While many earlier commentators freely incorporated Isrā'ili narrations into their interpretations of the Qur'an, Qazi Sahib subjected them to sharp criticism, declaring them unreliable. For example, in *Surah al-Baqarah*, the summary mention of Harut and Marut has been elaborated upon by Ibn Jarir al-Tabari, al-Baghawi, and al-Suyuti, who included numerous baseless narratives in their interpretations.³⁴ Even Ibn Kathir, despite making partial critiques, generally maintained a lenient stance towards such narrations.³⁵ However, Qazi Sahib thoroughly rejected the authenticity of this story, using both rational and textual evidence. He states:

*“This story belongs to the category of isolated reports (Akhbar Ahad), rather, it is among the weak and anomalous narrations. Furthermore, it receives no support from the Qur'an itself. Some of these reports are such that neither reason can accept them nor transmission (narration). The scholars of hadith declare that this story is neither authentic nor can it be correctly attributed to Hazrat Ali (RA) or Abdullah Ibn Abbas (RA). This humble servant (Qazi Sahib) affirms that not a single narration—whether strong or weak—transmits this story from the Prophet (PBUH)... This story is merely one of the fabrications of Ka'b al-Ahbar.”*³⁶ Similarly, many exaggerated and unfounded narrations about 'Uj ibn 'Unuq (a mythical giant) are found in books of Tafsīr. Qazi Sahib strongly refutes the narration quoted by Mufassir Al-Baghawi, stating:

*"I say that Al-Baghawi has narrated stories about 'Auj ibn 'Unuq that contain such exaggerations which reason cannot accept."*³⁷

Likewise, regarding the accusation that Prophet Dawood (AS) allegedly plotted the killing of Uriah to marry his wife, Qazi Sahib critiques this claim in the following words:

*"I say that, apparently, Prophet Dawood (AS) repeatedly sent Uriah to the battlefield. This is a blatant lie and slander, and he (Dawood AS) was far above such an act."*³⁸

The Jews also fabricated various accusations against Prophet Sulaiman (AS), which some exegetes incorporated into *tafsir* literature. Qazi Sahib rejected these as falsehoods.³⁹ At another place, where Qazi Sahib comments on the narration of "*Tilka al-Gharaniq al-'Ula*", he criticizes the tendency of accepting Isra'ili narrations without verification:

**"No reliable and authentic scholar has transmitted this narration with a connected chain. Such reports have only been recorded by those exegetes and historians who have a habit of writing and compiling *every narration—whether authentic or weak—without proper investigation."*⁴⁰

In short, Qazi Sahib subjected these Isra'ili narrations to rigorous criticism from both rational and textual perspectives, expressing his disapproval of such reports. Through his scholarly efforts, he further advanced the movement to purge Tafsir literature from *Isra'iliyat* in italic.

BREVITY AND CONCISENESS

The early exegetes typically narrated *Isra'iliyat* in italic at great length and with extensive elaboration. For example, regarding the story of Harut and Marut,

- Al-Tabari wrote nine pages⁴¹
- Al-Nishapuri wrote seven pages⁴²
- Abu Hayyan Al-Andalusi wrote two pages⁴³
- Ibn Kathir⁴⁴, Al-Baghawi⁴⁵, and Al-Suyuti⁴⁶ each dedicated eight pages to it.

In contrast, *al-Ṭafsīr al-Maḏharī* presents the entire story in only three-fourths of a page, while dedicating almost the same space for its refutation.⁴⁷ Thus, Qazi Sahib discouraged the practice of lengthy narration of such stories (even for the purpose of refutation, as done by Ibn Kathir and others). This concise approach was similarly adopted for other legendary tales, such as ‘Uj ibn ‘Unuq, Uriah, and Sakhr Jinni, ensuring that superfluous details were minimized.

CAREFUL RECONCILIATION BETWEEN NARRATIONS

In the *Muqaddimah Ṭafsīr*, Allama Ibn Taymiyyah, at one point, attributes the differences in interpretative narrations to the discrepancies found within *Isra’iliyyat* and states that in such cases, it is the duty of a commentator (*mufasssīr*) to either mention different viewpoints and give preference to one or reconcile them.⁴⁸ Accordingly, in dealing with harmless *Isra’ili* traditions, Qadi Sahib adheres to this methodology. This approach is evident in the narratives related to Prophet Ibrahim (521), Prophet Dawud and Sulaiman,⁴⁹ and Prophet Uzair,⁵⁰ where *Isra’iliyyat* are mentioned, and efforts are made to reconcile them. This method not only expands knowledge but also helps cultivate a research-oriented and critical mindset. Furthermore, in some instances, such narrations have also been employed for moral and didactic purposes.

THE CONSERVATIVE ASPECT OF *AL-ṬAFSĪR AL-MAḌHARĪ*

Despite its critical approach towards *Isra’iliyyat*, *Al Ṭafsīr al-Maḏharī* cannot be considered entirely modern in its treatment of these traditions. This is because, at the time, the scholarly rigor and stability required for a complete reassessment had yet to develop. In reality, a fundamentally new approach to evaluating *Isra’iliyyat* before the 14th (20th) century was not feasible, as comprehensive research on Jewish myths has mostly taken place over the last two centuries, and this work continues to evolve.⁵¹ While *al-Ṭafsīr al-Maḏharī* raises objections against the excessive influence of *Isra’iliyyat* and dismisses many narratives as baseless myths, it also incorporates some accounts deemed harmless. Therefore, it cannot be classified as entirely free from *Isra’iliyyat*. However, *Al Ṭafsīr al-Maḏharī* remains significant because it frequently presents historical

events and narrations through a critical lens, allowing readers to discern the deeper symbolic meanings behind these stories.

Another prominent aspect of its conservatism is that it often narrates Jewish myths using traditional *Isra'iliyyat* sources, a method considered flawed since many of these tales have been distorted through repeated transmission. Consequently, modern commentators—such as Mufti Muhammad Abduh and his distinguished students Mufti Rashid Rida, Al-Maraghi, as well as Amin Ahsan Islahi, and to some extent Hifizur Rahman Seoharvi, Abul A'la Maududi, Mufti Muhammad Shafi, and Sayyid Qutb Shaheed—either avoid these narratives altogether or, when necessary, refer to more reliable contemporary sources such as the Old and New Testaments, their commentaries, and other historical texts. This approach aids in maintaining coherence in the sequence of events and facilitates better understanding, avoiding unnecessary complexities. Moreover, where an incident does not align with Islamic teachings, these scholars refrain from forcefully reconciling it with Qur'ānic verses.⁵²

In conclusion, the approach and methodology adopted in *al-Ṭafsīr al-Maẓharī* regarding *Isra'iliyyat* can be considered more refined and developed compared to earlier classical exegetes. However, when compared to contemporary perspectives, its style still retains a somewhat conservative nature. Thus, *al-Ṭafsīr al-Maẓharī* serves as an intermediary link—it benefited from the knowledge of previous scholars and provided relatively improved insights. At the same time, it became a source of inspiration for later exegetical works, which, under its influence, advanced even further in their critical approach and scholarly rigor.

CONCLUSION

In light of the foregoing discussion, it becomes evident that *al-Ṭafsīr al-Maẓharī* occupies a distinctive position in the history of Qur'ānic exegesis. Qadi Thanauallah Panipati not only inherited the rich legacy of earlier tafasir but also introduced a critical rigor rarely seen in classical works. His cautious treatment of *Isra'iliyyat*—whether through outright rejection, rational critique, or measured brevity—signals a conscious effort to safeguard the sanctity of *ṭafsīr* from unreliable and fanciful narrations. Unlike many of his predecessors, who often reproduced these

accounts in detail before commenting on their weaknesses, Qadi Sahib employed a method that combined fidelity to sound hadith principles, reliance on rational analysis, and theological sensitivity.

By refusing to allow *Isrā'iliyyat* to dominate the interpretive discourse, Panipati not only aligned himself with the Prophet's guidance on these narrations but also prefigured the methodological concerns of later reformist exegetes. In this way, *al-Ṭafsīr al-Maẓharī* may be seen as a transitional bridge between the narration-heavy exegesis of the classical period and the more critical, rationally engaged tafasir of the modern era. Its contribution lies not merely in its content but in its methodological stance: a conscious resistance to the uncritical perpetuation of weak traditions.

Thus, *al-Ṭafsīr al-Maẓharī* deserves recognition as one of the earliest South Asian attempts at a systematic critique of *Isrā'iliyyat*. It embodies both continuity with the tradition of classical *ṭafsīr* and a forward-looking orientation that resonates with modern scholarly concerns, establishing Qadi Thanauallah Panipati as a significant figure in the evolution of Qur'ānic hermeneutics.⁵³

NOTES

1. The most significant evidence in this regard is temporal, as *al-Ṭafsīr al-Maẓharī* was completed in 1208 AH. During its compilation, certain incidents occurred that led the author to become disillusioned with life. Letters written during and after this period provide insights into this matter. Moreover, *al-Ṭafsīr al-Maẓharī* itself contains references to multiple works by the author, which were evidently compiled prior to it.
2. Nawab Siddiq Hasan Khan, *Abjad al-Uloom*, Bhopal edition, pp. 304–404.
3. Abdul Hai Hasani, *Nuzhatul Khawatir* Vol. 1, p. 942 published in 1999.
4. Al-Qur'an Chapter 16: Verse 44.
5. Ibn Kathir, *Tafsīr*, Vol. 1, p. 10.
6. *al-Itqān*, 2: 179.
7. *al-Burhān*, 2: 154.
8. Al-Qur'an Chapter 4 V 43.
9. *al-Itqān*, 2: 181.
10. Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Azīm*, vol. 1 (Beirut: Dār al-Ma'rifah, n.d.), 9–10.

11. Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Dhahabī, *al-Ṭafsīr wa'l-Mufasssīrūn*, vol. 1 (Cairo: Maktabat Wahbah, 1976), 148–152.
12. Saḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, Kitāb Aḥādīth al-Anbiyā', Ḥadīth no. 3461.
13. Ibn Taymiyyah, *Muqaddimah fī Uṣūl al-Ṭafsīr* (Cairo: Dār al-ḥadīth, 1999), 30.
14. Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Dhahabī, *al-Ṭafsīr wa'l-Mufasssīrūn*, vol. 1 (Cairo: Maktabat Wahbah, 1976), 148–152.
15. Ibn Taymiyyah, *Muqaddimah fī Uṣūl al-Ṭafsīr* (Cairo: Dār al-ḥadīth, 1999), 30.
16. Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāyah wa'l-Nihāyah*, vol. 1 (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyyah, 1985), 7.
17. Al Ṭafsīr al-Mazharī Vol. 1, p. 81.
18. Bible | Description, History, Books, & Facts | Britannica Accessed on 14/06/2017,
19. Musnad Ahmab bin Hanbal 3, 387.
20. Saḥīḥ al- Bukhari, 3, 198.
21. Fatah al Bari, 6 388.
22. Al tafsīr Wa al Mufasssiroon Vol. 1, pp. 171-174.
23. Ibn Khuldun, Muqaddamah, pp. 997-998, published in Beirut.
24. Al tafsīr Wa al Mufasssiroon Vol. 1. pp. 184-200.
25. Ameen al Khuli, ma'li Hayatihi, Published in Cairo in 1944.
26. Ibn taymiyyah, Muqaddamah fī Usool al Ṭafsīr.
27. Saḥīḥ al Bukhari, 3, 382-383.
28. Al Ṭafsīr wal Mufasssiroon, 1, pp. 214-216.
29. See Ṭafsīr al Neeshapuri 4, pp. 121-125, 140-143 and 147-149 etc.
30. Muqaddamah Ṭafsīr by Ibn e Taimiyyah, p. 19.
31. See Ṭafsīr Ma'alim al Tanzeel Vol. 1, pp. 294, 604-609 etc.
32. See Tasīr Ibn Kathīr Vol. 1, pp. 108-110.
33. Ameen Al Khauli: Maqala Ṭafsīr dar Urdu, Dayerah Ma'arif e Islamiyah Buzail Madah.
34. Ṭafsīr Al Durr al Manthoor, published in Beirut Vol. 1, p. 102.
35. Ṭafsīr Ibn Kathīr Vol. 1, pp. 254-260.
36. Al-Ṭafsīr al-Mazharī, Vol. 1, p. 109.
37. Idem, Vol. 3, p. 73.
38. Idem, Vol. 8, p. 178.
39. Idem, Vol. 8, p. 181.
40. Idem, Vol. 6, p. 389.
41. See Ṭafsīr Al-Tabri, Vol. 1, pp. 340-348.
42. Al-Neeshapuri, Gharayeb al Qur'an published in Qairo, Vol. 1, pp. 342-348.

43. Tafsir Bahr al Muheet, Vol. 1, pp. 329-330.
44. Tafsir Ibn Kathir, Vol. 1, pp. 254-261.
45. Tafsir Ma'alim al Tanzeel, Vol. 1, pp. 254-267.
46. Tafsir Al Durr al Manthoor, published in Beirut, Vol. 1, pp. 95-102.
47. Al-Tafsir al-Mazhari, Vol. 1, pp. 108-109.
48. Muqaddamah, pp. 100-101.
49. Al- Tafsir al-Mazhari, Vol. 6, pp. 202-210.
50. Idem, Vol. 7, pp, 160-163, 165-167, 171-172, 177-181 etc.
51. Idem, Vol. 1, pp. 366-368
52. Muhammad Taqi Uthmani, Muqaddamah Bible se Qur'an Tak and the sources he has gone through in the Book.
53. The substance of this article is heavily derived from Dr. Mahmood-ul-Hasan Arif's Urdu work *Tazkira Qadi Muhammad Sanaullah Panipati*, especially the chapter addressing Al-Tafsir al-Mazhari and the science of Hadith.

TARIQ KHAN

Diverse Expressions of Indian Architectural Styles and Their Historical and Cultural Significance

Art and architecture authentically represent an era's culture, showcasing that civilization's mindset and attitude. Here, the concepts and methods of a society achieve visual representation. India is a land of variety. Cultural pluralism in India refers to the coexistence of diverse cultural identities and practices. This diversity highlights the rich nature of India's cultural heritage and reflects the importance of diversity and mutual respect among different communities in Indian history. This diversity is also clearly visible in the art and architecture of India.

The diversity, especially in culture and geography, also impacted art and architecture. Individuals arriving from abroad became a part of the rich Indian culture, art, and architecture, which they introduced, leading to a new hybrid art in India. Beginning primarily from the rock art of prehistoric times to the sophisticated urban planning of New Delhi, Indian architecture has continuously adapted to changing social and religious contexts and persisted across the nation. Various artistic expressions arose in India's multicultural and pluralistic society, genuinely mirroring that era's culture. Numerous artworks were connected to everyday life processes and were not solely created for an elite segment of society. They appear as rock art, clay figures, toys, and more. Ancient Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain temples display intricate craftsmanship, spiritual symbolism, and innovative engineering that represent India's deep reverence for the divine. The introduction of Islamic influences brought about a fusion of Persian and Indian elements, giving rise to iconic structures like the Taj Mahal, which epitomize Indo-Islamic architectural brilliance. Regional architecture, shaped by local climates, materials, and traditions, showcases India's ingenuity in sustainable design, with structures crafted from accessible resources and built to harmonize with the environment. Additionally,

regional art forms—such as Madhubani, Pattachitra, and Warli—are vibrant expressions of local beliefs, social life, and natural beauty, each contributing to India's rich artistic legacy. This heritage inspires modern Indian art and architecture, combining old styles with new methods. This large legacy is an important part of the world's cultural history, showing India's special mix of history, diversity, and spirituality through its lasting art and buildings.

The oldest architectural traces are found in the civilized sites of Harappa.¹ In this instance, baked bricks were predominantly utilized as a construction material. Architectural remnants from the Vedic and Mauryan eras are extremely scarce. Subsequent eras, however, offer a significant quantity of architectural remnants and designs. The quantity of excavations since independence reveals much about the material progress of ancient Indian societies and their connections with ancient cultures in the Indian subcontinent. The primary element identified so far includes the cities and towns of the Indus or Harappan Civilization. Each city of the Harappan Civilization had a well-fortified citadel.² The largely regular planning of the streets and certain uniformity throughout the area of Indus culture in such features as weights and measures, the size of bricks, and even the layout of the city. Great cities are noticeable characteristics.³ One of the most noticeable things about that culture was how strict and traditional they were. At Mohenjo-Daro, nine layers of buildings have been uncovered. As the level of the earth rose from the periodic flooding of the Indus, new houses were built almost exactly on the sites of the old, with only minor variations in ground plan; for nearly a millennium at least, the street plans of the cities remained the same.⁴ In neither of the cities has any stone building been found; standardized burnt bricks of good quality were the usual building material. The houses, often double-storied, were all based on much the same plan—a square courtyard, round which had several rooms. The entrances were often located inside alleys, and there were no windows on the sides of the streets. The cities had a special way of handling waste, with bathrooms connected to drains that went into underground sewers beneath the main streets and then emptied into soak pits. The sewers were covered throughout their lengths by large slabs.⁵ The other key public buildings were the Great Bath and the Granary.⁶ There is no evidence of any clearly defined religious institutions being

built in the Harappan period, like temples.⁷ This proves that by then the priestly class had not emerged as a powerful class. From the art and architecture of the Harappan period, it is evident that in that period, the distinction between rich and poor had already emerged. Despite architectural similarities among Harappan cities, there was also a great deal of plurality.

The Mauryan period marked a time when architecture achieved an advanced level. The Asokan pillars, along with the animals and carvings on them, symbolize developed artistic expressions. During the post-Mauryan era, artistic endeavours were primarily connected to the religions being followed.⁸ At first, the building of stupas, chaityas, viharas, and eventually temples gained popularity. Due to frequent exchanges with different cultures during that time, we can also observe aspects of non-Indian art in the artistic works of that era. Mauryan architecture can be divided into three major categories: residential structures, religious architecture, and public works.⁹ Milind Panha describes a city with moats, ramparts, gatehouses, towers, well-laid-out streets, markets, parks, lakes, and temples. There are references to the building of several stories with waggon-vaulted roofs and verandahs, mostly constructed of wood.¹⁰ This description, to an extent, is corroborated by other literary sources such as Megasthenese's *Indica*, etc., and archaeological sources. However, in the countryside, not much change was noticed in architectural styles or types of hutments.

At the same period, the practice of preserving the remains of an important personality under a heap of accumulated earth had been in existence for a long time. Buddhists adopted this, and the structure built this way came to be known as a stupa. According to Buddhist sources, the remains of Buddha's body were divided into eight parts and placed under the stupas. These, during the time of Ashoka, were dug out and redistributed, which led to the construction of other stupas, the sacred places of Buddhism. The reverence of stupas is driven by their ornamentation, and a particular sort of design is created for their development. The stupas were shaped like an inverted bowl. At the top, which was a bit flat, there used to be a place called *harmika*, which means the abode of the gods. It was here that urns holding the remains of Buddha or a significant religious figure were placed in gold or silver boxes. A wooden rod was placed in its middle, and the bottom

of the rod was fitted on the top of the stupa.¹¹ On top of this rod were placed three small umbrella-type discs symbolising respect, veneration, and magnanimity. The main stupas in India are located at Bodhgaya, Sanchi, Bharhut, Amravati, and Nagarjun konda. Both the Buddhists and the Jains built chaityas and viharas as places of reverence. A chaitya may be a shrine cell with a votive stupa set within the middle. Viharas were basically cut out of rocks for the home of friars. Viharas usually have a square or oval area in the centre. Around this, there is a covered walkway supported by pillars, and along this walkway are many small square rooms. These rooms typically have tall seats where monks sit.¹² Ancient monasteries such as Bhaja, Bedsa, Ajanta, Peetalkhora, Nasik, and Karle are located in western India.

There are no remains of independent Hindu temples built before the Gupta period. All Gupta temples were small, and most had flat roofs and masonry without mortar and were much larger and thicker than was necessary for relatively small buildings. The standard type of Hindu temple, which has persisted from the 6th century to the present day, was not fundamentally different from that of the ancient Greeks. In the centre of the temple was a small, dark chamber called the garbha griha, which held the main religious image. Its passage opened into the 'mandap', which was a separate building but mainly connected to the temple chamber by a verandah.¹³ In the early medieval period, three types of temple construction styles developed in India: Nagara, Vaisara, and Dravida. Temples possess great cultural, religious, historical, and architectural importance.¹⁴ They serve not only as sites of worship but also as vital centres of community life, stores of art and wisdom, and lasting representations of the rich heritage.

Gupta craftsmanship depictions stand out in old Indian history, famous for their unparalleled brilliance, complex style, and otherworldly subjects. These pieces are celebrated for their exceptional authenticity, exquisite courses of action, and culminating human figures. Gupta's craftsmanship often as possible outlines quiet figures with peaceful faces, exemplifying a firmament and alleviating a vibe that charms craftsmanship partners universally.¹⁵

When the Turks came to India, a new way of building started. The style of architecture that came about during this time, created by mixing Indian local art styles with Islamic art styles and made by

Indian masons, is known as Indo-Islamic. In the Medieval period, the construction of buildings, including civic residences in new cities and towns, increased considerably. The biggest reason for this was the use of lime mortar, which was the basic material of cement.¹⁶ It was possible to build a true arch only because of lime mortar, because to build a true arch, it was necessary to lay stones or bricks in a curved shape to form an arch and bind them firmly with a good binding material. As a result, the lintels, beams, and corbelling that had been used earlier were replaced by true arches, and peaked roofs were replaced by domes. The pointed arch of the Islamic world became prevalent in India.¹⁷ The Tughlaqs introduced four-centred arches in their buildings.¹⁸

Basically, Islam is not against painting and illustration, but does prohibit the representation of God's image because it condemns idolatry.¹⁹ Therefore, the elements of decoration were, for the most part, limited to calligraphy, geometry, and foliage.²⁰ The art and architecture of Vijayanagara incorporated elements of Indo-Islamic engineering in simple structures such as the Queen's Bathhouse and the elephant stables, reflecting a highly advanced multi-religious and multi-ethnic society.²¹

Calligraphy was an imperative component of the enhanced craftsmanship within the buildings of this period. The Qur'anic platitudes are engraved on buildings in a precise, calm, and amazing script known as Kufic.²² They may be found in any portion of the building—frames of the entryways, ceilings, divider boards, and niches—and in an assortment of materials: stone, stucco, and portray. Geometric shapes in abstract forms are used in these buildings in a bewildering variety of combinations. The designs show the use of visual ideas like repeating shapes, balanced looks, and creating flowing patterns with leaf-like designs. The main type of decoration used in buildings is the arabesque.²³

The Mughal rulers had a strong sense of beauty and supported art and culture by building nice cities and structures in India. They combined the older Turkish method, called *trabeate*, with the *arcuate* style.²⁴ That mixture created a unique style that was their own.

In the world of building art, the time when Jahangir and Shah Jahan ruled was a period filled with marble. Red stones were soon replaced by marble that was very finely made. This change brought about important

changes in the style of architecture, which are listed here: The arch took on a unique shape with leaf-like curves, often having nine points. Marble structures with arches that had an edge became common. The dome became rounder at the top and had a narrow neck. Using two domes together became very popular; designs made with colored stones became the main form of decoration. Pietra Dura decoration began to be used, in which precious stones such as lapis lazuli, onyx, jasper, topaz, and carnelian were inlaid into marble to create leaf-like designs. It was used by Noor Jahan in the tomb of Itimad-ud-Daulah.²⁵ The decoration of the tomb shows the change in architectural style from the period of Akbar to the period of Jahangir and Shah Jahan. Also, minarets have been used for the first time in the tomb; earlier in the tomb, minarets were built only on the main entrance gate. That change was a shift from the strong and solid style of Akbar's buildings to a soft and elegant style.

Shah Jahan's reign is especially known for the construction of marble, which has been used in the Taj Mahal. The entire complex of the Taj Mahal is in the shape of a rectangle, which is surrounded by a high wall on all sides and has a large entrance in the middle of the southern side. There are a total of eight small pavilions here, six at the corners and one each on the east and west sides. The main building of the Taj Mahal is built on a high marble platform in the northern part of the complex. There is a mosque to the west of this building and a replica of it on the east side, which is called a mahmankhana, due to which the whole structure looks balanced and symmetrical. The Taj Mahal itself is a square building with deep grooves on both sides. Its corners have been cut to give it an octagonal shape. On top of this, there is a large, rounded dome with a lotus-shaped top and a metal tip. Around the platform, there are four circular towers, each with a small roof on top. Inside, there is a central room with smaller rooms at each corner, all connected by paths that spread out like spokes on a wheel. The ceiling of the main room is a curved shape that forms part of the double dome. The decoration on the outside includes writing and inlay work, while the inside uses a special kind of stone cutting called pietra dura. On the front of the main building, there's a garden split into four parts by two canals that cross through it, creating the four sections.²⁶

After the Mughal era, Safdarjung's tomb in Delhi was very significant.

It is set in a big garden and follows the design of the Taj Mahal. However, there is one big difference in its design: the minarets are not separate from the main structure. The main building sits on a platform with decorated arches. It has two floors and a large, nearly round dome on top. The minarets look like small towers and have domed roofs on top. The building is made of red sandstone with some marble parts. The tops of the arches are not carved much, but they fit well with the size of the whole building.²⁷

Building projects in British India were mainly carried out by churches and the government. The first group of people who tried to change how buildings were designed made Gothic architecture the main style for Christian buildings. The second group of reformers focused on local styles and brought back interest in India's history and traditions. Goa has some of the most impressive religious and non-religious buildings from the time the Portuguese were there, from 1530 to 1835.²⁸ Among the churches that are still there today, the Church of the Holy Spirit is the most significant one. The Portuguese introduced the Gothic and Baroque architectural styles to India. In some cases, they also used purely Indian styles. It's interesting that no single style completely replaced others. As a result, Indian churches show a wide range of different styles. The last major church in Goa to follow a European model is the Church of Our Lady of Divine Providence. It has a very rich and tall altar, which stands alone. The church has a Baroque feel both inside and outside.²⁹

Early churches were constructed in the Kerala region of the Indian subcontinent. Many Christians in that area believe that the Apostle Thomas established seven churches in various locations throughout the region. However, it's not certain that these buildings still stand today, as the main materials used in Kerala were wood and thalits. The Syrians brought some Western Asian traditions, which influenced how churches were designed. As a result, churches with regular chancels and naves started being built. These churches adopted the region's religious practices and rituals, leading to the development of a unique style of church architecture in Kerala. One key feature of this style was the decorative gable at the front of the nave, which was painted white with lime and topped with a cross. Most churches from that time had a porch or a hall called a shala at the front. This shala was used to accommodate

extra worshippers during festivals, especially when people from other areas came to visit. The oldest surviving European-style church in India is located in Cochin. It was built in 1510, the same year that Albuquerque set up a trading post.³⁰ This church was later used to hold the remains of Vasco da Gama in 1524. During British rule, the church became an Anglican church.³¹

The unique and varied tradition of art and architecture spanning from ancient times to the colonial era is distinctive, as it has embraced multiple styles from different regions of India and beyond. Primarily, the sculptural artwork of Gandhara reached its climax during the Gupta period, which was also the period of iconography and temple construction. The various styles in the temple building, such as Nagara, Vaisara, and Dravida, appeared during the early medieval times, the period immediately after the Guptas. Besides their religious significance, they also held cultural importance. The arrival of the Turks and Mughals led to the fusion that created the renowned Indo-Islamic architectural styles. The period of the Mughals was specifically significant for the free adaptation of regional architectural styles like Rajasthani chhatri and Bengali chhappar, etc. The medieval period was also the period of the construction of Sufi Khanqahs and dargahs. The doors of the Sufi khanqahs were open for each class. In this period, Khanqahs were such places where people of every religion and caste used to sit together and exchange ideas. Subsequently, in the Colonial era, elements of Gothic and medieval English architecture were utilized without restraint. The British also maintained India's architectural plurality to some extent. The incorporation of those styles is showcased in the development of New Delhi, also known as Lutyens' Delhi. From ancient to modern times, India has maintained plurality in art and architecture, just like cultural pluralism.

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KHURSHID MAKANI

The Khoja Community of India, Their Lineage, Diaspora and Religious Identity

ABSTRACT

The Khoja community of the Shia Imami Ismaili Nizari Muslim sect appears to stand somewhat alone as its traditions and practices seem distinctive from the rest of the Muslim *ummah*; yet in essence they are the same; adhering to both the *Qur'an* and *Sunnah*. The *Ismaili Khojas* are a *Sufi tariqah* that embraced Islam through the *da'wa* of the Saint, Pir Sadr al-din by means of the *ginan* corpus made up of esoteric poetry meant to bring the *murids* closer to Allah by holding on to the Rope of *Imamat* in the form of their *Murshid* who is an *Ahl-al Bayt* as well as the direct descendent of the Prophet Muhammad's (SAWS) daughter Fatimah and her husband Ali ibn Abu Talib A.S. The Khojas consider the *farmans* of their *Imam/Murshid* as relatable, relevant and reliable for a modern and progressive community which is part of a larger tradition that maintains cultural and community history. The *Khojas* due to many reasons stemming from economic instability to progress as well as persecution in the past found themselves emigrating both within the sub-continent as well as across continents from the time when there were only boats and later steamers. This made the Ismaili diaspora a significant one globally.

Keywords: *Khoja* identity, *ginanic* traditions, history, *farman*, Diaspora, *satpanth*, *Sufi tariqah*.

INTRODUCTION

A Muslim community of India that was converted by the 15th century Ismaili saint known popularly as *Pir Sadar*-ud-Din and who came to be known as the *Khoja* community of the *Shia Imami Ismaili Nizari* Sect

in South Asia has found itself over the centuries classified as a cult or not Muslim enough because they apparently do not subscribe to the more popular practices of the *Sunni* or the *Shi'a* Twelvers known as *Ithna 'Asharis*. While this group is able to prove its identity, solidarity as well as maintain its cultural stance in a multi-lingual, multi-cultural as well as multi-ethnicity Bharat, without infringing on the tenets of Islam, the *Khoja* community which professes their allegiance to the *Ahl al-Bayt* or the Prophet Muhammad's (*SAWS*) family especially from his daughter Fatima and son-in-law as well as cousin 'Ali ibn Abu Talib are the only group with a living *Imam*. This paper examines the *Khoja* community of the Shia Imami Ismaili Nizari Muslim sect of Islam who find themselves all over the globe and who have been successful in both their *din* (spiritual) as well as *duniya* (worldly) matters without sacrificing one for the other; but keeping the first as more important than the second. They credit their success to having a living *Imam* or Guide whom they can trace back to the Prophet (*SAWS*) and his directives of allegiance to the two important things he left behind; the holy *Qur'an* (the Book) and his *aal* (family).

THE KHOJA IDENTITY AND HISTORY

The *Khoja* community are a sub-sect of Ismailies who trace their cultural roots to Sindh and Gujarat¹ and whose religious affiliation to Islam began with their proselytization by "the 15th century Pir Sadar al-Din", who according to Azim Nanji quoted by Asani claims that this Sufi saint was the one who consolidated the tradition of the *Satpanths* also known as *Satpanthi*.²

The *Khojas* subscribe to the *Shia* sect of Islam that was once known as the Fatimids and the sub-sect of Ismailism called Shia Imami Ismaili Nizari Muslim; the other Ismaili sub-sect from the *Fatimid* being the Ismaili Muste'ali also known as the *Bohra* community.³ While the Nizari Ismailis continue with a living Guide currently in the fifth Aga Khan, Shah Rahim Al-Hussaini who came to inherit the title from his father, the 49th *Imam*, Shah Karim al-Hussaini. Thus, making Rahim Al-Hussaini, the 50th Spiritual Living Guide of the community, he is addressed as *Hazir Imam*, which means Present Guide or *Mawlana Hazir Imam* meaning, "our lord, the living and present *Imam*"

(Guide).⁴ The Ismaili Nizaris consider the existence of the *Imamat* as being crucial. Shelina Khoja-Moolji explains the importance of the Guide by using the “symbolism of a *panj* or the fist.”⁵ Moolji goes on to explain how the *Imam* explains the symbol of the “clenched fist” which symbolizes unity and the idea of united we stand and divided we fall and how the fingers on their own are “frail” but the *panj* which means the fist as well as number five for all the fingers required to make a fist.⁶ Incidentally, the holy people of the Prophet Muhammad’s (SAWS) family members are also known as the *Panj-e tan Pak*. They were himself, his daughter Fatimah, his son-in-law and their two sons Imam Hassan and Hussain A.S. Hence the importance of the Guide is emphasised and characterized by the guidance he gives the congregation or *jamat* through his *farman*. The *farmans* are “the oral and written directives”⁷ of the *Imam*. They were disseminated by the *Pirs* in the past but during the 48th Imam, Sir Sultan Mohammad Shah, Aga Khan III’s reign it became the means of communication between him and his *jama’at*. The *farmans* and speeches of Sir Sultan Muhammad Shah were seen as the means of modernization through which the leader conveyed his guidance on, “spiritual matters, on education, social welfare and female emancipation and on matters related to religious tolerance, personal conduct and co-operative economic enterprises.”⁸

WHAT ARE THE FARMANS?

Farmans took over the place of the *pirs* who were also responsible for delivering the *dasond* or tithe to the Imam in Persia. As the Saints no longer existed after the 16th century as in their place a book entitled “*Pandiyat-I jawammardi*” which was sent in place of the 25th Pir Taj al-Din, thus “it came to occupy the twenty-sixth place” of ‘*Pirhood*’.⁹ The “*pandiyat*, was translated into Gujarati and written in the Khojki script,” which contains the “admonitions of the Imam Mustansir bi’llah of Anjudan” found its presence in Sindh around mid-sixteenth century.¹⁰ It was at that point that the *Khojas* who outnumbered their Persian spiritual brethren began their visits to Anjudan.¹¹ One can conclude from this information that the Khojas were financially an able community during this period. After all, they were the *thakurs*, a title by “which Hindu Lohanas were addressed.”¹² The Nizari

khojas compiled “the traditional lists of *pirs*” including the *Pandiyat*.¹³ However, it seemed that while the *Pandiyat* found itself in the place of a *Pir*, apparently there was yet another *Pir* by the name of Dadu who “was despatched to Sindh” after the *Pandiyat* in the second half of the 16th century as many Nizari *Khojas* were reverting to Hinduism or converting to Sunni Islam.¹⁴ Thus while the *Khojas* hold on to the teachings of their *Pirs*, it is their *Murshid* who truly occupies their hearts and it is his guidance whether through his viceroys the *Pirs* in the past and still presently through the *ginans* left by the saints, their allegiance is to their *Imam* whom they look to for guidance both spiritually as well as materially.¹⁵ The *farmans* of the *Imam-e zaman/Imam* of the time allows the *murids* to remain current and progressive so as not to become complacent; eventually stagnating. The *murshid's* constant reminders on matters of education, stewardship of our planet earth as well as advice on economic matters makes this community thrive in the face of change and demands of the new age.

IMAMAT

The *Imams* trace their lineage to the Prophet Muhammad (SAWS) who later established the “Ismaili *dawla* or state” in Cairo and were known as the “Fatimid caliphate, in North Africa.”¹⁶ Daftari states that the “Fatimid period was the “golden age” of Ismailism.”¹⁷ Up till “the death of the Fatimid caliph-imam al-Mustansir in 487/1094” the Ismailis were intact.¹⁸ The dispute between his two sons resulted in the Ismailies splitting into two rival groups called “the Nizariyya and Musta’liyya.”¹⁹

The *Fatimids* were the great thinkers of the “late 10th and early 11th century”.²⁰ The followers of Nizar found themselves on the fortress of Alamut in Iran under their *Da’i* Hassan-i Sabbah (1050-1124)²¹ also known as the old man of the mountain²² and the Musta’li Ismailies moved to Yemen. The two factions of the *Fatimids* dispersed to Iran and Yemen respectively, but as history shows; both ended up with a large group of followers in South Asia’s Gujarat.²³

FRAGILE POSITION OF THE NIZARIS

The *Ismaili Nizari* community has come under persecution several times; the most livid experience was the one when they were persecuted

by “the Mongol ruler Genghis Khan”²⁴ who killed the entire group he could get hold of in Alamut and also destroyed the library which had precious pearls of wisdom; lost to mankind. The “medieval Ismaili state” was founded in 1090 until it “fell into the hands of the Mongols in 1256”²⁵

HISTORY OF *KHOJA ISMAILIES*

At this point, it would be good to delve into the history of the Ismailies to have a chronological view of how it came to Hindustan from the Alamut region despite the mass massacre that took place there. The post-Alamut period according to Farhad Daftari led to the *Nizaris* of Alamut to adopt *Sufism* which was a “disguise to safeguard themselves.”²⁶ This necessary adoption “of *taqiyyah* or precautionary dissimulation” was and to a certain extent is still the need of the day.²⁷

ANJUDAN PERIOD AND THE PROSELYTIZING OF *ISMAILI TARIQAH*

Daftari goes on to say that the emergence of the Nizari *Imam* in the 15th century saw the Ajudan revival in Central Asia and Afghanistan. These two centuries saw “Nizari Imams” proselytizing from Central Asia down to South Asia through their “da’wah” work.²⁸ However, William Ivanov according to Daftari, “designated” the period as “the Ajudan revival in Nizari da’wah and literary activities.”²⁹

So where is Ajudan and how did Ismailism come to be there? According to Wikipedia, Ajudan, “also known as Andijan, Anjidan and Injadan...is a village in Amanabad Rural District of Arak County, Markazi Province, Iran.”³⁰ In the late 14th century, the Nizari Imam was transferred there and as a result, the 14th to 15th century is known as the “Ajudan period”.³¹

By that time, the Nizari doctrine had spread to South Asia; especially Sindh and Gujarat where they were most successful. Those who were converted in that area were known as “Khojas”. According to Daftari, “The Nizaris of post-Alamut period developed distinctive literary traditions in Syria, Persia, Central Asia and India” where “the Nizari Khojas developed a unique literary genre in the form of devotional hymns known as *ginans*.”³²

Ginans which are Gnostic hymns through which *khojas* embraced Islam; a means that was employed by the 15th century saint Sadar al-Din to teach doctrines which addressed esoteric (*batin*) knowledge also known as the *Irfan*; which encourages the believers (*momin*s) or *murids* of the true path (*satpanth*) to look inwardly; so as to gain salvation. These are recited by the Shia Imami Ismaili Nizari Muslims during the allocated time prior to, after or between the set prayers of the day. The Ismailis were encouraged to listen to and emulate the teachings of the hymns, so as to internalize them as a way of life—thus, in a sense, living through the sacred texts. Through these hymns, the work of *da'wah* (religious propagation) was effectively carried out, beginning in the time of Ṣadr-ud-Dīn, as well as during the period of his predecessor, Shams al-Dīn—who was also his teacher and ancestor—and continuing into the time of his successors. Ṣadr-ud-Dīn played a significant role in the conversion of this particular group of Hindus. It was through this medium that the concept of the Living Guide, known as the *Imām-i Zamān*, was introduced to the followers. They were also taught about the “Rope of Imamate,” which is associated with the idea of the manifest Imām, as referenced in verse 12 of *Sūrat Yā Sin* (Al-Qur‘an, chapter 36: verse 12).

JAMAT KHANA

The first *Jama'at-khana* (House of congregation or “community house”) was also established “in Kotri, Sind” by this 15th century Saint.³³ *Jam'at-khana* is a Persian term. The *Jam'at-khanas* have two appointed leaders called a *mukhi* and *kamadia*. The former is the leader and the latter takes charge when the former is absent; however, the latter also acts as a treasurer in today's context.³⁴ Every *jam'at-khana* “comes under the jurisdiction”³⁵ of these two appointees and their spouses too are called *mukhiani* and *kamadiani* respectively. The two ladies act on behalf of their husbands for ladies' affairs and welfare in the community.

SHIA ISMAILI IDENTITY

The *Ismailies* as other *Shias* trace and support this verse, *Mankuntu Mowla fa' Aliyun Mowla*, the words uttered by Prophet Muhammad

(SAWS) at *Ghadir-e Khum*; after the last pilgrimage where Ali *Alayhi Salam* (A.S.), was professed as the Guide (*Imam*).³⁶ Thus we can say that to establish the *Shia Imami Nizari* sorteriology, and *Sufi tariqah*, it is pertinent to investigate the exegesis of the *Khoja* text; which would be the *ginans* and the *farmans*.

Besides chapter 36 of the holy *Qur'an* the second chapter which is titled The Cow or *surah Al Baqara*, *ayah* 255, also known as *ayatul Kursi* which means the verse of the Throne that speaks of God and His position and how He is the only one to be prostrated to and that He is ever-living and omnipresent as well as omnipotent, requires no sleep and possessor of what is in the sky and on earth. No one is able to heal or render help by His side without His permission. It is He who knows the past and the future... Wide is His chair/throne (His knowledge and strength). He has no difficulties taking care of both; i.e. what is in the sky and on earth as it is no burden to Him. And He is the Highest (the position of His nobility) as well as the Biggest (His authority).³⁷

The above pertaining to the verse of God's Throne has a line, which says there can be no intercessor without the permission of God. This is where the Ismailis validate the position of the *Murshid* who is the leader of the *Mu'min* (believer), *Amir-ul-Mu'minin* as the intercessor who was appointed by the Prophet Muhammad (SAWS) who was the "*khatim al-anbiya'*," meaning "seal of the prophets" which meant that Muhammad (SAWS) "could not be succeeded by another prophet (*nabi*)".³⁸ It is also a fundamental belief of all *Shi'as* that the last Prophet "designated 'Ali as his successor" and that this "designation or *nass* instituted through divine command and revealed by the Prophet at Ghadir Khumm shortly before his death."³⁹ This is where the legitimacy of *Imamat* (Leadership) is validated and this is what the Ismaili Khoja community still hold on to and consider the line of *Imamat* to not die and which to date is at the 50th Imam whom they address as Mawlana Shah Rahim Al-Hussaini, also known as Aga Khan V. It is by holding on to the rope of *Imamat* that *Ismailis*; albeit *Khojas* as they are being discussed believe they are acknowledging the two things left by the Prophet; the Book and the *ahl al-bayt*⁴⁰. Thus the *Ismailis* live vicariously through the *qur'an*, *hadith* as well as the *farmans* of the Imam of the time as it was done during the time of *Imam* Ali A.S. up till Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq, the fifth Imam, who also interpreted the law (*fiqh*).⁴¹

TRADITION

This tradition of following the *farman* continued during the Fatimid, Ajudan, Alamut period as well as in the sub-continent as many *farmans* are deep rooted in the *Qur'an and Sunnah* which the *Khojas* together with their *ginan* corpus introduced by the *Pirs*; use as a means of direction in their quest for the Light. Daftari mentions in his book that *Pir* Sadar-ud-Din was succeeded by his son Hassan Kabir al-Din who was "affiliated with the Suhrawardi Sufi order which at that time was prevalent in western and northern India."⁴² It also seems that *Pir* Hassan Kabir-ud-Din's name appears in the list of the spiritual masters of the Suhrawardi *tariqah*.⁴³ Under *Pir* Hassan, who was also the "contemporary of the Nizari Imam Mustansir bi'llah II in Anjudan" many Hindus were converted to Islam.⁴⁴ *Pir* Hassan as he was fondly addressed as was responsible for the conversion of many Hindus in Punjab. He eventually "settled in Ucch, which served as the seat of the Satpanth *da'wa* in India."⁴⁵

According to Asani who quoted Ivanow, the *khoja* title is a corrupted version of the Persian word *khwaja* that replaced the original Lohana word which was "*thakkur*" meaning "lord or master," or teacher even.⁴⁶

PIRS OR SAINTS

Pirs and *Sayyids* as Asani says were responsible for the "*Satpanth*" or true path employing the "Bhakti, Santh, Sufi, Vaishnavite and yogic traditions to articulate" the "core-concept of their teachings on the basis of "a variety of Indic and philosophical" approach.⁴⁷

Other than the *khojas*, the Indian sub-continent also saw the Nizari Ismaili spread to the north. The proselytizing of the Kashmiri Chak and Changad tribes lay in the hands of Shams of Sabswari who also happened to be Sadar-ud-Din's great-great-grandfather and was responsible for training the latter.⁴⁸

KHOJA LITERATURE AND ITS RELEVANCE FOR DA'WAH BY PIRS

This *Nizari* mystic, through his *garbis* and *ginans*; reached the hearts of many by igniting the fire of passion for both God and service to

humanity by way of the *satpanth* (true path) faith.⁴⁹ The latter is a short poem while the *granth* or literature is longer and addresses a different genre. One such *garbi* is, *Evi garbi sampon Sar* which speaks of spiritual upliftment through listening. *Granth*s like *Bujh Niranjana* as well as *Das Baatiyan* which is a *ginan*, speak of our Prophet Muhammad's (SAWS) *nur*/light as well as its purity likened to that of Allah's and angel Jibril's coming to the world to take ten things before *Qiyamah* respectively. The choice of words implores us to give thought to how this mystic/*pir* employs the known of the *murids* so as to be able to understand the unknown simultaneously. Through this means, Sufism and the depth of Islam through it by way of such meaningful poetry is disseminated. *Pir Shams* wrote poetry in many languages as his *da'wa* work took him all over the subcontinent and further. He also sung *garbis* outside a temple during *deshera* at a village not far from Ahmadabad known as Anilvad in Gujarat. *Pir Shams*, known as the 'first poet' of Punjab, also contributed towards "the growth of Urdu language during its infancy."⁵⁰ "The influx of immigrants into India" due to "Mongol incursion on the Islamic world", saw a dire need for "conciliation and concord" which was the need of the pluralistic society then. The mystics, including *Pir Shams*, saw liquidating barriers through syncretism as the only way forward.⁵¹ The Ismailis in Kashmir and Punjab identify themselves as "*gupti* (secret ones)".⁵² *Pir Shams* was also known to have "deputed many *dais* in China, Badakhshan, Kashmir and Gujarat".⁵³ He is said to have "visited lower Sindh" all the way to "Uchh Sharif" and "as far as Nepal", which is known by "the Indian Buddhists as Chinab-Nagari".⁵⁴

During the 46th Imam's reign, the Nizari Ismaili Seat of Imamat "was transferred from Persia to India" in the nineteenth century when the first Aga Khan I, moved from Iran to Sindh and later to Hind via Gujarat and eventually settling in Mumbai.⁵⁵ His marriage to the daughter of King Fateh Ali Shah, Sarv-i Jahan Khanum earned the 46th Nizari Imam his "honorific title of 'Aga Khan in 1234/1818, including the governorship of Mahallat and Qum'.⁵⁶ The "Qajarid court" treated the Imam well until the death of his father-in-law the King of the Qajar dynasty in 12500/1834.⁵⁷ Hence his exodus from Persia to India.

The method used by the Saints to proselytize to the people of Hindustan even before the arrival of the Imams were consistent. They worked from the known to the unknown. According to Daftari, because

the Ismailies were “persecuted outside the territories of their states,” *taqiyya* became crucial for self preservation.⁵⁸

KHOJA IDENTITY

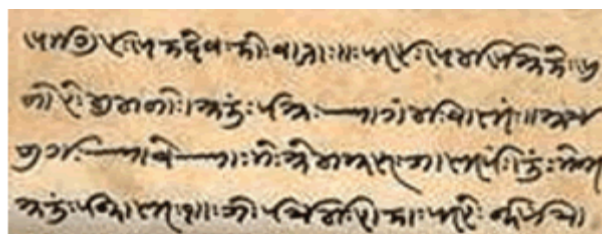
The Ismaili Nizaris have had “ambiguity of identity” namely “in the western regions of the Indian subcontinent, namely Punjab, Sindh, Gujarat and Rajasthan.”⁵⁹ The Nizaris Ismailies of the subcontinent, according to Asani, had been associated with various “*pirs* and *sayyids* from the 11th century” while the Imams resided in Iran. The Saints referred to their *tariqah* as the true path, thus we have the term *satpanth* and the practitioners are known as *Satpanthis*; belonging to “a small merchantile caste in western India” who eventually; “after some 150 years” began to call themselves “Shi’i Muslims, particularly Nizari Ismaili” led by The Aga Khan,⁶⁰ who brought about many changes to this community which according to Faisal Devji in his unpublished paper, Conversion to Islam: The Khojas,” quoted in Asani claims that they this group was also known as “a vaishnav path, a sufi order, a trader’s guild and a caste.”⁶¹ These syncretic terms for the different groups created a confusion for the colonial masters who needed a clear distinction between Hindu and Muslims; thus, the *Khojas* began to “identify themselves as Ismailis” due to the many schisms which arose pre and post-colonial era.⁶² These “strands” became far too much of a feat for the British Imperial Lordships, thus to deal with the polemic problems of a fast growing sense of nationalism based on religious identity, the colonial masters somewhat increased pressure on the *Khoja* community; like they did on others to identify themselves under one umbrella; Hindu or Muslim!⁶³ The intervention of The Aga Khan “as the hereditary Shi’i Imam” sanctioned a change using his position as the spiritual leader of the Ismaili Community and in this case, the *Khoja* community, “transforming *Khoja* identity from Indic caste to a Muslim denomination.”⁶⁴

The *Khoja* community is a distinctive mercantile community as well as a religious group which adheres to their Gnostic literature called *ginans* just like the other *Satpanthis* who were known as “Shamsis, Nijyapanthis (Nizaripanthis), Momnas, Imamshahis, Mahamargis and

Barmatis (Maheswaris). Each sub-group adopted a distinctive identity centred on the *pir* or *sayyid* it followed as well as the occupation or profession of its members.”⁶⁵

THE KHOJKI SCRIPT

This paper will be looking at the *Khoja* community of South Asia, their *pir*, Sadar al-Din, religious identity, devotional literature (*ginans*) and diasporas. Azim Nanji quoted in Asani says that this 15th century saint had created a “Khojki script” which is a set of alphabet for recording religious text and keeping commercial accounts” for the Lohanas (*thakur*) and Bhatias.⁶⁶ Below is an image showing a *Khojki* text.



Source: <http://ismailimail.wordpress.com/2011/01/29/khojki-script/67>

As mentioned previously, history has shown, the Ismailies have been a persecuted race and as such, Pir Sadar-ud-Din created this code of inscriptions which take their origin from the “Brahmic abugida script” which have “Indian roots” that blend into “Arabic/Persian influences”.⁶⁸ The script is associated with the Landa and Sharada alphabet.⁶⁹ This script was developed in Sindh by *Pir* Sadar-ud-Din “to facilitate the conversion and spiritual guidance of the Hindu communities (like the Lohanas).”⁷⁰ It “was a refined form of Lohanaki, the script used by the Lohanas.”⁷¹

MUSLIM OR HINDU?

Various forms of persecution and internal contestation marked the history of the Khoja community in India, as reflected in a number

of legal disputes brought before British colonial courts. Although the community identified itself as Muslim, certain social practices—particularly those relating to inheritance and the rights of women—appeared to retain strong affinities with local Hindu customs rather than conforming fully to Islamic legal norms. As noted by Rizwan Mawani in his postgraduate research, the term “Khoja” was employed rather loosely prior to 1809. In fact, early British colonial records often classified members of the community as Hindus, indicating the fluid and evolving nature of their communal identity during that period.⁷²

By 1841, the first Aga Khan had relocated the seat of the Imamate initially to Sindh, then briefly to Calcutta, before finally establishing it in Bombay. In 1847, in accordance with established Shi‘a legal principles, he advocated for a reform recognizing a daughter’s right to inherit a share of her father’s property. This position stood in contrast to the prevailing Khoja custom, which traditionally excluded daughters from inheritance. The evidence thus suggests that the Khoja community, despite identifying as Muslim, continued to adhere to pre-Islamic (Hindu-derived) customary practices in matters such as inheritance. In this sense, their religious affiliation and social customs reflected a complex interplay between Islamic identity and inherited cultural norms.

An observation made in 1847 by Sir Erskine Perry, the Chief Justice of Bombay, and cited by Mawani, states: “Although their language is Cutchi and their religion Mahomedan, in their appearance and manners the Khojas appear to be Hindu.”⁷³ A further observation, made approximately half a century later in Zanzibar by Justice Russell, appears to echo the earlier remark from Bombay. He noted: “Although a Khoja and his wife are married according to Mahomedan rites, yet at the time of his death, so far as regards the succession of his property, he is Hindu.”⁷⁴ This helps explain why, when Hassan Ali Shah sought to assert control over communally owned Khoja property, sections of the Khoja elite did not acquiesce passively. Rather, they expressed strong resistance, going so far as to challenge the authority of the 46th Imam even in matters such as the payment of tithe. Their opposition extended to accusing him of propagating “heretical” ideas in an effort to consolidate his influence and popularity.⁷⁵

MEASURES TAKEN FOR RESOLUTION: LITIGATION IN BRITISH COURTS

The British courts emerged as a crucial arena for resolving disputes between Aga Khan I and sections of the Khoja community when internal mechanisms failed to produce consensus.⁷⁶ It was during this period of legal contestation that the Ismaili leadership encouraged followers to practise their faith openly, asserting that *taqiyya* (precautionary dissimulation of belief) was no longer necessary. This shift was facilitated by the formal ratification of a document by the majority of the Ismaili community, affirming their allegiance to their *murshid* (spiritual guide). The legal proceedings thus not only addressed disputes over authority and property but also played a significant role in consolidating communal identity and religious practice in a more public and institutionalized form.⁷⁷

THE KHOJA CASE

The year 1850 witnessed the “Great Khoja Case,” presided over by Sir Erskine Perry. The proceedings effectively brought the Khoja community into the public limelight, as detailed reports of the case and its judgments were published in the *Bombay Times and Journal of Commerce*, a newly established English-language daily of the nineteenth-century British Raj.⁷⁸ According to Mawani, the Khojas continued to feature prominently in the press over the subsequent fifteen years, reflecting sustained public and legal interest in the community.⁷⁹ Whether this development served as a catalyst for the Khojas to move beyond their insular setting and integrate more visibly into the broader Muslim *ummah* remains open to debate; however, one point appears evident. Contemporary developments encouraged groups from Sindh and Gujarat—particularly from regions such as Kathiawar and Kutch—to migrate to what is now Mumbai in search of new opportunities within an emerging urban milieu. This transition also marked a significant shift in the public visibility of the Khoja community. Previously perceived as relatively “elusive,” they now became more exposed to social, legal, and scholarly scrutiny.⁸⁰ Bombay emerged as a canvas upon which the British constructed and disseminated representations of the Khojas’

“exotic” character. These portrayals catered both to the English-speaking populace within India and to British audiences at home, whose growing “appetite” for information ensured that this much-discussed community frequently occupied a prominent place in the columns of the daily press.⁸¹ On the other hand, this situation provided the Khojas with an opportunity to secure a place for themselves in the annals of history.⁸²

THE AGA KHAN CASE OF 1866

In the years that followed, the British courts not only witnessed but also adjudicated a significant legal dispute between the *murshid* and his *murids*. This culminated in the Aga Khan Case 1866, in which the identity of the Khoja community itself came under close judicial scrutiny. The case required formal mediation by colonial authorities, ultimately transforming what had been an internal communal matter into a legally defined question of religious identity and authority.⁸³ It was Justice Arnold who presided over the case and passed the judgement.⁸⁴ In his judgment, Sir Joseph Arnould articulated a position on the Khojas that is cited by Ali S. Asani and also preserved in an edited volume by W. E. Hart, published in Rajkot in 1903. The statement appears on page 363 of the *Report of Cases Decided in the High Court of Bombay* and is further echoed in Mawani’s thesis⁸⁵, described the Khoja community as “a sect of people whose ancestors were Hindu in origin, who were converted to, and have since consistently adhered to, the faith of the Shia Imami Ismailis, and who have always remained bound by ties of spiritual allegiance to the hereditary Imam of the Ismailis.”⁸⁶ It was at this juncture that a significant number of community members began to identify themselves as Sunnis, thereby giving rise to what came to be known as the Sunni Khoja community.⁸⁷

The Khojas who remained loyal to the Ismaili Imam found their communal identity formally recognized through the intervention of the British courts, where Arnold relied in part on what he regarded as the more “objective” scholarship of Western historians of Islam.⁸⁸

HAJI BIBI CASE

The early twentieth century, the people of India witnessed yet another case which the British courts presided over. This time, it was from the insider of the Aga Khan family.⁸⁹ It was called the Haji Bibi case which set the centre stage for the highly debated and contested case of the third Aga Khan, Sir Sultan Mohammad Shah by his cousin Haji Bibi and members of his extended family.⁹⁰ The claimant accused the defendant of being on equal status as themselves professing their affinity to the twelver *Shias* known as Ithna ‘Asharis and that the latter was not an *Imam*, but a “Sufi *pir*” like themselves.⁹¹ This case saw the *Khoja* community split into a *Khoja* Ithna’ashari faction and another remaining Ismaili; specifically *Nizaris*.⁹²

The Haji Bibi Case marked a turning point, enabling the 48th Imam, Aga Khan III, to initiate a series of reforms. By the time his grandson, Shah Karim al-Husayni, succeeded him, the Ismaili Nizari community—comprising diverse sub-communities from the Indian subcontinent, Persia, the Arab world, and even China—had begun to be systematically consulted in the formulation of a constitutional framework. This process contributed to a broader reorientation of the *Khojas*, integrating them more closely with their fellow co-religionists across linguistic, ethnic, and regional lines.⁹³ However, the debate over “correct Muslim identity,” intensified by movements such as Jamaat-e-Islami, Tablighi Jamaat, and other such groups, has promoted particular normative interpretations of Islam. This has, in turn, placed more pluralistic or historically distinct communities—such as the Ismaili *Nizaris*, including the *Khojas*—in a precarious position, as they navigate challenges to their religious legitimacy and identity.⁹⁴ The efforts of Aga Khan III to consolidate the *Khojas*’ religious identity within the Shi‘i *tariqah*, while also integrating them more fully into the wider Muslim *ummah*, and to respond to the growing impact of modernization, socio-economic transformation, and nationalism on his followers, appear to have been largely successful in fostering a more progressive and cohesive community.⁹⁵ This “programme of reform,” implemented through institutional mechanisms such as the constitution and the *farmāns* (authoritative directives of the Imam), constituted a two-pronged strategy employed by Aga Khan III. This approach was subsequently

expanded and further accelerated by his grandson, Shah Karim al-Husayni, extending its scope to Ismaili communities across the globe.⁹⁶

THE *FARMANS* AND THE CONSTITUTION

The *farmans* according to Asani, became the way the *Imam* “mandated reforms in all aspects of the Ismaili community.”⁹⁷ The constitution was also periodically revised to ensure its relevance to contemporary conditions and evolving social realities, enabling it to address the practical dimensions of everyday life for Muslims living within a secular framework.⁹⁸ The Imams have consistently emphasized the need to maintain a balance between *dīn* (religion) and *dunyā* (worldly life), while underscoring the primacy of *dīn* over *dunyā*.⁹⁹

The 20th century *Khojas* began shedding their names which resonated “with their “Lohana or Bhatia compatriots” for Arabic or Persian ones as their Islamic identity was being compromised in the eyes of other fellow Muslim.¹⁰⁰ Some even changed their surnames.¹⁰¹ Similarly, the Ismaili *Du’a*, which is a prayer and supplication was till 1950 mainly “in the Indic vernaculars, Sindhi, Gujarati with a number of phrases in Arabic.”¹⁰² It was during the time of the third Aga Khan in 1956 that it was fine tuned by his successor and grandson Karim who became the 49th Ismaili Nizari Imam and subsequently, Aga Khan IV.

With the six part set prayers *du’a* recited thrice a day, which begins with the first part beginning with *Surah Fatihah* followed by Qur’anic verses, with each part containing, “intercessory prayer addressed to the Imams and concludes in a prostration (*sujud*) affirming obedience and submission to God (*Allah*).”¹⁰³ According to Asani there were two reasons for this change. One, was to have a more universal lingua franca for worship that was not “Indic vernacular” but rather Arabic which is “a universal language of Islamic liturgical practice; secondly, it reflected a shift in the Khoja understanding of the doctrine of the Imamate from a Vaishnavite-coloured framework to one with *Qur’anic* proof texts.”¹⁰⁴ This change reflected the Khoja identity shift to an *Ismaili* one for a “pan-Ismaili” identity which meant that all Ismailis had commonality in terms of prayers which would bring them together from a “local to universal...practice that would be common to all Ismailis.”¹⁰⁵ Thus

strengthening the spiritual bond they all shared under the guidance of their *Murshid*.

SATPANTH OR TRUE PATH

For the *Khojas*, their devotional literature in the form of *ginans* was the identity of the *Satpanthis*. These literature which were believed to be the compositions of a “series of *pirs* and *sayyids* who for centuries served as intermediaries between Ismaili *Imam* in Iran and their Khoja followers in India.”¹⁰⁶ These hymns are poetic literature written in couplets or stanzas sung in “*ragas*, the *ginans* had been the focus of intense veneration as the embodiment of truth and wisdom.”¹⁰⁷ Along with the three daily set prayer, *ginans* were and are still a very important means of supplication in the *Jamat-khanas*. The *ginans* became an important means by which the *Satpanthis* transmitted and passed down their teaching from one generation to the next.¹⁰⁸ According to Mawani, these “sacred texts” called *ginans* was a strategy employed by the *Khojas* and their *Pir* as a “tool for safety for their survival obfuscating one tradition by creating another.”¹⁰⁹ Mawani goes on to say that the honourable Judge Arnould too “equated” the *ginans* “as a tool of conversion” which “blatantly included elements which drew upon Hindu mythological figures as well as prophetic episodes from the Qur’an.”¹¹⁰ He goes on to proclaim that due to the lack of *Khoja* association with Sunni Muslim practices, where the latter attends the mosque and offers *salah* (*namaz* in Persian and Urdu) versus the former reciting *du’a* and attending *Jam’atkhana*, makes their practice “Ismaili Sh’ism”¹¹¹ and not Sunni, (those who observe the traditions of the Prophet Muhammad (SAWS))

On one hand, the *khojas* rebuke the *sunnahs* and yet, on the other hand, they hold on to the traditions of their forefathers. The *khoja* case according to Mawani describes their relationship with tradition as being “complex and multi-layered.”¹¹²

Mawani claims that the 1866 trial did spin off the verdict which leaned towards the Aga Khan and his authority as the spiritual leader of the *Khojas*.¹¹³ It also became apparent that the *Khoja* community who with their “subservience” are the *Satpanthis* and with their traditions are another part of “Ismaili Islam”.¹¹⁴ With the constitution amended and revised, the *Khojas* are now “re-aligned”.¹¹⁵

RELEVANCE OF *GINANS* AND *KHOJA* LITERATURE

Moving forward, this paper will discuss a couplet or stanza from 3 *ginans* to show how *khoja* literature addresses esoteric (*batin*) aspects of life which is deemed important since the soul is eternal and that which is exoteric (*zahir*) is but temporary. The three *ginas* are, 1) *Gat ma(n) he(n) aavi-ne vira bhai*, 2) *Maari aatamna odhar ke alaga ma jajore* and 3) *Sam ku(n) aavanta jo kahe*.¹¹⁶ All three are by Pir Sadar-ud-Din.

This tradition is also prescribed by the Imam of the time in his farmans. Like this one that was given on 17th October, 1960 by the 49th Nizari Imam, Shah Karim Al-Hussaini, Aga Khan IV in Dacca:

I feel that unless we are able to continue this wonderful tradition which is a burden and a duty upon the Ismailia Association in particular, to teach the younger spiritual children their *Ginans*, I feel that we will lose some of our past which is most important to us and must be kept throughout our lives and lives of the spiritual children, who are yet to be born.¹¹⁷

For the first, which is the second of four couplets, that says,

Eji Gat ma(n)he(n) aavi-ne vira bhai sanmukh rahiye(n)
*Nind thaye tiya(n) thi oothine jaiye(n)*¹¹⁸

Meaning:

Come to the community or in this case House of congregation or *Jam'at-khana* and be like-minded

Where there is a chance to fall asleep, let us get up from there and leave.

The first line underscores the importance of congregational prayer, emphasizing not only the act of worship but also the cultivation of social harmony. By coming together for prayer, members of the community are encouraged to maintain cordial relations and arrive at mutual understanding on shared concerns, as communal living fosters unity and a sense of kinship.

The second line turns to the discipline required for regular prayer. Its reference to a place of slumber suggests an allusion to the obligatory dawn prayer (*ṣalāt al-fajr*). Pir Sadr-ud-Din appears to advise the devotee to physically remove oneself from the place of rest in order to resist the temptation of returning to sleep. Given the difficulty of waking at this hour, any hesitation may result in missing the prescribed time of prayer.

A second example may be drawn from the fourth stanza of another *ginan* attributed to Pir Sadr al-Din. This composition, consisting of five stanzas, carries a distinctly Sufi orientation while also engaging with the *virahini* motif—a Vaishnavite concept depicting the longing of the lover for the absent beloved. The *ginan* expresses the pain of separation, portraying the yearning of the devotee for union. Yet, it also introduces the idea that solace may be found through the companionship of a saintly guide who dwells in harmony with the seeker. The relevant verses are as follows:

Sakhi Maari vahalam vireha-ni vaat
Kena aagal kahiye(n) re
Koi sant mile re Sudheer
*Samaji ne rahiye(n) re*¹¹⁹

The translation for each two lines:

O precious friend, who can I speak of this separation to?
 If only I could find a saint whom I could live wisely.

The third one is five stanzas long and the last one is addressed here. It says,

Eji Peer Sadardeen boliya
Koi man aapnu samjaave
Kapda dhove so kiya hua
*Dil dhove so pave*¹²⁰

Here the verse is quoting the Saint Sadr al-Din saying

Please someone explain to the heart
 What is the point of washing your clothes
 Washing the heart will reap benefits.

The *ginans* according to Karim Gillani has two meanings; one is, “religious knowledge”, or “wisdom” which is similar to “the Sanskrit word *jnana*” that means “knowledge”¹²¹ while the other is “song” or “recitation”; both “suggesting a link to the Arabic “*ghanna*” and Urdu/Hindi meaning “*ghana*” both verbs meaning “to sing”.”¹²²

The *gināns* constitute a central component of Khoja religious life. They are recited in conjunction with the daily cycle of prayers—typically before or after the morning prayer, and likewise in the evening—while,

in certain instances, a *ginān* or a portion thereof is recited between the sunset (*maghrib*) and night (*ishā*) prayers. These recitations are often followed by the reading of *farmāns*, the authoritative directives of the Imam of the time or, at times, of his predecessors. While the discussion of *farmāns* will be taken up later, the present focus remains on the *ginān* tradition.

The “*ginān* corpus” comprises more than a thousand devotional compositions, primarily in Gujarati, Hindi, Punjabi, Saraiki, and Sindhi, though additional South Asian languages are also represented in the tradition.¹²³ The *gināns* are revered as sacred devotional compositions and may be understood, in a functional sense, as analogous to *śāstra* within Khoja religious life.¹²⁴

Each *ginān* is composed in a specific *rāga*, or melodic mode, which shapes its recitation and devotional expression.¹²⁵ *Gināns* are recited at different times and on varying occasions, reflecting the diversity of devotional contexts within Khoja religious life. Certain *gināns* are reserved for *bayt al-khayāl*—a designated time for meditation, typically observed in the early morning, about an hour before dawn. Others are performed during the *majlis*, a communal gathering oriented toward spiritual reflection and instruction.

Additionally, some *gināns* accompany the ritual consumption of *āb-i shifā* (blessed water), which is sanctified through the recitation of verses by the *murshid* (Imam) or through inherited devotional practice. This water is often diluted to accommodate the participation of a larger *jamāat*, reinforcing the collective dimension of the ritual.

Given that the Khojas historically emerged from the Lohana mercantile community—associated with higher social status within the South Asian caste framework—practices surrounding commensality carried particular significance. In a social milieu where sharing from a common vessel could be considered ritually impure, especially across caste lines, the Imams, through the agency of the Pirs, introduced the institution of *gatpāt* (from *gat*, congregation, and *pāt*, spiritual path or *Tariqah*).

This reform was symbolized through the use of a communal vessel (*kumbh*) and small cups (*pyālīs*), from which members of the congregation would drink in turn, emphasizing spiritual equality and unity. This practice continued well into the modern period, though

it underwent modification during the COVID-19 pandemic, when hygienic considerations led to the replacement of shared ceramic cups with disposable ones.

SIGNIFICANCE OF WATER IN ISLAM

One may inquire into the significance of such a ritual; however, the Qur'an itself underscores the value and sanctity of water, particularly through its purificatory properties. As cited by Asani, in Chapter 50, verse 9, Allah states:¹²⁶

"And We send down from the clouds water abounding in good, then We cause to grow thereby gardens and the grain that is reaped,"

In Chapter 21, Verse 30 of the Qur'an, Allah declares: *"We have made all living things from water,"* highlighting water as the very foundation of life. This theme is further deepened in Chapter 11, Verse 7: *"And He it is who created the heavens and the earth in six days, and His Throne was upon the water,"* indicating the primordial and pre-creative significance of water in the divine order. The centrality of water is not only theological but also deeply embedded in Islamic ritual and lived experience. The sacred well of Zamzam occupies a profound place in the spiritual consciousness of Muslims, symbolizing divine mercy and sustenance. Likewise, the ritual of sa'i—performed between the hills of Safa and Marwa during pilgrimage—commemorates the desperate yet faithful search of Hajira (peace be upon her) for water for her son Isma'il. This act stands as a powerful acknowledgment of Allah's providence, wherein the gift of water emerges as both a physical necessity and a profound spiritual blessing.

While there are controversies which surround "the authorship of the *ginans*," one cannot doubt the content and intent which have guided the believers on their moral conducts as well as "spiritual quest".¹²⁷ This ritual continues to occupy a large part of the "Nizari Khoja" religious rituals.¹²⁸

Furthermore, this corpus allows the *Khojas* to learn about Islam through the *Pirs* and to keep their culture and language in tact as well. As Daftari said, the *ginans* are "an oral tradition" which "relate anachronistic, hagiographic and legendary accounts of the activities

of the pirs and their converts” that are “reliable historical source s of information.”¹²⁹

KHOJA DIASPORA

The *Khojas* through time found themselves in different situations especially financially. As diaspora of a race is for many reasons, one of the many less favourable one was that of the community leaving for Africa. This exodus was the result of the advice of the 48th Imam, Sir Sultan Mohammad Shah, Aga Khan III who told his community in Gujarat to be brave and set sail. He also advised them that upon reaching there, they were to disperse in all directions so as not to be in one place but to be far and in touch so as to be of help to one another with a promise that he would personally evacuate them if the need arose and rightfully it did in Uganda. The Imam kept his word by sending his aircraft and subsequently even non-Ismaïlies and non-Muslims found themselves being helped out of a precarious situation which also threatened their lives. However, these immigrants in East Africa found themselves being uprooted and shipped elsewhere like the US, UK and Canada where they had to start all over again. Like Khoja-Moolji quotes Rehmat in her book, “*Humain ukhad diya gaya tha*” meaning we were uprooted!¹³⁰

However, Khoja-Moolji states that the three important elements that allowed and still allows the group to progress and maintain their place in societies they live in are, “their shared orientation to the Divine” which helps to foster “bonds of solidarity and compassion that transcend ethnic, linguistic and cultural differences.”¹³¹

Today, the *Khoja* diaspora finds itself in all parts of the world especially the developed ones. They attribute their success to having a living Imam who is astute and resourceful.

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Contributors

DR DURDANA SHAHEEN

Associate Professor, Villa Marie College, Somajiguda, Hyderabad, India
Email: shaheen.durdana@yahoo.in

DR FAZZUR RAHMAN SIDDIQUI

Senior Fellow, Indian Council of World Affairs, New Delhi, India
Email: fazzur@gmail.com

DR MAZHAR ASIF

Professor @ Vice Chancellor, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi, India
Email: vc@jmi.ac.in

DR MOHAMMAD AYUB NADWI

Professor, Department of Arabic, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi, India
Email: ayubnadwi@gmail.com

DR MOHAMMAD MUSHTAK (TIJARWI)

Associate Professor, Department of Islamic Studies, Jamia Millia Islamia
Islamia, New Delhi, India
Email: muftimushtak@gmail.com

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Assistant Editor (Islam and the Modern Age & Islam Aur Asr I Jadeed),
ZHIIS, JMI, New Delhi, India
Email: manwar1@jmi.ac.in

KHURSHID MAKANI

Research Scholar, Department of Islamic Studies, Jamia Millia Islamia,
New Delhi
Email: makanikhurshid11@gmail.com

DR TARIQ KHAN

Assistant Professor, Department of History, Zakir Husain Delhi College
(Evening) University of Delhi, India
Email: sahibzadatariqziakhan@gmail.com