RELIGIOUS PHILOSOPHY OF
SIR SYED AHMED KHAN AND
ITS CONTEMPORARY RELEVANCE

Her presentation on Sir Syed's Religious Philosophy
And Its Contemporary Relevance is her own original
approach to the issue. I am satisfied that her
thesis is submitted for M. Phil.

Signature of

ALIGARH 26.12.1995

Prof. S. Waheed Akhtar
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INTRODUCTION

(a) Life and Times of Sir Syed
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Sir Syed's Early Life

Sir Syed Ahmed Khan was born on 17th of October, 1817, at Delhi. He is the father of Muslim renaissance and resurgence in the South Asian sub-continent. He belonged to a very illustrious family of Syed nobility tracing its descent from Hazrat Imam Hussain. Syed Burhan, the great grandfather of Syed Ahmed Khan, had migrated from Iran during the reign of Mughal emperor Shah Jahan and entered in his service holding responsible civil and military posts. Syed Ahmed's grandfather Syed Mohmed Hadee was given such titles as 'Jawahid Ali Khan' and 'Jawad-ud-Dawla' during the reign of Alamgir II. Syed Ahmed's father Mir Muttaqi was a man of mystical temperament and had no liking for court life. Although Mir Muttaqi refused to accept any titles and honours yet he was in touch with the Mughal court on account of his personal friendship with Akbar Shah. Sir Syed himself used to visit the Mughal court in view of his close family contacts with the same. Thus on account of his ancestral titles, he came to be known as Syed Ahmed Khan. Syed Ahmed's father was in close touch with Shah Gulam Ali, the patron-saint of Mujaddidi order, founded by Shaikh Ahmed Sirhindi. It was after his name that Sir Syed Ahmed was named by the saint Shah Ghulam Ali. Sir Syed's maternal grandfather Khawaja Farid-uddin belonged to a very eminent (Kashmiri) family of Delhi. He was a descendent of a line of commanders and administrators
since emperor Shah Jahan. He was an accomplished statesman, mathematician, astrologer and linguist. He was appointed the superintendent of Calcutta 'Madrash-i-Alliyah' in 1791 by the recommendation of General Martin and other high Government officials. In 1803 the then Governor-General Lord Welsly decided to send Farid-ud-din as an attache of British Embassy to Persia. However along the journey the ambassador fell ill and returned back. Consequently Farid-ud-din singly tackled the whole job to the best satisfaction of Government. Subsequently, he was appointed the political officer at the court of Ava on his return to Calcutta. When Sir Syed was born in 1817, his maternal grandfather Khawaja Farid-ud-din had already become the Prime Minister of Akbar Shah II, in 1815. He enjoyed the personal friendship of highly ranked British Civilian and military officers. Sir Syed had the good fortune of living under loving care of an accomplished and distinguished statesman of his times. It is obvious that young Sir Syed must have learnt a lot about contemporary events at first hand. Farid-ud-din was a very strict disciplinarian and must have exercised a lot of influence on Sir Syed during his formative years. He rendered a valuable service in managing the court affairs but on account of some political intrigues he left the job. He died in 1828, and Sir Syed was so much impressed by him, that he throughout his adult age kept his grandfather's sweet memories and wrote his biography by way of homage titled Sirit-i-Faridyah in 1893.
As a child Syed Ahmed was physically stronger, healthier and more vigrous in comparison to other children born in his family. Sir Syed's upbringing was not very strict. He participated in every popular game in vogue during early nineteenth century Delhi. He was given ample freedom in his childhood, but never allowed to go out alone. Apart from his physical stamina and vigour, there was nothing exceptional about him in his early years. He did not display any extraordinary brilliance which could indicate that he was destined to play the role of an outstanding leader in his years to come. Syed Ahmed appears to have developed his intellectual powers gradually by constant training, hard-work and continued application.

**Early Education**

Sir Syed's education was on old classical lines. After studying the Quran, he began his Arabic and Persian lessons. As his father was a man of mystical temperament, so he remained under the guidance and care of his mother (Aziz-u-Nisa Begum) and his grandfather Khawaja Farid-ud-din. His mother played a key role in his early education. He learnt all the subjects under the guidance of his mother, who was a talented woman. Besides, she inculcated a strong character in young Sir Syed. Sir Syed did not learn English. He also did not go through all the routine in his Persian and Arabic studies. He studied some books on grammar, syntax, logic, philosophy and a few
elementary books on mathematics under the guidance of his maternal uncle. Here again, he did not show any special interest in any area of study or any specific bent of mind. For a while, he attended the clinic of Hakim Ghulam Hyder Khan with a view to study medicine and understand its applications. However, a medical career also did not attract him. This was his total formal education up to the age of eighteen. After all this he started reading and participating in the literary and poetic meetings that were quite common in Delhi. He had the opportunity of meeting the famous Persian Writers and scholars of Delhi such as Mufti Sadru-ud-din Azurda, Sahbai and Ghalib.

The Turning Point of Sir Syed's Life

As a young man Sir Syed indulged himself in all sorts of pleasures. He spent his youth in very colourful company. He would take part in singing and dancing parties and go on picnics with his friends. But the death of Syed Muhammad Khan, whom he loved very deeply changed his life altogether. He lost interest in colourful social gatherings. He gave up wearing fashionable clothes. Nextly, the death of his father in 1838 changed his carefree life into a responsible one. The salary his family was getting from mughal court was ceased and syed Ahmed Khan started seeking for a job to support his family. Sir Syed Ahmed Khan learnt judicial proceedings from his uncle Khalil Ahmed Khan, who was a 'Sadr-Amin' in Delhi. A few months later against the
wishes of his family, he joined the service of East India Company. He was appointed as a serishtadar in the court of his uncle. In 1838 he was transferred to Agra as a Naibmunshi in the office of the Divisional Commissioner, Sir Robert Hamilton. As Sir Syed Ahmed was semi-educated, he was mindful of his inadequacies. He worked hard to overcome the lack of self-confidence owing to inadequate education. In Agra Syed Ahmed made his literary debut and acquired quite a reputation as a budding author, indicating that he was endeavoring to overcome his lack of self-confidence. Those days permanent settlements in some districts of Agra division were being introduced. To expedite the settlements and to streamline the administrative procedures, Syed Ahmed drafted *Dastur-ul-Amal*, a transcript and analysis of settlement Regulations. It was followed by *Jam-i-Jam* a Persian history of Mughal dynasty including the reign of Bahadur Shah in 1840. Meanwhile, he compiled *Intikhab-al-Akhwayn* a civil law digest in order to get promoted to the position of a munsif in an examination. In 1841 he successfully competed for munsifship and was appointed a munsif at Mainpuri.

In 1846 Sir Syed thought of revising his modest religious learning and improve upon the same. He studied standard works of *fiqh* and *Asul-i-fiqh*, Arabic literature, traditions and the Quran from well known scholars. In the very same years he wrote some tracts including a biographical sketch of the prophet of Islam. He also carried out an Urdu translation of chapters tenth and twelfth of *Tuhfa-i-Isna Ashriya* a pamphlet dealing with
Shia-Sunni controversy. Syed Ahmed's most important non-religious work during his stay at Delhi was compilation of Athar-ul-Sanadid. It was compiled in one and a half year and published in 1844. It is partly an archeological history and partly a biographical encyclopedia of the prominent contemporary personalities of Delhi. Its archeological section deals with forts, mosques, towers, gardens, wells, bridges etc. of Delhi. It, as well, illustrates a list of 142 Hindu and fifty nine Muslim rulers of Delhi, who ruled from 1400 B.C. upto 1853 A.D. It also contains a list of various Delhi's forts renovated or rebuilt by different ruling dynasties from time to time. This book was instrumental to his success winning for him international recognition. He subsequently became a member of the Royal Asiatic Society. He was the first Asiatic to be honoured as a member of this society.

Another notable work of Syed Ahmed Khan was the revision of Ain-i-Akbari in three volumes. The famous Urdu poet Ghalib sent him compliments in the form of a mathnavi. However he remarked that, it would have been better for Syed Ahmed Khan to devote his time and energy to the study of English institutions, than to waste them in diverting the attention of people to these old and outdated stories. This book was published by Royal Asiatic Society in 1862.

Visit to England:

On April 10, 1869 Syed Ahmad Khan sailed for England. His two sons Syed Hamid and Syed Mahmud
accompanied him. Syed Ahmad's decision to accompany his sons to England was determined by two considerations; firstly, he wanted to make a first hand study of the system of education and the residential life at the British Universities, particularly Oxford and Cambridge, and secondly he wanted to write a rejoinder to Sir William Miurs' 'The life of Mahomet', for which he had to collect material from the libraries in England. Sir Syed rose to the occasion to meet the challenge of William Miur's book 'The Life of Mahomet' and wrote 'Essays on the Life Muhammad' (1870) in English. It was later published in Urdu with many additions under the title of Al-Khutabat-i-Ahmadiya. Syed Ahmed has given interesting details of his journey in a series of letters published in Aligarh Institute Gazette.

Syed Ahmed Khan's visit to England was the most significant event in his life. He made a first hand study of all the important English and Scottish universities and minutely examined their curricula of education. It was here that he formulated his future plans and chalked out the details on which he had to model the halls and hostels, the class-rooms and the lecture-theatres of the M.A.O. College. On October 2, 1870 Syed Ahmed reached India from England and resumed charge of his duties at Benars. In December 1870, a few months after his return to India Syed Ahmed Khan started his famous periodical Tahdhib-al-Akhlq.
This journal aimed largely at reforming Muslim religious thinking and putting the Muslims back on the road of progress. It tried to persuade the Muslims to adopt the best kind of civilization, so that the contempt with which the civilized people look upon Muslims should be removed and they may join the comity of civilized people.18

Movement for Education:

Syed Ahmed's interest in education had begun soon after 1857. But it was many years afterwards that his views on education assumed the form of an educational movement. In 1859 Syed Ahmed established a Persian Madrasah at Moradabad and wrote a small pamphlet both in Urdu and English, about the need and value of education. The establishment of the scientific society at Ghazipur was another landmark in the educational movement of Syed Ahmed Khan. In 1864, two months after the establishment of scientific society, Syed Ahmed established a school at Ghazipur.19 In 1864, Syed Ahmed came to Aligarh. Since he was the moving spirit of scientific society it couldn't function at Ghazipur in his absence and was shifted to Aligarh. The scientific society was a very active body. Due to the efforts of Syed Ahmed Khan many important and valuable English works were translated into Urdu. In 1866 the number of the journals and papers subscribed by the society including compliments had reached 44. Syed Ahmed wrote to the collector of Aligarh: "one of the chief
aims of the society is the introduction of improved methods of agriculture into India by which the condition of the people may be improved". In 1866 Syed Ahmed started a journal on behalf of the scientific society known as The Indian Institute Gazette. On his transfer to Benares on August 15, 1867 he left the work of society under the charge of Raja Jai Kishan Das.

On May 24, 1875 the M.A.O. College was established at Aligarh. This was according to Gibb "the first modernist organization in Islam". In July 1876 Syed Ahmed Khan retired from service and came to Aligarh. He dedicated all his time, money and energy to the cause of M.A.O. College. Syed Ahmed wanted this college to act as a bridge between the old and the new, the East and the West. In 1883 Syed Ahmed Khan established the Muhammadan Civil Service Fund Association. He planned that through this money Muslim students can go to England and appear in Civil Services. In 1883 Syed Ahmed Khan fell seriously ill. As soon as he recovered, he thought it necessary to prepare a Trustee Bill, so that the management of the college property might be vested in the Trustees and the danger of confusion and conflict after his death might be averted. A couple of months before his death, he even stopped talking to people and would remain silent for hours. Only eight days before his death he expressed his opinion about the language controversy, ranging then in the country.
On March 24, 1898 he fell ill. The doctors struggled hard to save him, but failed and on March 27, 1898 he breathed his last and his body was laid to rest in the mosque of college.22

Social, Political and Economic Conditions of Muslims

The last decade of 17th century Mughal Empire experienced a sort of numbness owing to the futile Deccan wars waged by Aurangzeb. A virtual civil war broke out after his death in 1707. Bahadur Shah who followed Aurangzeb could not prove an effective ruler. He ruled for five years and after him there was an open struggle for power and all sorts of intrigues were indulged in by competing political groups. Consequently there was a leadership crisis at its worst.23

After 1750 the courts of Indian Muslim princes were miniature copies of the Imperial Mughal court. Only Haider Ali could resist against the British onslaught. The most terrifying and sorrowful examples of degeneration were those of the courts of Hyderabad and Oudh. By the beginning of 19th century Indian Muslim rulers had realized the fact that real power was in the hands of British. The political weakness of Mughal rule was aggravated by the economic compulsions of the times. The Mughal Empire around 19th century was virtually reduced to a landlocked state. The Europeans had captured all the sea-routes and all trade was carried on by them. The internal trade was also crippled
due to unsafe roads in view of the ongoing internal anarchy. The trade centres such as Bombay, Madras and Calcutta were under British Suzerainty and all these factors conspired to make the continuation of Mughal rule an uphill task.

The new economic system led by the British seemed still profitable to Mughal princelings. They purchased whatever was offered to them and that too on British terms. Eventually India became a market of goods produced in European factories. In view of the same, Indian commercial system was shaken to its foundations and damaged beyond repair. In course of time, the British introduced the English language and literature. Under the influence of Raja Ram Mohan Roy, the Hindus embraced the new system of education, which was more liberal and enlightened. On the contrary, the Muslims had no informed leadership and they did not accept the western education. According to Dr. Tarachand "the Muslim mind was soaked in medievalism and thus intellectually quite unprepared to withstand the attack from the West".

India experienced momentous change in social political and economic spheres of action during early 19th century when Sir Syed was born. Slowly and steadily British imperialist order was being installed in place of Mughal Empire. New social forces were replacing old social order. Western science and technology inspired increasing
industrialisation, in the process, shattering the medieval economic structure. Sir Syed being brought up on old values and traditions and facing rapid transition and change was finding himself on the horns of a dilemma. While tradition pulled him in one direction, modernity pushed him in another. It was to his perennial credit that Sir Syed faced the situation squarely and took the bull by the horns.

The Mughal Empire was getting shorn of all its glory. The red fort presented a gloomy picture of degeneration and decay. The princes inside the fort were dying of hunger but out of a sense of false pride did not venture outside to earn their livelihood. The process of decay started in the beginning of 18th century. It reached its climax in early 19th century. Even the Marathes, the Jats and the Sikhs which were instrumental in shaking central Mughal authority could not stand to the rising tide of the British imperialism. The collapse of the Mughal Empire inevitably led to the downfall of a powerful segment of society. They were deriving their social and economic sustenance from the Empire. The fall of the Empire resulted in the loss of the socio-economic security. European trading companies backed by superior technological sophistication, struggled in India to find markets for their goods. All strategies to kill the indigenous industries and check the export of Indian goods to Europe were employed by British merchants. In the process, the
flourishing tradesman of India were reduced to the position of Economic destitution.

The plight of the Muslim traders became worse than their counterparts belonging to other religions. Sir Syed observed "The speed with which decline has set in is so far rapid that it seems imminent that within a few years the Muslims will not be found anywhere except serving in stables and kitchens or mowing the grass". 27

Nevertheless, Muslims were culturally and intellectually alive. However, when British slowly and steadily began to consolidate their grip on Indian political scene, Muslims faced a virtual crisis. The Hindus were in an advantageous position. They were already surviving under Muslims. Therefore, the Hindus of Bengal who went through modernisation to begin with, had no difficulty in switching over their loyalties towards the British. On the other hand, Muslims were reduced to political subjugation for the first time. This difference in the social position between the communities was vital and entailed different methods of approach to overcome their respective predicaments. 28

Muslims struggled for half a century under the guidance of a number of brilliant leaders to overcome this political crisis. They were involved in a life and death struggle. They invested all their talent, wealth and efforts to come out of this predicament. Eventually they failed in this venture. However that is another story. The
fact is that Muslims during these years were not bereft of political leadership of a higher order. The Muslims dominated the bureaucracy and held most important positions in the administration of the country. However the British in the light of their own political perceptions and historically conditioned reflexes and prejudices began to discriminate against Muslims and encourage Hindus at their cost. The Muslims as a cultural group were still considered hostile by the British. The Hindu on the other hand demonstrated conciliatory attitude towards Christianity as well as British rule. Subsequently in view of the same, Hindus captured the crucial administrative positions and Muslims were phased out in persuance of a well thought out strategy.  

Even upto the early years of 19th century Muslims were greatly creative from the literary point of view. The new learning that was developing in England at that time was reaching the learned circles in India. The Nawab of the Murshidabad used to study English literature and politics. The king of Oudh patronised European art and oriental philosophy. However owing to several factors, this trend could not fully fructify or mature among the Muslims of India.  

The details of the political activity as given by Dr. Hunter in Our Indian Musalmans reveal a very bright picture of the Muslims of the time. The majority not only
displayed great moral courage and deep religious convictions, but proved that they can run the administration of the country. The intellectual and the moral position of the Muslims of India before 1857 was definitely above the normal. Despite numerous superstitious practices in which Muslims were fettered, their over-all position was not as bad as it is generally depicted.  

The 18th century witnessed the political decline and social disintegration of Muslims throughout the world. In the very same century two outstanding personalities of modern Islam Muhammad b. Abdul Wahab (1703-1783) and Shah Waliullah Dehlvi (1703-1763) appeared in Arabia and India respectively. They generated wide-spread reforms in Islamic lands. They proposed similar measures with a view to reform, Muslim society. However, they differed in one important respect. Muhammad b. Abdul Wahab fought tooth and nail against sufi practices and beliefs whereas Shah Waliullah Dehlvi was distinguished sufi himself in view of being rooted in Naqshbandia - Mujadidia Sufi traditions.

The reform movement led by Shah Waliullah was multi-dimensional. He attacked the superstitious practices widely adopted by Muslim masses. He criticized mystics for their complete reliance on intuitional knowledge and absorption into what may be called morbid spirituality. He also criticized ulema for their ultra conservatism and lack of independent thinking. On the positive side, he enunciated
the fundamental principles of Islamic ideology. He was convinced of the need for a reinterpretation of Islam as a universal creed. He forcefully underlined the need for the use of the principle of Ijtihad, a principle neglected and ignored by the doctors of Islam for centuries together. He argued that centuries long non-application of Ijtihad had resulted in the decline of Islam as a socio-political force. Shah Walliullah demonstrated exceptional courage in advocating what he called absolute Ijtihad. He exhorted the Muslims to liberate themselves from the blind acceptance of the interpretations worked out or arrived at by classical jurists. Instead he advised them to return to the Quran and Sunnah and devise a new legal system in keeping the spirit and needs of the times.\textsuperscript{33}

The invasion of Nadir Shah and Ahmed Shah Abdali led to political instability and chaos in Northern India. This helped the rise of Sikh power in Punjab. Subsequently, Muslims also reacted to the Sikh political phenomenon in the first half of 19th century and their political thought and activity was considerably influenced by the same. The Muslims waged a struggle against Sikhs under the leadership of Sayyid Ahmed Shahid. The British adopted a policy of wait and watch.\textsuperscript{34}

Sir Syed informs us of the situation as follows "Thousands of Mohammadams armed with weapons and a large store of war materials were collected for Jihad against the
Sikhs. The commissioner and the Magistrate who were informed of it brought it to the notice of the Government, but the Government clearly wrote to them not to interfere". 35 Sayyid Ahmed Shahid had been able to make his movement popular in Northern India. He made Patna as his headquarters. He subsequently established himself in Peshawar and fought battles with Sikhs. He was martyred in 1831. Nevertheless his mission was carried on by his zealous followers. However, after 1846, when British subjugated Punjab, they came into direct confrontation with them. Consequently, they fought many a battle against British forces on the frontier. However they were crushed during the years 1860-1870. 36

Within a short period of time the Wahabi Movement influenced the political thinking and attitudes of Indian Muslims. Its impact could be felt from Peshawar in North-Western Frontier province upto Delta of Bengal. The change in the political outlook of Muslims was tremendous.

The Muslims were continuously victimised after the mutiny. However around 1870s British statesmen concluded that Muslim political resistance against the British rule had practically come to an end. The Wahabi and Farazi movements culminated in 1857. Thus Muslim politics was clearly left in the wilderness. Muslims were left in Utter confusion and they could recover from the shock after several decades. 37
The upheaval of 1857 is generally looked upon as a great misfortune for the Indian Muslims. It was the prime cause of their political, social and economic degeneration and final eclipse from Indian political firmament. Thousands of well established Muslim families from U.P. and Bihar were totally ruined. Only those upper class Muslims who survived this great upheavel inherited the cultural values of the bygone era. The upper class did not or couldn't provide the requisite political leadership to the Indian Muslims. They raised their own problems and engaged the governmental attention on their own grievances and thus gave a wrong direction to the social and political development of Indian Muslims. Thus led by the uninspiring upper class, Muslims couldn't respond creatively to the demands of the situation throughout 19th century.  

After the great upheavel of 1857, Sir Syed emerged on the scene with an educational mission. His other great passion was reinterpretation of Islam in the light of contemporary requirements. Shah Walliullah had given the lead in this regard and Sir Syed used the principle of Ijtihad to interpret Islam in keeping with the demands of the new scientific age. In his Tafsir of the Quran Syr Syed extensively quotes Walliullah in support of his formulations.  

According to Sir Syed the consequences of the revolt of 1857 were different for Hindus and Muslims. To the
Hindus it was a tremendous political boost. They did not undergo a crisis of identity. But it was a total disaster for Indian Muslims. Apart from the heavy economic losses, they lost thousands of outstanding men belonging to the middle and upper classes. These men could have provided leadership to Muslims in various fields.  

Muslims faced an all-pervading hostile environment. The British thought that the revolt was mainly engineered by them. The Sikhs looked upon the Muslims as their hereditary enemies. Gurkhas had a long standing grudge against the Muslims in the person of Nawab of Qudh. The result was that all the three joined together not only to crush the so-called resistance of the Muslims against the British rule, but to destroy their spirit and culture as well. It was the direct result of their strong persecution that the Muslims took the longest to recover from this shock.

A mere revival of the traditional religious consciousness and a movement of moral reform was not enough to energise Muslim society unless it was supplemented by an introduction and absorption of scientific knowledge and technology of the West. The upheaval of the 1857 just underscored the fact that Muslims needed to come to terms with modern world situation, increasingly dominated by scientific creativity and technological sophistication. Destiny chose Sir Syed to provide the requisite creative
leadership at this crucial moment in the socio-political history of Indian Muslims, although he had to start almost from a clean slate.  

Syed Ahmed's contribution to Muslim upliftment can be evaluated only in the context of the Indian situation prevailing those days. There were three factors that worked collectively against Muslims. The first was the presence of the Christian missions to whom the British authorities supported fully. The representatives of these Christian missions, their newspapers and preachers were busy in attacking the Islam and its founder. It was the first occasion in the history of Islam, when the Muslims were reduced to the status of a subject people and as such had to face and stand to the attacks of Christian critics, who had the advantage to being the ruling party. Great courage of conviction was needed to defend the Islam and Muslims against these attacks as the Muslims had lost all their political power and prestige. The second factor was the aggressive trend of Hindu nationalism. Hindus took full advantage of the anti-Muslim policies of the British rulers. They were able to gain the upper hand in almost all spheres of life. In order to reap the full harvest of this situation, they were gradually beginning to assert themselves not only against the Muslims, but also against the British. It was in this context that Syed Ahmed was forced to raise his voice against the so-called national
demands of the Hindus through the Indian National Congress. The third factor was the demoralisation that had set in among the Muslims as a result of the failure of their movements for the political liberation of the country and the social reformation of the community.\footnote{43}

The degeneration, that came over Muslim society was the result of the severe persecution that they had to undergo later at the hands of the British. In a lecture (1889) Sir Sayyid Ahmed gave his impression of the period of REvolt. "It is a heart-rending story to recall", he said, "how Muslim nobility and general masses suffered and died at the hands of the persecutors (both English and Native). When \textbf{Mr. Shakespeare} desired to give me a Jagir (which belonged to a Muslim noble family), I refused to take it and said that I no longer wished to remain in India. I thought then that our people would never prosper and get honour again. I could not bear the deplorable condition of my nation. For some days, I remained in this state of uncertainty and misery. Believe me this sorrow made me old and turned my hair grey. When I reached Moradabad (in course of service) which had witnessed a great massacre of Muslim nobility, my grief increased all the more. But then I thought that it would be very cowardly on my part to leave my people in this state of ruin and save myself in some place of security. I gave up the idea of hijrat and chose to work for my people."\footnote{44}
Sir Syed was an eye witness to the unforgettable horrors of mutiny. He was greatly worried for the future of Indian Muslims. The destruction of their life and property in Northern India was so extreme that Sir Syed lost all hopes for their regeneration. Sir Syed was convinced that the traditional system of education was shattered to pieces and Muslims must establish educational institutions on the English pattern. Sir Syed was a hard-boiled realist. He realized with great clarity that Muslim political power in India can't be resuscitated. He came to the conclusion that educational advancement of Muslims was the only option available for their survival and revival. He was firmly convinced that Muslims could never take their rightful place in the comity of nations unless they acquired western knowledge and developed themselves on scientific and technological lines.  

He held moulvis responsible for distorting the simple teaching of Islam and inculcating superstitious among Muslims. Accordingly Sir Syed exhorted Indian Muslims to give up all the practices and customs, which had no necessary relationship with Islamic faith. Instead they should adopt western education and culture and liberate themselves from out-dated ideas. He stressed that Muslims should go in for the study of the history, natural philosophy and political economy.
It was against this backdrop that Syed Ahmed Khan had to devise his plan of re-energising the Indian Muslims. Sir Syed immediately concluded that Muslims should concentrate their efforts in non-political fields of operation. He exhorted the Indian Muslims to refrain from politics. As the Muslims had lost everything in their political struggle Sir Syed Ahmed wanted to save them from further deterioration and humiliation. So he advised them to genuinely undergo a change of heart and willingly profess loyalty to the British rule.47

Sir Syed devised a two-pronged strategy to save Muslims from further downfall. On the one hand, he advised Muslims to be genuinely loyal to the British and, on the other hand, he wrote several tracts, such as, Asbab-i-Bhagavat-i-Hind (The causes of Indian revolt), The Loyal Muslims of India etc., as a counter to Dr. Hunter's book Our Indian Musalmans wherein he tried to clarify the position of Indian Muslims, viz. their British rulers. In his preface to Dr. Hunter's counter he says: "Now-a-days the loyalty of Indian Muslims and particularly of Wahabis is a subject of great discussion. Many newspapers in India and England due to prejudice have tried to spread totally unfounded ideas". He brilliantly traces the history of Wahabi movement in India and tries to prove that Jihad sponsored by them was directed against the Sikhs and not British.48
Sir Syed stood for a comprehensive social and moral reform. He published essays against prejudice, reactionism and asceticism. He stood for freedom of thought, self-help, universal education and liberalism. His periodical was addressed to the task of bringing about a total and complete reform of Muslim society, although it could not be sustained beyond a limited number of years. However, it succeeded in bringing about a new awareness among Muslims regarding the ongoing social, political and ideological controversies. It specifically educated Muslim public opinion about anti-religious implications of western science and the new propaganda techniques of Christian missionaries. Sir Syed was also aware of the inherent dangers of English education. He knew that people who receive western education start entertaining doubts about their religious beliefs and values. He deemed it his duty to defend Islam against such misgivings. In view of the same, he started writing a commentary of the various chapters of the Quran to begin with and subsequently began a systematic commentary, which however could not be completed. The commentary was fiercely opposed by the orthodox ulema. However, Sir Syed's commentary was instrumental in averting the irreligiousness of the growing Muslim intelligentsia, who were being constantly exposed to western ideas and values.
Thus in 19th century Sir Syed stood out as a great champion of modernisation of Muslims. He stood for free enquiry, large-hearted tolerance and pure morality. He stood for scientific research, liberalism and interreligious fellowship. Religious pluralism was one of the cardinal principles of his world-view and value-system. The doors and windows of Sir Syeds' mind remained open till he passed away. His life-long educational mission was addressed to inculcate amongst Muslim mind the same values of tolerance, pluralism, fellowship of faith and open-mindedness. In view of the same, he wanted Muslims to come out of the syllabi prescribed in Maktabas and delve deep into secrets of Nature through ceaseless scientific inquiry and methodologically informed experimental validation or verification. It was one of his abiding convictions that word of god i.e. Revelation and work of God i.e. Nature cannot contradict each other. The fault must lie in our understanding which suspects a deep chasm between the results of science and dogmas of faith. Accordingly, Sir Syed strove unfailingly to reinterpret Islam in keeping with the 19th century naturalistic outlook. In so doing he, at times, overstepped the limits of balance and proportion. However, such a radical reinterpretation seemed to be necessary for providing a corrective to an outmoded mind-set in which Muslims of 19th century were irremediably caught in.
CHAPTER - I
A BRIEF HISTORICAL SURVEY OF ISLAMIC THOUGHT IN INDIA WITH REFERENCE TO SHAIKH AHMAD SIRHINDI AND SHAH WALIULLAH

The advent of Islam in India is generally traced back to Muhammad Bin Quasim's invasion of Sindh province in 711 A.D. \(^1\) Since then Islam has been functioning as a dominant cultural and intellectual force in Sindh and in rest of South-Asia, large parts of which were ruled by Muslims from late 12th century upto 1857, when Britishers finally usurped power from the Mughals. In the tenth century A.D. Mahmud of Ghazni had made several attempts to conquer and capture India. However, while Muhammad Bin Quasim could capture Sindh and Mhamud of Ghazni usurp large parts of Punjab, the Central Southern and Eastern provinces of India remained beyond their reach. Although Mahmud's raids were largely inspired by economic considerations, yet his incursions across India, subsequently contributed to the establishment of widespread Muslim rule in South-Asia.

By the end of the 17th century A.D., Islam was politically and culturally a dominant force for a period of five hundred years in India and introduced for nearly one thousand years, if we count from Muhammad Bin Quasim's invasion of Sindh. During this long historical march it achieved considerable geographical expansion and Indian Muslim community remained in close and constant intellectual contact with Islamic lands in the central and the Western parts of Asia. However Islam could not be completely insulated from Indian influences and it
registered a distinct cultural colour and situational flavour of its own.³

During 1180s, Sultan Moiz-ud-Din Muhammad Ghori succeeded in capturing Lahore, thus putting an end to the rule of Ghazni dynasty. Subsequently four dynasties viz. the slaves, the Khiljis, the Tughlaqs and the Sayyids ruled India upto the middle of the 15th century. During this period Muslim scholars and saints continuously flowed to India from Islamic lands. Abu Hafs Rabi bin Sahib al-Asadi al-Basari, a famous traditionist came to Sindh during this period; Mansur Hallaj is reported to have made a trip to India in the 10th century A.D. Various distinguished scholars and saints visited India subsequent to the invasions of Mahmud. The most prominent among them were Ali bin -Uthman- al-Hujwayri, Shaikh Ismail Bukhari and Farid-ud-Din Attar.⁴ There is no doubt that some highly distinguished Muslim personages visited India before 13th century. However, the systematic missionary work couldn't be taken up before the firm foundations of the Sultante were laid.

The 13th century is critically significant in the history of Islam. Muslim civilization and culture registered a growth in South Asia. However it simultaneously witnessed the decay of Muslim power in Central Asia and Spain. The ongoing political disputations in the Central and West Asia led a great number of Scholars, Saints and intellectuals to
migrate to India. India, in fact, served as their asylum and refuge. During the thirteenth century many Hindus were converted to Islamic faith. Between 1200 A.D. and 1450 A.D., 'Chishti', 'Suwarwardi' and 'Firdosi' Sufi orders established and stabilized themselves in India. The Muslim religious thought of the period was represented by these very orders. The mystics and even theologians followed these very orders. In India, following al-Ghazali and Suwarwardi, a synthesis of mysticism and logic was worked out. Sheikh Bahau-ud-Din Zakariya Multani was the founder of the Suwarwardiya order in India. However Suwarwardiya order functioned mainly in Punjab and Sindh. The Chishtia order was founded by Shaikh Mu'in-Ud-Din Chishti in India about 1190 A.D. He devoted his life to the preachings of the tenets of Islam and spiritual guidance of the people.

The vast majority of the subcontinental Muslims are Sunni, Ghaznavides. who conquered and ruled over North-Western India were Sunnis of Shafi school of Jurisprudence. Later on they themselves switched over to Hanafi school of law.

The first Muslim religious thinker in Indian Muslim history was Shaikh Nuruddin Turuk. He came to India during the reign of Razia Sultana. He was an Ismailee agitator and he attacked Hanafi as well as Shafi interpretations with great vigour and forceful arguments. The Mughals, however, were the Central Asian Hanafis and encouraged Hanafi
persuasion during their rule which lasted up to 1857 A.D.

The diversity of Islam in South-Asian sub-continent is a proof that it has been subjected to various influences in course of its long historical development. In the process, sectarian weaknesses have crept into its body-politic.10

The contribution of sub-continental Muslims to the development of theological studies is not of any substantial quality having at the most regional rather than universal value. Abu-Hafs al'Asadi of Basara was the first authority on Hadith who initiated theological studies in Arab Sindh. Abu Mashar Sindhi was the first scholar of the South-Asian subcontinent who distinguished himself in the study of Hadith.11 Shaykh Ismail Bukhari had the distinction of introducing the study of the Quranic exegesis and Hadith in Ghaznavid Lahore.

During Khilji period Islamic education was established on a sound footing. Such theological sciences as the Quranic exegesis, Hadith and Hanafi jurisprudence were taught in Islamic Madrasas. Abd-al-Aziz Ardabli a disciple of Ibn-i-Taimiyyah, arrived in India during the same period and was instrumental in enforcing orthodoxy. Gujrat which had long historical and trade relations with Arabia was always in touch with the theological developments over there. However, the level and the quality
of theological scholarship before the advent of Mughals was, on the whole, very low and weak.\textsuperscript{12}

The most distinguished Muslim missionary of the 12th century was Khawaja Moin-uddin-Chishti. He founded \textit{chishti} order in India in 1190 A.D. India responded to the teachings and practices of this order quite warmly. Khawaja passed away in Ajmer in 1236 A.D.\textsuperscript{13} However the \textit{Chishti} order made significant contribution to the development of Islam in subsequent history of the subcontinent. Khawaja Moin'ud-Din converted many non-Muslims to Islam, and moreover the order founded by him played a great missionary role and also contributed to the education of Muslims for hundreds of years. Two of his most famous disciples were Khwaja Qutub-ud-Din Bakhtyar Kaki and Shaikh Hamid-ud-din Nagori.\textsuperscript{14}

Shaikh Nizam-ud-Din Awliya of Delhi was another renowned Saint of the same order. He carried on the mission of spiritual enlightenment of the people during the reign of several Sultans at Delhi. Under the mentorship of Shaikh Nizam-ud-Din Awliya, the \textit{Chishtiya} order spread to all the corners of the country. Its branches sprang up throughout the whole country.\textsuperscript{15} However, after Shaikh Nizam-ud-Din's death, the political developments during the reign of Muhammad-bin-Tughluq led a shattering blow to the order. Shaikh Nasir-ud-Din Chirag Delhvi was the last renowned and recognized head of the order.\textsuperscript{16}
During the reign of Muhammad Bin-Tughlaq, the Chishti order was decentralised. Two subsequent centuries did not inspire any vital spiritual awakening among people at large. Rather there was an over-all spiritual vacuum during this period. The Chishti and Suharwardi orders declined during this period. The Qadiri and Naqshbandi orders, which later on, re-invigorated the moral and spiritual energies of Indian Muslims from the seventeenth century onwards had not arrived yet on the scene. The ulema or theologians, it is reported, were deeply involved in exploitation, greed, sinfulness and hypocrisy during this period. They could hardly be expected to provide any meaningful leadership to the community.

During the sixteenth century there was an all-round spiritual vacuum. The crisis was felt in the entire Islamic world. Among sub-continental Muslims, the crisis gave rise to what may be called heretical neurosis - the view that Islam needed a rejuvenation and a rejuvenator at the end of its first Millennium. During this critical phase of Indian Muslim history Shaikh Ahmed Sirhindi generally known as 'Mujaddid-i-Alf-i-Thani' was born. He was born in 971/1563 at Sirhind. He was taught Tafsir, Hadith, Fiqh and philosophy by renowned scholars of his time and was initiated into mystic discipline by his father. He received Khilafat from him in Chishtia and Suharwardiya orders.
By the time Shaikh Ahmed was 28 years old, he proceeded to Delhi and joined the Naqshbandiya order. He mastered its practices, prayers and techniques very soon and received Khilafat from Khawaja Baqi-Billah. When Shaikh Ahmad, in his role of Mutahid, undertook the reform of the Muslim Ummah, he discovered that Tasawwuf had completely taken in its grip the collective psyche of the Muslim community of the late 16th century. The soul of the Muslim community was controlled by Tasawwuf. Sufi philosophers, theoreticians and leaders had, under the patron-mentorship of Shaikh—Mohi-ud-Din—Ibn-al-Arabi, replaced the monotheistic personal transcendent God of Islam by a pantheistic account or theory of God. Even the categorical commandments of Shariat were given up by the mystics who had become oblivious to the explicit and express laws laid down by Allah.  

Furthermore, the Ulemma or theologians were exclusively engrossed in the study of jurisprudence. As a matter of fact, they had reduced the entire theological studies to Fiqh. The original sources of Islam, viz. the Quran and Hadith were hardly referred to. Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi along with Mulla Abdul Quadir Badauni held Akbar, the Emperor, and divines like Makhdum-ul-Muluk, responsible for this sorry state of affairs. Both of them perceived that the policy of reconciliation pursued by Akbar throughout his long years of governance was calculated to undermine the religious consciousness of Muslims.
Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi put up a heroic struggle against the heretical interpretations inaugurated by Akbar and upheld by his son Jehangir. He was given the title "Mujaddid-i-Alf-i-Thani", meaning the renovator of the second millennium. In the seventeenth century Islam was completing its first one thousand years of history. Mujaddid Shaikh Ahmad is supposed to have restored the pristine purity of the doctrine of Islam in the beginning of the second millennium of Islam. There is a unanimous acceptance among leading orthodox thinkers of Shaikh Ahmad's being the Mujaddid of the second millennium of Islam.²²

Mujaddid pointed out, obviously in the light of his own experience, that experience of monism 'wadhat-ul-Wujud' is not real, but only a feeling. The 'Wahdat' or unity is not Wujudi in existence, but Shuhudi in experience or feeling. The 'Wujudi' interpretation had a great impact at that point of time. Some highly accomplished Sufis had maintained that the experience of 'Wahdat-ul-Wujud' was the pinnacle or 'Summum Bonum' of mystical path. Mujaddid, on the other hand, offered a counter-claim and that too on the basis of his personal experience. He maintained that the experience of 'Wahdat-ul-Wujud' was the beginning and not the culmination of the Sufi path. Theism rather than patheism represented the truth.²³
The **Mujaddid**'s call was to go back to the path shown by prophet Muhammad(s). This call had an electrifying impact on the people. Firstly, it led to the reform of the Sufism itself. There was an all-round yearning to purify the Sufi path of the extra Islamic elements and correlate it back to the original sources of Islam, i.e. the **Quran** and the prophet of God. Additionally, **Mujaddid**'s call induced the theologians, who were concentrating on 'Fiqh' to take up the study of traditions of the prophet. Thus he redirected the 17th century **Ulema** as well as the people to 'Kitab-o-Sunnat'. As a result of this reawakening, subsequently Shah Waliullah established the first school of **Hadith** on the Indian soil.²⁴ Shah Sayyid Ahmad Barelvi, turned the School established by Shah Waliullah into 'Ahl-i-Hadith centre. However, the mystical contemplation was also accommodated into this centre. But in course of time, the school emphasized on rejection or repudiation of 'Taqlid' or blind following of the authority of the jurists. Thus the school turned into a centre of 'Ghair Muqalidia' or 'Ahl-i-Hadith'.²⁵

Historical perspectives are personal and judgemental. Therefore, an objective assessment of a personality or any historical phenomenon is very difficult, if not impossible. However, it can be safely argued that Shaikh Ahmad Sirhind's position as 'Mujaddid-i-Alfi Thani rests chiefly on his forceful, repudiation of the philosophy of
'Wahdat-ul-Wujud' formulated by Ibn-i-Arabi and accepted by some influential sufi Thinkers and popularised by many distinguished persian poets. According to Ibn-i-Arabi what we call 'Being' or Reality is one. 'Being' is that which exists and this 'Being' is Allah. The other things are His manifestations. Thus Allah and the world have a relation of identity. The creation of the world is a form of emanation.

In the philosophical perspective of Ibn-i-Arabi 'Dhat' or 'Being' has a relation of identity with 'Sifat' or Attributes. The Attributes are themselves expressed in manifestations i.e. the world and its objects. Ibn-i-Arabi argues that the 'Isma' (names) are identical with 'Musamma' (named) and 'Musamman'is the very Essence of Allah. The multiple divine names, in point of fact, denote one and the same Entity.

Ibn-i-Arabi holds the relation between world and God to be one of identity. He obtains this identification either through the affirmation of Allah or through the negation of world. Starting from the negation of the world he maintains that the world is purely nominal, unreal and imaginary. It is objectively non-existent. God alone can be said to be existent in the real sense of the world. The phenomenal world has no independent existence of its own. Starting from the affirmation of Allah he holds that the unity has differentiated itself into modes. These modes exhaust His unity.
Ibn-i-Arabi propounds that relation between man and God is characterised by identity, 'immanence' and 'nearness'. The nearness or 'Qurb' of God to man is affirmed in the Quranic verse meaning "We are nearer unto him than his life-artery". The saying (one who comes to cognise his own self comes to cognise his God) reveals the same relation of identity between man and God. Self realisation is equated with God-realisation.

Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi could not altogether reject the doctrine of 'Wahdat-al-Wujud'. Therefore, he declared that the interpretation of the universe in terms of the philosophy of 'wahdat-al-Wujud' is an expression of a spiritual stage in the progress of the seeker after truth. The ultimate stage in one's spiritual progression was 'Wahadat-al-Shuhud' (unity of phenomena). His proof for the 'Wahadat-al-Shuhud's being the final stage of one's spiritual journey, was his personal spiritual experience thereof. Sirhindi tried his best to quote from the Quran and traditions of the prophet(s) and also advance logical reasoning with a view to demolish the thesis of 'Wahadat-al-Wujud' and prove that there is an ultimate duality between creator and the created.

The Central features of his philosophy of 'Wahadat-al-Shuhud' as revealed in his personal, spiritual progression are as hereunder: Mujadid's personal spiritual
journey passes through three stages, the stage of 'wahdat-al-Wujud' or pantheism, the stage of 'Zilliyyat' or adumeration and the stage of Abdiyyat or servitude. To begin with, Mujaddid has the spiritual experience of 'Wahdat-al-Wujud'. The main purpose of this stage is to transform the belief grounded on faith or even reason into indubitable knowledge based on direct experience with regard to God-man relationship. Secondly he graduates to the stage of Zilliyyat or adumeration. This stage is of the intermediate nature. At this stage the duality is experienced between Asl and Zill. From this transitional stage Mujaddid passes on to the stage of abdiyyat or servitude. This, according to Mujadid, is the highest point or pinnacle of spiritual experience. At this stage the seeker according to him is categorically assured of the duality of the God and world. He realizes the unbridgeable gap. 32

With the death of Aurangzeb in 1707 the Mughal Empire started declining. The Muslim society also started disintegrating. At this critical point of time the religio-intellectual leadership of Muslim India fell on the shoulders of Shah Waliullah. He revived the study of traditions already rehabilitated by Muhadith Abdul-Haqq Delhvi in 16th century. 33 After Abd-ul-Haqq, the religious thinker of real significance was Shah Waliullah. 34
Shah Waliullah whose original name was Qutub-ud-Din Ahmad was born in 1703. His father, Shah Abdul Rahim was a greatly respected figure in view of his learning and exceptional piety. He was a renowned Sufi as well. One of his foremost contributions to Islamic scholarship was his compilation of 'Fatwa-i-Alamgiri'. He founded an Islamic seminary known as 'Madrasa-i Rahimiyah'. In view of the fact that he was a Sufi as well as a theologian, he imparted the spirit of reconciliation to his son Shah Waliullah, who received his early education from his father. Shah Waliullah was deeply anxious about the future of Indian Muslim community. While at Madina, he was convinced through his mystical experience that it was his duty to strive to safeguard the Indian Muslim community. Shah Waliullah was the undisputed intellectual leader of the Indian Muslim community during the eighteenth century.

Shah Waliullah was convinced that Islamic world-view was the real source of strength and power of the Muslim community. In view of the same, he tried vigorously to call the Muslims to the original teachings of Islam. Dr. Sir Mohammad Iqbal's opinion is that Shah Waliullah was the first Indian Muslim who felt the urge of a new spirit in him. He was categorically convinced that Islamic ideology if practised and implemented properly will lead human race to prosperity and safety. Accordingly, he concentrated all his energies on purifying Islam of all unhealthy
influences. Thus he established Islamic beliefs and ideals on new intellectual foundations with a view to face the challenge of the emerging situation.\(^3\)\(^6\)

The Quran and Sunnah were the basis of Waliullah's philosophical superstructure. In accordance with the Quranic teachings, Shah Waliullah rejects all beliefs or values emanating from a polytheistic world-view. God is unique in His Essence as well as Attributes. The prophets or saints can't be attributed with any of the divine qualifications. They may be considered to be intercessors. However, they can't be invoked for help. None can be worshipped, directly or indirectly besides Allah. The Quran and the prophetic traditions are two basic sources of Islamic dogmas. The other sources of beliefs or laws, if any, are secondary and subject to continuous investigation and reinterpretation. The prescriptions and prohibitions of religious life aim at cultivation of self, and service of humanity.\(^3\)\(^7\)

Following Ibn-Taymiyya in taking the position that Ijtihad was permissible at all times, Shah Waliullah defines Ijtihad as an exhaustive struggle to grasp and reinterpret the derivative principles of canon-law. Waliullah conceived the Muslim society to be structured on the theory of universal Caliphate.

Shah Waliullah was seriously dedicated to resolving social, political and economic conflicts and arrive at a
system which reconciles the differing interests and standpoints. For Waliullah spirituality is two-pronged: firstly, it is man's personal relationship with God; and secondly, it is expressed in man's interpersonal relationships. In point of fact, the spirituality of a person can be tested only in a social set-up. In view of the same, Islam doesn't emphasize the importance of a person as an individual. Rather it always sees man as a member of the community. Social justice, according to Waliullah, is a pre-condition for individual development.  

The harmonious development of race can be achieved only by the establishment of 'Adalah' (justice). The variegated patterns of human life can be unified and integrated only by the establishment of justice. In matters pertaining to income and expenditure, we call it economy and in state-affairs, it is termed politics. Shah Waliullah deals with the problem of human relationships under the heading of 'Itifaqat'. The interdependence of individual members and the need for the satisfaction of human wants leads to or originates society. The considerations of mutual security and safety lead to the formation of Government. Accordingly, an economic system is formed with a view to satisfy the material needs of people. Waliullah advocates that a sound economic system based on social justice can lead to our collective happiness. For Shah Waliullah state is not an end-in-itself. It is a means to and end.
Sectarianism was one of the perennial banes of the Muslim community. Waliullah was struck by this problem in view of the ongoing Shai-Sunni conflicts in the 18th century South Asia. Accordingly Waliullah was convinced of the foremost need for unity amongst all sections of the Muslim society. Shah Waliullah attempted to remove basic points of difference between Shias and Sunnis with a view to forge a link of unity between them. His book entitled, 'Izalat al-Khifaan . Khilafat al-Kheelafa' is an attempt to iron out the Shia-Sunni differences and bring about doctrinal reconciliation between these ideologically warring camps.  

Shah Waliullah argued that the basic cause of the moral decline of subcontinental Muslims was their ignorance of Islam. The Quran contains the fundamental teachings of Islam and accordingly we need to lay stress on the Quranic teachings with a view to reducing sectarian disagreements and creating a feeling of solidarity, as doctrinal differences are generally a product of interpretation. The dissemination of the Quranic message would take care of these differences. In view of the same, Shah Waliullah translated the Quran into Persian as it was widely understood by the 18th century educated sections of the Muslim society.  

Four schools of jurisprudence viz. 'Hanafi', 'Shafi', 'maliki' and 'Hanbali' were equally valid in the
estimation of Shah Waliullah. He was personally a Hanafi. However, he deemed other schools to be as important as the Hanafi school of jurisprudence. Accordingly, Shah Waliullah tried to reconcile the differences amongst these schools and did not approve of the tendency of mutual criticism indulged in by the votaries of various schools. He laboriously explained that these differences were a function of interpretation and the fundamental principles of Islam had nothing to do with these disagreements.\textsuperscript{43}

In Islamic discourse interpretation is called Ijtihad. In fact, Ijtihad has a wider connotation. For Shah Waliullah it is "an exhaustive endeavour to understand the basic principles of the holy law and is not confined to an effort to understand the conclusions of the earlier scholars". Shah Waliullah advocated that the very sources of religion need to be reinterpreted with a view to adapting Islamic law to contemporaneously obtaining socio-political situation. He courageously maintained that Taqlid or mindless imitation of religious practices was a feature of least developed people.\textsuperscript{44}

Shah Waliullah stressed that fact that Ijtihad was deemed to be the collective duty of gifted Muslims. They undertook it in large numbers and the rest of the Ummah felt secure in their hands. However, as this was a great task entailing heavy responsibilities, every one can't be entrusted with the task of undertaking Ijtihad. A mujtahid
must have three main qualifications according to Waliullah: (1) he should be able to formulate general principles in the light of which particular judgements can be exercised, (2) he should be well-versed in the Quran and the prophetic traditions, and (3) he should be capable of drawing injunctions from the Quran and the Hadith in the light of contemporary requirements. 45

Shah Waliullah used his conciliatory approach in the resolution of the controversies emanating from the doctrinal confrontation between unityism (Wahdat-ul-Wujud) and apparentism (Wahadat-ul-Shuhud) respectively advanced by Ibn al-Arabi and Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi. The upshot of his reconciliation is that Ibn al-Arabi and Mujaddid did not differ really and their differences were mainly verbal and not real. However, it was the contention of Shah Waliullah that both really advocated the doctrine of 'Wahdat-ul-Wujud'. However, he is in full agreement with Mujaddid and other orthodox Sufis, that any mystic experience which does not accord with the Quran must be rejected. Thus he tries to remove the conflict between the major groups of Sufis to help them to be engaged in spiritual regeneration rather than be involved in doctrinal disagreement. 46

Like Mujadid Shah Waliullah advocated that Islam is not a religion in the conventional sense. It is rather a complete code of life aiming at not only individual
righteousness but social reformation as well. He did not consider social political and economic principles to be separable from the moral teachings of Islam. A good and beneficial society could not be achieved without moral and spiritual values of Islam permeating our social, political and economic struggle.47

In this way Shah Waliullah brought about a radical change in the outlook of the Muslim community. Due to his all-pervading impact, later on, Shah Ismael Shahid and Sayyid Ahmad Barelvi launched a very significant movement for the socio-political upliftment of Muslims. Their movement made Muslims realize that their social position is a reflection either of their neglect of Islam or of their wrong approach to the same.48 This realisation ignited a strong desire among Muslims to take steps to retrieve their social and political standing in South Asia.

The fundamental categories of Shah Waliullah's thought provided a framework for subsequent developments in the history of sub-continental Islam. Many Islamic movements trace their inspiration for Shah Waliullah's writings although they adopted differing approaches. For example, the religious traditionalism of Deoband and Islamic modernism of Sir Syed turned to Shah Waliullah, both for their inspiration and authentication.49

Shah Waliullah's eldest son, Shah Abdul Aziz succeeded his father at the Madrasha Rahimiyah in 1763. He
inspired various movements for the political reformation of the Indian Muslims. However, he couldn't merely concentrate on educational and religious matters. He inevitably had to deal with political questions as they were deeply exercising the minds of leading Muslims of South Asia. In his famous 'Fatwa' he declared India governed by Britishers to be 'Dar-ul-Harb'. His declaration inspired Sayid Ahmad Barelvi and Shah Ismail Shahid to launch what is known as 'Wahabi movement'.

After 1857 the impact of the Western ideologies and philosophies was deeply felt by the Indian Muslims. Modernist thinkers have since then been trying to incorporate the basic western values into their re-interpretation of Islam. Syed Ahmad Khan was the first modernist to launch a re-evaluation of Islamic world-view in the light of the western values. He was the central figure in the struggle of Indian Muslims for their religious, political, educational and cultural regeneration. By the sheer force of his indomitable determination he pulled Indian Muslims out of their socio-political wilderness.
CHAPTER - II

ATTEMPT OF RECONCILIATION BETWEEN ISLAM AND SCIENCE WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO MUTAZILITES, IKHWAN UL-SAFA AND PHILOSOPHERS

In the early history of Islam, the Muslims did not differ as to who to interpret the Quran. They did not debate about the meaning of the tenets of Islam. However this non-controversial state could not last indefinitely. Conflicts and discords, did emerge among Muslim intellectuals in course of time. Four of the problems, subsequently led doctors of Islam to develop various schools and viewpoints:

1. Freedom of human will
2. Attributes of God
3. Beliefs and actions of Muslims
4. Reason and revelation.

A group of disputants known as 'Qadris' (believers in free will) evolved as rationalists who were popularly known as 'Mutazilites'. The mutazilites were radical rationalists. They advocated theoretical reason to be competent enough to judge all that is revealed to the prophets. Etymologically and dictionally the term 'mutazila' means those who separate themselves or those who stand aside. It was applied to wasil Bin Atta and his followers who stood aside from a discourse of 'Hasan-al-basri' on the question of describing the eschatological prospects of a Muslim guilty of a serious offence. Therefore wasil and his followers were known as 'al-Mutazila' the withdrawers or secessionists.

The mutazilite interpretation of Islam was not meant for the common man, but for Muslim intellectuals as well as
non-Muslim scholars who were well-versed in Greek philosophy. The tenets of Greek philosophy were deemed to be true by mutazilites. They thought human reason to be an unfailing guide and an inviolable criterion. Accordingly, they tried to make several Quranic doctrines compatible with Greek philosophical assumptions.

The mutazilites define themselves to be people of unity and justice (Ahl al-Tawhid wa-al adl). They deemed works or actions of a man to be an essential part of one's faith. However, they held that a person guilty of a grave Sin, unless he repents, is neither a believer nor a non-believer but occupies a "middle ground". They deemed man to be completely free and responsible for his actions. Human actions if divinely predestined, do not entitle us either to be rewarded or to be punished. God's justice and human responsibility entail that man must be a completely free moral agent. God determines the realm of nature, while our moral actions originate from our free-will.

The central contention of mutazila movement was to establish the thesis that the Quranic teachings were in complete conformity with the dictates or imperatives of reason. Furthermore, mutazilites were thoroughgoing unitarians. Their views regarding the Essence and Attributes of God somewhat mitigated the rigid theistic externalism and paved the way for inner discipline and order.
Mutazilites professed to be the people of unity and justice. By denying the Attributes of God, they thought they upheld the unity of God. By advocating that it is incumbent upon God to reward virtuous and punish vicious, they deemed themselves to be standing for justice. Mutazilites held that beliefs of unity and justice necessitate the following beliefs as well:

1. Divine justice entails that man should be the author of his actions. Only then can he be held responsible for his deeds. Thus mutazilites advocated total indeterminism. They held man to be the creator of his own volitional acts. Among those volitional acts he creates some by way of 'mubasharah' and some by way of 'Taulid!'

2. Man by virtue of being the author of his own acts justly deserves to be rewarded for his good deeds and punished for his bad ones.

3. God's justice further entails that man should not do anything that goes against justice and equity. Wise men can undertake only that which is beneficial to the other creatures of God. A man can't be cruel and exploitative by bringing into effect the evil deeds. God being just does not place on any person a burden that he can't bear. Mutazilites held that things are not good and evil, because God defines them to be so. God only distinguishes good from evil on account of their being
good and evil. The things are essentially and innately good or evil. The innate goodness or evil of things is the basis or the cause of God declaring certain things to be lawful or forbidden.

4. No Muslim of whatever persuasion ever asserts God to be unjust. However mutazilites argue that God is necessarily just. He cannot be unjust. For Asharites God is always just and He will be just even if he does things that do not accord with human understanding of justice. Mutazilites, on the other hand held that what is just or unjust for us or as it is dictated to us by our reason, is same for God. Justice of God is not merely a fact, it is a permanent obligation of God to be always just. His own justice dictates to Him to be always just. God is not only just, He can't but be just as well.

5. God's justice also excludes any possibility of predestination. God would be unjust, if he decides in advance, who is to be saved and who is to be damned in the hereafter. Man has to merit salvation or damnation on the basis of his freely committed actions in this life. It is for man to choose whether to follow divine commandments or disobey them. God can't, in anticipation, declare some men to be righteously guided and others to have gone astray. Man has to work out his own destiny by recourse to his free choice, if God's
justice is, as it is believed by all, All-pervading and All-prevailing.⁹

6. Rewards for the virtuous and punishments for the sinners, will have to be carried out by God on the day of judgement. God cannot allow sinners to go scot-free. Nor can He afford not to reward the righteous people. God must reward or punish in the light of human conduct in this world.¹⁰ Otherwise the distinction between good and evil will be lost sight of and man's moral struggle will be jeopardised.

The mutazilites argued furthermore that the unity of God entails the following beliefs as well:

Firstly, the principle of the unity of God entails the denial of His beatific vision. The mutazilite argument against any possible beatific vision of God is that any vision of any object necessitates that the object be at some place in some direction. As Allah is innocent of any placement and direction, His beatific vision is impossible of attainment both in this world as well as in the next world.

Secondly, the principle of unity of God entails that the Quran is an originated work of God and it came into existence together with the prophethood of the prophet of Islam.¹¹

Thirdly, the principle of the unity of God entails that Allah transcends all shades of duality, plurality,
multiplicity and complexity. He is one pure and simple. God is pure Essence. He is without so-called external Attributes. For if we define God to be Essence qualified by Attributes, the Attributes along with Essence will stand as multiple co-eternals and the unalloyed unity of God will be thereby violated. God knows, wills and acts by virtue of His Essence and not through Attributes of knowledge, will and power. God does not have an eternal Attribute of speech by recourse to which the Quran and other revelations were sent to prophets at various points of time. Accordingly the Quran was created at a certain point of time and can't be deemed as co-eternal with Allah.\footnote{12}

Fourthly, Mutazilites stress the absolute uniqueness and transcendence of God. The Central Contention of mutazilites, in this regard, is that God is not a body to be qualified with any of the bodily properties. He is not localised, doesn't have a form or shape and doesn't move about. All the anthropomorphic representations of Allah are absolutely unacceptable. The Quranic references to Allah's hands, eyes, face etc, must be taken in a figurative sense.\footnote{13}

Mutazilites contend that human reason is competent enough to discover what is good and what is evil, even if man receives no revelatory instructions in this regard. However, revelation corroborates the findings or
investigations carried out by reason independent of revelation. Man by virtue of his reasoning is duty-bound to do what is right even if no revelation had actually been sent for human guidance. In view of this priority of reason to revelation, revelation has to be interpreted in keeping with the imperatives of rational ethics. However, it should not be inferred that revelation is redundant. Firstly, in view of man's propensity to flatter in the face of an ethical dilemma and consequently make a wrong choice against his rationality, revelation helps man to choose what is right. Secondly, revelation is unavoidable in so far as the communication of positive religious obligations is concerned.

Besides this mutazilites deny the existence of the Recording Angels. God is All-knowing and All-perceiving. He is directly in constant knowledge of the doings and sayings of all his servants. Therefore, the question of appointing Recording Angels, with a view to keep an account of what they do and say doesn't arise at all. The physical existence of the Tank (al-Haud) and Bridge (al-Sirat) is also flatly denied by mutazilites. They donot accept that heaven and hell exist as now, but hold the view that they will become existent on the day of judgement. The miracles of saints are also denied by mutazilites, for if they are admitted, they will be confused with the evidentiary miracles of the prophets.
The mutazilites advocate the universe to be contingent (Mumkin), both substance-wise and quality-wise. Qualities are just subjective relations. In view of the fact that a substance can't sustain without qualities, the universe is just a bundle of appearance. It is but a mere show of ordered subjectivities. Substances with their accidents are indivisible atoms. These irreducible elements are created and destroyed continuously by the will of God. Every atom is simple without any extent or quantity and cannot be separated from its accidents. Space and time are atomically structured as well. Mutazilites conclude that the atomic view of the universe is dictated by the Quranic world-view. God is all and besides Him there is none. Therefore, His will must be absolutely free.

Mutazilism is rationalism in the true sense of the term in that the mutazilites consider that man's intelligence is aware of many things or can grasp many things independent of the revelatory guidance encapsulated in the Quran. God can also be known through human reason. We cannot only demonstrate God's existence by means of reasoning, but also can grasp His nature through the same as well. Reason can prove that God is not only the creator but also the self-sufficient (Ghani) and All-Good, and can't will or do anything but Good. The reasoning of man can also show the authenticity of Muhammad's prophethood and veracity of the Quranic discourse. Revelation confirms
what reason establishes. There is no contradiction in between these two sources of knowledge, contradictions if any, are only superficial appearances, which can be ironed out by recourse to an appropriate interpretation of the revealed discourse.\(^{17}\)

Besides this, Mutazilite have formulated a number of doctrines independent of the Quran and possibly under the spell of Greek philosophy. The element of independence also establishes the rationalistic credential of Mutazilites. For example, they tried to explain the world and man through their independent reasonings and arguments. They conceived bodies as agglomerates of atoms, made subtle distinctions between substances and accidents and tried to explain physical phenomena through the inherence of accidents in the atoms which are irreducible constituents of all bodies.\(^{18}\) Mutazilites tried their best to prove that the teachings of the Quran were in confirmity with reason.

Like mutazilites, Ikhwan-us-Safa too were deeply committed to interpretation of Islam in accordance with the then prevailing or acceptable principles of reason. The Ikhwan-us-Safa did not belong to any sect. Their philosophical ambition was to synthesize Islamic revelation with Greek rationalism and thereby evolve a spiritual perspective acceptable to all and yet superseding historical religious.\(^{19}\) Ikhwan-us-Safa were interested in popularising the knowledge of all sciences. Philosophy was
too pedantic to be accessible to laymen and religious dogmas were too formal to be acceptable to philosophers or intellectuals in general.

Ikhwan-us-Safa summed up the philosophical and scientific learning of the time in fifty one tracts (Rasail). In their encyclopaedic writings they underlined the need for a synthesis between Greek philosophy and Quranic revelation. Such a synthetic vision could emancipate soul from matter. Thus liberated, soul merges into the universal soul.

The Ikhwan-us-Safa advocated unity of religion and worked hard towards a reconciliation of philosophical insights and scientific truths with the wisdom of the tenets of religion. They were catholic in spirit and worked out an eclectic system comprising the ideas of pythagoreans, plato, Aristotle, Neoplatinists, the Mutazilites and the Ismailians.

Ikhwan-us-Safa followed Aristotle in holding 'Matter' and 'Form' to be inseparable and in accepting everybody to be comprised of both 'Form' and 'Matter'. Further they regarded space and time as unreal. Space is objective in so far as it is related to bodies and can't be independently conceived of except in connection with moving bodies. In their theory of causality the Ikhwan-us-Safa again followed Aristotle. They held that there are four causes and the four must together interplay with a view to
produce and then sustain anything. 21

Ikhwan-us-Safa undertook an analysis of ethical questions as well. However their ethical viewpoint is more or less expressed in mystical discourse. In their ethical views they are again ecletic. They try to integrate the ethical values of different religious systems into a synthetic ethical vision. They argue that human soul is of divine origin. It has emanated from a primal cause. Here and now the soul and matter are temporarily united for a while, so to say. The soul struggles through wisdom and faith to liberate itself from its liason with matter and return back to its original source. Therefore Ikhwan-us-Safa stress ascetic and spiritual values for the liberation of the soul from matter. They stress that our actions should be dictated by rationality. 2 2 It is in the nature of man that he strives for God. This striving or longing should be quickened. Love is the highest virtue for only through love can we achieve union with God.

Following Mutazilites and Ikhwan-us-Safa many Muslim philosophers such as, Al-Kindi, Al-Farabi, Ibn-Sina, Ibn-Rushud etc., tried to reconcile Islamic world-view and Greek philosophical assumptions and logical principles. These philosophers were deeply influenced by Greek philosophy and science and wanted Islamic world-view to be integrated with the same. 2 3 Al-Kindi was the first Muslim who made philosophy an integral part of Islamic culture. He
reconciled Aristotelianism, Neo-platonism and Helenistic heritage with Islam and thereby pioneered a new philosophy. Al-Kindi exerted to reconcile philosophy with Islamic world view. He almost equated the teachings of the Quran and reasoning of Plato and Aristotle. He began his intellectual career as a mutazilite and later translated Greek philosophical tracts into Arabic. Religion for Al-Kindi is a divinely ordained message for guidance. Philosophy on the other hand is a rational undertaking or guided by reason in the formulation of its assumptions and principles.

In Al-Kindi's view, the gate-way of religion is faith, whereas the method of philosophy is logical. Philosophers depend on logical demonstration, whereas Muslims as men of religion follow the word of God as incorporated in the Quran. For Al-Kindi the Quranic arguments being revealed by Allah are more sure and certain in comparison to philosophical arguments employed by human intellect. In the Quran we find answers to such questions, as the origin of the universe and the destiny of man. These questions are not amenable to philosophical or rational treatment. Thus Al-Kindi was the first philosopher in Muslim world who undertook a comparative analysis of philosophy and religion, thereby preparing the ground for al-Farabi, Ibn-Sina and Ibn-Rushud.

Al-Kindi made significant contribution to the development of Muslim philosophy. In his philosophical
tracts, Al-Kindi discussed such problems as the creation of the universe, the nature of the soul, the role of reason and revelation in our knowledge etc. Besides this he argued that the knowledge of the Primal Cause, was the 'Summam Bohum' or 'Highest Good' for man. His theory of creation was strongly influenced by the emanationistic account of Plotinus. Al-Kindi, however dressed the emanationistic theory in the Quranic terminology.

Following Greek philosophers, Al-Kindi invests God with simplicity, indivisibility, invisibility and causality. Following, Islamic worldview, Al-Kindi qualifies God as true and transcendent. He holds that God can be qualified by negative Attributes. Following Mutazilites, Al-Kindi refused to ascribe positive Attributes to God. He offered causal argument for the existence of God and considered God to be the efficient cause of the universe.

Al-Kindi's doctrine of soul is more or less parallel to that of Aristotle, who divided the soul into three parts, namely; intuitive, reproductive and rational. Al-Kindi divided soul into four faculties, namely; Agent-intellect (aqlifa'al) which has divine origin, the rational faculty (aql-i-hayulani) which distinguishes man from other animals, the acquired intellect (aql-i-mustafad) which is acquired by rational faculty, and the intellect in action (aql-bil-fe'al).
In his comparative analysis of reason and revelation Al-kindi was simultaneously influenced by Greek thought and the Quranic doctrines. For Greeks the primary source of the truth was reason, whereas the Quran advocates revelation to be the ultimate source of the truth. Al-kindi accepted reason as the source of true knowledge but also advocated that revelation too guides man towards the truth. In his view, the world is not eternal and the 'space' 'movement' and 'time' are quantities.

The greatest scientist-philosopher among Muslims was Abu Nasar al-Farabi. His works can broadly be divided into two divisions, one dealing with logic and other with philosophical, socio-political and ethical studies. In his logical studies, Al-Farabi deals with different parts of Aristotle's organon. In his other studies, he deals with language, mathematics, natural sciences and social sciences. In the history of Muslim thought, Al-Farabi was the intellectual to have worked out the classification of sciences.

The basic contention of Al-Farabi was that the fundamental truths arrived at by Greek philosophers and the principles of Islam did not contradict one another. The doctrines of the unity of God (Tauhid), revelation, after life etc., were in accord with Greek philosophical truths. The differences crept only from the differing discourses employed by religion and philosophy. Philosophy employs
abstract logico-metaphysical terms, whereas religious discourse is concrete and anthropomorphic. However, the central import of philosophy and Islam is one and the same. The differences in religious truth and philosophical truth are only formal. Objectively they are one and the same. In this way, al-Farabi works out the accord between religion and philosophy.

In fact, al-Farabi expounds philosophy in a religious way, and presents religion philosophically, so that both of them co-exist by way of mutual understanding. It was al-Farabi's endeavour to reconcile Platonic and Aristotelian philosophy with the Quranic teachings. For him Greek philosophy too was a revealed truth. Al-Farabi holds that One i.e. God is intelligent as well as intelligible. By His very Essence, He is really unique i.e. nothing is like unto Him. Nevertheless, al-Farabi does subscribe to law of causality and causal connection.

Al-Farabi's theory of intellect is derived from Aristotle. He broadly classifies intellect as practical intellect and theoretical intellect. The theoretical intellect is further subclassified into material, habitual and acquired. Al-Farabi's account of acquired intellect is nowhere to be found in Aristotle, for in case of al-Farabi the acquired intellect is identified with separate intelligence. Furthermore, it serves as a link between human knowledge and revelation. The theory of prophethood
as advanced by al-Farabi is perhaps the most significant attempt to work out a reconciliation between dogmas of religion and imperatives of philosophy.\(^{34}\) Al-farabi's theory of prophethood is rooted in his psychological and metaphysical theories, apart from being intimately linked to politics and ethics. He gave a rational explanation and a scientific interpretation to the institution of prophethood.

Al-Farabi opines that the chief characteristic of a prophet is to have a vivid imagination. It is through this imagination that a prophet can develop communication with the 'great Agent intelligence', while waking and sleeping and thereby obtain the requisite spiritual vision and inspiration. It is through 'Agent intelligence' that revelation is emanated from God. As against Aristotle, al-Farabi maintains that man can commune with 'Agent intelligence'. However this communion is available to the privileged and chosen few only. The divine laws and inspirations originate from the agent intelligence. For al-Farabi the agent intelligence is almost similar to the Angel i.e. Gabriel who is deemed to have been imparting divine messages to the prophets or inspiring them.\(^{35}\) The prophets and the philosophers are competent to commune with the 'Agent intelligence', the prophet communing through imagination and the philosopher by recourse to speculation and contemplation.
Al-Farabi works out a distinctive interpretation of the Quran. He accepts miracles to be valid, for they establish the relevance or meaningfulness of a prophetic dispensation. However, the supernaturally ordained miracles don't contradict the well-known and established laws of Nature, for the origin and source of these laws is in the world of spheres and its intelligence governing terrestrial realm. Al-Farabi is highly radical at certain points while interpreting the Quranic concepts. For example, references to 'Tablet' and 'Pen' are not taken to be literally. They are just symbols for precision and preservation. Similarly, Al-Farabi admits that human beings will be rewarded with eternal bliss in the heaven and punished with painful suffering in the hell in life after, but cautions us that such matters are to be understood spiritually rather than in a material terms.

In his ethical and social views Al-Farabi follows Plato. In his opinion only philosophers are competent or capable of guiding the destiny of a nation. God is the absolute ruler of the universe which is an organic whole. In the same way man's body is an organic whole being presided over by heart. Man is endowed with both animal and rational powers. It is through rational power that man can distinguish the good from the evil. The soul, when liberated from the fetters of material existence can exercise its will fully and attain to 'Highest Happiness'
which is also the 'Greatest Good'.

Al-Farabi has written various treatises on politics, most significant being his "Ideal State". His ideal state is a united whole of parts. The parts must function as organs of a body. If any part of an organism gets unwell, the other bodily parts see to it that it is restored to health. The function of the head of state is likened to the role played by heart in our body politic. The distinguishing or characterising marks of a head of state are physical stoutness, love of knowledge and judiciousness. The head of the state must be capable enough to attune himself with the 'Agent intelligence' so that he is inspired in moments of crisis.

Ibn-Sina, one of the greatest philosophers of all times, succeeded Al-Farabi. Among the greatest philosophers of Islam only Ibn-Sina devised an elaborate system of philosophy. Ibn-Sina adopts Aristotelian principles along with a ring of Neoplatonic assumptions. Unlike al-Farabi, Ibn-Sina stands for a complete separation between theology and philosophy. In his philosophical writings, Ibn-Sina takes up such problems as; the origin of knowledge, induction and deduction, matter and force, cause and effect, universals and particulars etc. for his consideration. He also gives serious philosophical consideration to such religious issues as evil, efficacy of prayers and miracles etc.
The hallmark or characterising feature of Ibn-Sina's philosophy is that of arriving at definitions by recourse to division and distinction of concepts. Like al-Farabi, Ibn-Sina's theory of Being is emanationistic. God is the necessary existent and from Him flows only the first Intelligence as from a single absolutely simple entity only one thing can emanate. However, the first Intelligence is not simple and from first Intelligence emanates plural or multiple entities. This emanatory process goes on and culminates till we arrive at the tenth Intelligence. The tenth Intelligence is responsible for governing the sublunary world and Muslim philosophers call this Intelligence Angel 'Gabriel'.

The view that immaterial Intelligence emanate from the Supreme Being is clearly inspired by Neoplatonism. The Aristotelian theory of God being untenable, Ibn-Sina borrowed from Neoplatonism to arrive at a more acceptable relationship between God and the universe. Furthermore, Ibn-Sina holds that from, 'Form and Matter', we can not get concrete existents. Only essential and accidental qualities can be obtained from them. However, essences exist a priori in God's mind before they are exemplified in the external world.

Following Greek philosophical legacy, Ibn Sina defines knowledge to be a cognizant's abstraction of the form of the thing known. He lays great stress on the degree
of this abstracting power in various cognitive faculties. Following Aristotle, Ibn Sina holds a representational view of perception or he may be described to have been Naive Realistic ' in this regard. He, furthermore, distinguishes between the potential intellect and active intellect, the former being in man and the latter being outside man. The potential intellect in man is a substance that is indivisible and immaterial.  

Ibn Sina has argued for the necessity of prophethood and of divine revelation. He strove to establish the necessity of this phenomenon at the intellectual, the imaginative, the miraculous and the socio-political levels. Ibn Sina being simultaneously a legatee of Greek intellectual and Islamic spiritual traditions, has sought to integrate the two to the best of his philosophical acumen. In this regard, he has stressed that the Quranic revelation is essentially a symbolic truth and it should not be literally overstressed too much.

Ibn-Sina opines that the people differ vastly in their intuitive powers both with regard to quality as well as quantity. Common People are completely in the dark in this regard. Only an exceptionally endowed person is in total contact with 'Reality' such a person need not be trained in any school or seminary. He can become a repository of truth on his own. The prophet creates a new value system on the basis of this very creative insight.
This knowledge-giving and value-creating insight is technically termed as 'Active Intellect' and identified with the 'Angel of Revelation'.

The revelation is both internal and external to prophet. The internality of revelation is obvious. However, in so far as the prophet is a human being the revelation may be said to be external to him. The prophet is, without doubt, the 'Active Intellect'. However, as a human being, he is so not by essence but purely by accident. The prophet is endowed with an exceptionally strong imagination. He transforms the purely intellectual truths into images and symbols by recourse to an impelling psychological necessity. The symbols and images are so powerfully inspiring that one not only believes in them, but is driven to undertake various actions in the light of his beliefs.  

According to Ibn Sina, the Essence of God is identified with His Necessary Existence. God is absolutely simple, so He can not be encapsulated in a neat definition. Following Neoplatonic tradition, Ibn Sina opines that God is absolutely simple. However, in knowing Himself, He knows the Essence of natural phenomena. Ibn Sina holds that God's Attributes of knowledge, power, creation, will etc., are not something over and above His Existence but they only signify the fact of His Existence. He being 'Pure Intellect', the object and the subject are identical in Him. God's creativity means that the world eternally
emanates or proceeds from Him. The seat of emanation being the intellectual nature of God, it is thus unavoidably and necessarily rational with a view to do justice to the demands of religion and reason. Ibn Sina holds that the world exists eternally with God. According to him the Matter as well as Forms emanate eternally from God. 45

Thus we find that Mutazilites, Ikhwan-us-Safa and such philosophers as Al-Kindi, Al-Farabi and Ibn-i-Sina, have been engaged in reinterpreting Islam with a view to reconcile it with the rational and scientific imperatives. They struggled to hammer out a reconciliation between Islam and Science within the first five centuries of Islamic calendar. The Asharites were primarily inspired by the scholastic controversies, emanating from the Quranic text itself, to work out a rational interpretation of Islam. The Ikhwan-us-Safa tried to reconcile Islam with scientific insights within an eclectic framework of ideas derived from Pythagoras, Plato, Aristotle, Plotinus etc. The philosophers were inspired by Greek rationalism and tried to interpret Islam in the light of Platonic and Aristotelian assumptions.

Sir Syed was familiar with these developments. He was a keen student of History. He was also aware of the development of Islamic thought in India. However, in Nineteenth century his immediate source of
inspiration was Shah Waliullah. He was also powerfully attracted to western science and liberalism. All these factors inspired him to bring out a fresh interpretation of Islam. A summary of this interpretation is worked out in the following chapter.
CHAPTER - 3

SIR SYED'S REINTERPRETATION OF ISLAM:

(a) TAFSIR, (b) HADITH, (c) ETHICS and (d) PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION.

REINTERPRETATION:

Sir Syed did not profess himself to be the Mujtahid of his times. However, he did undertake the reconstruction of the Islamic thought on a wide scale and with great originality and distinction. Sir Syed's 'Ijtihad' or reinterpretation of Islam was carried out in the light of 19th century scientific developments, although he always undertook great pains to refer to original sources of the Islamic world-view and value-system. Sir Syed's attempt at reinterpretation was so thorough and comprehensive that it emerged into a full-fledged philosophy of religion. In his wide-ranging interpretations, Sir Syed was always clear, transparent, demystifying and rather demythologising. He advocated that human thinking should be guided by scientific inductions and logical deductions and not by blind faith and uncritical acceptance of traditional patterns and assumptions of thought.¹

The widely ingrained belief amongst sub-continental Muslims that the doors of Ijthihad had
been closed for all times to come, proved to be the
greatest roadblock in Sir Syed's mission. Such a stance on
the part of Sunni Muslims is deemed to be highly
unacceptable and even objectionable by Sir Syed. He
followed Shah Waliullah, who was convinced of the need for
the reinterpretation of Islam in the eighteenth century,
with a view to meet the critical challenges posed by the
new age. The attitude of Taqlid (blind allegiance to
authority) amongst Muslims all over the world opined Sir
Syed, was a function of their political subjugation,
economic dependence and educational backwardness. Sir Syed
had to put up a heroic struggle in order to make a sound
case for an informed reinterpretation of Islam.

Sir Syed underlined that the doors of 'Ijtihad' should be thrown open so that anyone qualified or competent
enough for this job can take it up and reinterpret Islamic concepts, dogmas, doctrines and beliefs in the light of
contemporary frame of reference. Sir Syed takes the
Doctors of Islam or 'Ulema' to task for having declared
'Ijtihad' to be closed. Such a stance, he argued, has done
great damage to the intellectual and spiritual growth of
Muslims. In our times Muslims needed to inculcate a spirit
of enquiry and research. Every age must have its own
'Mujtahids' for guiding the community, out of newly
emerging critical situations.
Shah Waliullah was Sir Syed's main and immediate source of inspiration in matters pertaining to religion. Waliullah had made a categorical and clear distinction between 'Din' and 'Shariah'. 'Din' is immutable, rather eternal, whereas 'Shariah' is situational and necessitated by circumstantial imperatives. A particular 'Shariah' can be, in course of time, suppressed or abolished, if it gets corrupted. The social and moral reorientation carried out by a prophet is always dictated by the society in which he is born, the culture in which he is brought up and the intellectual level of people to whom he addresses.

Following Shah Waliullah, Sir Syed distinguishes between the 'Din' that is eternal and the 'Shariah' that is situationally directed and determined. The 'Din' refers to our beliefs; belief in one unique supreme God, belief in the authenticity of numerous prophets, the last being the prophet of Islam viz. Muhammad (P.B.U.H.), belief in the day of judgement etc. 'Besides, 'Din' includes our acts and modes of worship. It is 'Din' and not 'Shariah' which is finally revealed in the Quran in a perfect form. 'The 'Shariah' consists of legal deductions derived from the Quran and authentic traditions of the prophet, as well as inductions arrived at by the Doctors of Islam. However these inductions and deductions are worked out in specific situational contexts. With the changing times the Muslims must arrive at fresh inductions by creatively interpreting
the source material of Shariah. Like Ibn Taimiyyah, Sir Syed rejected the dogma of the finality of four schools of Islamic jurisprudence and emphasised that we must return back to our original sources so as to derive guidance from the same in the light of our requirements.6

Sir Syed reviewed several commentaries of the Quran available in the second half of the nineteenth century but was not satisfied with them. Most of them, according to Sir Syed, contained little more than mythological stories and accounts of alleged miracles. Most commentators interpret the verses of the Quran with reference to particular historical events and thereby water down the universal and eternal message contained therein. Similarly, he reviewed the compilations of the early jurists and greatly appreciated, albeit with critical sympathy, the work done by them in terms of elaborate rules and regulations derived from the Quran and authentic traditions of the prophet. However, Sir Syed emphasised that presently we need to derive contemporaneously relevant rules from the principles outlined in the Quran rather than be engaged in zealously guarding the inferences derived by earlier jurists. Every age demands fresh interpretations and creative reconstructions in accordance with its requirements.7

In his article entitled 'Uncivilized Countries', Sir Syed takes Turkey to task for not carrying out the legal
reform. He opines that the foremost cause of the backwardness of Turkey as of other Muslim countries was due to prevalence of outdated legal codes over there. He advocates that contemporary social, political and administrative problems cry for a new legal code. He points out that the attitude of 'Taqlid' is widespread amongst Muslim countries and this prevalence of 'Taqlid' i.e. following Doctors of Islam without any regard to contemporary situations, has generated the following unacceptable results:

1. Muslims wrongly assumed that all matters, pertaining to world were dealt with by religion and consequently we can't do anything without the sanctions of 'Ulema'.

2. Muslims wrongly identified the decisions arrived at by jurists with the 'Islam' itself. In view of the same Sir Syed advocated that the foremost duty of Muslims was to reinterpret their civil and criminal laws and rewrite their commercial and trade manuals in the light of contemporary scholarship.

The famous periodical 'Tahdhib-Akhlaq' launched by Sir Syed after his return from England in 1870 inaugurated a new pattern of independent and critical thinking in social, political, moral and religious spheres of operation. In the very first issue of the periodical, Sir Syed emphasised that the following steps were specifically and specially needed in order to make a real breakthrough in our understanding of Islam:
1. Independent thinking.
2. Rejecting of all those religious beliefs and practices which are not integral to Islamic world-view.
3. Analysing of some religious problems which are true in themselves, but are not expounded in rational terms.
4. Critical review of some religious problems which have been wrongly interpreted in the past.

In one of his speeches Sir Syed said: "Those who believe in Islam without any philosophical and rational basis undoubtedly have a faith stronger than those who need to augment and reinforce their beliefs with rational argument, because in the minds of the former there is neither any doubt present nor is there any room for it. They need no logic, no philosophical justification for a belief in God and in the prophet... I regard them as shining stars of faith and genuine Muslims". But, he continues, "Apart from this group of people, there is another group who demand proof of everything. They don't like to go on assenting to things simply from fear of other people's opinion or under social pressure while their hearts are in fact disturbed by doubt". Syed Ahmad's targetted audience was this group of Muslims. While writing numerous articles in 'Tahdhib-ul-Akhlq' and also while undertaking a commentary on the Quran, he addressed himself to these very people.
It was the Central objective of Syed Ahmed to convince the emerging generation of young muslims of the truth and uniqueness of Islam. He claimed Islam to be far more simple, rational and natural than other religions. However, he was convinced that science posed a great challenge to Islam as it posed to all religious traditions. Furthermore, the enlightenment spread by western ideas amongst the young muslims was another challenge capable of undermining the faith of the community in times to come. Sir Syed accepted the challenge of the nineteenth century science and accordingly tried to reinterpret Islamic doctrines with a view to reconcile Islamic beliefs with the findings of natural sciences, as early muslim philosophers had attempted a reconciliation between the Islamic orthodoxy and Greek rationalism. While outlining the attempts made by earlier muslim thinkers to reconcile theological sciences with rational sciences, Sir Syed said, "Today we are as before in need of a modern 'ilm-al-Kalam' by which we should refute the doctrines of modern sciences and undermine their foundations or show that they are in conformity with the articles of Islamic faith. As I am endeavouring to popularize these sciences among the muslims, it is my sole duty to defend the religion of Islam and to reveal its original bright face."
For Sir Syed a true religion can't but confirm with human nature and Nature in general. It is pointless to assume word of God not to be in confirmity with the God's action, i.e. natural world. The entire universe including man is the work of God. Religious views and values are based on His word i.e. the Quran. There simply could not be any contradiction between the two.  

Sir Syed claims to have pondered over Quranic text to the best of his ability and he honestly concludes on the basis of his understanding of the Quran that there is no contradiction between the Islamic world-view and modern natural sciences. His argument for the truth of Islam is based on the two principles as laid down hereunder:

1. Firstly, Islam or for that matter any other religion should not preach or teach anything contrary to the laws of Nature as natural world is the work of God and any true religion revealed by God is His word. Therefore the work of God and the word of God can't but be in natural harmony.

2. If there is a difference between the principles of natural science and the revealed word of God i.e. Quran as received by the holy prophet and handed down to successive generations of Muslims, it may either be demonstrated to be only apparent or modern scientific contention under consideration be declared to be wrong.
Sir Syed was cautious to distinguish between the originally revealed Islam and historically evolved Islamic traditionalism, before he could advance any argument in defence or favour of Islam. He was not prepared to accept the decisions of the traditionists and jurists to be final. He accepts the Quran as the only final authority or supreme court of appeal. Here again, he accepted the text of the Quran as final and all its interpretations as worked out by 'Muffasirin' to be only of provisional value which may or may not be accepted. He enunciated the principle of 'Tafsir-al-Quran bil-Quran' i.e. explanation of the text of the Quran by reference to the Quran itself and not by reference to the authority of the scholar.\textsuperscript{15}

Sir Syed's interpretation of Nature' was deeply influenced by 19th century Mechanistic world-view. Like nineteenth century scientists he interpreted 'Nature' as a closed system, strictly governed by physical and mechanical laws and unexceptionally obeying the principle of uniformity of Nature. The mechanical laws govern the Nature at all levels; inorganic, organic and the human. The following words of Sir Syed clearly indicate his acceptance of the Mechanistic world-view : "In the beginning this knowledge of the Nature was limited. But with the increase in the knowledge, the sphere of the Nature has correspondingly increased and thus seems to have become co-extensive with what we find in the
universe, what we see or feel so much so that the actions and thoughts of man and even his beliefs are all different chains in the inexorable laws of Nature.\(^\text{16}\)

The acceptance of a mechanistic world-view entails a radical shift in our metaphysical and moral views. There is no place for God in a mechanistic world-view. The question of freedom of human will does not arise and such contentions as the purpose of the cosmos and the autonomy of moral values are thoroughly rejected as pointless. Sir Syed was enamoured of this mechanistic world-view and he accepted it without deriving its implications for religion and morality. His acceptance of mechanistic world-view was uncritical. In view of the same, Jamal-ud-Din Afghani declared Sir Syed to be 'Dahrriyah' or 'naturalist'. Sir Syed assumed that some research scientists have come to the conclusion that laws of Nature indicate a design in the universe and it strongly suggests the possibility of a designer in the universe which in the religious language is known as God. The scientific researcher is identified with religious seeker by Sir Syed.\(^\text{17}\)

Sir Syed cites numerous verses from the Quran indicating how various prophets of Allah realise the truth and are led to believe in the existence of God by recourse to observing multiple phenomena or objects of Nature. He cites the following verse from the Quran(iv,159) in this
regard: "Assuredly in the creation of the heavens and of the earth, and in the alteration of night and day, and in the ships which pass through the sea with what is useful to man, and in the rain which God sendeth from the heaven and in the change of winds and in the clouds that are made to do service between the heavens and the earth - are the signs for those who understand." Thus SirSyed argues for the reality or existence of God from these considerations which cumulatively amount to a teleological argument for His Being.

Sir Syed says: "None of the prophets come to realize God except through this process. Moses expressed his view to see God, he got the reply, 'By no means canst thou see Me but look upon the mount' (vii, 143). What was on the mountain? It was nature, anammanifestation of the law of Nature. God couldn't manifest HIMself direct, the way He pointed out was the way of nature.... when asked, 'what art Thou? He invariably refers to the laws of Nature and implies that it is He who changes night into day and the day into night who gives life to the dead and the death to the living."19

Sir Syed further refers to the spiritual experience of Abraham as recorded in the Quran (III, 65-79): "From the Nature he went to God, from the uniformity of the laws of physical universe, he was able to transcend to the spiritual reality behind. He saw the Sun, the stars, the
moon, appear and disappear, rise and set according to fixed immutable laws and was able to penetrate behind the veil of these laws of Nature to their Author. He declared: 'I have set my face, firmly and truly towards Him, who created the Heavens and the earth'.

In this way Sir Syed identifies Islam with Nature or tries to bring out the truth of Islam through a consideration of various features and laws of Nature. Thus he declares that true religion consists in the belief in one God only and anyone accepting the oneness of God is a muslim. It is not necessary that such a person practise muslim rituals or modes of worship. In an article 'Islam is Nature and Nature is Islam', he says, "Islam is such a simple and useful religion that even irreligiousness is included in it.... what minimum beliefs an irreligious person may hold must be the basic creed of Islam. Every religion has certain special rituals and creeds on account of which it is differentiated from others and any one who doesn't believe in or follow these rituals is called irreligious, though we have no right to call him so, for religion pure and simple is above all these rituals and formalities, with which it comes unfortunately to be bound up. He who doesn't believe in any prophet, Avatar, revealed scripture or the ritualistic formalities, but believes only in one God is a muslim in the true sense of the word."
The second characterising feature of Syed Ahmad's thought is his emphasis on the application of reason and commonsense. Syed Ahmed lays emphasis on empirical reason as exhorted to believers by the Quran. He underlined that the Quran never asks its followers to be guided by blind faith in accepting the basic principles of religion. Reason he defines as 'aql-i-kulli'. He defines reason as "that inherent capacity in man by which he draws conclusions on the basis of objective phenomena or mental thinking processes and which proceeds from particulars to generalizations and vice-versa...... it is this capacity of man which has enabled him to invent new things and led him on to understand and control the forces of Nature, it is by this that man is able to know things which are a source of happiness and then tries to get as much profit out of them as possible, it is this which makes a man ask the whys and the wherefores of different events around him." 22

Sir Syed differed openly with those Doctors of Islam who looked down upon commonsense in matters pertaining to religion. The orthodox Doctors of Islam accused Sir Syed of wrongfully interpreting religion in the light of western rationalism and modern sciences. Sir Syed quoted al-Ghazali in his defence who said that no interpretation of Islam can be deemed to be perfect or
free from defects. While discussing the verse (III, 7) where the Quran categorically maintains that its discourse is comprised of fundamental and allegorical verses, Sir Syed points out that the presence of allegorical verses in the Quran indicates that God wants us to interpret those verses in every age in the light of its intellectual and methodological perspective.

In his celebrated article 'Thoughts of man' Sir Syed again underlines the role and significance of reason. Rationality is the hallmark of man which distinguishes him from other animals. It is the very rationality of man that imposes on him moral duties and responsibilities. The function of reason is to gather knowledge about the reality of natural phenomena. He says, "I came to the conclusion that reason alone is the instrument, which can decide the matter and bring about the necessary conviction. As the reason is used almost universally, so the reason of one man can be corrected by that of another and the reason of one age by that of the another age. Without it, nothing can be achieved".

Sir Syed does not think that reason and revelation are qualitatively different. The generally held distinction between revealed and natural religions is not acceptable to Sir Syed. Such a distinction suggests that the revealed religion is different or even contrary to rational and natural demands of man. For Sir Syed
inspiration is a natural development of man's instinctive and rational dimensions. Following the Quran he calls 'instinctive power' which all animals and insects possess, as 'Wahi' or revelation (XVI, 68), and thus makes instinct, reason and revelation belong to the same category, though with a difference of degree at each grade of being. Man is endowed with reason far above the animals. It is due to Man's natural aptitude which he calls 'Wahi', that men in different ages and regions have been able to evolve a uniform standard of moral values. Those who are endowed with reason to the highest degree are the guides of mankind whom Shah Waliullah call muthimun. In spiritual matters they are called prophets. According to Sir Syed these guides appear in all spheres of human life secular as well as religious.

Sir Syed holds that 'Wahi' or inspiration is natural to all men. All men are more or less endowed with the capacity for revelation. Inventors designing new devices, scientists discovering Natural laws and musicians composing new symphonies; are all in their own way recipients of this divine revelation. Prophets and other geniuses differ only in their spheres of operation. The mission of the Prophets is to reorientate the spiritual and moral life of the people and accordingly, they receive the messages that have the potential of healing the spiritual and moral ailments of mankind.
The orthodox view forwarded by most theologians that God out of His absolute freedom confers the rank of Prophethood on anyone He chooses, is outrightly rejected by Sir Syed. For Sir Syed the prophethood is a natural faculty like other human faculties. However this faculty has a natural time to ripen and it fructifies at the appropriate point of time. Poets, engineers, and physicians and others do take their time to emerge as authorities in their respective fields of operation. The prophets too are naturally endowed with the proficiency to heal the spiritual maladies of mankind and regenerate their latent potential for moral struggle. When a prophet's natural aptitude ripens at an appropriate point of time, he is called upon to declare his moral and spiritual mission.27

Although Sir Syed agrees with the widely accepted view that prophets are born not groomed, so to say, yet he argues that it should not be taken too literally. Prophethood should not be construed to be a rank which God confers artibrarily upon whomsoever He pleases. From the Quranic accounts, it can be inferred that prophets are not born out of vacuum but have to undergo severest possible trials with a view to realise their natural aptitude for prophethood. They gather confirmation of the authenticity of their spiritual strivings only after facing enormous trials and tribulations. According to Quran, Prophets attain the truth by their natural faculties. Later on,
they get confirmation of what they have attained through their natural struggle. A prophet is not a freak of Nature. He doesn't come all of a sudden out of the womb of the earth. He is rather a man like us, albeit with the highest spiritual endowments.\textsuperscript{28}

Sir Syed doesn't accept the mechanical interpretation of revelation. The widely held view that prophets receive inspiration through the medium of Gabriel is unacceptable to Sir Syed. Sir Syed holds that there is no intermediary in between God and the prophet. A prophet is a direct recipient of the message from God. Gabriel is a symbolical representation of the prophetic faculty. "His heart is the mirror which reflects the divine illuminations. It is his heart which carries the message to God and then returns with the divine message. He is the being from whom the words of God's speech emanate. He is the ear which hears the wordless and noiseless speech of God. From his heart gushes forth like a fountain the revelation and then it descends on him. His spiritual experiences are all the result of human nature. He hears his spiritual message by his physical ears as if somebody else is saying something to him; he sees himself with his physical eyes as if another person is standing before him."\textsuperscript{29}

Sir Syed doesn't consider revelation as coming from up above the sky, so to say. It is a function of the divine mind working through human consciousness. That is
why the Quran was not revealed at one stretch. It was revealed to the prophet(s) in numerous instalments in accordance with the demand of the occasion. Prophetic faculty like other human faculties works in face of certain motives and practical demands. Revelation from God is also an expression of what is the need of the hour. The prophetic consciousness comes into operation in response to the demands of the immediate occasion.\textsuperscript{30}

Sir Syed opines that all men are blessed with prophetic faculty, notwithstanding the individual differences. All human beings can receive divine revelation and the question of finality doesn't arise in this regard. Revelation as a source of knowledge is open to us all for over. Only the role of prophethood has come to an end.\textsuperscript{31} Accordingly, Sir Syed denies the authenticity of the traditions referring to the appearance of 'Mahdi'. There was a time, when the people were rationally immature and thus God sent prophets for their rational development. But with the passage of time and development of human reason, this guidance was discontinued, and as the last favour of God, the moral and spiritual values enunciated by Islam were fully disseminated. Therefore prophet(s) is the last of the distributors of these divine gifts, not only because there would come none after him for the distribution of divine gifts, but also because with him these divine gifts were fully distributed and nothing was
left and as the divine gifts were distributed in stages and the prophet(s) came to distribute them the last of all, his prophethood is also the last. So it was declared in the Quran (v,5): "Today I complete for you your religion and complete my favour to yo and have chosen for you your religion, Islam."³²

Religion, for Sir Syed, is an aspect of Nature and God is its Author and the First Cause. God ordained the laws of the Nature and it is running perfectly in accordance with those very laws. God's laws like His own Being are immutable or unchangeable. As the Quran (X,VIII, 23) asserts, "No change shall you find in the habit of God". Just as the material world works and operates in accordance with immutable laws, so in the moral sphere there is an absolute law of right and wrong which knows no exception whatsoever."³³

(a) TAFSIR

In reinterpreting the Quran, Sir Syed postulates certain doctrines and principles, as the task of reinterpretation cannot be carried out without a basic frame of reference. He deems the acceptance of fifteen doctrines and four principles of exegesis as absolutely essential for carrying out the task of reinterpretation authentically.
Doctrines

**First Doctrine**: That it is indisputable that God exists, He is One and He is the Creator of this Universe.

**Second Doctrine**: That it is indisputable that God has sent prophets for the guidance of mankind and prophet Muhammad (S) is an authentic prophet and seal of all the prophets.

**Third Doctrine**: That it is indisputable that the Quran is the Word of God.

**Fourth Doctrine**: That it is indisputable that every word of the Quran has been revealed to the prophet.

**Fifth Doctrine**: That it is indisputable that the entire Quran is an authentic text and that nothing false and unnatural is recorded therein.

**Sixth Doctrine**: That all affirmative and negative Attributes of God contained in the Quran are authentic and true. However an exact understanding of the Attributes of God is beyond the ken of human understanding. Therefore, the Attributes which we have understood through the medium of worldly contingencies can't be exactly ascribed to the Essence of God whose Existence is Necessary or beyond the realm of contingencies.

**Seventh Doctrine**: That Divine Attributes are integral to His Essence and are primordial and perennial like His Essence. The manifestation of Attributes is through the very Nature of God's Essence.
Eighth Doctrine: That all the Attributes of God are boundless and free of any limits. He is absolutely sovereign to make any promises and was absolutely free to establish those laws of Nature by recourse to which, He might have previously created any universe or has created this universe or may create any other universe in any way whatsoever. There can't be any contradiction between God's promises and the laws of Nature established by Him, for that spells imperfection in the perfect Attributes of God. On the other hand, God's making promises and creating this universe in accordance with the laws of nature, is a proof for His Almightiness.

Ninth Doctrine: That there is no injunction in the Quran that contradicts Laws of Nature.

Tenth Doctrine: That the Quran exists as it has been revealed in its entirety, nothing more or less.

Eleventh Doctrine: That the order of the verses in every Surah is Mansus (Divinely ordained).

Twelfth Doctrine: That nothing abrogates or is abrogated in the Quran i.e. none of its verses abrogates any other verse.

Thirteenth Doctrine: That the Quran has not been revealed at once, but in instalments from time to time.

Fourteenth Doctrine: That what has been revealed in the Quran by God about what exists and what is created is perfectly in accordance with the obtaining universal
order. It can't happen that His words contradict His creations or vice-versa.

**Fifteenth doctrine**: That even when it is categorically accepted that every word of the Quran is the word of God, yet its meanings can be determined in the light of Arabic grammar, for it is revealed in the Arabic which is a human language. For determining the meaning of any discourse, whether human or divine, the following points need to be taken into consideration:

a) That every word is used in accordance with its definitional meaning.

b) That it be clarified that the word under consideration has not been used in any other sense.

c) That if a word has multiple meanings, it must be clarified as to in which sense the word under consideration has been used. The pronouns which can be variously applied can't come under this category.

d) That it be clarified as to whether the word under consideration has been used according to its original meaning or in a metaphorical sense.

e) That it be clarified as to whether there is any inherent (hidden) meaning in a statement or not.

f) That it be clarified as to whether a word under consideration specifically refers to any one of the stipulated meanings or not.\(^{34}\)
Principles of Exigesis

**First principle**: That God is the Supreme Reality and the Quran is His Discourse (Kalam). It is an Authentic Discourse and no development in science or scholarship can falsify it. Any breakthrough in any branch of knowledge, rather illuminates its varacity.

**Second principle**: That in this world, man encounters two phenomena viz., work of God (Nature) and Word of God (Quran). The work of God and the Word of God can't run contrary to each other. The work of God (Nature) is out there, beyond any doubt or suspicion. If we deem the work of God and the Word of God running counter to each other, then necessarily the Word of God will be in danger of being declared to be false. God forbidding, such a situation is categorically unacceptable. Therefore, it is imperative that the work of God and the word of God are in accord with each other.

**Third principle**: The physical world runs according to fixed laws of Nature, is a practical convenant of God and the Quran is a promise of deliverance. Therefore, they can't run against each other.

**Fourth principle**: Whether we accept that man has been created with a view to follow laws and practices of religion or religion has been designed for the sake of man, in both cases we will have to accept that man as against other animals has been endowed with reason
obliging him to bear heavy moral burdens. Therefore, it is all the more important that the religion given to him is not above or beyond his reason, for in that case man can't be deemed to be responsible for bearing the cross of moral choices. Obviously a bull or a donkey can't be burdened with moral recommendations and prohibitions.

The religion of Islam and God's discourse are free of these limitations. It advocates that God's promise should be understood and believed in. What God declares is true. There can't be anything truer than what God communicates to us through the founder of Islam viz. 'I am a man like you. It is revealed to me that there is no God but Allah who is One and Unique. I am a messenger of glad-tidings and a warner unto you'. We can not be said to be complete believers if we accept something on the authority of the Quran and Hadith without understanding its real import, even though such a belief might be deemed to be a sufficient condition for deliverance on the day of judgement.35

Sir Syed employed philological and metaphorical methods in his exegesis and interpretation of the Quran. By philological method he meant understanding the Quranic discourse or words employed in the Quran, in the light of their meanings prevalent during prophet's time. In support of this contention Sir Syed quotes Shah Waliullah's 'Al-Fauz al-Kabir' where Waliullah exhorts scholars and
commentators to avoid engaging in hair-splitting interpretations and keep in mind the pure Arabic idiom of the prophet's time whenever the need for exegesis of the Quranic verses arises.\textsuperscript{36} The metaphorical method is suggested by verse 7-Surah 3, wherein the Quran divides its verses into Muhakamat (verses of established statements) and Mutashabihat (Allegorical or Metaphorical statements). Thus various Quranic expressions and words have been metaphorically employed. God's sitting on the throne (Q. 7, 54) is a case in point. The traditional interpreters translate 'Arsh' as 'throne' and take the verse wherein God is metaphorically referred to as sitting on the throne literally. Sir Syed refuses to accept this literal understanding of the Quranic metaphors or allegories. Instead, we must understand such expressions metaphorically, although the real meaning of such expressions is beyond the reach of human understanding.\textsuperscript{37}

According to Sir Syed God is Self-Existent, One and Eternal, reveals Himself in His Attributes. He is All-Powerful. Nothing is comparable to Him, nor is there any partner or rival to Him. He is neither a Substance nor an Attribute, nor is He bound to space and time. Syed Ahmed was deeply convinced that the uncompromising monotheism advocated by the Quran is the hallmark of Islam and gives it a distinct identity in comparison to other religions.\textsuperscript{38}
Sir Syed agrees with the Mutazilite thinkers that the Attributes of God are identical with His Essence. However we can comprehend neither His Essence nor His Attributes. He transcends our thoughts, speculations and imaginations. He is beyond the ken of human speech. As a matter of fact, the Quran qualifies God with multiple Attributes or 'Beautiful Names' as it terms them. However the meanings of these attributive words can't be understood in keeping with dictional stipulations of ordinary discourse. So the ultimately Real God can't be comprehended by His Attributes. Sir Syed believes as against Mutazilites that God is the creator of the virtue and Sin, and good and evil. Human beings have been so fashioned by God that they have the choice to opt either for virtue or for Sin. God's actions are not arbitrary. However the wisdom of His pattern can't be discerned by us mortals. He is All-powerful to enact any law any time. However, the laws once ordained by Him are insured against any possible violation.

Sir Syed was deeply convinced of the authenticity and truth of the existence of God. However, this strong conviction was not born out of a blind faith in the veracity of the Quran. He does refer to Quranic method of pointing out the wonders of Nature as demonstrative of the existence of God. However, he does not stress the teleological considerations advanced by the Quran in this
regard. He rather advances the cosmological proof for the existence of God. Sir Syed argues that all things out in the universe are linked with other things by a chain of causation. The entire universe is a co-ordinated system of cause and effect. This causal chain has to end somewhere and that Final or First Cause is what we call God. The existence of God is not accidental or incidental but eternal.41

God is not only detached from the physical order but also from the moral order. The moral order has its law of right and wrong as the physical order is run by its own immutable laws. The moral laws like physical laws operate unexceptionally. As men sow, so they reap. Their actions are logically followeld by pains and pleasures of various types. The question of divine interference does not arise in this regard. Sir Syed's denial of the possibility of miracles and efficacy of prayers can be understood in the light of this God-Nature relationship. Laws of Nature are His practical promises or commitments, and God can't allow violations of His promises taking place. Things happen according to certain fixed patterns. If we maintain that things can happen otherwise as well, we are simply accusing God going against His promises.42

The argument claiming that negation of miracles goes contrary to the Ominipotence of God is not acceptable to Sir Syed. He redefines the term 'Ominipotence'. God is
not limited by any external agency. However Sir Syed points out that God is limited by His own plans and purposes. The Quran points to the infinite power of God manifesting itself through the order of the universe. He says that we are not aware of all laws of Nature. However Syed Ahmed accepts the miracles as the strange and extraordinary events, which obey the laws of causation and uniformity of Nature and holds that Waliullah also accepts only this kind of miracles. But he totally rejects miracles which violate the laws of nature. He says, "I don't deny the possibility of miracles, because they are against reason, but because the Quran doesn't support the happening of events or occurrences that are against the laws of nature or violate the usual course of things".

Sir Syed's belief that laws of Nature are immutable and can't be changed even by God entails the question of efficacy of prayers as well. What is the point of praying to God when there is no corresponding divine acceptance, for in this perspective, punishment and reward are the logical and natural correlaries of one's actions and God's will is not involved at any stage in any manner whatsoever. Sir Syed opines that the utility of prayers should not be measured in terms of God accepting or rejecting them, but in relieving the individual of his inner or psychological tensions and anxieties at stressful moments of his life. Prayer according to Sir Syed is a
call upon God to direct oneself to Him. The conventional interpretation of prayers in terms of God responding to one's supplications can't explain as to why countless supplications are not obviously attended to, despite God's promise to hear all the prayers. Besides the situation a person is placed in, is decreed by God Himself and such decrees have to follow their own inexorable logic without concession or compromise. This radical interpretation of God-Nature relationship ruling out miracles and the efficacy of prayers in the conventional sense was deeply resented by Doctors of Islam. It was the most controversial contention of Sir Syed and was unacceptable to the community at large.45

The cardinal assumption of Sir Syed's world-view is his belief that the entire universal order or cosmos is eternally and inviolably determined by law of cause and effect. In view of this all-pervading law, Sir Syed refuses to accept the orthodox belief in the effectiveness of prayer. When it is said that God accepts the prayers of request, it only means that God is pleased with such a prayer. Subsequently, the practical impact of such a prayer is the generation of the patience and firmness in the personality of the supplicant.46 Such an interpretation of prayer is in accord with the Mutazilite point of view. Mutazilites held that God's asking His servants in the Quran to invoke Him means only that He wants an attitude
of adoration from them. Similarly, when God promises to listen to their prayer, it means he responds to our good actions.47

Many Muslim philosophers have advanced the idea of the evolution of man. However, Sir Syed was a believer in the modern theory of evolution. The evolution is an all-pervading long and laborious process of development. The emergence of man is a specific event in this long drawn out process. Sir Syed believes that the process of evolution was originally started by God Himself by uttering the word 'Be'. Man is a result of the chemical and biological processes going on in Nature. Sir Syed quotes the Quranic verses in support of his contention that the chemical changes in water and clay led to the emergence of all life and finally the man on this planet.48

The Biblical and the Quranic account of Adam as having fallen from grace and subsequently expelled from Heaven is again radically interpreted by Sir Syed. For Sir Syed the word 'Adam' does not signify an individual. It is a symbol for the whole mankind. The dramatic presentation in Bible and the Quran of the fall of Adam is a literary way of drawing home to us some fundamental truths about man. The event should not be understood literally. It is not a dialogue between angels and Satan or between Satan and God.49
Sir Syed's interpretation of the existence of angels is also unconventional. He admits the existence of angels. However, they are not beings with bodies and wings and still invisible. The Quran doesn't support such popular notion of angels. The word angel signifies the inexhaustible power of God. It signifies the potentialities of things such as solidity of mountains, the fluidity of water, the growth of vegetation etc. as well.  

The concept of Satan is also reinterpreted in the same vein. Satan is not a being existing outside man. It is rather a symbol for evil forces in the universe. Man has both angelic and Satanic dimensions. God's commanding angels to prostrate before man signifies that the good forces of the universe will always be obedient and faithful to man. Again, God's commanding to Satan to bow, signifies that God can dictate to evil forces to behave. Satan's disobeying the divine commandment, symbolises that evil in man can't be that easily controlled. Man has to control the devil within with all his spiritual resources. Similarly, God's forbidding Adam to approach the tree refers to man's freedom of will. Man's disobeying signifies that man can exercise his free will independently, without any fear of or consideration to external authority, even though the exercise of free will has the potential to mislead him. The Quranic reference to
Satan's stripping of the rainment of Adam and Eve is similarly reinterpreted (VII, 27). In this verse 'virtue is being symbolised by the word 'raiment' and 'evil' is being symbolised by the expression 'shameful parts', thus implying that virtue will cover up the shameful behaviour of man. Syed Ahmed adds that man's being misled by evil forces and disobeying God proves that man is completely free in the exercise of his will and in understanding multiple possible projects.

Sir Syed's treatment of the problem of the freedom of will is based on naturalistic premises. Man is simultaneously determined by external causes such as society, environment and education and internal causes such as his psychological and physiological make-up. However despite these determinations man is endowed with the capacity to discriminate between good and evil. Man rises above his spatial and temporal determinations by the natural light of his heart. All men are endowed with the capacity to break with the past and introduce new values and standards in the present. However, only in exceptionally gifted persons, is this value-genetic power realised to the full. Syed Ahmed points out that it was this innate faculty which made Abraham to realise and declare, 'I have set my face firmly and truly towards Him who created the heavens and the earth and never shall I ascribe partners to Him'.
Sir Syed holds that all human beings have the capacity to follow what is good and also to do what is evil. Human well-being is a function of the preponderence of our inclination to do what is good over our tendency to do what is evil. None of us is condemned to moral and spiritual depravity. If a man with the deepest orientation towards doing evil can, somehow, manage to exploit his latent potential for doing what is good, he can find salvation. We don't attain salvation by piling up virtuous deeds. Salvation can be obtained by our authentic yearning to realise the full potential of our moral and spiritual gifts. Our sincere efforts directed towards the realisation of good are sufficient to obtain us the good pleasure of God. By using the natural light of heart', we can slowly and steadily control our lower impulses and nurture a consuming will to do good. Man can never be a finished moral product. What is important is that he always struggles to keep his moral flags flying.

Sir Syed holds that man's freedom is guaranteed by his very nature as man is patterned after God Himself. However human freedom doesn't delimit the omnipotence of God. God has granted free will to man out of His sweet discretion. Similarly, man's freedom of will does not set any limits to God's prescience. We need not deny the omniscience of God with a view to defend the freedom of man. God's omniscience and man's free-will are not
incompatible. Just as an astrological prediction which comes out to be true doesn't determine the subsequent happening, so God's omnipotence or prescience of human fate does not set limits to human freedom. God's knowledge may be necessary like His Existence. However, that does not determine human behaviour in any way. In spite of God's omniscience man is free to pursue his goals, virtuous or vicious.

Sir Syed's view of human soul is largely, in keeping with the analysis worked out by classical scholars in this regard. However, he tries to base his theory of human soul on the scientific findings of nineteenth century. Syed Ahmed opines that unless we believe in the reality of soul, we can't explain our conscious experiences and our rational and volitional faculties as well. What is soul or what is the nature of soul are questions beyond the ken of human understanding. Nature of soul can't be grasped by means of reasoning. For Sir Syed, soul is a self-existing substance and not an attribute so to say. The Quranic verses about human soul viz. 'it is from my lord's command' (XVII, 87), is not interpreted in such a way by Sir Syed as to arrive at any philosophical or mystical thesis regarding soul. He doesn't find anything peculiar in this verse. He maintains that God's response would have been similar, if He would have been asked about the nature of water or earth etc. The surest
inference ever from this verse is that it is impossible for man to know anything about soul.  

Sir Syed believes that there is no qualitative difference between the souls of men and those of animals. However, human behaviour is unlimited and this is due to the structure of human bodies, which are the instruments of their souls. Men have differences even amongst themselves. Although the souls of all men are alike, yet some people are capable of attaining an intellectual stature of a very high order. Syed Ahmed considers soul to be immortal. In support of this contention, he cites the scientific law of indestructibility of matter or energy, the doctrine that asserts that nothing can ever perish in the world. Sir Syed believes that both body and soul will be resurrected and resurrection will be a continuation of this very life. The Quranic reference to resurrection is, functionally speaking, an argument against purely mechanistic, physicalistic and reductionistic explanations of human life. The Quranic analogies referring to resurrection are not meant to bring out the nature and character of resurrection. They have the function to underline the reality or so to say, the authenticity of the 'would be happening of resurrection'.

Furthermore, the nature of heaven and hell and the problem of reward and punishment are also discussed by Syed Ahmed. The Quranic verse viz. 'Fear the Fire prepared
for the infidels, whose fuel is men and stone' is interpreted by Sir Syed to bring out that heaven and hell are not in existence right now, for men will become the fuel of hell only when they are thrown into it, after the day of judgement. Heaven and hell are essentially incomprehensible. For example the incomprehensibility of heaven according to Sir Syed can be inferred from the Quranic verse viz. 'No soul knoweth which joy of the eyes is reserved for the good in recompense of their works (XXXII, 17). 'Streams' 'houses made of gold' 'Rivulets of milk' 'beautiful damsels' etc, are not to be taken literally, because in that case these will contradict the explicit statements of the Quran and Traditions. The reality of the Supersensous things can't be expressed in world, even by the words of God.58

The paradise and the hell described in sensuous terms in the Quran are mere symbolical representations of possible psychological states in after life. Similarly, the words used in the Quran describing the rewards and punishments in heaven and hell are all allegorical and metaphorical. Sir Syed cites a reported tradition of the prophet in this regard. A man is reported to have asked holy prophet (PUB) whether there would be horses in the paradise. He replied "you will have a red turquoise horse to ride and you will be free to go anywhere you like". Another person asked whether there would be camel also, he replied "Everything you desire will be there". According
to Syed Ahmed the phrase "Everything that you desire" does not imply that the heaven will be a store house of every possible and desirable object. It rather means that a righteous person can find perfect happiness in life hereafter. The nature of happiness can, however, be interpreted in various ways.\(^{59}\)

The supreme ascension (Miraj) of the holy prophet (S) is discussed by Sir Syed in a scientific way. Firstly he discusses the distinction made by the traditionists between 'Isra' and 'Miraj'. Both these words refer to one and the same event. This is supported by a number of traditionists. Thereafter, he discusses as to whether ascension of the prophet was a spiritual experience or vision or a physical journey heavenwards.\(^{60}\) Sir Syed cites the arguments of those traditionists and interpreters who deemed 'ascension' to be a spiritual vision rather than a physical movement. After detailing multiple traditions in support of the contention that prophetic 'ascension' was only a spiritual experience, Sir syed agrees with the same point of view regarding 'Miraj'. He quotes the Quranic verse viz. 'we granted the vision which we showed you, but as a trial for men' (xiii, 60), in this regard. From this verse Sir Syed thinks that we can work out only a spiritualistic interpretation of the event of 'ascension'. The verse categorically establishes that 'ascension' was only a spiritual experience rather than a bodily movement. Such authentic authorities as
'Ayisha', 'Hasan of Basrza' and 'Muawiya' etc. supported the same point of view. The Quranic description of the 'ascension' as a 'Journey by night' indicates that it was a divinely ordained dream experience. Furthermore, all the traditions quoted in favour of the popularly held view that the prophetic 'ascension' was a physical movement to the heavens rather than a spiritual vision are, untenable on the rational grounds.

With regard to 'Jihad' (holy war) Sir Syed insists that any war in order to qualify as 'Jihad' must be rooted in, based on and sustained by pure, genuine and authentic religious considerations. The Quran does allow Muslims to resort to violence under certain situational compulsions. However, such an allowance is only to steer a middle course between unqualified violence advocated by some and slavish surrender recommended by others. Sir Syed points out that Islam exhorts people to be forgiving, kind and compassionate. However, if the situation demands, it allows people to take up arms for the redressal of their genuine grievances.

Sir Syed maintains that 'Jihad' or waging of a holy war becomes unavoidable only under certain conditions. For example, if Muslims are attacked by unbelievers (Kafir) out of their sheer enmity towards Islam or when Muslims in a particular country are not allowed to perform their religious rites or when their peace is disturbed or their
property destroyed purely on grounds of religion, it is incumbent upon all members of the community to collectively wage a holy war against the attackers. Waging of a holy war or 'Jihad' with a view to forcibly convert unbelievers into Muslims is a contradiction in terms. The purpose of waging a holy war is to establish peace and order.\textsuperscript{63} Even while waging a holy war Islam asks Muslims never to attack non-combating women, children and elderly people. The looting and burning are not allowed at any cost and the prisoners of war are to be set free on payment of ransom.\textsuperscript{64}

(b) HADITH

It was one of the central concerns of Sir Syed to eliminate the unnecessary assumptions and interpretations appended to Islam through jurists, commentators, philosophers, dialecticians and Sufis. For Sir Syed, the Quran and the authentic and established traditions of the prophet, are the only two sources of Islamic beliefs and values. Sir Syed took a radical stand about the traditions attributed to the prophet of Islam. He insisted on accepting of authentic traditions only. He repudiated William Muir's contentions about Islam and the prophet as having been based on fabricated traditions. Sir Syed emphasized the fact that the traditions of the prophet were not collected during the life-time of the prophet (S), nor were they compiled during the times of his
companions. They were compiled after two hundred years of prophet's demise and as such the authenticity of the traditions of the prophet has to be accepted with great care and critical circumspection.65

Sir Syed points out that most of the honoured companions of the Prophet of Islam (S) were against the writing down of Traditions of the Prophet.66 Most of the traditions were committed to memory by the illiterate Arabs and were subsequently transmitted orally to various compilers. Besides there was great political chaos in the Arabia of second century (A.H.) when the collections of the Prophet's Traditions were compiled and such a situation was conducive to the fabrication of thousands of so-called traditions falsely attributed to the prophet of Islam. In view of the same, despite the utmost caution exercised by such compilers as 'Malik', 'Bukhari' and 'Muslim', all the traditions even in their 'Collections' can't be accepted as authentic.67 In other Collections, we can easily trace traditions which are false. The verbal accuracy of traditions recorded in most of the collections can't be guaranteed. The traditions as recorded in the collections convey only the sense of what the prophet said. An authentic record of the exact words employed by the prophet could simply not have been maintained, under those circumstances.68 Therefore, Sir Syed did not accept traditions as a valid source of religious inductions and
deductions. In the footsteps of Umar bin al-Khitab, he deemed Quran to be the sufficient guide in resolving controversial matters. The traditions were not as trustworthy a source as the Quran. Besides, following Shah Waliullah, Sir Syed holds that only traditions pertaining to religious affairs were binding on us. The traditions with regard to worldly matters may or may not be followed. 69

Sir Syed classifies the traditions of the Prophet into four types. Firstly, there are traditions dealing with religious affairs; secondly, there are traditions pertaining to the peculiar conditions of the society in which prophet worked; thirdly, there are traditions applicable to all conditions; and fourthly there are traditions pertaining to political and administrative problems. With regard to the last three categories, we must first make sure as to whether they include the revelational message or not. The prophet is to be necessarily followed in religious affairs only. However we are not bound to follow him in non-religious matters. We can chalk out an autonomous strategy, if the circumstantial exegencies demand a novel and creative solution. 70 Besides, each and every tradition attributed to the Prophet should be tested on rational grounds as well.

A tradition of the prophet can become a basis of religious belief and law only if it stands to certain
tests, so to say. Firstly a tradition attributed to the
prophet must be compatible with the general spirit of the
Quran. Secondly, it must not contradict the established
historical events and thirdly, it must be acceptable on
rational criteria. Sir Syed accepts that traditionists
have done a highly commendable job in collecting and
compiling the traditions and in developing the 'Science of
'Rijal', thereby providing us biographical profiles of the
transmitters of the traditions. However, it does not
complete the job of establishing 'Ilm-i-Hadith' as a
comprehensive science. The whole material of the
traditions should have been critically appraised with
regard to its content. Unfortunately, the traditionists
did not pay the requisite attention to the same.
Therefore, it is the foremost duty of present day Muslims
to critically assess their material in the light of
contemporary criteria of criticism.

In the light of historical criticism, Sir Syed came
to the conclusion that only very few traditions attributed
to the Prophet of Islam are to be accepted as authentic.
Therefore, the most important task to be undertaken by
contemporary scholars of prophetic traditions is to
compile a document in which all the absolutely authentic
traditions of the prophet are assembled. The Quran is to
be accepted as the only reliable criterion to assess the
authenticity of a tradition.
By comparing any tradition with the text of the Quran, human reason can discern whether it is authentic or unauthentic. 'Any hadith which is in disharmony with the Quran or against it should be declared unreasonable and rejected'. This can be done purely in keeping with the methodology of historiography. The Quran is to be accepted as an authentic criterion for there is nothing in the Quran that flies in the face of facts. Quran does refer to numerous stories prevalent amongst Jews, Christians and Arabs. However the Quranic accounts are not unnatural, extravagant and irrational. The extravagances and irrationalities are found only in the commentaries of the Quran. Therefore, if a tradition contradicts with the text of the Quran, its authenticity becomes questionable. Similarly, if a tradition contradicts with human experience or reason, it should be treated as unreliable. Furthermore, the traditions extolling the merits of the prophet by the companions of the prophet express the sentiments of the companions for the prophet and should not be attributed to the prophet of Islam as such. Lastly, any tradition disparaging any prophet should be treated as a concoction of unbelievers and any tradition militating against the dignity of the prophet of Islam should be rejected forthwith. It should not be done entirely out of our reverence for the prophet of Islam but on grounds of historical criticism, for it is conclusively established by historical scholarship that the prophet of
Islam was the most virtuous and dignified of all creatures.

Sir Syed's final statement, during or after 1869, on the question of the reliability of Hadith, gains interest. His aim is to establish truly neutral standards of Hadith criticism, valid for all men, believers or unbelievers. Sir Syed faces squarely the problem of time-lag between prophet Muhammad's life and critical collection of traditions almost two centuries later. He accepts it as a historical fact that in a longer period of oral transmission legends develop around a nucleus of facts, or just grow without any factual connection, especially in the realm of religious traditions. The religion of Islam is not an exception to this rule. 75

The events of the prophet's lifetime rest on the evidence of oral traditions transmitted to us, during the first hundred years after his death. There was thus ample opportunity for baseless reports to enter into Hadith. The very amount of time, from prophets' death to the formal compilation of traditions was a source of distortion and fabrication. Much of the legendary material that grew during this phase of oral transmissions comprised of 'traditions' overglorifying the prophet of Islam. Besides, the transmitters made errors in understanding the reasons for certain events in the life of the prophet and misinterpreted their purport. The words of the prophet were often misunderstood, and sometimes, only half of the
matter was transmitted, resulting in many a distortion. The traditions were even forged in order to advance the objectives of a particular sect of people.\textsuperscript{76}

(c) ETHICS:

Islamic Ethics (Ilm al-Muamala) like other Islamic sciences is rooted in the Quran. In fact, the Quranic system or world-view is based on pure ethical principles. Therefore, the need for making a distinction between Islam and Islamic ethics has not been felt by Muslim philosophers or interpreters. The moral, civil and criminal laws enunciated by Islam form one systematic whole and can't be identifiably separated from one another.\textsuperscript{77}

Islamic ethics is a body of injunctions laid down by the Quran for guiding us in day to day lives. These injunctions were exemplified by the prophet of Islam in his personal life. Defining his mission the prophet (S) says, "I have been sent to perfect morals'. When somebody inquired from the holy prophet (S) as to what is the essence of religion he replied that it is the good character that we display in our daily lives.\textsuperscript{78}

Sir Syed maintains that there is no necessary relationship between our beliefs and morals. We may be deeply religious and have an unshakable faith in a theistic world-view. However, our beliefs don't necessarily determine our morals. There is no necessary relationship between religion and morality. We can have a
set of uncompromising beliefs and yet they may not impinge on our actions. Similarly our actions don't necessarily determine our beliefs. Beliefs are a function of our inner and subjective choices, whereas morals are translated into our external and publicly observable actions.  

Sir Syed advocates that morals can be deemed superior to beliefs or they may be said to be having priority over beliefs. Our morals do have a deep impact on our individual and social lives. Even if we don't have a set of religious beliefs, we need a set of morals or a value system in order to stabilize a social order. A person having no religious beliefs, but having a set of moral values can contribute more fruitfully to the development of human society. He can be of greater help to man in his struggle for justice and welfare. Morality in comparison to beliefs leads to deeper enrichment of our humanity, for it lends spiritual solace and stability to our lives. Thus morality is more significant for humankind than an abstract system of beliefs. Religious beliefs are meaningful only in so far as they offer us deeper moral insights and illuminate our ethical choices. Conversely, they are pointless unless they provide us reinforcement for moral struggle. Thus religion acquires meaning in so far as it teaches us mutual co-operation, fellow feeling, compassion and humanity.  

Sir Syed's understanding of Ethical values and laws convinced him that they are neither absolute as maintained
by orthodox theologians nor subjective and relative as theorised by modern liberals. He argued that ethics is based on natural law, lying in between the extremes of theological absolutism and radical relativism. Moral truths and laws, although revealed by God, are yet discoverable by human reason and traceable to human experience.81

However, Sir Syed's ethical perspective should be clearly distinguished from that advocated by western ethical naturalists, such as Herbet Spencer, Nietzche, Deshumbert etc. For Spencer the goal of ethics is the preservation and promotion of life. He accepted the evolutionary perspective of Darwin and tried to base his ethical system in accordance with the principles of Darwinian hypothesis. Neitzche advocated robust morality as against meek morality on the basis of, what he called man's natural orientation to will to power.82 Deshumbert bases his ethical system on laws of Nature by arguing that man himself is a part of Nature and thus subject to same laws. However, he concedes that besides the obvious role of power in the conduct of human affairs, such intellectual and moral qualities as patience, courage, power of observation and judgement etc, do also play an important part in our lives.83 However, the above points of view are inspired by evolutionary perspective with reference to Nature as the standard of moral evaluation.
Sir Syed's understanding of Nature is more comprehensive. He holds that all levels of existence; physical, chemical, botanical, zoological and most importantly human, are teleologically oriented. They display a purpose and a recognisable moral tone. Man being a part of the Universal Natural Order, his morality has got to be in consonance with, derived from and based on the general character of the universe. Therefore, all the revealed principles of morality can be understood by man by the application of his intellectual powers. Only, he must have the capacity for undertaking a dispassionate investigation.  

Sir Syed was astonished to find his contemporary Muslim community zealously clinging to orthodox religio-ethical regulations even in their minutest details. He forcefully advocated that the circumstances demand that we work out fresh interpretations of Islamic beliefs and values and, if it is not done, Muslims will continue to wallow into conflicts and confusions. Therefore, Sir Syed advanced a new definition or theory of Islam, re-christening it as the 'religion of Nature', and therefore, a thoroughly rational system of beliefs and values. 

(d) PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION:

Sir Syed was a multifaceted personality. He was a keen thinker and a great doer. He had the vision to translate his dreams into concrete institutions. A great
intellectual, an erudite theologian, a perceptive historian, a pragmatic social reformer and above all a revolutionary educationist, Sir Syed was destined to change the destiny of modern Indian Muslims. The Indian Muslim society presented the sad spectacle of political degeneration and intellectual lethargy in early 19th century. They were steeped into superstition, ignorance, pointless conservatism and mindless traditionalism. They just couldn't summon the necessary intellectual courage to face the challenges of the west which came with the advent of British rule in India. Such a situation called for a radical departure from traditional lines of thought and Muslims of India needed a far-sighted intellectual and educational leader. Sir Syed's educational mission constituted the radical departure, which, in course of time, heralded Muslim renaissance in South Asia. This movement started by him is commonly known as Aligarh movement.

The Aligarh movement launched by Sir Syed was an all-pervading reform movement. It stood for the religious, social, political and economic reform of the Muslims. However, the central objective of the movement was the spread of modern education amongst Indian Muslims. Sir Syed launched a modern educational movement amongst Indian Muslims in view of the fact that they were confined to traditional learning imparted through Arabic and Persian and thought that modern, scientifically oriented education
imparted through English language was detrimental to their religious and cultural identity. The scientific and technological learning of the 'post-industrial Revolution era' was bypassing Muslims. The momentous changes going on did not attract their attention. Sir Syed was convinced that without imbibing the scientific and technological learning of Europe, the Muslims would have no economic, political and even cultural future. In the words of Tara Chand "Higher English education as the panacea for all the social and political issues of India". In this very context, his educational philosophy assumes special significance.

According to Sir Syed "the purpose of education has always been to enable a man to develop his intellectual powers to the full so that he may grasp the significance of any situation that arises, that he may know the difference between right and wrong and gain ability to contemplate the divine mysteries of Nature. Education should strengthen the character, help him to look after himself and concentrate on the life to come". He further added, "Education was not the putting into a person of something from outside. It was the releasing of the capabilities latent in a human being".

Sir Syed was acutely conscious of the fact that due to rapid scientific and technological development, the techniques and methods of education had undergone a sea-change. Therefore, education can serve as a powerful
instrument of social, economic and cultural transformation. Sir Syed pointed out that the age of arm-chair theorisation and conceptual hair-splitting had come to an end. We are living in the age of experimental verification and laboratorical confirmation. In a speech delivered at a meeting of 'Anjuman-i-Islam' at Lahore, he brought out the significance of scientific and technical education in these words: "Modern trade can't prosper without a knowledge of arts and sciences. Education is not only necessary to keep complicated accounts and for the supervision of factories, but also to develop and popularise the manufactures. If our nation learns all the sciences and arts, India still contains so much wealth and such resources will suffice for generations. But we don't utilize them on account of our ignorance." He was convinced of the fact that agriculture being another source of prosperity and progress was no less dependent on the arts and sciences. "Nowadays", he pointed out "the cultivated area has been extended to such an extent, that agriculture without the help of machines has become almost impossible. If Indians learn these sciences and arts, the progress of agriculture on account of the use of machinery can only be imagined".

In one of his speeches, Sir Syed brought out the levels of education necessary for the progress of the society in the following words: "There should be in the nation a considerable group, of highly educated, which is
expert in some subjects. In this way experts in all sciences should be represented, and their researches, thoughts and efforts should provide for progress in the arts and sciences and become a matter of pride for the nation. Then there should be a very large group of people having an average education and able to appreciate the writings of competent writers and understand basic principles. Then comes the great mass of people with a low level of education. Some will perform duties which constantly require the use of reason and education', others the manual labourers', should still be able to read the news papers, works on religion and be able to write a letter and keep accounts. No nation educated to a standard lower than the outlined could either progress or win respect in the eyes of other nations".  

Sir Syed was a staunch advocate of the right of a nation or community to administer its educational affairs. While deposing before the Education Commission of 1882 he argued: "My own opinion is very much at variance with public opinion on the matter. After giving a great deal of thought to every aspect of this question, I have come to the conclusion that it is impossible for the people to acquire a suitable form of education into their own hands. It follows that it would be to the country's advantage if the government left the people to manage their own education for themselves, restrained from interfering in
any way whatsoever". Sir Syed did not advocate this policy because he belonged to a country dominated by a foreign power. He advocated this as a matter of principle. Sir Syed's policy has been upheld even by the Constitution of India with a view to accord the minorities the right to administer their own educational institutions.

In his educational writings and speeches, Sir Syed stressed the importance of character-building and moral training. For him character-building was as important as learning. In his speech at Meerut on March 14, 1888 Sir Syed underlined: "My desire is not only to spread education among Mohammadans, but to spread two other things. The first of these is training of character. Unless we give the children of our nation along with education a training in morals, we can't reap those advantages which we desire". Sir Syed's emphasis on character-building has been echoed in the report of Education Commission of 1949 headed by Dr. S. Radhakrishnan. The commission noted, "We are building a civilization not a factory or workshop. The quality of civilization depends not on the material equipment or the political-social machinery, but on the character of man. The major task of education is the improvement of character". Sir Syed repeatedly stressed the significance of character-building and held the opinion that character-building was to a nation what soul was to body.
For Sir Syed, human soul without education is like unsculpted marble and its hedges can be smoothened only by a painstaking process of education. A man may be potentially very good and great, but all his good characteristics will remain hidden without appropriate education. Great philosophers, scholars, saints and men of generosity, goodness, wisdom and courage can't emerge on the social scene, unless their potential qualities are actualized by education. Sir Syed underlines that education should not be confused with training. They are two distinct operations. The actualization of man's inner potential signifies his education. Education is an activation and consequent efflorescence of man's latent or God-given potential. However, training in contrast to education, is the development of the professional competence of a person with a view to make a reasonable living.93

Sir Syed advocated value-based education and emphasised that education should inculcate in us the requisite understanding or wisdom to be able to distinguish between truth and falsehood and virtuousity and viciousness. The education should inculcate in us historical consciousness so that we can conduct our affairs in the light of the collective experience of mankind. Simultaneously, it should make us forward-looking and future-oriented. Besides, it should inculcate in us
values of sincerity, fellow-feeling, cooperativeness, mutual consideration and above all self-respect.\textsuperscript{94}

Sir Syed stressed that in their struggle for education, Muslims should be open-minded and yet rooted in their spiritual heritage: "Philosophy will be in our right hand and natural sciences in our left and the crown of la-illah-illallah (There is no God but Allah) will adorn our heads".\textsuperscript{95} This was the basic philosophy of education that inspired Sir Syed to establish M.A.O. College, wherein the best of Islamic values will be synthesised with the western Sciences and Humanities. For Sir Syed, science and religion were two modes or approaches of responding to Cosmic Reality and both are equally valid. Sciences are born out of our interrogation of the Natural Order, and religion is revealed to man through divine discourse. Thus sciences are born in responding to the work of God i.e. Natural Order, and religion is given to us through the word of God. Obviously there can't be any contradiction between the work of God and the word of God.

Sir Syed exhorted the students of M.A.O. College not to forget the basic values of Islam even while being deeply engrossed in the cultivation of western learning. He said, "Remember the truest words of all, 'there is no God but Allah and Muhammad (S) is His prophet'. It is to these words that our community owes its very existence,
whatever you may accomplish, even though you may become the stars of firament, unless you accept, you will no longer be Muslims. I want you to set an example both in scholarly pursuits and the practice of Islam. Only then will our community be honoured and respected".96

It is obvious that Sir Syed wanted the emerging generation of Muslims not only to excel in the scientific learning of the West, but also to accept and adopt Islamic beliefs and values in their day-to-day conduct. They should cultivate such Islamic virtues as large-heartedness, broad-mindedness, truthfulness, universal brotherhood, love of peace and freedom or faith in reason etc.

Sir Syed was deeply conscious of the special educational requirements of Muslims. In an address submitted to Lord Lytton the then Governor General of India, on the occasion of the Laying of foundation stone of M.A.O. College on 8th of January, 1877, it was stated: "So different in many respects are our educational wants from those of the rest of our population of India, that the best measures which the Govt. can adopt, consistently with its policy must still be inadequate, and if it were not opposed to the wise policy of Govt. to interfere in matters of religion, it would be beyond its powers to remove difficulties which owe their strength to religious ideas, and yield to theological discussion. The Govt.
could neither introduce a system of religious instruction, nor could it direct its efforts towards contending with the prejudices of a race by whom religion is regarded not merely a matter of abstract belief but also as the ultimate guide in the most ordinary secular concerns of life."^97

Sir Syed was not only a radical thinker and a revolutionary educationist, but also a deeply concerned educator of Indian muslims. Throughout his life, he struggled for education of Indian muslims and was deeply involved in inculcating modern values amongst them. Accordingly, he exhorted Indian muslims to give up obsolete ideas and fossilized notions. They should liberate themselves from pointless customs that have eaten into their moral and spiritual vitals and relegated them to a state of utmost backwardness. It is imperative for muslims to think radically and act boldly and give up traditional or conventional modes of thought and behaviour. This can be done only if muslims pluck the courage to tolerate and conflicting points of view. Freedom of thought is absolutely necessary for the education and civilization of any community or country. Muslims too can't civilize themselves unless they stand for freedom of thought. They must understand that distorted and motivated interpretations have no necessary relationship with the
beliefs and morals outlined in the holy Quran. Indian muslims have been practising certain customs which they deem to be integral to Islam. Therefore, it is imperative that they are educated on Islamic lines through appropriate analysis and exigesis of the Quran and the prophetic traditions.
CONCLUSION

A critical appraisal of Sir Syed's Reinterpretation of Religious Thought in Islam, His Achievements and Failures

The great devastation caused by the revolt of 1857, led men of concern and determination to undertaking projects and devising schemes and strategies with a view to rejuvenate India. Sir Syed felt called upon to dedicate his physical and intellectual resources to the economic and cultural rehabilitation of his contemporary Muslim community in view of their total demoralisation and dejection. He persued this objective through his discussions, writings and speeches with deep devotion and fervant dedication.

Sir Syed was simultaneously a man of action and a man of vision. He was blessed with a robust commonsense, and great moral courage. A keen, critical and analytical mind, he had the courage of convictions to translate his vision into reality through various social, political and educational interventions. His indomitable determination has few parallels in the annals of Muslim history. His passion for social reform welled up from the depths of his being. The establishment of 'M.A.O. College', now, 'Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh' is one of the most seminal contributions of Sir Syed to the cultural and educational upliftment of Indian Muslims. However, here we are concerned with Sir Syed's philosophy of religion and its relevance to our times and climes. The following remarks, though brief, would be in order, in this regard.
Sir Syed was the first Muslim thinker who had the necessary intellectual calibre and courage to come out of the medieval conceptual grooves and fixed patterns of thinking. He was acutely conscious of the scientific and technological superiority of the western Europe. The western scholarship and research was backed by scientific verification. The emerging sciences were increasingly achieving very high standards of methodological sophistication. Therefore, Sir Syed's reinterpretation of Islam was worked out in such a way as to accord with the twentieth century philosophical and ideological milieu.

Sir Syed's emphasis on understanding Islam in the light of reason and commonsense is also in accord with contemporary sensibility. While the doctrines and dogmas of religion are perennially relevant, our understanding of religion needs to be constantly and continuously updated in the light of newly emerging scientific researches, technological advances, methodological breakthroughs, sociopolitical situations, economic scenarios and above all attitudinal changes. A mere parrotting of literalistic translations or fixed interpretations cannot carry conviction in the fastly changing times. Besides, religious values and beliefs are to be translated into concrete sociopolitical, educational, cultural and institutional strategies in a given historical era and intellectual milieu. discovering a golden mean in formulating such strategies can be facilitated through the application of
reason and commonsense only. An unalloyed faith uniformed by reason and commonsense can either lead to mindless revivalism or generate sociopolitical disasters by way of reaction.

Sir Syed's project of the reconstruction of traditional Islamic religious thought was inspired by his concern for the socio-political, economic and cultural rehabilitation of Indian Muslims. Sir Syed was convinced that the root-cause of the economic and political backwardness of Muslims was their allegiance to various outward patterns of thought and modes of behaviour, wrongly deemed to be Islamic. He opined that a critical reappraisal of such patterns and modes reveals that they cannot, by any stretch of interpretation, be deemed to be integral to Islamic world-view and value-system. They may be historically and socially conditioned responses of the Muslim community as such. However, their necessary relationship with Islam cannot be justified either by Quranic discourse or by the example of the prophet of Islam.

Sir Syed was aware of the historical, cultural and sociological conditioning of our religious consciousness. He accepted that every age determines our ideas and beliefs and patterns of thinking imperceptibly. The ancient and medieval times were ages of creduality. People of those times tended to be highly gullible. They believed in impossible formulations. In point of fact, the more
preposterous and unbelievable a particular formulation was, the readier and merrier the people were to accept it. Our age is the age of doubt. People of our times tend to be skeptical. Therefore, religion needed to be presented in a new idiom. Such a presentation will have to take modern scientific developments into consideration as well.

Furthermore Sir Syed was convinced that Muslims will have to come to terms with the liberal and progressive civilization of the Western Europe. The posture of confrontation with the West was uncalled for. The confrontationist or militant strategy adopted by Muslims against the British under the leadership of Syed ahmed Barveli could not succeed. The joint front put up in 1857 by Hindus and Muslims against the British again turned out to be an unqualified failure. The British forces clearly and categorically demonstrated their superiority in military as well as political fields of operation. Their superiority-complex in the cultural field was also inspireld by their superior technological achievements leading to their social and economic progress. The Muslims needed to grasp these realities and understand the causes of their backwardness through a dispassionate analysis of historically significant forces and factors. They could no longer go on bragging to be individually and collectively committed only to obtaining of the good pleasure of Allah in the hereafter and least bothered about their economic progress or cultured advancement. Such a stance would not only lead to
their economic bankruptcy and cultural backwardness but rob them of their religious identity and spiritual moorings as well. The religious and spiritual health of the Muslims inexorably entailed their social and cultural rehabilitation. Such a rehabilitation was possible only by casting off, what may be said to be their, false religious consciousness. The so-called Islamic beliefs and values were neither warranted by the Quranic text nor by the example of the prophet(s). They rested primarily on conditioned responses of Muslims, that were, in course of time, sanctified by tradition, custom and history. The Muslims needed to undertake a critical reappraisal of the very conceptual framework of the historically accepted Islamic beliefs and values as against the beliefs and values of Islam per se; and reconstruct a new conceptual framework in the light of contemporary scientific research oriented by the philosophy of Naturalism.

Accordingly, Sir Syed set out in search of a new conceptual framework for Islamic thought. For him, the most authentic basis of understanding Islam was the text of the Quran and not the numerous interpretations of the Quran worked out by various commentators. He courageously expounded that the myths and the stories that have been incorporated into the commentaries of the Quran should be given up and the Quran must be interpreted afresh with a view to work out a reconciliation between the Quranic discourse and scientific laws. It was one of the abiding
assumptions of Sir Syeds' religious philosophy that the Quran being the word of God must be in conformity with the work of the God or the Natural World explored by Sciences.

Thus, fired with an ambition to reconcile religion and science and demonstrate that there is no basic difference between Islamic and Naturalistic World-Views, Sir Syed brought out radical reinterpretations of some fundamental beliefs of Muslims. The following were some highly controversial theses that invited the wrath of the orthodox Ulema:

1. That the Quranic account pertaining to the origin of man involving 'Adam' 'Iblis' and angels is not a body of descriptive or factual statements. It is rather an allegorical or parabolical account of the genesis of man.

2. That the words 'Satan' and 'Iblis' as used in the Quran do not refer to any external and objectively existing phenomenon. They only refer to the evilish and devilish potencies and potentialities latent in a human personality itself. 'Satan' is a personification of man's lower self.

3. That angels are personified powers of Nature and not Celestial beings actually existing out there.

4. The 'Jinns' also are not invisible fiery beings but refer to wild tribes of deserts and mountains.
5. That Heaven and Hell are not localities. The Quranic account of Heaven and Hell is allegorical and analogical.

6. That prophets are not arbitrarily selected by Allah. They grow up naturally and struggle unfailingly to attain to prophethood.

7. That all human beings are endowed with Prophet Faculty.

8. That Gabriel is not an intermediary between God and the prophets but is a symbolic representation of the Prophetic Faculty.

9. That any alleged miracle is not a proof of the authenticity of a prophet.

10. That the Quran does not ascribe any miraculous powers to the prophet of Islam.

11. That there is no verse in the quran certifying the popularly held account regarding prophet Abraham's having been consigned to flames.

12. That the immaculate birth of Christ is not categorically supported by the Quranic text.

13. That in no verse does the Quran maintain that Jesus was resurrected or ascended alive to the Heavens.

14. That the account of Eschatological Resurrection as given in the quran is not a prediction of a great event. It is an allegorical account designed owing to the limitations of human understanding.

15. That the description of Eschatological Accountability is also not be taken literally but allegorically.
16. That polygamy was permissible only if the husband was sure he could do equal justice to his wives.

17. That usuary as practised by seventh century Arabia was prohibited by Islam. However, such a ban does not apply on Government loans given on interest for business purposes.

18. That dressing like non-Muslims and eating like them was not forbidden by the Quran.

19. That everybody is entitled to interpret and reinterpret such social, political, economic, legal, educational and cultural questions and problems as are not specifically covered in the text of the Quran or referred to in the authentic traditions of the prophet.

Thus Sir Syed took a critical and methodologically informed stand against orthodox projection or interpretation of Islam. Simultaneously, he also built up a case for religion by arguing that Naturalism need not necessarily lead us to atheism and religion need not necessarily be understood or explained in supernaturalistic terms.

Sir Syed adopted a rational and reasonable attitude towards the reported traditions of the prophet of Islam(s). The stand taken by 'traditionists' (Muhaddithin), according to him, was not comprehensive enough. It is not enough to merely examine the authenticity of the chain of narrators in order to develop an authentic body-corpus of the traditions of the prophet(s). We need to critically examine the
contents of the reported sayings of the prophet as well as discard the ones contradicting the Quranic statements or injunctions and human experience and rationality. Furthermore, it is obligatory for Muslims to follow only those authentic traditions of the prophet which pertain to religious affairs. The traditions pertaining to worldly affairs may or may not be followed. Muslims are free to devise their own social, political, economic and cultural institutions in the light of the requirements of the age to which they happen to belong. Only the categorical injunctions of the Quran and its spirit cannot be violated.

Sir Syed refuses to acknowledge 'Ijma' as a source of Islamic law. He did not think that a unanimous opinion of the scholars of a particular time can be deemed to be valid for all times to come. Even the 'Ijma' of the companions of the prophet regarding a particular issue, cannot be accepted to be final. Such unanimous judgements could have been inspired by the then prevailing circumstances and therefore perfectly relevant under those circumstances. However, in our times, the problems can better be tackled in the light of our own requirements. Thus every age will need to undertake 'Ijtihad' in accordance with its own specific problems and questions. In fact, 'Ijtihad' is a continuous or never-ending process.

The very presence of allegorical verses in the Quran means that the Quran is and will always be in accord with
the times to come. New ages open up new perspectives. As situations change and human knowledge and experience grow, the outlook of the people also changes correspondingly. Thus the allegorical verses of the Quran will perennially reveal fresh meanings and insights in accordance with the obtaining methodological field-situation. This reveals the perennial scope and relevance of Islam as well.

Thus, Sir Syed stood for comprehensive 'Ijtihad' or reinterpretation of orthodox Muslim law. In fact, he stood for the reconstruction (Tajdid) of Islamic concepts, beliefs and values. The decisions of the ancient Doctors of law and interpretations of the commentators of the Quran and the sayings of the prophet are respectable but never final. Sir Syed, especially, wanted to banish the spirit of 'Taqlid' from the portals of Islamic thought.

Sir Syed's philosophy of religion is contemporaneously relevant in so far as he brought out the proper role of religion in our age that is driven by technology and led by Science. He rejected the medieval conception of religion as a fixed set of social, political, economic, cultural and educational values and as a perfect and infallible source of guidance in every situation for all times to come. Instead, he clearly brought out the distinction between the spiritual and temporal affairs of the Muslim community. It is obligatory on Muslims to abide by the beliefs, values and practices enjoined by Islam in matters spiritual. However, they are free to work out their own solutions of their
temporal affairs in keeping with the needs of the age. The institutional and legal matters are best left to be sorted out by the application of 'Ijtihad'.

Sir Syed was aware that with the onset of scientific era a new interpretation of religion was needed. Philosophical and theological issues cannot be settled by scientific method. However, a new version of religion in keeping with the contemporary methodological perspective was urgently needed. therefore, he attempted a reconstruction of the basic concepts and doctrines of Islam in keeping with the then widely prevalent Naturalistic World-View. Sir Syed might have overestimated the validity of the naturalistic Perspective or sometimes given an oversimplified interpretation of a particular belief. Such oversimplifications need to be rectified by suitable reinterpretations. However, such an exercise does not invalidate the soundness of Sir Syeds' approach to religion.

Sir Syed's method of analysis of the Quranic discourse is surprisingly akin to the method of Linguistic Analysis formulated by twentieth century Austria born Cambridge professor of Philosophy, namely, Ludwig Wittgenstein. In fact, he foreshadows the Wittgenstein's method of analysis. The central contention of Wittgestein is that language has a multifunctional character. Words of ak living language have descriptive, evaluative, prescriptive, symbolic, analogical, metaphorical, allegorical and many
other uses. Confusing these diverse and multiple uses with one another or reducing them all to a plain descriptive use generates unnecessary and pointless philosophical disputes or theological controversies. Sir Syed applies the same method in his analysis of the Quran. Every word of the Quran, Sir syed most respectfully believes is from God. However, as the Quran is revealed to the prophet of Islam in the Arabic language, it cannot transcend the grammatical, syntactical, morphological and linguistic structure of Arabic language and literature. It is definitely the most beautiful work of Arabic prose. However, in its presentation and style, it employs the same figures of speech as were in vogue during seventh century Arabia when the Quran was actually revealed. Like human discourse, the Quran also employs metaphors, symbols, similies, allegories, analogies and other sytlistic contrivances. Therefore, in order to determine the meanings of Quranic verses, we need to appreciate the style of the Quran and its specific method of using words. Unless we carry out such an analysis of the Quran, we are bound to confuse the issues and generate irresolvable controversies. For example, following this method, we will have to clearly demarcate the religious doctrines and injunctions from statements of fact and laws of Nature. The crucial or central statements of religion are not amenable either to logicomathematical validation or experimental verification. The statements of religion are not descriptive and factual but prescriptive and analogical.
The logic of religious discourse cannot exactly be pinpointed. However, by accepting the metaphorical or allegorical character of such a Quranic statement as God is the light of the Heavens and the Earth, one can attempt to work out its possible meanings. For example, one might say that just as light of the stars sustains life on our Earth, similarly, God is the Supreme Source of spiritual sustenance and illumination for all living and non-living phenomena of the universe. The Quranic statement describing its message to be like "Light unto darkness" can be paraphrased as a message that liberates us from cruelty, greed, lust, exploitation, falsehood, betrayal, etc., and inculcates in us such values as kindness, justice, purity, co-operation, truthfulness, honesty, self-respect and love etc. Such an approach can hopefully eliminate avoidable controversies by liberating us from the stranglehold of the widely supposed descriptive logic of the Quran, which approach generates unnecessary metaphysical and theological disputes on the sectarian and denominational levels.

Sir Syeds' emphasis on undertaking 'Ijtihad', his rational approach to religion, his underscoring of the elements of universal value in Islam, his catholicity of spirit, his deep religious consciousness coupled with constructive worldly wisdom and above all his sparkling sincerity, unimpeachable integrity and complete dedication, have inspired generations of subcontinental Muslims. Dr. Sir Muhammad Iqbal's Reconstruction of Religious Thought in
Islam advocating a dynamic conception of Islam and emphasising the need for 'Ijtihad' in keeping with contemporary world society and Abul Kalam Azad's Tarjaman-ul-Quran forwarding a universal interpretation of the Quran, confirm the essential soundness of Sir Syeds' understanding of Islam. However Sir Syeds' philosophy of religion was too radical to be readily acceptable to the Muslim community. His reinterpretations and conceptual reconstructions inspired powerful opposition from the orthodox Doctors of Islam. His philosophy of Islam is still opposed by leaders of the community representing orthodoxy. However, Sir Syeds philosophy deserves a far more critical, sympathetic and empathic analysis than it has received so far. The need for such an analysis is increasingly underlined by the ever-increasing relevance of Sir Syeds' methodology of interpretation.


3. Ibid., P. 24.


10. Ibid., PP. 43-44.


20. Ibid., P. 74.

21. Ibid., P. 83.

22. Ibid., P. 89.


24. Ibid., PP. 504-507.


29. Ibid., PP. 66-67.

30. Ibid., P. 64.

31. Ibid., P. 52.

32. Ibid., P. 46.


35. Ibid., P. 12.

36. Ibid., P. 30.

37. Ibid., PP. 93-94.


40. Ibid., P. 83.

41. Ibid., PP. 59-60.

42. Ibid., P. 51.

43. Ibid., PP. 15-16.


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47. Ibid., P. 216.


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29. Ibid., P. 429.
34. Ibid., P. 465.
41. Ibid., P. 483.
42. Ibid., P. 487.
43. Ibid., P. 495.
44. Ibid., PP. 498-500.
45. Ibid., PP. 501-502.
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