

Reconstruction of Muslim Philosophy

Before dealing with the crux of the problem it may be stated at the very outset that this paper does not claim any originality for the ideas expressed in it. To say that this paper is original in its contents would be worse than being pretentious, for these ideas have been expressed in one way or another ever since the time of our Prophet (peace be on him) by his true followers, who had the perspicacity to realize the truth and fight for it. And we should bear in mind that the shahud of Bilal, the first muezzin, was a physically conscious expression, the result of his own acquaintance with his living ideal.

Secondly, whereas no originality is claimed here, it is believed that this paper is based on certain definite assumptions, states of consciousness, and experiences of some of our greatest leaders, saints and sages. With them the **shahud** has been as real, but on another plane from that of the original associates of the Prophet (peace be on him).

Those of us who are either not thoroughly informed about these assumptions or don't have any appreciation for them, or have not attained to some form of shahud as a result of spiritual evolution or otherwise, may reject this paper as theoretical, orthodox or subjective; dogmatic and old-fashioned. Such critics fail to understand the Arabic interpretations of the root from which several of the words used herein, and by them, arise.

One of the tragedies of this so-called age of enlightenment is that pseudo-Islamic philosophy has come to contaminate pure and true Islamic philosophy as propounded in the Holy Qur'an by Allah and given to humanity by Rassoul-Lillah (peace be on him) and more detailed in Hadith.

This pseudo-philosophical erudition consists mostly of translations and instrumentations that have excited non-Muslims and many ultra-modern groups in Islamic countries. Tradition, **ijma** and dogmas have been mixed with streams of erudition, and granted that philosophies should have some **maj** or premises, these premises have not always been confined to the Holy Scriptures or traditions. Ijma may have its place in society or in the law-courts, but where does it belong in Islamic philosophy: Is "reason" among the wonderful names (attributes) of Allah?

When we look abroad to conferences on Islam we find that diplomats and European savants control not only the panels, but the programs, the procedures and everything else. Although some of the teachers are without prejudice, they are without knowledge of Islam—it is not even required that they accept the existence of a living Deity; certainly this Deity, when named, is not closer than the neck-vein.

Therefore what they have to offer has nothing to do with realities and hagiography. These teachers are mere formalists who know movements but do not understand Hikmat, or the wisdom of Qur'an (or any scripture), either in hidden or manifest form. They neither have true knowledge of the nature of Allah and his role in human life, nor do they understand the aim and purpose of life as ordained by Allah.

What is affirmed here as being Islamic Philosophy is strictly speaking Allahistic philosophy, especially as it is derived from Qur'anic revelation. One must not depart in any sense from kalama although within these bounds one may have various interpretations of kalama. And what is not in

Adzan must be thoroughly explained before it can be added to true Islamic philosophy, at the first level, or in Qur'an and Hadith at other levels.

Another important point to notice is that in an attempt to reorient Muslim philosophy there is a tendency to exclude **tasawwuf**. As soon as Mohammed was dead (peace to him), the shahud entered either a subjective state, or a transfinite experience from the material state. Shahud became embodied in memory or subtle vision and as soon as sight passes from the material state to memory or clairvoyancy tasawwuf begins.

Philosophers have assumed nationality, derived from the Greeks, and under the cry of "Mohammed," not Plotinus, they have introduced Grecian principles predating Plotinus. They both proclaim Sufis and attack Sufism. Poets and philosophers like Saadi, Rumi, Al-Ghazzali and others are introduced as "lighted of Islam" to be discarded whenever the predilections of the philosophers desire. After all the arguments of Al-Ghazzali, whom they sometimes proclaim, we are back in the self-same arena of thoughts, confusions, and self-proclamations under the name of "Islamic" which means surrender to Allah and not surrender to ideas.

There is no need to speak of non-Muslims when at all times we find men who call themselves Muslims finding fault with Islamic philosophy (Allahistic philosophy), which they now wish to reorient. They do not respect the asma-ullah-i-Ta'ala (names and attributes of God) and living energies. Before thinking about reorienting Muslim philosophy, we must accept that when we deeply study nature, we find them in Sifat-i-Allah. We ask the lovers and students of nature who wish to reorient Islamic philosophy whether they know and realize that a deep study of the various sciences demonstrates that Sifat-i-Allah (attributes of God) operate through the mineral, vegetable and animal world.

It is useless to repeat these beautiful names (Sifat-i-Allah) without incorporating them in one's nature. Nor do we appreciate that the moral culture is based on the assimilation of these same Sifat. Critics of the point of view expressed here will not only have to read from the great poet Rumi, but also the great philosopher Ibn Khaldun whose monumental works are now received in the West, even more than in parts of the so-called Islamic world, as forerunners of both the social and scientific worlds in what are sometimes known as "enlightenment cultures." It is ridiculous to find the non-Islamic world accepting those sages, and "Muslim philosophers" rejecting them.

If we study modern physics in its entirety and depth we shall see it acceded to the unity of Allah (Wahdat and Tauhid) without confirming any theology. We can see it especially in present day teachings on Light, Spectroscopic Analysis and post-atomic-disintegration ideas.

If we study modern biology we can see how Kemal, Jemal and Jelal operate in the living form. If we study the characteristics of chemical elements and if we study the Sifat-i-Allah we find in each case a sort of unifying essence behind each, while manifesting through differentiations. Ibn Khaldun discovered this and it is mentioned in his Muqadimmah, but since his time Islamic philosophy went downhill. People began to please certain regimes and diplomatic circles rather than Allah. Eventually Muslim philosophy and the Muslim word have come to a deplorable state, where philosophies have played doubtful roles. The phrases “back to Qur’an and Hadith” are used, but Allah is given short consideration before social conventions.

To orient means to turn or gear toward a definite goal. The question arises to which goal shall we re-orient Muslim philosophy? What will be our criterion? It is obvious that today human limitations and inclinations have been bound by subjective considerations. One Western writer has remarked that with many so-called “reform movements” within Islam in the past two centuries, there is no appreciable change in moral behavior.

So we either have no absolute goal or valid criteria on the one hand, or half-distorted and misunderstood knowledge and understanding of true Islamic philosophy on the other. The problem of reorientation logically leads one to first explore deeply Islamic philosophy, and then to reorient Muslim philosophy to Allahistic philosophy. This is divine in nature and spiritual in essence. It transcends any subjective intellectualism and personalism.

In the context of reorientation to Allahistic philosophy, it seems necessary to review the essential meaning of Islam. Islam signifies peace. It is derived from the word **salam**, meaning peace. Islam or peace is the goal of every soul and the different teachers of humanity have all come to show the way that leads to this goal.

The God-ideal was taught to man gradually. There was a time when the elements of nature, such as earth, water, fire and air were worshipped. Then prophets and teachers were idealized as incarnations of God, until from the Semitic race came the Prophet Ibrahim, the father of religions, who taught the ideal of the formless God, which was explained stage by stage by different prophets who came after him. It was openly proclaimed by Moses and spiritually taught by Christ.

Thus ages succeeded until the Merciful Lord desired to bring the teachings of His religion to the final state. This was through Prophet Mohammed (peace be on him). One day when the Holy Prophet was delivering his khutba (address) on Mount Arafat during his last pilgrimage, Allah completed His revelation and philosophy of life for mankind by revealing the following Ayat (in Arabic, meaning:)

“This day have I perfected thy religion and completed My favor unto thee and chosen Islam as the

religion for thee.”

The straight path of Islam requires submission to the will of Allah as revealed in the Qur'an, and recognition of Hazrat Mohammed (peace be on him) as the Messenger of God, who in his daily life interpreted and exemplified that divine revelation, which was given through him. Innumerable biographies of the Prophet bring out different aspects of his unique personality and mission in life. Jami has most beautifully surmised up the salient features of the Prophet's personality in his immortal verse (in Persian) meaning

“You alone embody in yourself the best qualities of all the prophets.”

The Holy Prophet, who every moment of his life exemplified in all respects the spirit of manifest surrender to Allah, which is a very hard base of pure Islam. The Holy Prophet both theoretically as well as practically showed that Allah has given to man-kind a universal practical philosophy and has also shown the way to adapt it to special circumstances and needs of the time.

But it must not be overlooked that there are roots which are unchangeable, and are meant to determine time, and no times can alter them. This means that Islamic philosophy, or rather Allahistic philosophy is universal in its essence and approach. Therefore the principles, tenets, and methods of Islamic philosophy can be preached to all races and at all times or periods of human history.

The only period in Islamic history after the Holy Prophet (peace be on him) is the period of Knul afah-Rashidun, when Islam spread far and wide and made remarkable progress in all fields of science, art and morality. This was the period when people were happy and progressed in all directions. No person who calls himself an objective critic can possibly deny the fact. The great English writer, H. C. Wells, pointed out that the proof of Mohammed (peace be on him) came in his immediate successors; Islamic apologists quote Wells but by-pass the fact that after Hazrat Ali the “Islamic world”—which ceased to be an Allahistic world—went off in other directions, bringing corruption, egocentricity, and mammonism and a large sector of apologists have refused to accept this history or explained it away. Whatever appears in Holy Qur'an or in later literature concerning nufs is skipped. No one did more than Data Sahib (Al-Hujwiri) to fight this trend and restore the greater Jihad (against the lowest-self). Too many will not face this fact or the basic causes of disintegration, within or without Islam.

When the Muslim world is surrounded by problems and looks for solution, we must realize that the panacea for these ills lies in going back to Islamic philosophy. The greatest contribution of Islam which is not found among the Greeks is **kashf**, insight, not **akl**, reason, which is after all a **kafir** invention. In the end the choice between Islam and **harb** or **kafr** may come in kashf, if in nothing else, although there is more than kashf.