A BRIEF ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

The problem of evil is one of the ancient problems and the old controversy between pessimists and optimists regarding this problem still persists. This is a problem not only for theists but also for all sensitive persons. In the present thesis we have discussed the metaphysical question regarding good and evil and its kinds in a theosophical framework that is if God created the world or if He sustains, manages or supervises it, and if God is infinitely good, how shall we explain all the pain and evil, the sin and sorrow, and the suffering and disappointments which are evident everywhere in the world? There are quite a number of adequate solutions of the problem of evil presented by different thinkers. But in the present thesis we are mainly concerned with the solutions presented by St. Augustine, Imam Al-Ghazali and St. Thomas Aquinas.

St. Augustine was born in 354 A.D. and he died in 320 A.D. He was the precursor of medieval period and scholastic philosophy. He tried to solve the problem of evil through the conception of "Privation of good". He classified evil into two categories, "Cosmic evil", and "Moral evil".

He justifies cosmic evil through the doctrine of "nature". He argues that the source of existence is God and
God is good, therefore He can not create evil. He further
says that nature is also created by God, therefore, nature is
not evil. But the corruption of this nature is evil. And
this corruption can not be of the whole being. Thus he justifies
cosmic evil through infinite wisdom and absolute goodness of
God who ordains all and whose ways are beyond human understanding.

He explains moral evil on the basis of free will.
He admits that God has given man free will. Will is good
because it is created by God. But the turning of will towards
mutable good instead of immutable good is evil. Because man's
chief good is the good of the both, the body and the soul.
The good of soul is the perfect satisfaction which depends on
ultimate happiness which can be attained by chief good and chief
good is God; therefore, the turning of the will towards mutable
good is evil. Evil lies neither in the will nor in mutable
objects, but only in turning of the will towards the lower
than the higher good.

Imam Al-Ghazali was born at Tus in 1058 A.D. and
died in 1111 A.D. He was a great theologian and profound
philosopher. There is no description of cosmic evil in
Al Ghazali's system. He believed that every thing in the world
is in the grip of God. There is divine purpose linking the
antecedent to the consequent and this divine purpose is manifested
in the existing orderly succession of events without the
least break or irregularity. Divine purpose is a mystical
one. Every one can not know it. Thus he remained silent
so far the cosmic evil was concerned.

He called moral evil as Sahr. It is the prohibitions
of God and Khair (good) is the commandment of God. He
explains moral evil through the doctrine of free will and
document of "Kasab" (acquisition).

Firstly he explained the nature of man, i.e. both
material and spiritual. He says that human heart is suscep­
tible to both the elements, i.e. Satanic and Divine element.
Then he analysed human actions, i.e. natural, intentional and
voluntary one. All human actions are directed to some end.
Al-Ghazali calls this end as Sa'ada (Blessedness) which lies
in the realization of perfection. Man's perfection is in the
vision of God which is the Summum Bonum. Man's will is neither
free nor determined. Al-Ghazali called this position as
"Kasab" (acquisition). Therefore he presented sequence
theory of causation. But it is in the hand of man either to
use his power in the right direction or in the wrong direction.
The wrong direction is the dominance of the Quwat-i Shataniya
(Devil's power); when Satanic power dominates evil occurs.

St. Thomas Aquinas was born in 1225 A.C. in Italy and
died on 7th March 1274 A.C. at the Abbey of Fessamoya. There
is the culmination of Scholasticism in his system. He was the follower of Aristotle, but he was also influenced by Plotinus, St. Augustine and Muslim Philosophers.

In solving the problem of evil he agreed with St. Augustine that "Evil is Privation of Good". He classified evil into two (a) Evil in being and (b) Evil in action. He believed that being in itself is good because it proceeds from God who is all Good. Secondly there is a gradation of goods. Like St. Augustine he also justifies this gradation through Divine wisdom. He explained moral evil like St. Augustine and Imam Al-Ghazali on the basis of free will and he made an analysis of actions. He argues that the goodness of an action depends on two elements, viz. (1) formal element which relates to the end towards which the act is directed and (ii) the material element which is related to the means that is adopted to attain that end and circumstances that are connected with the choice of the means. If all these are bad the action is evil.

He, further, explains will. According to him will is natural and wills something naturally. Therefore will is free to move towards end and to choose its means, but inspite of this freedom its actions can be controlled by reason, i.e. by man. Therefore man is responsible for the action of his will.
The present thesis consists of the following heads:

Chapter I - Introduction:

A brief historical survey of the problem of evil in the background of history of philosophy

Chapter II - St. Augustine:

(a) Life and times of St. Augustine
(b) His metaphysics
(c) His conception of evil

Chapter III - Imam al-Ghazali:

(a) Life and times of Al-Ghazali
(b) His metaphysics
(c) Conception of evil

Chapter IV - St. Thomas Aquinas:

(a) Life and times of St. Thomas Aquinas
(b) His metaphysics
(c) His conception of evil

Chapter V - Conclusion

A critical evaluation of the problem of evil in the philosophy of St. Augustine, Imam Al-Ghazali and St. Thomas Aquinas
In conclusion we can say that all these three philosophers were primarily the scholars of religion and they dealt with the problem in their own way. They share each other on many points. St. Augustine, St. Thomas Aquinas do not believe in the existence of evil in real sense but they call it as a lesser good in respect of higher good. But evil is evil. We can not call it lesser good or good in itself as the blindness of man or the suffering of innocent can not be called lesser good. Though these evils can be justified by saying that God punishes the wicked nations for their evil deeds, yet what remains unexplained is the fact that the innocent persons should not be punished. Secondly the solution of evil as the privation of good seems contradictory in itself. The absence of good is not possible in nature which is good in itself.

Now it is clear that evil is not good in any form, it is different from good. So far moral evil is concerned the stand may be appreciated that good and evil are based on the pronouncement of God. He also gave freedom of will to man, so that he may choose between good and evil. This choice would have been impossible without the alternatives and without choice free will would have no meaning and there
would not be any justification for reward and punishment in the next world. That is why St. Augustine, St. Thomas Aquinas and Imam Al-Chazali preached the freedom of man. In this way man is responsible for moral evil as he has the free will.