CHAPTER : I
DEVELOPMENT OF ISLAMIC THOUGHT BEFORE SHAH WALI-U ALLAH

Islamic thought can be described as the reflective and the interpretative knowledge of Islam derived from the Qur'an and the Sunnah. It is distinguished by its apodictic, creative, ethico-social and transcendental character. Throughout the history it has been developed by assimilating various modes, methods and patterns which coincide with the socio-intellectual exigencies of the times. Its formative phase is marked by simplicity of shari'ah knowledge. The subsequent phases are characterised by the canon formulations, dialectical theology (ilm-al kalām), philosophical thinking and sufism. In this chapter an attempt is made to make a critical survey of the development of Islamic thought before shah Wali-u Allah upto the medieval period of Islamic history.

The Qur'an and the Sunnah, received by the early community, led to the formation of Islamic thought. The Qur'an is the revelation from Allah and His Word and the Sunnah is its verbal and practical interpretation and transformation by its direct recipient- Prophet Muhammad (SAWS). Both the sources provide man with teachings and norms for his day to day living. They constitute a system of laws and regulations to

guide human life which in the traditional technical sense, is called “shari’ah”\(^2\). In its early phase of Islamic thought the simplicity of the shari’ah rulings is patent. It is expressively found in the sirah (biography) of the Prophet and that of his Companions (sahabah). The explanation and the amplification of the Qur’anic teachings by the Prophet in word and deed, received directly or indirectly by the Companions, is called Hadith or Sunnah\(^3\). The Sunnah is actualisation and practical

2. The root of shari’ah is shara’ which means to prescribe or introduce: and shari’ah stands for prescriptions and laws. In the traditional Islamic sense; it is used a collective name for laws of Islam as put forth by the Qur’an and the Sunnah and elaborated by the analytical principles of the five imams of legal schools (madhāhib) of Islam. See also Fazlur Rehman, *Islam*, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London Wi Chapter 6, and Syed Abul Hassan Najmee Islamic Legal Theory and the Orientalists, Institute of Islamic Culture, Lahore, 1989, pp.18-24.

3. Generally ‘Hadith’ and ‘Sunnah’ are used synonymously. Hadith, according to the Traditionists (Muhaddithin), stands for ‘what was transmitted on the authority of the Prophet, his deeds, sayings, tacit approval, or description of his sifāt (features)’. Sometimes the word Khabbar is used to denote Hadith. Sunnah literally means ‘a way, course, rule, mode or manner of acting or conduct of life.’ Earlier Sunnah has not a restricted usage, it was however, at the time of Allah’s order in the Qur’an, that Muslim should obey the Prophet and take his life as a good model and follow it, the expression ‘Sunnah of the Prophet’ came into use. (see al-Ahzab : 21 and al-Imran : 132). It is said taḥt Imam Shafā’i was the first who defined Sunnah as the model behaviour of the Prophet. See also Dr.Shiekh Mustafa Husini Sabahi, *Sunnat-i Rasool* (Urdu Translation), Maktaba Zikra, Rampur (U.P) 1992, pp.21-34 and M. Sayed Abul A’la Mawdudi, *Sunnat kī Aayeeni Hathyat*, Markazi Maktaba Islami, Delhi, 1990.
transformation of Allah's guidance. It is the model conduct for all Believers. The
Sunnah got preserved and disseminated due to the Companions keen obedience and
devotional association with the Prophet who used to listen his sayings and deeds,
memorize and write them down for others. The Prophet himself used to advise them for
listening to and preserving of Hadith. That is why Hadith began to be written even
during the times of the Prophet. Although this opinion about early Hadith writing is
contested by some of the scholars yet the majority subscribes to it. Gradually the
Hadith listening and transmission was followed with full devotion by the Companions.

Following sayings of the Prophet and one of his Companions bear the testimony to this
fact:

May Allah keep the people happy who used to listen to any saying (Hadith) from the Prophet and transmit it to others as to many people it is transmitted afterwards and the preserver of Hadith enjoys the better status than that of the listener.

Bura bin Aziz, the Companion of the Prophet, speaks:

We (Companions) being engaged in grazing our camels, our associates used to narrate to us the Hadith as the Companions who could not listen to the Prophet's sayings did receive it from the


Companions, present in the company of the Prophet or had a good memory for this purpose. Whosoever narrated the Hadith had to face a critical investigation by the audience.

The devotion of Umar I, Ibn Abbas and Abu Hurairah to the Hadith is worth mentioning who used to wait for it anxiously. Whenever Umar did miss the saying of the Prophet, he had to hear it from his neighbour who was asked by Umar to receive the Hadith from the Prophet on the alternative days. Ibn Abbas used to knock the door of the Companions who heard a Hadith from the Prophet and waited there till the Companion arouses from his sleep. Similarly when Abu Hurairah inquired from the Prophet about the person who would deserve most his intercession on the Day of Judgment. He was told, in reply, that the very question would not have been expected from any other Companion than him for his very close association with the Prophet. In addition to this the Companions were given the responsibility of disseminating the education of the Qur'an and the Hadith to others. Such education was regarded as essential even at the time of war. For this Ma'az bin Jabal was allowed by the Prophet to carry out the duty of educating people with the teaching of the Qur'an and the Sunnah even on the time of battle of Hunain.

It is, therefore, the will of Allah reflected in His Word – The Qur'an – interpreted and elaborated by His Messenger (SAW) through the Hadith that shapes the formative phase of Islamic thought. In it the shar'iah was followed in its purity and

6. Ibid., P.148.
simplicity. The reason is that the Companions were the generation of the Qur'an\(^7\). They themselves witnessed the revelation of its verses on the specific occasions with the specific purposes and it enlightened them and clarified their doubts. The Prophet's physical presence provided them with the direct and proper approach to the Qur'an and the Sunnah to guide their day to day living. Conviction, certainty and simplicity enlightened them dominantly without indulging in speculations. So their thought was the thought of deed and the deed was the act of the shari'ah\(^8\).

**Formulations of the Shari'ah Rulings**

The epoch of the formulations of the shari'ah began when the Prophet and his Companions passed away. During their time, answer was sought from the Qur'an immediately as they were witness to its occasional revelation and at other times their problem was clarified by the Hadith which they directly received from the Prophet. Such direct and easy facility was not available to the succeeding generation who had to evolve the methods and formulations of approach to adapt their living with the shari'ah. The exigency was given further impetus by extension of Muslim rule to Byzantine and Iran. Novel situations arose, new customs of the people along with the new problems were to...

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8. In one of his Traditions, the Prophet has characterised his successors as: "The best age is the age of mine, then of those people who are nearer to it...", see M. Mufti Shafii, *Maqâm-i Sahâbah* (Urdu) Maktaba al-Falah, Deoband (U.P), p.53.
be answered by the Muslims⁹. In this domain the endeavours of the early jurists of Islam and Muhadithin are a watershed in the history of Islamic thought. These jurists were elites of their times. The people used to seek answers from them regarding their day-to-day problems as their marginal distance from the language of the Quran, paucity of Hadith literature and above all the illiteracy of the common people could hardly make them able to resolve such problems on their own. Although, the attempts in this direction, were initiated by the teachers of Abu Hanifah (d.150/767) in Iraq¹⁰ but the success was achieved by the former who founded viable formulations of the shari’ah during later Umayyad period which became popular even during the Abbasids. His founding of qiyas (analogical reasoning) and istihsan (juristic preference), in Islamic thought, is a progressive and extensive formulation of the shari’ah. It does not, however, mean that Abu Hanifah ignores the primacy of the Quran and the shari’ah as he is, sometimes, accused of by some quarters¹¹. The method of jurisprudence was further elaborated by his pupils, Abu Yusuf (d.181/797) and Muhammad al-Shaybani through their decrees (fatawa) and fiqh-works. Abu Yusuf also attained the position of the chief justice under the Abbasid caliph Harun Rashid who ruled from 786 to 809 CE.

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Abu Yousuf’s *Kitāb al-kharāj* and al-Shaybani’s *Al Sayir al Sagīr Wa al Sayir al Kabīr* are the two distinguished works on the extensive use of Abu Hanifah’s argumentative method. Equally important are the endeavours of Malik Ibn Anas (d.179/795) who founded the Madina school of jurisprudence that is associated with the pupils of Abdullah Ibn Umar. Malik’s formulations of the shari’ah are distinguished by his scrupulousness to the Hadith. He emphasises upon the operation of the shari’ah laws through the living Traditions of the Prophet and he is strictly followed by *Ahl al Madina* (the Madinites). To him *ijma* is more related to the Sunnah, retained by the ahl al Madina than to its logical structure. That is why Malik Ibn Anas is regarded more as a traditionalist than a jurist. The fact is that his is an attempt to adjust the Hadith corpus with the formation of legal rules and give a full validity to the latter. His principle of *masālah al-mursalah* is a progressive development in the formulation of Islamic legal thought. Through this principle shari’ah laws are devised keeping in view the object of the shari’ah itself. Imam-i Malik’s Mauatta which is basically a collection of the Hadith but his working on the Hadith science through it gives it a high place even in the fiqh literature. Muhammad Idris Shafi’i (d.204/819) the other great jurist of the

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12. See Abu Zahrah Misri, *Hayāt-i Imām Abu Hanīfa* (Urdu Trns.) Muslim Academy, Sāhranpur, U.P.


time also made distinguished contributions in the Shari’ah sciences. Taught by both Imam-i Malik and the pupils of Abu Hanifah, he thought over two methods of the Shari’ah formulation. He expounded to standardise the living traditions of the Hadith and replaced them by the verbal traditions. After the Qur’an he gives the validity to the verbal traditions than *ijma* or *qiyaṣ*. In his *Risālah* and *Kitāb al Um*, Shafī‘i elaborates his methods of the Shari’ah. These works evoked criticism as well as support of his views on the formulations of fiqh. Dawud Ibn al Zahri differed with his views on *ijma* while Asbaqh ibn Faraj (d.225/840) and Ibn Burhan al Farisi (d. 305/919) produced works in favour of Shafii’i’s usul-i fiqh. Ahmad ibn Hanbal (d. 241/855) and Jafar as-Sadiq (d. 148/765) were also the famous jurists of this epoch who made an outstanding contribution to the intellectual history of Islam. Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal accumulated the Hadith in his *al-Musnad* extensively in order to provide the community with the authentic solutions for their problems from the Hadith. Here he follows the method of his teacher, Imam-i Shafii’i but unlike he gives a considerable place to *qiyaṣ* and *istislah* (seeking of that which is in the public interest). Jaffar as-sadaq too has a


16. Ja’far as-Sadiq was a renowned scholar of Islamic sciences, who taught both Abu Hanifah and Malik ibn Anas. The Shia’h (atha ashariyah) consider him as the founder of their school of law—fiqh al-Jafari.

good place in the fiqh and a circle of his pupils learnt from him at Madina, including Abu Hanifah and he became famous for devising the fiqh of the shari'ah. Such formulations of the shari'ah coincide with the collection and compilation of the Hadith by the various scholars. Ibn Majah (b. 209 A.H) Imam Tirmizi (b. 209 A.H.) and Imam Nasa'i (b.215 A.H) attained a high place in disseminating the shari'ah knowledge. Theirs is a critical evaluation of the corpus of Hadith so that the common masses could be guided properly.18

The formulation were elaborated and systematised by their pupil-jurists in the independent schools of the law – the Hanfi, the Shafi'i the Malaki, the Hanbali and the Jafari in their use of the texts (nasūs)- the Qur'an and the Hadith – and that of ijmā', ijtihād, etc. for the shari'ah purposes, the Ummah reasserted its intellectual universalism and the social stability in the post-Prophetic period, the period of political conflicts among the Muslims. This activity of the Muslim scholars of interpreting the texts, evaluating the Hadith and the living practices (ijma') etc., flourished among the community and exercised a lasting influence upon the future history of Islam.

Post-Formative Developments

From the later Umayyad and the medieval period of Islamic history, the post-formative developments of Islamic thought are found. In it the controversies, contentions on religious matters and the reaction to assimilation of the foreign

influences took place. The Apostolic generation had already passed away, their Successors (Taba‘in) who did hardly live in this era and the early purity and simplicity of Islamic thought and activities was now affected by the new predicaments. Owing to its political dissatisfaction and unstability, the intrusion of influences from the non-Islamic creeds and cults like those of the Greeks, Christians and Jews activated by the linguistic distance from the Qur'an and the Hadith, new trends and modes of thought sprang up and gradually took the form of the independent schools and movements. They are described as the schools of kalām (dialectical theology) and philosophy (falāsafah). Mu’tazilah, Ash’ariah and Maturidiah were the main theological schools and with them emerged the movements of the philosophers and the tasawwuf in the history of Islam. The whole medieval period is remarkable for this corpus of Islamic thought that discerns both the productive and the distinguishing character of the Community.

Although Qadariyah and Jāfariyah are also described as post-formative kalām schools but their short independent character due to the transformation of their dogmatic positions into Mu’tazilah and Ash’ariah respectively, they can be described more as the tendencies or trends of the Muslim thought than the systematic schools of theology (kalām). Mutazilis manifested as the powerful school which was founded by Wasil ibn Ata (80-131/699-749) a desciple of Hassan Basari (d.110/728)

19. Ibid.

20. Ibid., pp. 85-87.
the outstanding genius of Islam. He was followed by the great figures like ‘Umuru bin Ubaid, Abu Handil, Nazam, Qazi Ahmad Abi Daud and Allama Zamakhshari.

The scholars, researched on these theological schools among whom Shibli Numani21, Macdonald22, Iqbal23, I.R. al-Faruqi24 are notable, do regard the five axioms as the foundation of the Mu’tazilah school. They are al-Tawhid (uniqueness of God), al-adal (Justice), al wa’d al wa’id (the promise of reward and threat of punishment), al manzilah bayna al manzilatayn (the intermediate station between salvation and damnation) and al amr bi al ma’ruf wa al nahy an al munkar (the enjoining of good and prohibition of evil). Al-Tawhid or unity of God as their doctrinal axiom was expounded to refute the contentions of Jewish anthropomorphists, the Marichaen dualists, the Christian trinitarians and those of the Near Eastern Philosophers of gnostic emanations25. Its emphasis on the ‘neutralisation’ of the Divine attributes is to argue for the eternity of God otherwise His omniscience will be sought out from Him and that involves polytheism. Al-adl was emphasised to reckon with the advocates of

Acknowledging the Quranic verses as supporting both freedom and determinism, the Mu'tazilah, however, regarded freedom as the basis to the whole religious system. Their argument for it includes man's responsibility (taklīf) Prophethood, good and evil. Man, being capable of discovering good and evil through reason and revelation is regarded by them as the author of his own deeds upon which he is to be rewarded or punished in the life Hereafter and it is God's justice otherwise all such phenomena are absurd\(^{26}\). The third and the fourth axioms of the Mu'tazilah doctrine are subsidiary to Divine justice. \(\text{Al-}\)\(\text{wa'd wa'id}\) is man's meeting with his destiny, which built up with his deed, is necessary to him. The intermediate position between salvation and damnation is to render justice with the grave sinner who is neither called saved nor faithless\(^{27}\). The fifth axiom - enjoining of good and forbidding evil-is simply meant to universalise righteousness against falsehood and remould the world on the pattern God has revealed. These five axioms of the Mu'tazilah constituted their school of thought, the denial of any of them removed the man from it. The dialectical method is conspicuous in their discussions and discourses and it is termed by some scholars as the rationalism of the Mu'tazilah\(^{28}\). This

\(\text{\textsuperscript{26}}\) Supra, n. 24, pp.288-289.

\(\text{\textsuperscript{27}}\) The Khawarij hold that the grave sinner does not remain the believer and the Murj'ah regard him still a Muslim.

school flourished in the intellectual circles of the Muslims. In the later 9th century C. E. it, however, met with the powerful reaction of the Ashariyah and the other quarters of political side and 'the traditional orthodoxy'.

The Ash'riyah is the other outstanding school of the epoch. It is after Al-Asha'ri, the pupil of Al-Jubbai who was the representative of Mu'tazilah school in Basra. But on the failure of their dialectical position regarding God's justice, Al-Asha'ri, however, dissociated from their school and founded his own method of approaching and contending on the issues of religion. On repudiating the former he says:

Oh people, one who knows me, he, thus, knows me, yet one who does n't, I wish to inform him that I am so and so. My belief was that the Qu'ran is created and nobody could see Allah. (In this way) I committed evil and now I repent for it and persuade to the rejection of Mu'tazilis. Now I will leave no stone unturned to expose their vanity. Oh people, I remained hidden for some time and examined the arguments of the Mu'tazilah yet found no change in their mode of thinking and thus none of them is worth following. I (then) prayed to Allah for guiding me to the right path. However, what Allah guided me is expressed in my books. I put off the dress of my previous belief as I am putting off this dress of mine.

Owing to the dissatisfaction with the Mu'tazilah axioms of Divine justice, createdness of the Qur'an, freedom of man, Al-Ashari reacts against them

considerably\textsuperscript{30}. Unlike the Mu'tazilah neutralization of the Divine attributes. Al-Ashari withholds them with this position that through them God describes Himself and it cannot affect His transcendence as the latter is beyond human examination. Similarly he refutes the denial of beatific vision in paradise of the Mu'tazilah on the ground that the realm is not that of this world but of transcendental nature and God has promised it to the righteous and it cannot be denied but be affirmed as per the revelation of the Qur'an\textsuperscript{31}. In addition to this he founded his system of ideas on the religious issues with the tools of the orthodoxy and the dialecticism which was later on extensively followed by His successors. The main issues of theological thought are the existence and the unity of God, \textit{Kasb} (acquisition), Divine pattern and the priority of revelation to reason. On the existence and the unity of God his arguments, being opposite to atheism and Trinity, are that the world is made of bodies which are divisible into atoms — the smallest existents — and from it follows that all things like atoms are created and their ultimate cause is an uncreated creator. The uncreated is the necessary being and it cannot be contingent like the world. The necessary being is God. The orderliness and design of the world also necessitates His being and the existence of many such provident beings is not possible i.e., ploytheism as it will upset the order of the creation\textsuperscript{32}. Against the Mu'tazilah doctrine of freedom of man. Al–Ashari founded the idea of \textit{kasb}

\textsuperscript{30} Supra, n.24, p.292.


\textsuperscript{32} Supra, n.24, p.293 and M. M. Sharief, \textit{op. cit.}, p.241.
(acquisition) which means that man only wills things and it is the power (qudrah) of God to cause the willed object to be. Man attains the merit or demerits of the event not because he did it but because he willed it. Al-Ashari's attempt is to reconcile between God's justice and man's responsibility which are basic axioms in Islamic System. In his doctrine of Divine pattern, he repudiates the material causal sequence of the Greek and affirms the total providence of God, expressed through his unique mastery over the universe. To him it is Divine pattern that pervades and rules over the universe. Contrary to the Mu'tazilah position who regarded reason the main criterion for justification, al-Ashari gave priority to revelation over reason. This is related with his interpretation of imān and God's judgment. He holds that imān (faith) does not necessarily imply virtue and commission of a sin will either be forgiven or punished depending upon God's will. God need not send His Prophets yet when He sent them it also, argues al-Ashari, has acquiescence with what they brought from God. Reason, however, is not out rightly rejected by the school but is placed subordinate to the revelation. Such ideas of al-Ashari were further elaborated by his followers who gave them popularity among the majority of the community and it gradually became identified with the sunni view of

33. Ibid.

34. Supra, n. 26, p.231.

35. Nazamal -Mulik. Imam al Haramin, Al-Ghazali (the present author, however, views Al-Ghazali position as developing beyond their paradigms), Baqilani and Sharistani are considered as the renowned personages of the Ashariyah school.
Isla n d 6. The m ethod o f the tw o kalam schools is dialectical which is moulded variedly
by their founders. One uses it to emphasise the universal humanism and justice and the
other (Ashariyah) emphasised on the efficacy of Divine pattern. Both the phenomena of
Islamic thinking were overshadowed by the discursive and free discourses of the
early medieval times. Maturidism, the other theological school of this period was
founded by Abu Mansur Muhammad b. Muhammad b. Muhammad b. Muhammad, al
Maturidi (d. 333/945), a famous follower of Abu Hanifah. Some scholars like Ismail
Raji al-Faruqi, T.J.Boer, M. M. Nadvi regard Maturidi among the propounders of
al-Ashari yet a great number of scholars give him an independent position in the
theological thought of Islam. In this dialectical theology al-Maturidi differs on many
points with both the positions taken by the Mu'tazilah and Ashariyah. Unlike the
Ashariyah he does not devalue reason or give an allegorical colour to God's attributes
but accords a good place to reason and gives approval to the attributes of God in terms
of their meaning, content – knowledge of God – compitable with His eternity. Al-
Maturidi also maintains the freedom of man, a reaction to al-Ashari, by emphasising the

36. Supra, n.30, p.293.
38. T.J.Boer, The History of Philosophy in Islam, Delhi (1983); PP. 41-64.
40. Among such scholars include D.B.Macdonald, Shibli, M.Iqbal, Abu Zahra Misri,
F. Rehman and M.Abdul Hye.
41. Supra, n.35, p.267.
choice given to man by God and the action or results of the exercise of His choice is regarded by him as Omniscience of God that is closely related to His Justice and Wisdom\textsuperscript{42}. Al-Maturidi, therefore, founds a new mode in the theological thought of Islam where he attempts at the reconciliation between reason and revelation, humanism and transcendentalism\textsuperscript{43}. M. Abdul Hye also speaks of such achievements of al-Maturidi school while making an appraisal of their writings\textsuperscript{44}. Although Maturidi school could not flourish widely like the Ashariyah yet its independent place is remarkable in the history of Islamic thought and the degeneration of its followers was due to its interaction with the Asharis and the latter's political patronage.

The Philosophical And the Sufi Developments

Owing to the translation movement of the Greek scientific and philosophical texts and the countering agencies to the Islamic missionaries (\textit{d'ais}), Muslims took a considerable interest in formulating their thought on philosophical methods. These philosophical methods were deeply influenced by the Hellenistic philosophy\textsuperscript{45}. Abu Ya'qub al Kindi (d.251/866) Abu al Nasr Muhammad al Farabi(d.339/950) and Abu Ali

\textsuperscript{42} Ibid., p.268.

\textsuperscript{43} Supra, n.27, p.93.

\textsuperscript{44} M. Abdul Hye in \textit{A History of Muslim Philosophy}, Delhi (1989) PP. Cf. al-Maturidis, \textit{Tafsir Surah al-Fātah}, Islamic Research Institute, Islamabad (Pakistan).

\textsuperscript{45} Ibid. p.117.
al Husayn ibn Sina (d.428/1037) were the Muslim philosophers of early medieval period of Islamic history. Scholars from the Muslim as well as the western quarters have amply reckoned with the works of these philosophers and high lighted their themes. Very frequently is evaluated their thought vis-a-vis the shari'ah and the cause of failure of the philosophers in gaining the currency among the community. Al-kindi, Al-Farabi, Ibn Sina all were concerned with the keen study of the philosophy particularly Aristotle and introduced it, though in varied forms, to their own people. Philosophy, as they considered it, has for its aim of seeking the truth – knowledge of God. On this basis they formulated their doctrines of epistemology and ethics. Al-kindi builds up his theory of emanations and describes the world not as created voluntarily but emanated from God through intermediary agencies – angles. Similarly human soul emanates from the world-soul which though in operating actions is bound up with body, in its spiritual realm it is independent of it – imperishible. He further divides the soul into faculties namely Agent Intellect (aql-i fa'al), Rational Intellect (aql-i hayulāni), Acquired Intellect (aql-i mustafad) and Intellect in Action (aql bil amal). Al-Kindi, however, never departs from reliance on revelation to reach the truth. Al-Farabi and Ibn Sina, too, represent this concern of approaching the reality through philosophical methods of the

46. Even M.M. Sharif and Majid Fakry hardly examine this issue in their works.
48. Ibid., pp.48-49.
Greeks. Al-Farabi, regarded as *mu'allim-u thant*⁴⁹ and following the logic and epistemology of Aristotle, attempts at the combination of the Shari‘ah and intuitionism of tasawwuf. In his system of thought, he maintains God as the necessary being whose essence is to create and takes up prophesy and philosophy of the same purport⁵⁰. Ibn Sina, known in the west by his Latinised name Avicena, is famous for his systematic statements of philosophy and medicine. He deepened and added to the theories of Farabi on epistemology and metaphysics. He is described as adopting the methods of both Aristotle and Plato (in its neo-Platonic form) and recognizes the independent domains for both religion and philosophy⁵¹. Although Ibn Sina wrote prolifically on the available knowledge yet some of his views on religious issues raised strong controversies. They manifest his holding the opinion that morally underdeveloped souls won't be resurrected in the Hereafter and declares the society of the common people as denigrated⁵². Such rationalism of the philosophers was strongly refutated by al-Ghazzali (d.505/1111) and Ibn Taymiyah (d.728/1328)⁵³. Muhammad Abdul Walid Ibn Rushd (d.593/1198) known in the West as Averroes, gained a distinguished position both in the east and the west for his philosophical works. Apart from his standard commentaries on Aristotle, Ibn

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50. *Supra*, n.41, p.308.

51. *Ibid*.

52. *Supra*, n.42, p.119.

53. *Supra*, n.50, p.308.
Rushd attempted more rigorously to reconcile religion with philosophy in his works like *Mujtahid Wal Nihayat al Muqtasid and Fasl al Maqal fi ma hayna al Hikmah Wal Shari‘ah Min al Ittisal*. Unlike some theologians Ibn Rushd regards God’s knowledge extensive to both universals and particulars and believes in the immortality of the soul. Unlike some theologians Ibn Rushd regards God’s knowledge extensive to both universals and particulars and believes in the immortality of the soul. In his systematic presentation of Greek philosophy, defending its formulas in *Tahafut al Tahafut*, it is observed that he relies more on reason and considers its evidence higher than the moral teachings of theologians. He calls them simple teachers of morality. The philosophical thinkers and formulations, as they appeared in history, could not gain popularity among the Muslim masses. The reasons for it are the philosopher’s over-rationalisation of the doctrines, reducing religion to mere knowledge and the denial of bodily resurrection by some philosophers. Seeking wrong paralellism between religion and philosophy that resulted in the confusion about God and the immortality of the soul also added to the repudiation of philosophers. To their devaluation, the traditional orthodoxy—muhaddithin—also contributed considerably as the latter accused them of blasphemy and attacked their free-thought strongly. Although the philosophical method could not appeal to the ethos of the community as its propounders wished to do it, yet its influence turned, as opined by some of the scholars, towards other direction called sufism.

55. *Supra*, n.53, p.310.
Sufism or tasawwuf is the other development that took place partly due to the Muslims' general concern with the purification of the heart and partly due to the extreme positions taken by both the traditional orthodoxy and the philosophers. The first element did exist in a proper way even during the time of the Prophet (SAW) and taken as tazakiya (purification), zuhd (piety), ikhlas (sincerity), ihsān (special morality) etc.\(^{57}\) A large number of the Companions showed a keenness towards this ethos of Muslims. The Companions like Abu Dhar-i Ghaffari, Salaman Farsi, Umar Ibn Abdul Aziz are notable of such tazkiya builders among the Companions and among their successors, Hassan al Basari (109/728) became distinguished in this domain of thought\(^{58}\). Its emergence as a movement was on the rise of rigorous controversies between the traditionalists and the rationalists and the intrusion of the foreign influences activated it and simultaneously corrupted its purity\(^{59}\). Among the early Sufis Dhul Nun al Misri (d.245/859), Junid of Bagdad (d.298/901). Abu al Qasim al Qushayri (d.465/1072) are renowned for introducing the Sufi doctrines in Islamic thought of the medieval period.

Dhu al Nun's interpretation of tawakkul (trust in God) is a replacement of the causal relation with God. He classified of knowledge into the realms of senses, reason,

\(^{57}\) Cf. Syed 'Abul Hassan Nadvi, Tazakiya wa Ahsān, Majlis-i-Tahqiqat wa Nashriyati Islām, Lukhnow, 1979.

\(^{58}\) Supra, n.54, p.295.

intuition and attributed the last one to the sufis and termed it as *ma'rifah* (gnosis). This is considered as his main achievement in the field. Junaid seeks a proper harmony between the shari'ah and *bātin* (inner state) that is the path called *tariqah* which is to be followed with full trust in Allah (*tawḥīd*). He tends towards fana principle (of sufism) when he emphasises on the absorption with the unity of God. Qushairi and Hijwiri’s contributions are in a way of systematisation of this method of thought. Their works, *Risālah Qushairiah* and *Kashf al-Mahjub* present the sufi doctrines in an elaborated manner. Knowledge of reality, *mujāhidah, mushāhidah, maqāmāt of fana* and *baqa* etc, are amply reckoned with by them. Both these works have substantially influenced the future Sufi thought of Muslims. The distinguished Sufi figures of the later medieval phase were sheikh Abdul Qadir Gilani (d.525/1166), Al-Ghazali (d.505/1111), Ibn Arabi (d.638/1240), Jalal ud Din Rumi (d.672/1273) Nizam ud Din Awaliya (d.725/1324) and Abdul Karim Jili (d.1406). Abdul Qadir and Al-Ghazali, the renowned geniuses of the domain have propounded their mystic path and the doctrines of gaining the knowledge of certainty.

The former speaks of the four states of Sufi’s spiritual development-state of obedience to the religious law, state of reality (attaining wilayah), state of complete submission to God and the state of annihilation (*fana*). Both empirical and visionary experience of knowledge and reality and the attributes of generosity, patience and piety are to be

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60. *Supra, n.45, p.341.*

61. *Ibid., pp. 344-345.*
maintained for the over all development of man. Al Ghazali while repudiating the arguments of the philosophers for the eternity of the world and the priority to rationalism and materialism, finds certainty in the intuitive knowledge rather than in the rational knowledge. Al Ghazali follows the method of Ahs’arite mutakalimūn yet his refutation of the philosophers in Tahāfat al Falāsafah and devoting many other works to the themes of mysticism place him among the luminaries of the sufi movement. His are the attempts to lay the solid foundation for the shari’ah society and, on the other hand, attempting 'a rebuttal of the hostile influences intruding into the Muslim Community. An elaborated appraisal of Al-Ghazali’s works will occur in the following pages of this chapter. The mystic trend of Al-Ghazali where Tawhidic knowledge and pietistic character is emphasised upon, is continued also in the works of Jalal ud-Din Rumi, (though of Persian origin yet settled in Konya, Turkey) Nizam ud-Din Awliya (b.737/1336) of Delhi and Shiekh Ahmad Sirhindi (d.1034/1625). The other Sufi thinkers like Al-Hallaj(244-309/857-922), Ibn Arabi (d.638/1240) and Al-Jilli(767-820/1365/1917) tended towards monism which is contrary to the Tawhid of Islam. Al-Hallaj seems idiosyncratic in his thinking when he claims himself of being the final truth (ana al haq) and Ibn Arabi’s doctrine of monism and the claim of being the seal of the saints, too, has raised strong controversies. Al-Jili limits the essence of God merely

63. Supra, n.55, p.300.
64. See infra., pages of the present chapter.
65. S. Urooj Qadri, Tasawwuf aur Ahl-i Tasawwuf, Delhi (1990); P.281-299.
and thus echoes of Ibn Arabi are found in him as well. The sufi movement developed considerably during the medieval period and exercised a deep influence upon the masses which is discernible in its *silsilas* (sufi orders).

**Al-Ghazali's Breakthrough and Ibn Taymiya's Reassertion of the Shari'ah**

Abu Hamid al-Ghazali (450-505/1058-1111) a versatile figure of the medieval period represents a great breakthrough in the history of Islamic thought. Being well-versed in both the domains of the knowledge of the philosophers and the traditional Islam including the mysticism of his time he came up with the new and viable method of affirmation of the truth of Islam. The method can be marked as philosophico mystic rapprochement. The arguments of reason (*mantiq*) are used to refute the doctrine of the philosophers regarding the nature of the unity of God (*Tawhid*) and the Day of judgment (*m'ad*). Al-Ghazali finds the error in the philosophers who hold the opinion of the eternality of world as it is tantamount to the Plurality of the Necessary Being – God. God, the omnipotent and the omniscient is the only eternal reality, says Ghazali, and the World is created by His will. So both time and space are created objects like the World itself. Describing their limiting of God's knowledge to the universals only as another

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69. *Supra*, n.63, pp.299-301.
error of the philosophers, Ghazali maintains that God has pre-knowledge of all things and His consciousness is unsusceptible to change\(^70\). Similarly the philosopher’s view that the resurrection of the body is impossible on the Day of judgment, is rejected on this ground that man will receive reward or punishment there in the same physical form which is given to him in this world of action. This is one dimension of Al-Ghazali’s system of thought, propounded in his *Tahāfat al Falāsafah* and *Al-Iqtisād Fil Itiqād*. Its other aspect is the acquisition of knowledge through intuitive or mystic experience. This he interprets in both the sufi and the Shari’ah terms. Through this principle he builds up that the laws and regulations of the Shari’ah are meant for science and strict obedience which touches man’s intrinsic self to recognize certainty and perfection. He sometimes calls it *Kashf* (revelation)\(^71\). It is a distinguished achievement in Al-Ghazali’s system where he, unlike the philosopher’s, gives priority to the practicing of the Shari’ah over the knowledge – pure thought. Knowledge in Al-Ghazali attains uniqueness as it is called a mystic discovery parallel to *jmān*, which is vital for having apodeitic nature and serving as a source of ultimate postulates. His treatises like *Al-Manqadhman al Djalal*, *Al-Madhun bihi ala Ghairi Ahlihi*, *Mishkiwat al Anwar* take account of this method of al-Ghazali. To resolve the conflicts among the various kalam-schools vis-a-vis the traditional orthodoxy by making a *tāwil* of *usūl al-Dīn* (fundamentals of religion) and the *ahkām al-Dīn* (laws of religion) in a balanced way. This got further elaborated

\(^{70}\) Ibid.

through his treatment of the science of the religion. His magnum opus, *Ahya al Ulûm al Din* is the main representative of this systematic reformative thought of al-Ghazali where he replaces extremist rationalism and the narrow conservatism with a balanced and viable method that influenced considerably the subsequent thinkers of both Muslim world and the west.

Taqi al-Din Ibn-Taymiya (661-728/1263-1328) comes about 150 years after Al-Ghazali and propounds his own mode of approach to Islam. He denounces al-Ghazali’s use of the Greek logic and, at the same time, refutes Muslim philosophers free thought and the personalised character of Sufism. He is mostly concerned with the reassertion of the Shari’ah in its pure and simple form. In him the literal interpretation of the attributes of God, the verses of the Qur’an, the injunctions of the Hadith is more conspicuous than that made by the theologians. Differing with the theologians on the attributes of God, he maintains that the latter are descriptive names through which God is understandable to human mind yet, they need not to be taken in the ordinary sense and their meaning is unique and transcendental. Hence he denounces the rationalism, the anthropromorphism and the Divine relativism (*izafiyat*) of the various schools of thought. The following

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73. Ibn Jawzi (b.508 A.H.) holds that the attributes of God are not to be called attributes but *izafiyat*. See Abu Zuhra Misri, *Ibn Taymiyah* (Urdu Trans.) P.449
marks of Abu Zuhara, an Egyptian scholar of the modern times, clarifies this position of Ibn Taymiyah:

Imam Ibn Taymiya did not only criticised strongly the philosophers but was also dissatisfied with those who approached Islamic beliefs and its other themes on philosophic pattern. He criticises Ghazali for the latter's use of logic in Islamic sciences. The Imam (Ibn Taymiya) believed in the fact that the Qur'an and its explanatory Sunnah is enough for understanding beliefs and laws of Islam. Once a matter is settled by the Qur'an and the Sunnah illustratively conforms to it, it is to be accepted without any excuse. He did not tolerate the hegemony of rational interpretation over the clarity of the Qur'an and the Sunnah. Nevertheless he surpassed the Qur'anic words and the established Hadith but made them easily intelligible and convincing.

Ibn Taymiyah’s accomplishment lies also in his thrust on the purposiveness of the will of God that is deeply incorporated in the Sharia. The Sharia is the path in harmonious with God’s Will and Wisdom. Awamir (imperatives) and nahi (prohibition) testify to the khair (betterment) of human beings corresponding to their capacity. In his thought there is a strong refutation of blind adherence to the schools of law (madhāhib), innovations or accretions in religious practices and the personalised sufism. Ibn Taymiya is well known for opening the door of ijtihad which had been almost closed.

74. Ibid., p.385.
for about two centuries. Although Ibn Taymiyah has tendencies towards Hanbali School of law, he revers deeply the other three Sunni schools of Fiqh. Having himself the calibre of a mujtahid, he do not confine himself in any of the four schools of Fiqh but can resort to all the imams at different times. With this endeavour of the reopening of *ijtihad*, Ibn Taymiya sticks keenly to the teaching of the Qur'an and the Sunnah and rejects the innovations and the experiences of *kashf* while denouncing the Sufi doctrines of *tahul* (absorption), *wahadat al wajud* (unity of being) and *fana* (annihilation). In his critique of the rationalism and the sufism, Ibn Taymiyah attempts at the reform and purification of Muslim thought to reassert the Shari'ah for the community. His is patently a distinguished attempt in the domain of Islamic thought as his direction is further actively developed by his pupils like Ibn Qaym (691-751 A.H.) and the renowned Muhammad Ibn Abdul Wahab (1115-1201/1703-1787) of Najad (Arabia)76.