CHAPTER TWO

MUHAMMAD ASAD IN LIGHT OF HIS BIO-ACADEMIC PROFILE

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2.1. Life of Muhammad Asad

The life history of Muhammad Asad almost spans over the whole of twentieth century. He was born in a Jewish family as Leopold Weiss, at the dawn of twentieth century, on July 2, 1900—as the second of the three children of his parents—in Lwow, Galicia, now in Poland, and then part of Austrian empire. In accordance with his family’s tradition, Leopold Weiss received, through private tutors at home, a thorough grounding in the Hebrew religious lore and the sacred scriptures. By the age of thirteen, he not only could read Hebrew with great fluency but also spoke it freely and had, in addition, a fair acquaintance with Aramaic. He studied the Old Testament (Hebrew Bible) in the original, and the Mishna and Gemara—that is, the text and the commentaries of the Talmud—became familiar to him. He could discuss with a good deal of self assurance the differences between the Babylonian and Jerusalem Talmud; and immersed himself in the intricacies of Biblical exegesis, called Targum, just as if he had been destined for a rabbinical career. He was very critical about his ancestral religion and regarded it not more than a series of restrictive regulations. Not even concerned with the theological and philosophical ideas, he was looking forward to, what was not much different from the expectations of most other boys: action, adventure and excitement.3

Towards the end of 1914, when World War I was already raging, Leopold Weiss felt that the first big chance to fulfill his boyish dreams seemed to come within his grasp and at the age of 14 managed to join the Austrian army. After a week or so, his poor father succeeded in tracing him with the help of the police, and was ignominiously escorted back to, Vienna, where his family had settled some time earlier. At the age of 18, he was legitimately drafted into the Austrian Army to fight in the World War I. But by then he had ceased to dream of military glory and was searching for other avenues to self-fulfillment. For about two years after the end of the Great War he studied, in a somewhat desultory fashion, the history of art and philosophy at the University of Vienna. A quite academic career did not attract him as he felt a yearning to come into more intimate grips with life, to enter it without any of those carefully contrived artificial defenses, which security-minded people love to build around themselves. He wanted to find for himself an approach to the spiritual order of things which, he knew must exist but which could not yet demystify. He gave up the University Studies and tried his hand at Journalism and left Vienna for Prague, in 1920, a year later after the death of his mother.4
Weiss managed somehow for his subsistence in the alien land (Berlin) for a few months ahead and consequently had to cast about for a job that was not readily available to him. Destined to hunger, he had to spend several weeks subsisting almost on a little quantity of food that too was managed hardly. Thus “the rule of his days”, as he himself maintained in *Road to Makkah*, “was stark hunger and in the nights his sleep was filled with dreams of steaks and sausages and thick slices of buttered bread”. He himself lived a hard life yet pretended to his father of living a luxurious life.\(^5\)

These days of adversity and impoverishment came to an end when Weiss began his job as an assistant to F. W. Murnau, who was a film director in Hollywood. Later, his friend Anton Kuh—a Viennese journalist came to prominence in Berlin as a theatre critic—invited Weiss to collaborate with him on a film scenario which he had been commissioned to write. Working enthusiastically on it, Weiss had at the end a handful amount at his disposal for the future days.

Notwithstanding the availability of some provisional employments, Leopold Weiss was still fond of journalistic career and in 1921 he met Dr. Dammert who was starting a news agency of his own in cooperation with the *United Press of America*. This news agency was named as *United Telegraph*. Dr. Dammert after having a short discussion with Leopold Weiss about his career appointed him as a telephonist instead of Journalist. Weiss accepted this job which turned out to be the leading step towards his cherished goal. On getting an opportunity of carrying out a journalists job while collecting information about the famine which took place in Soviet Russia in 1921, Weiss got successful in making Dr. Dammert impressed with his job and thus got himself promoted to news reporter.\(^6\)

By 1922, he had become a foreign correspondent in the Near and Far East for the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, one of the most outstanding news papers in Europe during that time. After his resignation from the *Frankfurter Zeitung* he became a foreign correspondent for three other newspapers: *The Neue Zurchur Zeitung* of Zurich, *The Telegraaf* of Amsterdam and *The Kõlnische Zeitung* of Cologne.\(^7\) His career in journalism took him to Palestine, Egypt, Syria, Iraq, Iran (Persia), Jordan, Arabia and Afghanistan and gave him a unique perspective on world affairs, particularly issues relating to Jews and Arabs.\(^8\)

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2.2. Discontent with Zionism

While staying with his uncle in Jerusalem, he came into contact with the Zionist Committee of Action and was repelled by its contempt toward the Arabs as he had established cordial relations with some Palestinians both, Arabs and Jews. The Zionists, expectedly looked upon him with some sort of puzzled suspicion because of his sympathy for the Arabs which was so apparent in his dispatches to the *Frankfurter Zeitung*. Although of Jewish origin himself, he conceived from the outset a strong objection to Zionism and was against the conspiracy of Jews against the Muslim inhabitants of Palestine. He considered it filthy on part of the Zionists, who at the behest of a great foreign power, were sneakily penetrating as immigrants, with the avowed intention of attaining a majority in Palestine and thus to dispossess the people whose country it had been. This attitude of Leopold Weiss was beyond the comprehension of practically all the Jews whom he came in contact during those months. He was surprised on how everyone accepted without question the dictum that Palestine was the rightful heritage of the Jews.\(^9\)

In Jerusalem Weiss began to confront Zionist vanguards, like Menachem Ussishkin\(^10\) (1863-1941) and Chaim Weizmann\(^11\) (1874-1952), on Arab question and soon gained a reputation as a sympathizer of the Arab cause.\(^12\) In this regard, Dr. Weizmann who was one day articulating his vision of a Jewish National Home, was enquired by Weiss upon the Jewish contention of making Palestine their homeland provided the vehement opposition of the Arabs who, after all, composed the majority of the country. Upon this the Zionist leader shrugged his shoulders and answered ironically: “we expect they won’t be in a majority after a few years.”\(^13\) This reply however, left a sorrowful impression on Leopold Weiss, who thought it impossible for people endowed with so much creative intelligence as the Jews to think of the Zionist-Arab conflict in Jewish terms alone. He even considered it very strange that a nation which suffered so many wrongs in the discourse of its long and sorrowful Diaspora was now in a single-minded pursuit of its own goal, ready to inflict a grievous wrong on other nation.\(^14\)

In Jerusalem, Weiss met a new friend, Jacob Israel de Haan—the Dutch poet and Journalist—who supported his cause of Zionist rejection along with helped him in his journalist career. It was through De Haan that Weiss met an Arab leader, Amir ‘Abdullah\(^15\) (1882-1951) in the summer of 1923—his first in a lifetime of meeting with Arab heads of State.\(^16\)
2.3. Encounter with Islam

Dedicated to the job of a journalist in Palestine Weiss lend his service to Frankfurter Zeitung wherein he got the opportunity of giving vent to his logically oriented anti-Zionist and anti-British outlook. While supporting the Muslim and Arab cause against the Jewish lobbies in the same newspaper he also published a small book on this burning issue in 1924.17 Leopold’s interest in Islam grew more while he made extensive travels as a journalist within the Muslim world and embarked on examining critically the whole scenario to trace out the causes behind the palpable slumber and decadence of the Muslim world. He witnessed the disintegration of once glorious Ottoman Empire which was confined merely to Anatolia and a small part of Europe and Arabia was bogged down in tribal warfare; foreign powers were conquering Muslim Lands with the help of Muslim puppets. By 1918, the military control of Britain and France in the Middle East and the Maghreb was strongest than ever before. Making the same newspaper as the platform for reporting his experiential insights, he published a series of articles on them in the Frankfurter Zeitung. Weiss felt sorrowful not only on the political decadence but also on the intellectual slumber, the Muslim world was passing through at that time following blindly the Western ideological setup, which as per him undoubtedly and innately precludes a religious orientation in human beings.18

Notwithstanding the blatant face of degenerating Muslim world, Leopold Weiss developed his interests in the study of Islam rather than its disparaging adherents and found this eternal creed as a perfect piece of architecture that embraced the entire gamut of human activity. Delving deep in the oceanic study of Islamic scriptures his curiosity was fostered as he observed that in Islam there was no place for mere nationalism, no vested interested, no class divisions, no church, no priesthood and no hereditary nobility, in fact, no hereditary functions at all.19 To crown it in his words, it seems more tempting to quote him verbatim,

I had no illusions as to the present state of affairs in the Muslim world. The four years I have spent in those countries had shown me that while Islam was still alive, perceptible in the world-view of its adherents and in their silent admission of its ethical premises, they themselves were like people paralyzed, unable to translate their beliefs into fruitful actions. But what concerned me more than the failure of present day Muslims to implement the scheme of Islam were the potentialities of that scheme itself. It was

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sufficient for me to know that for a short time, quite at the beginning of Islamic history, a successful attempt had been made to translate that scheme into practice; and what had seemed possible at one time might perhaps become really possible at another. What did it matter, I told myself, that the Muslims had gone astray from the original teachings and subsided into indolence and ignorance? What did matter that they did not live up to the ideal placed before them by the Arabian Prophet thirteen centuries ago—if the ideal itself still lay open to all who were willing to listen to its message?

The wonderful and inexplicably coherent structure of moral teachings and a pragmatic life scheme offered by Islam diverted Leopold’s attention from every other ideology that could have sustained by his mind. Being divinely ordained, this creed created the strongest impressions on him while he perceived its structure like a work of an architecture, whose parts are harmoniously conceived to complement and support each other: where nothing is superfluous and nothing lacking, with the result of an absolute balance and solid composure. Subsisting on the critical approach of his own legacy and analytical understanding of the teachings of the Qur’ān he became available with the conclusion that the holy Qur’ān is the word of Allah. In this final word of Allah, he found not mere human wisdom of a man of a distant past in distant Arabia but what he observed was that out of the Qur’ān spoke the voice greater than the voice of Muhammad (ﷺ). No man could have foreseen as the Qur’ān has done the torment so peculiar to the Europe of 20th century, he concluded.

2.4. Leopold Weiss Embraces Islam

In 1926, the young Leopold being fully enthused by the simple yet profound Islamic ideas and philosophy, sought out one of his Muslim friends (an Indian by birth), who was at that time the head of a small community in Berlin, disclosed his intention before him and got reverted to Islam in Berlin subsequently getting the Muslim name, Muhammad Asad. A few years later his wife, Elsa, an artist (painter), also got converted to Islam. Prior to conversion Asad relates his perceptions and inner condition that eventually lead him to embrace Islam, as follows:

An integrated image of Islam was now emerging with finality, a decisiveness that sometimes astounds me. It was taking shape by a process that could almost be described as a kind of mental osmosis—that is, without any conscious effort on my part to piece together and ‘systematize’

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the many fragments of knowledge that had come my way during the past four years. I saw before me something like a perfect of architecture, with all its elements harmoniously conceived to complement and support each other, with nothing superfluous and nothing lacking—a balance and composure which gave one the feeling that everything in the outlook and postulates of Islam was in its proper place.  

After his conversion to Islam, Asad lived for nearly six years in Arabia and enjoyed the friendship of King Ibn Sa‘ūd. He got married with an Arab woman, Munira bint Husayn ash-Shammari from whom he had a son, Talal Asad.

2.5. Muhammad Asad and Sanūsī Movement

Being overwhelmed by pragmatic outlook of Islam, Asad actively supported the North African Sanusi movement that was active since 1911 (established in 1837 by Muhammad ibn Ali al-Sanusi), in the aftermath of the Italian incursion on Tripolitania Cyrenaica. Sayyid Ahmad (1873-1932), the then exiled leader of Sanusi movement, sought Asad’s help as a policymaker in the struggle against the imperialistic Italians. In this regard, Asad had a meeting, in January of 1931, with the veteran leader of Sanusi movement ‘Umar al Mukhtār, who was put by Sayyid Ahmad and Sayyid Idris, at the helm of the struggle and policymaking against the Italian subjugators. However his planned tour to Libya proved futile, as it was too late to usher his enthusiastic support, as the movement was crushed solely later on during that year. To relate the same in his words, he maintains;

When I had come to know Islam and accepted it as my way of life, I had thought that all my questioning and searching had come to an end. Only gradually, very gradually did I come aware this was not the end: for to accept a way of life as binding for oneself was, to me at least, inextricably bound up with a desire to pursue it among like-minded people—and not only to pursue it in a personal sense but also to work for its social fruition within the community of my choice. To me, Islam was a way and not an end—and the desperate guerrillas of ‘Umar al Mukhtār were fighting with their lifeblood for the freedom to tread the way, just as the Companions of the prophet had done thirteen centuries ago. To be of help to them in their hard and bitter struggle, however uncertain the outcome, was as personally necessary to me as to pray [...].

Following this event, Asad had parted from Ibn al Ṣa‘ūd due to some personal disappointments with the monarch. However, other versions of this discrepancy had also
Muhammad Asad

2.6. Muhammad Asad in Indian Sub-Continent

In September 1932, Muhammad Asad reached Amritsar, India for the first time and met Ismail Ghaznawi, one among the young spearheads of freedom movement, with whom he had already established a cordial relation during Pilgrimage or Hajj previously that year and also had worked out some planning against the British occupation in India. With this drive, Asad made his first public appearance when he started his “Lecture Tour” and delivered a lecture on “Islamic and Western Civilization”, held in Habibiyyah Hall (Islamia College, Lahore), chaired by Dr. Barkat ‘Ali Quraishi (Principal) and organized by the Arabic Society of the College. After two weeks, he was invited by Delhi, Aligarh and Jamia Millia (Delhi) to lecture in the widely-known educational centres of Islamic learning. Then he went back to Lahore where he delivered two lectures in Barkat Ali Muhammadan Hall on 22nd and 23rd February. Though unknown precisely, his topics should have expectedly addressed the grave areas of modern day Muslim world, detecting mainly the causes and remedies of the onslaught of Westernization and simultaneous decadence that had engulfed the whole Muslim world.

Apart from the academic preoccupations, Asad was taking an active part in the agitation of the Kashmiri Muslims and made his appearance in Kashmir in 1933. He involved himself with the local community of Kashmiri Muslims and stood against the British-backed Maharajah of the State of Jammu and Kashmir who was committing atrocities on the unaided Muslims of Kashmir. According to the secret record of the British government Asad was accused of spreading Bolshevik ideas in Kashmir because his presence seemed a threat to their cherished goals of extending their persistent rule and finally he was forced to leave Kashmir without any substantial evidence.

2.7. Muhammad Asad Meets Dr. Iqbāl

During the days of his stay in Kashmir, Asad had an opportunity to meet Dr. Sir Muhammad Iqbāl and exchange his views about their mutual interests as the later had
came to know about Asad’s active involvement in liberation movement of his homeland, Kashmir from the brutal Maharaja rule. Dr. Iqbal left an undying impression on Asad’s mind and opened new vistas for his approach to Islamic resurgence. Asad gave up his own scheduled programmes and followed the footprints of his spiritual leader. In the opening section of The Road to Makkah, he pays his homage to this spiritual leader in the following words:

[A]fter leaving Arabia I went to India and there met the great Muslim poet-philosopher and spiritual father of the Pakistan idea, Muhammad Iqbal. It was he who soon persuaded me to give up my plans of travelling to Eastern Turkistan, China and Indonesia and to remain in India to help elucidate the intellectual premises of the future Islamic state which as then hardly more than a dream in Iqbal’s visionary mind. To me, as to Iqbal, this dream represented a way indeed the only way, to a revival of all the dormant hopes of Islam, the creation of a political entity of people bound together not by common descent but by their common adherence to an ideology. For years I devoted myself to this ideal, studying, writing and lecturing, and in time gained something of a reputation as an interpreter of Islamic law and culture.  

Such was Muhammad Asad inspired from the intellectual discourse that most of his writings, particularly penned before 1947, are reminiscent of Iqbal’s politico-philosophical concepts and often he does not skip to quote Iqbal’s popular distiches to substantiate his view point as a result the spirit of Iqbal’s Reconstruction has profoundly permeated his articles and books. It was because, since 1933, Muhammad Asad used to pay regular visits to the poet-philosopher of the sub-continent, who suggested, commenced and guided maximum of the scholarly undertakings of Muhammad Asad. Dr. Iqbal, on the other hand, known of Asad’s proclivities and intellectual attainments intended to utilize his experience and intellectual depth for the uplifting the prevalent standard of religious teaching in the educational institutions. He offered Asad headship of the Department of Islamic College, Lahore which however never materialized due to some reasons.  

Muhammad Asad also happened to meet Maulana Maududi (1903-1979) on 3 August 1937 in a meeting of the advisory committee of the proposed Dārul Islam (Note:A Waqf founded by Chaudary Niaz Ali Khan (1880-1976), a retired assistant engineer, to provide leaders to Indian Muslims and to serve as the foundation for a genuine religious
movement of political deliverance) that was presided by Dr. Iqbal, and both Muhammad Asad and Maulana Maududi were assigned to write prospectus of this institution.³⁷

Asad established very cordial relations with Maududi and ranked him as one of the greatest religious scholars of Muslim world, despite the existence of intellectual discrepancies between them. In one of his interviews Asad says that:

Maududi was not only a great Islamic scholar, but also a dear personal friend of many years standing³⁸… In my list of supporters, Maulana Maududi stands on the top. He played a positive role in saving me and my reputation from the allegations. I was neither member of jamat-i-Islami nor I agreed with his views. In spite of our intellectual differences, I am pleased to admit that he had a respectable and fair personality.³⁹

Mawlānā Mawdūdī also owed to Asad in a same spirit and acknowledged his creditable service for the Islamic revival in a letter written (on 15 Ramazan 1955) to their common friend, Niaz Ali, in the following words:

I met Muhammad Asad in Hyderabad. I have gone through his ‘Islam at Crossroads’ and the translation of ‘Sahīh al Bukhārī’. I think that out of Europe’s spoils (ghanā’im) Islam has found in Asad a most precious diamond in the modern age. The spirit of Islam has completely penetrated his body and he has served Islam more than other Islamic Scholars who have been teaching for the last fifty years. If he is available for your institution, you will be fortunate and I congratulate you. I hope that your idea will definitely be fruitful.⁴⁰

However, later on, Mawdūdī changed his appreciative remarks about Asad’s personality after going through Asad’s English translation of the first nine Sūrahṣ (chapters) of Qur’ān and remarked adversely about Asad in his letters written to Maryam Jameelah (1934-2010). In a letter addressed on 25th February 1961 to her, he wrote about Asad in detail in these words:

You have asked me about the book, ‘Islam at Crossroads’. I have read that book along with other writings by Mr. Muhammad Asad and I had the opportunity of personal acquaintance with him as after accepting Islam, he settled in the Indo-Pak subcontinent. Perhaps you may be interested to know that he is also of (Austrian) Jewish origin. I have great respect for his exposition of Islamic ideas and especially his criticism of Western culture and its materialistic philosophies. I am sorry to say, however, that although in the early days of his conversion, he was a staunch, practicing Muslim;
gradually he drifted close to the ways of the so-called “progressive” Muslims first like the “reformed” Jews. Recently his divorce from his Arab wife and marriage to a modern American girl hastened this process of deviation more definitely. Although these melancholy facts cannot be disputed, much has justified, yet I cannot blame him too much for this. At the time we met during the first years after his conversion, were welcome and pleasant changes were brought about in his life. But once a man begins to live the life of a true Muslim, all his capabilities lose their “market value”. It is the same sad story with Muhammad Asad, who had always been accustomed to a high and modern standard of living and after embracing Islam, had to face the severest financial difficulties. As a result, he was forced to make one compromise after another. Still I hope that despite these adverse changes, his ideals and convictions have not altered even though his practical life has suffered many modifications.41

In the subsequent years Asad found a new benefactor in 1936 when he assumed the editorship of the journal, ‘The Islamic Culture’ after the death of its first editor, Muhammad Marmaduke Pickthall. This enabled Asad to enter the intellectual arena of a wide range of Orientalists and Indian Muslim scholars that instigated him to write scholarly pieces and translate texts. When Nazi Germany annexed Austria in March 1938, the life of Viennese Jewry became a succession of confiscations, persecutions, pogroms, and deportations. He became very worried about his Jewish family and tried to manage their rescue after leaving India but it all turned into a futile yet hectic exercise and returned back to India.42 Asad was detained immediately in India as a threat to the British interests, and he spent the next six years in internment camps with Germans, Austrians and Italians who had been collected from all-over the British-ruled Asia. While expressing his feelings in the detention camp Asad maintains:

[B]ecause of my then Austrian citizenship—I found myself an involuntary “guest” of the Government of India from September 1, 1939 to August 14, 1945. Throughout those years I was the only Muslim in an internment camp peopled by some three thousand Germans, Austrians and Italians—Nazis and anti-Nazis as well as Fascists and anti-Fascists—all of them collected helter-skelter from all over Asia and indiscriminately locked up behind barbed wire as enemy aliens.43

Muhammad Asad was released on 14th August, 1945 and was wholly identified with the cause of Pakistan, which he saw not simply as a refuge, but as the framework for an ideal Islamic polity. Consequently, when Pakistan was created in 1947, he was made director of the Department of Islamic Reconstruction, which was to elaborate the
ideological, Islamic concepts of statehood and community upon which the newly born political organization might draw. In this regard, he gave himself over to formulating proposals for its constitution. Unfortunately, his proposals, published in March 1948 as ‘Islamic constitution-Making’, were never implemented save a few suggestions that have been utilized in the (abolished) Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan; perhaps only in the preamble, adopted by the Constituent assembly in 1949, can an echo of those suggestions be found and later on Asad, however, lamented over the failure of the materialization of Pakistan as an ideal Islamic state. After two years of this extremely stimulating activity, in 1949, he adopted the Pakistan’s Foreign Service and was appointed as Head of the Middle East Division in the Foreign Ministry, where he dedicated himself to strengthening the ties between Pakistan and the rest of the Muslim world. In 1951, he returned to Saudi Arabia after eighteen years as an emissary of the Government of Pakistan. Following this he was appointed as the undersecretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs and became its permanent representative to the United Nations in 1952. In the beginning of 1952, after twenty years of continuous residence in the subcontinent, Muhammad Asad came to New York, as Pakistan’s minister plenipotentiary to the United Nations. He was naturally in the public eye and encountered a great deal of curiosity among his European and American friends and acquaintances before whom his activities at the United Nations made it obvious that he identified himself not merely ‘functionally’ but also emotionally and intellectually with the political and cultural aims of the Muslim world in general.

Asad divorced his former Arabian wife Munira bint Husayn ash-Shammari and married Pola Hamida before a civil judge in New York in November 1952, and remained with her for the next but last forty years of his life. This marriage, according to Martin Kramer, presaged his evolving preference for an ideal Islam, distinct from the born Muslims who practiced it.

However at the end of 1952, Pola Hamida’s marriage compelled him to resign from his post of Pakistan’s plenipotentiary in New York and he devoted himself in writing his master piece, “The Road to Makkah” which was published in New York in 1954. The book won wide-spread praise for its combination of spiritual searching and desert adventure and paved way for many non-Muslims to embrace Islam.
2.8.  Asad’s Last Travels and Death

After two years stay in New York, Muhammad Asad travelled extensively before returning to Pakistan in 1955. But the couples restlessness spurred them on, first to Morocco, then to Tangier, then to Portugal and finally to Spain. He made a trip to Pakistan at the invitation of the government of Pakistan to organize a colloquium on Islamic culture. In 1957, Asad moved to Beirut, Lebanon, lived in a hotel, ‘The Green’. In 1959, he was invited to address The Royal Institute of International Affairs in London, chaired by Sir Arnold Toynbee, on the principles underlying the idea of an Islamic State. In 1960 he moved to Tangier and Morocco, then to Portugal, and finally to Spain.48 In July 1983, Muhammad Asad was again in Pakistan on the invitation of the Government to participate in the meeting of Ansari Commission established to evolve an Islamic form of Government. From Pakistan he went to London on August 03, 1983 before going home. In 1985, Muhammad Asad left Tangier and moved to Lisbon. Finally, he moved to Mijas (Malaga) in the Andalusian province of Spain where he died on February 20, 1992 and was buried in the Muslim cemetery in Granada, Andalusia.49

2.9.  Thought of Muhammad Asad

With the keen interest for Muslim renaissance, Asad took a characteristic approach and fully immersed himself in understanding the basic source of Islam, the Qur’ān. Embarking on an intensive study of classical Arabic, he began at the same time living among the Bedouins of Central and Eastern Arabia whose speech and linguistic associations had essentially remained unchanged since the time of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ).

In order to learn more and more about Islam, Muhammad Asad, not only comprehensively studied the basic sources of Islam—Qur’ān and the traditions of the Prophet, but he also went through the history of Islam by studying profuse material written about and against it.50 Deriving profound insights from the eternal message, Asad found an intense God-consciousness that made no division between body and soul or faith and reason, but consisted of a harmonious interplay of spiritual needs and social demand. Coming to the decadence of Muslim world he concluded, on realizing the worth of the Qur’ān, with the assertion that the decline of the Muslims was not due to any shortcomings in Islam but rather to their own failure to live up to it, substantiating further that it was not Muslims that had made Islam great rather it was Islam that had made the
Muslims great. But as soon as their faith became merely ritualistic and ceased to be a complete code of life, the creative impulse that underlay their civilization waned and gradually gave vent to indolence, sterility and cultural decay.” Muslims, according to Asad, were the heirs of the great civilization, by which he meant a peculiar outlook, the social scheme and the way of life endangered by Islam and not the specific achievements of the Muslims in any one country or period of their history. They lost this heritage by deviating from the right path of Islam—Sharī’ah and began to believe in dogmas other than Sharī’ah which are difficult and even impossible of intellectual comprehension.

2.10. Asad’s Concept of Sharī’ah

As for Muhammad Asad, the only way to regain the magnificence of the Muslim civilization is to put Sharī’ah into practice which according to him is formed by what Qur’ān and Sunnah have commanded excluding of Fiqh, the traditional Islamic law. He believed the naṣūṣ [clear textual injunctions] of Qur’ān and Sunnah collectively constitute the real and eternal Sharī’ah of Islam which is valid and obligatory.

While describing the historical review of the concept of Sharī’ah he gave its literal meaning and said Sharī’ah literary means “the way to a watering place” (from which men and animals derive the element indispensable to life). In religious terminology, says Asad, it denotes the Right Way marked out in the commandments of God and His Apostle, Muhammad (ﷺ): the law of Islam.

With the keen interest for Muslim renaissance, Asad took a characteristic approach and fully immersed himself in understanding the basic source of Islam, the Qur’ān. Embarking on an intensive study of classical Arabic, he began at the same time living among the Bedouins of Central and Eastern Arabia whose speech and linguistic associations had essentially remained unchanged since the time of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ). It gave him insight into the semantics of the Qur’ānic Language unknown to any Westerner and enabled him later to translate the eternal inexhaustible subject i.e Qur’ān into English as “The Message of the Qur’ān”. After dedicating complete seventeen years on the translation and simultaneous commentary published in 1980, the Message is without parallel in conveying the meaning and spirit of the holy book to non-Arab readers.
Dedicating *The Message* to “people who think” Asad however, traces out a couple of reasons for the lack of appreciation of the Qurʾān in the western world. The first reason is the Qurʾānic stress on reason as a valid way to faith as well as its insistence on the inseparability of the spiritual and the temporal (and, therefore, also social) spheres of human existence: or the other way round Asad says,

The westerner cannot readily accept the Qurʾānic Thesis that all life, being Allah-given, is a unity, and that problems of the flesh and the mind, of sex and economics, of individual righteousness and social equity are intimately connected with the hopes which man legitimately entertains with regard to his life after death.\(^{57}\)

Second, perhaps ever more decisive, is the fact, “the Qurʾān itself has never yet been presented in any European language in a manner which would make it truly comprehensible.”\(^{58}\) Asad tries to explain why this lack of understanding occurred by pointing out that the authors of the long list of translations—whether they are Muslims or non-Muslims—were or are people who acquired their knowledge of Arabic through academic study alone: that is, from books. None of them, however great his scholarship, has ever been familiar with the Arabic Language as a person is familiar with his own, having absorbed the nuances of its idioms and its phraseology with an active, associative response within himself, and hearing it with an ear spontaneously attuned to the intent underlying the acoustic symbolism of its words and sentences. His own translation and explanation, *The Message of Qurʾān*, is an attempt, according to him, at a really idiomatic, explanatory rendition of the Qurʾānic message into a European language.\(^{59}\)

Nevertheless, Asad by no means claim that his effort in interpreting the Qurʾān exhausted all the depths of the book. Indeed, in a speech delivered at a Conference of the Islamic Council of Europe in London, April, 1980, Asad stresses that: “Neither my own approach to it, nor the commentaries produced by the greatest scholars of the Muslim past, could ever claim to have exhausted something that is utterly inexhaustible by virtue of fact that it represents Allah’s Ultimate Message to man.” In emphasizing this point, he quotes the 109th āyah of 18th Sūrah from the Qurʾān as: “Say: If all the sea were ink for my sustainer’s words—the sea would indeed be exhausted ere my Sustainer’s words are exhausted”. Therefore, in no way Asad considers his commentary on the Qurʾān as a final and perfect one.\(^{60}\) However, the title of his commentary on the Qurʾān reflects his basic concern. He chose the word ‘Message’, for his main preoccupation was with the
Message of the Qur’ān which he saw as the main vehicle for an Islamic renaissance and this concern of his reflects in his other works also.61

But apart from interpreting matters expressly laid down in the Qur’ān, wrote Asad, “the Prophet [ﷺ] was ordained to supplement them by further injunctions which, if given in terms of command or prohibition and authenticated beyond any possibility of doubt, are as binding on a Muslim as the laws enunciated in the Quran [Qur’ān]: and so we arrive at a definition of the Prophet’s [ﷺ] Sunnah [Sunnah] as the second source of the sharī‘ah.”62 While explaining the meaning of the term Sunnah in the context of Sharī‘ legislation, Asad said that “everything which the apostle of God [Allah] did, commanded or consented to comes under the general heading of ‘Sunnah’ [Sunnah]”63

Having recognized the significance of the institution of Sunnah, Asad argues of three distinct reasons for submitting to its credence. The first reason—being the individual aspect of Sunnah—is the training of human beings in a methodical way, to live permanently in a state of consciousness, wakefulness and self-control. The second is its social importance and utility considering that the social conflicts are due to human beings’ misunderstanding each other’s actions and intentions because of extreme variety of temperaments and inclinations of the individual members of the society. The Sunnah enables members of the society to be systematically induced to make their habits and customs resemble each other, despite the difference in their social and economic status. Coherence and stability (in form) intersperses in the society where the creed of Sunnah gets nourishment, eventually precluding the developments of antagonisms and conflicts. By bringing up the life as per the Sunnah every Muslim will be able to usher his contribution in bringing the spiritual influence of Prophet (ﷺ) on the Ummah, realizing, thus, the fact that the Prophet (ﷺ) is not only the bearer of moral revelation but also the guide towards a perfect life.64 Asad has corroborated the same propositions in his translation and explanation of Sahīh al Bukhārī, the most important compilation of the Traditions,65 which is part of his endeavor to foster the better understanding of the word of Allah (the Qur’ān) and the example of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ). For Asad, a genuine revival of Islam is impossible without an intensive inquiry into its original spirit for which Muslims, should consider themselves travelers aiming at new discoveries in the domain of the spirit of Islamic teachings, and the more the worldly knowledge of
Muslims increase, the more new and hitherto hidden meanings appear in the *Qur’ān* and the *Sunnah*, are deciphered.\(^{66}\) Thus, while Asad favors the pragmatic and dynamic way of life for which the code is to be derived from the *Qur’ān* and *Sunnah*, he laid emphasis on the Muslims to reinstate their lost legacy of intellectualism and develop a realistic approach towards the life in the modern world.

### 2.11. *Ijtihād*

The importance of using one’s rational faculties to understand the divine text (*Ijtihād*), a fact emphasized in the *Qur’ān* itself, was a theme Asad returned to, again and again. He asserts that the actual *Sharī‘ah* comprises of small number of profound dictates based on the *Qur’ān* and *Sunnah* and rest are the laws resulting from the *Ijtihād* exercised in every age as per the exigencies of time. Such laws based on the independent reasoning of earlier Muslim scholars have no sacrosanct value and can therefore be brought to alteration and even replacement and Muslim intellectuals of every generation bear the right to exercise *Ijtihād* in the temporal areas and substantiates his assertion with the *Qur’ānic āyah*: “for every one of you (i.e. for everyone of your community) have we appointed a (different) divine law and an open road.” (5:48).\(^{67}\)

Asad admitted that the great ‘ulamā’ of the first two centuries A.H. adopted *ijtihad* as they felt need for a legal system which would cover all aspects of private and social life as thoroughly as possible and would at the same time closely follow the spirit of Islam. If they might have not do so the Muslims would be estranged from true Islam and lose its homogeneous quality in a sea of multiform and contradictory legal opinions.\(^{68}\) Those ‘ulamā’ with an admirable endeavour, succeeded in stemming the flood of non-Islamic influences which were threatening to undermine the unanimity of the Muslim outlook. Now the time has passed and is continuously passing. Not only the distance from the Prophet’s time steadily increasing but also the social structure of the Muslim world is rapidly growing wider and more complicated. Now the current state of Muslim world demands the exercise of a fresh *Ijtihād*, in conformity with *Qur’ān* and *Sunnah*, maintains Asad in the following way;

A rediscovery of the open road of Islam is urgently required at a time like this, when the Muslim world finds itself in the throes of a cultural crisis which we may affirm or deny….set as we are in the midst of a rapidly changing world, our society, too, is subject to the same inexorable law of...
Muhammad Asad

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change... from the Islamic point of view, an endeavor to return to the realities of Qur’an and Sunnah, and to find on their basis new channels for our political thought and social actions.⁶⁹

Thus Muslims, to him, are in a dire need of utilizing this tool of Ijtihād so that there could be a way for getting out of the slumber that had engulfed the modern day Muslim world since the culmination of glorious medieval Islam and the Muslims would be therefore able to contribute to the resurgence of Islam in the modern world. This necessitates to some extent the disagreement with blindly following the early Muslim Jurists who have carried out Ijtihād in their times but stands outdated for the present day scenario of the Muslim world. Thus to Asad, only through Ijtihād, Muslims could grow, change and develop in accordance with the needs of the time and the growth of human experience, while always remaining true to the Qur’an and the practice of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ). This was not to deny the importance of religious scholars but to emphasize that Muslims are obliged to understand their faith as best as they could using their own rational faculties, before seeking help, to enlarge their understanding.⁷⁰ “Every Muslim ought to be able to say the Qur’an has been revealed for me”, maintained Asad sometime before his death. And he was fond of quoting the Prophetic Hadīth that, “if you use your reason and turn out to be wrong, Allah will still reward you, and if you are right, you will be doubly rewarded.”⁷¹ But at the time when Asad argues that it is Ijtihād that can cure our illness, he puts restrictions on overuse of it by saying that as overdose of medicine is dangerous for a patient, similarly, overdose of Ijtihād—the reasoning that crosses the limits of the Sharī‘ah—is dangerous for Muslims. So Asad felt it necessary that “we must apply our Ijtihād within the bounds clearly demarcated by the two sources of Islam and further we must not apply it to the Sharī‘ah proper, which is divine in its origin and therefore beyond any mortal’s Ijtihād”.⁷²

2.12. Asad on Religious Pluralism

Regarding the religious pluralism, Asad on the basis of his understanding of the Qur’an pleads of taking cautions regarding the basic terminology related to pluralism as he relates that “in each and every case, the religious terms used in the Qur’an in the sense which they have acquired after Islam had become institutionalized into a definite set of laws, tenets and practices. However legitimate this institutionalization may be in the context of Islamic religious history, it is obvious that the Qur’an cannot be correctly
understood if we read it merely in the light of later ideological developments, losing sight of its original purport and the meaning which it had—and was intended to have—for the people who first heard it from the lips of the Prophet [ﷺ] himself.”

On the basis of this understanding he also interprets the term Kāfir, which is usually equated with unbeliever or infidel, as one who denies (or refuses to acknowledge) the truth in the widest spiritual sense. Asad says in this respect as follows: “In other words, the term Kāfir cannot be simply equated, as many Muslim theologians of post-classical times and particularly all western translators of the Qur’ān have done, with unbeliever or infidel in the specific, restricted sense of one who rejects the system of doctrines and law promulgated in the Qur’ān and amplified by the teachings of the Prophet [ﷺ]—but must have a wider, more general meaning…a kāfir is one who denies (or refuses to acknowledge) the truth in the widest, spiritual sense of this later term: that is irrespective of whether it relates to a cognition of the supreme truth-namely, the existence of Allah—or to a doctrine or ordinance enunciated in the divine writ, or to a self evident moral proposition, or to an acknowledgement of and therefore gratitude for, favours received.”

Muhammad Asad also held that while arguing the beliefs of other religions Muslims must take care of their sentiments and while having any sort of conversation, they should not hurt their feelings. While explaining the meaning of the 108th āyah of Sūrah al An‘ām: (But do not revile those [beings] whom they invoke instead of God....), Asad held that:

This prohibition of reviling anything that other people hold sacred—even in contravention of the principle of God’s oneness—is expressed in the plural and is, therefore, addressed to all believers. Thus, Muslims are expected to argue against the false beliefs of others, they are not allowed to abuse the objects of those beliefs and to hurt thereby the feelings of their erring fellow-men.

Islam is the religion of peace and it never encourages uproar in the society—especially where there is a religious pluralism. Muslims should argue their beliefs which are with them since childhood in the most kindest manner because a polemic against those beliefs often tends to provoke a hostile psychological reaction and therefore, in all such cases these disputes should a priori be avoided.

World of Islam and the Occident, need a more better, sophisticated and deep understanding for a better future of the whole world, accentuates Asad, while he points
out the mutual distrust between the two, so called ‘antagonistic realities’ as the main obstacle in the way of a possible collaboration that could be expected to materialize in future. Moreover he expects Muslim, Christian and Jewish collaboration could be conceived, from within each of their existing societies, religious patterns of thought and feelings, which alone could withstand the onslaught of materialism. While Asad admits of bilateral concern between Christendom and the Muslim world he concludes that it is the moral duty of the Muslims to bring the intellectual premises of Islam closer to the understanding of the Christians, and that Christians should approach the problems of the Islamic World in the same spirit of justice and fair-play as they approach and demand for their own concerns.\textsuperscript{77}

2.13. Works/Writings of Muhammad Asad

Muhammad Asad emerged as a distinguished Islamic Scholar of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century and a fully and strongly committed Muslim whose life goal was the cultural, intellectual and spiritual renaissance of Muslims. He wrote in English and his writings cover large area: travelogue, autobiography, exegesis of Qur’\={a}n and Sunnah, jurisprudence, secularism, Westernization, political theory and constitutional law. Likewise his readership is across all the major continents of the world. His writings have exerted much influence on Muslim thinking throughout the world. His writings have such fascinating appeal that many non-Muslim embraced Islam such as Maryam Jameelah (1934-12).

Muhammad Asad has contributed a number of books, articles and papers dealing with the reconstruction of Muslim thought. Some of his writings have been highlighted hereunder:

2.13.1. Jerusalem in 1923: The Impressions of a Young European (1923).\textsuperscript{78}

This is the translation of some excerpts from Muhammad Asad’s (the Leopold Weiss) work, Unromantische Morgenland (The Romantic Orient) which opens the ways to relish the historic and the timeless aspects of a land full of spiritual and cultural riches. In this article the translator has taken the excerpts from 14\textsuperscript{th} March to 6\textsuperscript{th} June 1923 which reveal the experience of Young Weiss in Jerusalem and his views about the city including his conversation with Musa Kasim Pasha, the leader of the then Arab Movement in Palestine and with the chairman of the Zionist Action Committee in Palestine, Lord
Ussykin. The paper also reveals that Asad had grasped the terrible current of events in Palestine very earlier.

2.13.2. Islam at Crossroads (1934)⁷⁹

This book was written in summer 1933 and published in 1934 in Delhi and Lahore as a plea to the then Muslims to avoid a blind imitation of western social forms and values, turn to preserve instead their Islamic heritage which once upon a time had been responsible for the glorious, many sided historical phenomenon comprised in the term “Muslim Civilization”. Written for the English-speaking intelligentsia of Indo-Pak subcontinent, the book is, however, more vital and relevant even today. In this book the author analyzed tragic fall of the Muslims and wrote about the evils of Western education and its undeniable detrimental effects upon the Muslim youth. However, in the concluding chapter he prescribed adherence to the Sunnah of the Holy Prophet as the only remedy for the illness of Muslims. The book, though written nearly 80 years earlier, still stuns the contemporary reader with its analysis of Muslim regression and its bold prescription for instilling self-assurance to an Islamic world suffering from lack of confidence under the onslaught of Western civilization.

2.13.3. The Spirit of Islam (1934)⁸⁰

This is a pamphlet which has been extracted from Asad’s work, Islam at Crossroads to make it a useful addition to the growing literature on Islam, providing the busy modern reader with a succinct treatment in a lucid and convincing style. This work provides Asad’s investigation about the possible cooperation between the two civilizations—Islam and The West. For this, he first of all, discusses the general rule of religion in human life followed by Islamic approach to life. In this pamphlet Asad asserted that the real spirit of Islam is to attain perfection by making full use of all the worldly possibilities of one’s life in accordance to the will of Allah.

2.13.4. The Concept of Religion in the West and in Islam (1934)⁸¹

This paper was published in The Islamic Literature (Lahore) in 1967 in which the author brilliantly discusses the concept of religion in the west and in Islam. In this paper he made a unique comparison between the two religions and wrote that to the Western mind, religion is nothing but a private relationship between man and God; it has no direct
bearing on the political, social and economic life of man. But to a Muslim religion is a complete code of human life. There is nothing which falls outside the orbit of religion. After discussing the various facets of religion in it, he argued that *Sharī'ah* should be brought within the orbit of the Muslim masses and should be made an open book which every Muslim could understand.

2.13.5. *Ṣaḥīh al Bukhārī: The Early Years of Islam (1981)*

This is one of the best books of Muhammad Asad. This is the translation of the most authentic and famous compilation of Ahadith, *Ṣaḥīḥ al Bukhārī*. He took the charge of this work on the suggestion of Dr. Sir Muhammad Iqbal who told him that the present generation is in need of the translations of these classical sources of which could meet the contemporary demands of the time. He agreed and consequently between 1935 and 1938, he published five installments of *Ṣaḥīḥ al Bukhārī* and named his work as *Ṣaḥīḥ al Bukhārī: The Early Years of Islam*. Unlike most translations of Hadīth, the complete Isnād or chain of transmitters is retained and the English published side by side with the original Arabic text. The author’s illuminating commentary shows that he is a competent scholar of Hadīth and the Arabic language. The contents of the book are divided into four parts: How Revelation Began; The Merits of the Prophet’s Companions; the Beginning of Islam and the Book of campaigns. On seeing the quality of the book, the book has been printed again and again.

2.13.6. *Towards a Resurrection of Thought (1937)*

In this article Muhammad Asad critically analyzed the contemporary Muslim thought and held that Muslims were once regarded as a creative force but today they became stagnant by their blind imitation of their ancestors. After discussing the causes of their stagnation, Asad provided that there is a need of resurrection of Muslim thought which should be revised in the light of our own understanding of the original sources and freed from the thick layer of conventional interpretations which have accumulated for centuries and have been wanting in the present time. Asad held that the outcome of such an endeavor might be the emergence of a new *fiqh*, exactly conforming to the two sources of Islam—the Quran and Sunnah—and at the same time answering to the exigencies of present life.
2.13.7. Why Arafat? (1946)\textsuperscript{84}

This article was a kind of introduction to the Journal, *Arafat: A Muslim Critique of Thought* (Dalhousie, 1946-47), A quarterly journal of Islamic reconstruction, which was monthly published under the editorship of Muhammad Asad. In this journal, Asad excluded, for the time being, all literary contributions from outside and restricted it to his own conclusions. This article was published in the same English periodical on 8\textsuperscript{th} September 1946, in which the author introduces *Arafat* as a humble contribution to a revival of Muslim Thought. In this article the author mentions three reasons to answer his query in the title. Firstly, the name is on the place of Arafat where Muslims yearly assemble during Hajj period without any discrimination and thus *Arafat* is a reminder of this universal feeling of brotherhood. Secondly, the title reminds the meeting on the Day of Resurrection and third reason is that it reminds that Islam is a complete religion and it is an eternal reminder to us that we need only *Qur’ān* and *Sunnah*, and nothing else, to know what Islam is.

2.13.8. The outline of a Problem (September 1946)\textsuperscript{85}

In this article, Muhammad Asad points out and describes briefly the problems faced by the contemporary Muslims and lastly provides the solution in reference to the holy *Qur’ān* that, “Behold, God does not change the condition of a people until they change the condition of their inner selves” (13:11). However, he discusses the whole theme of this articles in the following sub-headings:

- Bragging about our Past;
- Talking of Muslim Revival;
- Our Slipping-Away from Islam;
- Whose is the fault?;
- A New Approach; and
- The Basis of Our Civilization

The topics under these subheadings are also included, with the same titles, in *This Law Of Ours and Other Essays*. 

\*\*94\*\*
2.13.9. Is Religion a Thing of Past (October 1946)\textsuperscript{86}

This article is a response of Muhammad Asad to whom who consider religion a thing of past and has no relevance in the present times. He logically provides the essence of religion in perspective of Islam and considers it a programme in which all needs of individuals are satisfied in every period of time.

2.13.10. Towards an Islamic Constitution (July 1947)\textsuperscript{87}

This article was written by Muhammad Asad in which he first time laid down his ideas regarding the Islamic State and its constitution in perspective of Pakistan which was struggling, after having its independence, about what should be the laws according to which this newly born state could be governed. In this article he briefly defined the need and importance of an Islamic State along with its form and structure.

2.13.11. Islamic Reconstruction (March 1948)\textsuperscript{88}

This article of Asad produces the aims and objectives of the Department of Islamic Reconstruction and thus presents the importance of the Department.

2.13.12. Islamic Constitution Making (March 1948)\textsuperscript{89}

This article is about the constitution making of the then newly born state, Pakistan whether make it a secular one or a true Islamic state which could serve as a model to the whole world. In this the author concluded that the constitution of Pakistan should be based on the true \textit{sharī'ī} principles so that it should become an Islamic State not merely in name but in fact.

2.13.13. The Road to Mecca (1954)\textsuperscript{90}

\textit{The Road to Mecca} is the most famous autobiography written by Muhammad Asad. In this he has written his various journeys across Arabia and the Middle East. In the course of the narrative Asad shifts topically and chronologically among his biography, his adventures in the Middle East and reflections of Islam.

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This book was first published in 1961 and was reprinted in 1980. In this book, Asad laid down in unambiguous terms the foundation of an Islamic state on the basis of Qur’\textsuperscript{anic} injuctions and the Prophet Muhammad’s (ﷺ) teachings. This book represents a development of ideas first set forth in his two essays—Islamic Constitution Making and Towards an Islamic Constitution—which are briefly reviewed above. This book does not reveal only biography of Asad but is very helpful in studying the history of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century. In this book, he has not only indicated the causes of Muslim downfall and decay but has also provided the solutions by narrating that Muslims could regain their prosperity and strength by strictly following the tenets of Islam.

2.13.15. Islam and Politics (1963)\textsuperscript{92}

This is the 9\textsuperscript{th} pamphlet of a series of pamphlets written by Muhammad Asad which has 11 pages. In this pamphlet Asad has critically analyzed the relationship between religion and politics and concluded that there is an intimate connection between the two but this is strange to the Westerner. He discusses the role of Islam in building up the social order and other institutions related to human beings.

2.13.16. The Message of the Qur’\textsuperscript{ān} (1980)\textsuperscript{93}

The Message of The Qur’\textsuperscript{ān} is the remarkable English translation and commentary of the Holy Qur’\textsuperscript{ān} which he completed in 17 years. The aim of Asad’s translation was to penetrate the veil that over the years has enveloped the meanings of some Arabic words due to semantic change and to reveal them in their original connotations at the time of the revelation of the Qur’\textsuperscript{ān}. He made attempts to interpret the Qur’\textsuperscript{ān} for the Modern world in terms of both the linguistic usage prevalent at the time of the revelation of the Qur’\textsuperscript{ān} and the contemporary disciplines such as hermeneutics and psychological and socio-anthropological methods, which he brings to bear on certain texts dealing with matters of a supernatural nature. The Message of The Qur’\textsuperscript{ān} reflects Asad’s careful scholarship, familiarity with classical works and interesting and stimulating insights into the Qur’\textsuperscript{ān}.
2.13.17. This Law of Ours and Other Essays (1986)\textsuperscript{94}

This is the compilation of Muhammad Asad’s papers compiled by his wife, Pola Hamida which she thought is a valuable contributions to Muslim religious and political thought. This compilation provides the consistency of this unusual Muslim’s views down the years. It constitutes something like a ‘profile’ of the intellectual face of Muhammad Asad over more than forty years of his long life.

2.14. An Estimate

Muhammad Asad has emerged as a writer, adventurer, diplomat and a Muslim thinker par excellence in the 20\textsuperscript{th} century. His writings cover large area which include autobiography, travelogue, Islamic studies, Jurisprudence, and Qur’\textsuperscript{ā}nic exegesis, secularism and westernization, political theory and constitutional law. After embracing Islam, he associated himself with several attempts to further the cause of Islam by trying to establish the social and political conditions for a truly Muslim life. His hopes were initially pinned on Saudi Arabia and then on Sanusiyya in Libya. But it was the creation of Pakistan which provided him with a possibility to devote himself to this task. In his early years of Islam, Asad not only attacked the western civilization but also criticized the Muslims of not following the basic tenets of Islam which had once made them great in the history. He again and again emphasized the importance of basic sources of Islam to be implemented in the resurgence of Islam with the help of fresh \textit{Ijtihād}.

The ideas of Muhammad Asad, being an interpretation of the Islamic message, are offered objectively in a ubiquitous manner. Unique with his command of the English language, knowledge of the Bible and Biblical sources as well as Jewish history and civilization, he was able to address appealingly, both the Muslim and non-Muslim readers, the essence of Islam in its historical and timeless context. His thought demands from the contemporary Muslims to return to the ideology apparent in the \textit{Qur’ān} and \textit{Sunnah}, prompts us to consider new ways of thinking, and heightens our sensibilities and feelings for other people, places, and their ways of being. Muhammad Asad contributed to the cause of Islam in an inimitable way by which he tried to stimulate a purposeful and vibrant soul among the modern day Muslims and thereby ushered a room for them to realize, think and solve the coming forth novel issues in the Muslim world while remaining strictly adherent to Islam and its everlasting principals.
Notes and References

1 It scarcely happens that a person’s name portrays almost all the phases of his life but the name of Muhammad Asad is an exceptional one. The following different forms of his name indicate the various stages of his life:

Leopold Weiss (family name)—Poldi (name of endearment)—Asadullah (at the time of embracing Islam in 1926)—Muhammad Essad Weiss (1927)—Hadji Muhammad Weiss (1928)—Muhammad Assad Leopold Weiss (1928)—Muhammad Asadullah (1929)—Leopold Muhammad Weiss (1930)—Muhammad Leopold Weiss (1930)—M. Asadullah (1931)—Asadullah von Weiss (1931)—Herr Leopold Weiss alias Muhammad Asad Ullah Vyce (1933-34)—Allamah Asad, Mawlama Asad, Haji Asad, Haji Muhammad Asad, Shiekh Muhammad Asad (1934-1938) and Muhammad Asad (1940-1992).


3 Ibid., pp. 57-62

4 Ibid., pp. 51-65

5 Ibid., p. 67

6 Ibid., p. 68-73

7 Ibid., pp. 70, 104-106 and 327

8 Ibid., p. 327

9 Ibid., p. 101-107

10 Menachem Ussishkin (14 August 1863- 2 October 1941) was one of the Russian-born leading and founding fathers of Zionism from 1923 until 1941. He was the powerful chairman and member of the Jewish National Fund, the president of the 20th Zionist Congress, the permanent president of World Zionist Organization’s Zionist Action Committee, and a member of the Jewish Agency Executive. In 1920, he was appointed head of the Zionist Commission in Palestine. (See Menachem Ussishkin- A Brief Biography & Quotes on www.palestineremembered.com visited on 11-06-2013).

11 The first president of Israel, Professor Chaim Weismann (1874-1952)—scientist and statesman—was among the leaders who were instrumental in the establishment of the state of Israel. He was the president of the state from 1949 to 1952. (www.mfa.gov.il/chaim%2Bweizmann.htm visited on 11-06-2013).

13 Asad, *The Road to Makkah*, op.cit., p. 102

14 Ibid., p. 103

15 King Abdullah bin Al- Hussein (1882-1951) was the founder of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. ([www.kinghussein.gov.jo/kingabdullah](http://www.kinghussein.gov.jo/kingabdullah) visited on 11-06-2013)

16 Kramer, “The Road from Mecca”, op.cit., p. 229


18 Muhammad Asad harshly criticized Reza Khan, and especially Mustafa Kemal whom, according to him, is a petty masquerader who denies all values to Islam. See Asad, *Road to Makkah*, op.cit., pp. 99-101; 104-105; 188-190; 243-248; 264-270; 297 and 319; *Isalm at Cross Roads*, (Gibraltar: Dār al Andalus, 1934) pp. 101-104; *This Law of Ours and Other Essays*, (Gibraltar: Dar al Andalus, 1987, reprint 1993) p. 75

19 Asad, *The Road to Makkah*, op.cit., p. 324

20 Ibid., p. 325

21 He criticized his own society by saying that, “[…] They belonged to a generation which, while paying lip service to one or another of the religious faiths that had shaped the lives of its ancestors, never made the slightest endeavour to conform its practical life or even its ethical thought to those teachings. In such a society the very concept of religion had been degraded to one of two things: the wooden ritual of those who clung by habit—and only habit—to their religious heritage, or the cynical insouciance of the more 'liberal' ones who considered religion as an outmoded superstition to which one might, on occasion, outwardly conform but of which one was secretly ashamed, as of something intellectually indefensible.” See Asad, *Road to Makkah*, op.cit., p. 60. He also criticized the cruel political maneuver designed against Palestinians to subjugate them in their own country. Ibid., pp. 101-109


23 This man is referred to Abdul Jabbar al-Khairi (1880-1958) who arrived in Berlin in 1918 and was first elected Imam of this society. He was the founder of the Jamī’at al-Islamiyya Berlin and many great men entered into the abode of Islam from his sincere, zealous and persistent efforts. See, Muhammad Ikram Chaghatai, “Introduction” in

24 Asad, *The Road to Makkah*, op.cit., p. 321


26 Asad, *The Road to Makkah*, op.cit., pp. 333-363


28 Kramer, “The Road from Mecca”, op.cit., p. 234

29 Muhammad Ikram Chaghatai, “Muhammad Asad’s Indian Years” in Chaghatai, *Europe’s Gift to Islam*, op.cit., p. 323. Cf. *Inqilab*, 2 and 6 February 1933. Exact date of this lecture was 5 February and lecture’s name is given as “Asad Leopold Weiss: A Converted German Muslim”.

30 *Ibid.* Cf. *Inqilab*, February 1933 under the caption: “Lectures of Haji Muhammad Asad—A German Journalist” with a comment that he “is an enthusiastic and competent Muslim…His views are useful for the educated Muslims.”


32 C.I.D. report of 20 November 1933, India Office Records, R/1/1/4670

33 Lieut.—colonel L.E. Lang, Resident in Kashmir (Sailkot) to B.J. Glancy, Political Secretary, Government of India, Foreign and Political Department (New Delhi), 31 January 1934, British Library (India Office and Oriental), R/1/1/4670, Cf. Kramer, “The Road from Mecca”, op.cit., p. 229

34 Chaghatai, “Muhammad Asad’s Indian Years”, op.cit., p. 325. Cf. *Arafat* (Lahore) vol. 1, no. 1 (1948) and Asad, *This Law of Ours*, op.cit., pp. 89-118

35 Asad, *The Road to Makkah*, op.cit., pp. 3-4

36 See letters of Dr. Iqbal to Muhammad Asad in Sayyid Muzaffar Hussain Barni (ed.), *Kulliyāt-i-Makātīb-i-Iqbāl*, vol. III, (Delhi: n.p., 1993), pp. 531, 563, 571, 579-80, 597, and 660


39 Chaghatai, “Muhammad Asad’s Indian Years”, op.cit., p. 335

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40 *Ibid.* Cf. “Khuṭṭ-ỉ-Μawdūdî” explained and annotated by Rafi‘uddin Hashimi and Salim Mansur Khalid. vol. II, Lahore: 1995, p. 62. From the last sentence of this letter, writes Chaghatai, it is evident that after Partition (1947) Niaż Ali intended to establish a Dārul Islām in Jauharabad (where he settled and died) on the same pattern of such institution in Pathankot and contacted its administrator (e.g. Mawdūdî) and the members of the governing committee (e.g. Asad).

41 See *Correspondence between Maulana Maududi and Maryam Jameelah*, (Lahore: n.p., 1978), pp. 14-15

42 See Weiss, undated note to India Office in London, received at India office on 8 June 1939; India Office Records, L/P&J/72678. Weiss gave his London address as 119, Old Church Street, Chelsea, s.W.3.

43 Asad, *This Law of Ours and Other Essays, op.cit.*, p. 1


45 Asad, *The Road to Makkah, op.cit.*, p. 4

46 Kramer, “The Road from Mecca”, *op.cit.*, p. 242


49 *Ibid*

50 Asad, *Islam at Crossroads, op.cit.*, p. 11

51 Asad, *The Road to Makkah, op.cit.*, pp. 205-207

52 Asad, *This Law of Ours and Other Essays, op.cit.*, p. 8

53 Asad, *The Road to Makkah, op.cit.*, p. 205


55 Asad, *This law of Ours and Other Essays, op.cit.*, p. 41


59 Asad, *The Message of The Qur’ān*, op.cit., pp. iii-v

60 Asad, *This Law of Ours and Other Essays*, op.cit., p. 187

61 Iqbāl, “Two Approaches to the English Translation of the Noble Qur’ān”, op.cit., p. 390

62 Asad, *This Law of Ours and Other Essays*, op.cit.. p. 41


64 Asad, *Islam at the Crossroads*, op.cit., pp. 139-149


66 See Asad’s Preface to the first edition (1938) of *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhari: The Early Years of Islam*, op.cit., pp. vi-vii


68 Asad, *This Law of Ours and Other Essays*, op.cit., p. 46

69 *Ibid.*, pp. 16-17

70 This theme appears clearly and thoroughly in his *This Law of Ours*, op.cit., pp. 11-70 and *The Principles of State and Government in Islam*, op.cit., pp. 11-17


72 Asad, *This Law of ours and Other Essays*, op.cit., p. 63

73 Asad, *The Message of the Qur’ān*, op.cit., p. vi


75 See the translation of the Sūrah al-An’ām (6:108) with its corresponding note 92 in Asad, *The Message of the Qur’ān*, op.cit., p. 267

Ibid., pp. 121-128


Asad, Islam at Crossroads, (Gibraltar: Dār al Andalus, 1934).


Asad, The Message of the Qurʾān (Gibraltar: Dār al Andalus, 1980).

Asad, This Law of Ours and Other Essays, op.cit.