CHAPTER - III

EXTERNAL FACTORS - THEIR IMPACT ON -

(i) WESTERN IDIOLOGIES AND EDUCATION SYSTEM

(ii) ISLAM AND OTHER WORLD RELIGIONS

(iii) ISLAM AT CROSS ROADS
Western Ideologies and Education System

It has been observed currently that every existing system of oriental culture has somewhere been under the systems of western culture. At times, the impact is glaringly observable, at times, it is latent. As the scientific phenomenon of latent heat being more powerful, the latent impact has been more effective. It has caused deep concern for those who have rightly valued the oriental monopoly in their lives. The intrusion was inevitable, with the advance of science and technology. However, it could always be argued in favour of the occidentalists that they could have been more discriminative and choosing, rather than blatantly blaming the western society outright.

There are several evident fields where western influence has been deep rooted. History records the modern western civilization to have had its roots in Greek, Roman and Christian philosophies. General opinion regards it as the direct result of the revolt against ecclesiastic class, of society. It has also been recognised by its dazzle, its economic progress, its technological heights and its glare for materialism. But, if each social phenomenon is observed in the framework of its historical connection and development, then history has often noted that "every form of human organisation came into existence with the seeds of its own destruction."

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The main characteristics of western ideology may be thus summed up in few headings like secularism, Liberalism, Democracy, Nationalism and Materialism. These ideas have quietly crept into the strict and staunch followers even of Islam. Like any other religion, it had to succumb, if not in principle, but in practice, to the western influence. We can multiply recent examples. We can study minutely the lives of Muslims all over the world. The impact has been there. It has played its role, whether the upholders of Islam may accept it or not. The secularistic and liberal ideologies have vitiated Islam less than the idea of democracy. This doctrine has finally ousted God, the Sovereign the Creator and the sustainer from the arena of power. There was a change, even on religion front. The idea prevailed that sovereignty should rest with the people rather than the representatives. As in political power, so in religious authority, it is the masses that are the true sources of power and the rightful wielders of sovereignty. There is hence, no conflict between the two classes. "Sovereignty could be reconciled with the liberty". This is the idea of Divine Sanction. It has found its place in this religion. It has set forth some ideas which modern Muslims have found inviting and rational. After all, religion cannot be made the monopoly of one particular class, so that the rest of the society merely takes dictations from that class, keeping aside all reasons. This is surely an impact from the idea of democracy.

2 Abdul Hamid Siddiqui, "Main Springs of Western Civilisation", (Lahore, 1975), P-XI.
Some thinkers may condemn it as a doom but the deed has been done, and the results are here for us to observe. Such an attitude had given birth to the idea of humanism. Herein, the question of religious state, or religious political power is replaced by human type morality. The criterion of goodness is not only material success, as has been wrongly suggested by some scholars.\(^3\) The only criterion is the welfare of the individual in society, irrespective of any religious establishments. Even if the modern muslim keeps aloof of his quranic scriptures, he, nevertheless, has no qualms about it. The change in perspective is two definite to be refuted by any theoretical commentaries. It is evident, this spirit of secularism, even in the organised religious groups.

There is the sarcastic observation, at places. Very true, that the places of religious worship churches and synagogues are transformed into places of public entertainment. It is quite clear that the west achieved its material progress which may be called Renaissance movement. It was a novel method of inquiry, of approach and of investigations. It involved challenge to all establishments, in all fields. Religion was not exempted, thanks to the idea of political democracy.

However, it is preposterous to assume that progress in material world allots those nations, the authority to remain even moral dictators, far from it. On the contrary, it is a fact that such a

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3 Dr. Yohd. Manzoor Alam, "Islam Western Civilisation and Muslim Youth", P-13.
progress has proved to be lop-sided. The moral aspect of these nation's have swung off to such a latitude that any attempt at its revival seems futile, at least in near future. Mere acquaintance with the external world does not guarantee the entire development of man. So much is his involvement with matter, that man has come to the state of identifying his entire existence with it. "Absorbed in fact, he is entirely cut off from the unplumbed depths of his own being", observes Dr. Mohammad Iqbal.⁴

In this rush for material wealth, the west has been driven to catastrophic consequences. It has lost its stability in family life, which is the foundation of any healthy society. In its mad fold, it has tried to embrace even the east. The charms and glares dazzled the visions of the estern societies and now, they are also facing the consequences which are disturbing. Muslim societies all over the globe have experienced the light of west, some of them now at the point of taking drastic measures to restore Islam, its old glory. Even if that is least necessary, the drift from it is equally disheartening. To the staunch muslim, it is blasphemy of the most shameful order. Thus, the influence of West is more infamous than welcome.

The original message of Islam is forgotten, rather neglected today. The reasons, we have noted, are the changes in the world, even the influence of other religions. However, it is worth noting

that Islam has not made any demarcation between secular and spiritual life. There can be no separation nor division nor dichotomy between the harmoniously integrated part of the unity. Hence, it could be aptly asked as to how such lofty ideals which Islam prescribes, are rather given up than followed. How is it possible that the shallow theories of west could penetrate and shake the depths of the religion? The answer lies with the propounders of Islam. It is their own attitude towards the others that has deteriorated and spoilt the name of Religion. Religion does not preach anything contrary to human welfare. It is the followers whose limited sources of intelligence and understanding mis-presented the entire religious spirit. Instead of emphasizing the love and the peace and the benevolence of Islam, they brought to the limelight, for their own petty ends, the importance of religious wars, some strict social customs and some other unpleasant aspects like intolerance of other faith. Quranic teachings were distorted by the priestly class, as was the case with almost all major religions of the world. Within muslim society itself, ample laxity has crept in, indulgence into sensuous pleasures to the total neglect of Quranic teachings has led to this state of diapalation. This impact of the western civilisation is more or less common all over the world. This observation need not console


6 Khurshid Ahmed, "Islam or Socialism, 111-50."
the orientalist on large, because the latter can proudly claim rich cultural heritage from past, whose dilution can never be excused. The present state of affairs is a challenge to the systems of education and culture and it calls upon both, faith and reason to work in a team. The society is called upon to imbibe the Islamic ideology instead of aping the western ideologies. The religious ideologies have the characteristic touch of being imbibed with the spiritual rather than mere material. This responsibility should be shouldered by "Men who have ability to build a complete system of theory and practical life based on Islamic principles and who have strength enough to challenge effectively the intellectual leadership of the present godless thinkers and scientist."

Education Systems

It is typical of western civilisation to impart education formally. There were systems in oriental countries where education had the texture of entwining all aspects of life, not only verbal proficiency. Education had carved the meaning of personality development, which was carried out at the hands of those teachers whose characters were beyond doubt. The consequences were rich, the entire society faced less problems, less maniacs, and no perversion and obsessions. The picture today is different. Inevitably, the systems of education are those charted out by the western civilisation. Every educational system is characteristic of its

own social structures and its own goals in view. For instance, as the western system of education foresaw its society at material apex, it framed its educational policies accordingly. Ancient orientalists regarded the excellence of mind and spirit as the final good and that was reflected evidently in their mode of imparting education. When the western system of education is introduced in Islamic society, it will not yield due results; on the contrary, it will harm its very fibre. It will result into mental and religious apostasy.

In the previous chapters some reasons have been given for the opinion that Islam and the Western civilisation being built on diametrically opposed conceptions of life, are not compatible with each other. This being so, how could we expect that the education of Muslim youth on western lines, an education based entirely a western cultural experiences and exigencies, would remain free from anti-Islamic influences?

"We are not justified to expect this, except in rare cases, where a particularly brilliant mind triumph over the educational matter, the Western education of Muslim youth is bound to undermine their will to believe, their will to regard themselves as representatives of the peculiar theoretic civilisation of Islam. There can be no doubt whatever that the religious belief is rapidly loosing ground among the 'intelligentsia' educated on western lines".

"If the tuition of European literature in the form it is prevalent today in many Muslim Institutions, contributed to the
estrangement of young Muslims from Islam, the same in a still larger remark is true of the European interpretation of world history. In it, the old attitude, Romans versus Barbarians very distinctly comes to its own. Such a presentation of history has for its unavowed goal to prove that the western races and their civilisation are superior to anything that has been or could be produced in this world, and so to give a sort of moral justification to the western quest of domination and material power.  

Muhammad Asad further writes:

"The only aspect such historical training can have upon the minds of young non-European people will always be the feeling of inferiority so far as their own culture, their own historical past and their own future possibilities are concerned. They are systematically trained to disdain their own past and their own future - unless it be a future surrendered to western ideals."

"In order to counteract these evil effects, the conscious leaders of Islamic thought should do their best to revise the tuition of history in Muslim institutions. This is a difficult task, no doubt, and it will need a thorough overhauling of the historical investigation, before a new history of the world, as seen with Muslim eyes, is created. But if the task is difficult, it is, none the less, possible, and, moreover imperative. Otherwise our young generation will continue to be fed with undercurrents.

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8 Muhammad Asad, "Road to Mecca", 1954, P-85.
of a contempt for Islam; and the result will be a daily deepening inferiority complex."

Further the author boldly states that -

"If Muslims have been negligent, in the past, of scientific research, they cannot hope to repair that mistake today by an unrestricted acceptance of western learning. All our scientific backwardness and our poverty stand no comparison, whatever with the deadly effect which our blind following of the western educational structure would have on the religion possibilities of the Muslim world. If we wish to preserve the reality of Islam as a cultural factor, we must guard against the intellectual atmosphere of the western civilisation which is about to conquer our society and our inclinations. By imitating the manners and the mode of life of the west, the Muslims are being gradually forced to adopt the western outlook; the imitation of outward appearance leads, by degrees, to a corresponding assimilation of the mental disposition."

Many other western scholars have thought similarly. One of them was Macaulay who observed "We must do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern, a class of persons, Indians in blood and colour, but English in taste, opinions, words and intellect". 9

9 Basu E.D. "History of Education in India under the rule of East India Company", P-87.
Such a system of education in favour of western ideologies were in fact, a cruel imposition upon the eastern people. They manipulated their position in interfering within the infrastructure of the eastern social institutions. The results were devastating ever since, though brought to limelight only during this century that is, after Indian independence. The west tried to mould countries into their own caste regardless of their social contexts. Undoubtedly, schools and colleges bore the name of educational institutions, where practically speaking, only clerks were trained.

W.C. Smith has interesting observation to make. He says "To some extent, these were imposed, to some extent, sought after, some Muslims resisted, some welcomed them, or were brought up to or gradually came to welcome them, eventually many came to take them for granted. The process has continued apace." 10

Western thought and civilisation along with the educated Muslim class all over the world has faced the change in the values of life. The situation today is dilemmatic. Today's muslim has become so poignantly ambiguous that he neither accepts the western authority unwillingly and completely nor is he in a position to denounce his age-old religion and customs. Any religion at crossroads faces transition. In order that it may be revived, institutions in power may make serious attempts. Whether they will succeed fully is doubtful simply because of the fact that modern muslim society, has lost its identity beyond recognition and it

10 W.C. Smith, "Islam in Modern History", (1957), PP-63-64.
itself is reluctant to accept more, the bondage of religion, once they have freed themselves. The retreat is difficult, if not physically, then mentally. Islamic values have passed through a period of transition. They have been tested and retested, only for the modern muslim to denounce most of them. This is not a remark on the respectibility or aestheticity or the status of the values as such. It is rather a comment upon shifty attitude of modern man towards ultimate values of life. It is a remark on the lax and hedonistic nature of man, which found expression, once the authority of religion was unheeded. However, there are the unpleasant reminders of barbarous customs in some muslim countries. They practice cruelty in punishment, encourage submissiveness in women, hail bloodshed in the name of religion, and practice outdated costumes of many wives. Statesmen and politicians can easily amend these mal-practices and atrocities in the name of religion, if they are seriously concerned. Moreover, most of the laxity/looseness that is found in muslim life style is the direct result of the western educational systems which are bereft of any spiritual touch. Pre-Islamic part and its obsolete ideology held sacrosant by modern muslim is the weakness with him, yet to be overcome. Instead of reaping the enlightened achievements of the west, the muslim has preposterously blamed it for its waywardness from morality. True, but a phenomenon which, if avoided, could turn the defeat of muslim societies into their healthier growth.

The picture though, is not as hopeless. Discrimination in the choice of educational systems will go a long way. That aim
of education lies in the inculcation of basic values of life, is something which cannot be controverted. To impart civic sense and human values, is the minimum curriculum of any civilized society. Then, the community which aims to shape its society spiritually should rightly choose its system of education. Right from literature, philosophy and culture, down to science and technology, the entire approach should be goal-oriented, or at least spiritually oriented. Instead of neglecting everything that is western there should be sufficient maturity to accept all that is the best in all systems. The constant endeavour should be towards enlightenment and modernisation. No one can afford to put the clock back. The reality that science and technology has brightened up the world of matters and brought together the human beings all over the world cannot be overlooked. The western contribution will have to be appreciated fully. It has allotted the mulims, the down-trodden and the submissive and meek women the power of expression, which is everyone's birth right. It has illuminated the dark, ignorant mind, blindly following the dictates of ecclesiastic al class, without any ray of hope for better life here on this earth. It has released the voices which were chocked so far, with pseudo religious apprehensions of hell and hell-fire. Any religion with traces of aboriginal practices cannot stand parallel with the modern concept of humanism and hence their downfall. Islam can stand and prove better than any ism, for a religion has a plus point which every ism even humanism, lacks. This qualification is the hisoty and the men and the
religious dogmas. Over and above all, it is the touch of spirit, which has always entered human mind to a religion. The fact of isms is temporary, the ecstasy of religion is universal.
(ii) Islam and other world religions

Having its inception in Judaism and Christianity, Islam shows the characteristics peculiar to these Semitic religions. Initially, Islam did not claim a total independence of approach. Nor did it claim the novelty of its message. The message was presented by Prophet Muhammad (S.A.), who applauded it as the message of all prophets of God to mankind. It is the meaning that this Arabic word carries, submission, surrender, obedience and peace. As a religion, it is Divine Guidance for the entire humanity. It was revealed by God to the mankind from Adam, through Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus to Prophet Muhammad (S.A.). However, some proficient religious thinkers do believe that this message had been misrepresented to the masses from time to time, till Prophet Muhammad (S.A.) sanctified the religion and parallel to the world in the name of Islam. He was the last of the prophet-hood and hence was entitled to receive the message word by word. He was ordered by God to take up the responsibility of delivering it to the masses, and show them the path to salvation.

The aim of any religion is to attempt an answer to the ultimates; why we are born, who created us, why we must die, what is the purpose of our lives, and what will happen to us after death. These questions are profound, and profounder still, are

11 Quran 11:36 111:19, 67, 83-85 XI 72 84; XII:101, VI 44, 111; XXVII:44
12 Quran XLII:13, XV:9 LXXV 21-22
the answers. In the process, a religion is born, be it Judaism, Christianity or Islam. However, the characteristics of these Semitic religions are that they believe in the revelation, in the prophethood and in the holy book.

Both Judaism and Christianity became static and stagnant due to the extremities in their practice. Ecclesiastical class was powerful to the extent of influencing the status. This class held in contempt the members of the lower social strata. Jesus Christ came forth as their saviour, but he too met the infamous end at the hands of Jews. However, Christianity has the widest following today, next comes Islam. Number of followers do not contribute to the greatness of any religion; true but it has been a general observation that greater the number, wider is the space over which it is spread.

The moral and the religious condition of Arabs was diplorable. Neither Christianity nor Judaism had succeeded in raising them in the standards of human values. Both, Jews and Christians cherished monotheistic ideals. The Jews had entered Arabia at various times, and under the pressure of various circumstances. They had the tendency to lapse repeatedly with idolatry, akin to that of heathenism of Arabs. With an idea of the "God of Abraham" they would naturally combine a materialistic conception of the deity, and hence we find them rearing a stature representing Abraham, with the ram beside him ready for sacrifice in the interior of Kaaba. However, such drifts in the monotheistic religions just indicate the fact that human nature craves for a concrete object
of worship. Abstract worship, though widely practiced and possible fails to fulfill his total personality. Hence, the slightest chance, makes room for some kind of idolatry; though Abraham himself was neither Jew nor a Christian. Both, Moses and Abraham are mentioned frequently in Quran. The influence of Jews on Islam is on other fronts too. All the three monotheistic religions attribute to Ishmael, the son of Abraham. This is a significant remark on the Muslim ancestry. It is an important remark on the spiritual foundation of the Muslim world in general, and of the Arabs in particular, in that the Quran associates him and his father Abraham with the founding of Kaaba in Mecca. Thus, the Arabs are the physical members of the family of Abraham through Ishmael. However, Islam does not subscribe to the Judeo-Christian tradition which considers Abraham as the founder of a hereditary community of a chosen people. Quran views Abraham as the guide or leader of a non-hereditary community of God's people. Quran specifically calls attention to Abraham's role as the founder of monotheism. He has been given full credit for disdaining idol worship, or associating any other totems with God. Once and for all, he fortified the monotheistic way of worship.

As with Judaism and Christianity Monotheism is the most outstanding and distinguishing mark of Islam. This trend did face

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strong opposition from pagan Arabs who had dragged into polytheistic practices. To them, Prophet Muhammad (S.A.) reminded that he was just following what Abraham had innovated. It was because that tradition was genuine.

The Judaism and Christianity too are revealed religions, like Islam. Islamic tradition of revelation includes Prophet Abraham and Prophet Noah. Prophet Mohammad (S.A.) declared to all antagonists that be thy Arabs, Jews or Christians, they must adhere to the true tradition. This point is particularly significant, because it is a remark on the priority of Abraham even before Jews and Christians.

The most fundamental principles that Islam shares with Judaism and Christianity are the basic principles of monotheism, revelation and the holy scriptures. Chronologically, Judaism is accepted to have been established in 1500 B.C., Christianity in 1 A.D., and Islam in 570 A.D.

The lives of those who received the revelation, however, are spectacularly and strikingly varied. The common man is honestly and genuinely baffled at the choice of the Almighty and is not able to strike any definite criterion of selection. However, one rests content with the idea that the purity of heart, that is the inculcation of some fundamental human values, forms a very noteworthy aspect of the persons receiving revelation in these three religions.

The religious scriptures of the religion, as most any/religions, meet in all major aspects of their message. There is no major
disagreement in the values and their hierarchy. Apart from these similarities in the revealed religion, non-revealed religions have also similar points of remembrances.

Thus, the influence of the religion on Islam, mainly Judaism and Christianity with whom it resembles in major points, is quite noteworthy.

Further, the impact of neo-platonic philosophy is worth consideration. To relate the Allah of the Quran with Pantheistic One Being, Man and Phenomenal world - everything else in fact, except Allah - they identified with Not-Being which reflects Being like a mirror. Since man is endowed with the spark of Real Being, he is Contingent Being. (A kind of Being which is and is not, as Plato world say) so long as he remains in his present probationary state. He is subject to laws and creeds to restrain his evil tendencies. But the end of man is to return to that from which he emerged.

Thus, even Sufi Mysticism tends to pantheism and Al-Ghazali accused the philosophers, of denying resurrection altogether, Averroes denied the change, affirming that "that which will be resuscitated will be a representation of what is seen in this world. It will be not the very thing 'in essentia'. For that which has perished cannot be revived, except that it can be individualised and existence can be bestowed only on the semblance of what has perished in its identity". He concluded that this proves that the future existence has a kind of generation. More

15 E.I.I. Whinfield. The Gulshan-i-Raz (London 1880),
elevated then that of actual existence and constitute a more excellent order than the order of the world. But he admitted then he was not able to establish immortality on philosophical grounds. Though he held the belief as a religious tenet, in the eyes of St. Thomas and the scholastics Averroism, was as incompatible with Christian teaching as it was with orthodox modern Theology. Even if the Arabian commentator was thought to have presented a rather difficult picture of the Peripatetic tradition, he was always treated with courtesy and respect by both Aquinus and Dante, and his influence in Europe continued till the beginning of the scientific renaissance in the seventeenth century, which marks the period of enlightenment on scientific and technological fronts. Its effects on religion through were slightly disheartening. In some aspect or the other, all religious practices received a setback. Some religion survived it, other vanished, still others, intermingled with the major religions of the world today. Fundamental teachings of revealed religion cannot be altered. They may be mis-interpreted nevertheless. With Islam, it is not the strictures that have suffered change, but the followers. The impact of some such factors indulged the Muslims in the enticement of material life, and the neglect of the glorious religion they had so fortunately inherited.

16 Tahafut al Tahafat (Cairo A.H. 1303) Renan Averroes ell Averrolsome (Paris 1896), PP-158 ff
(iii) Islam at cross-roads

This phenomenon in the life of any religion is the natural outcome of modern age. Modern lives have created a rather alien atmosphere for the free and spontaneous survival of any religion. At least it is difficult to catch the initial spirit. Even Islam faces the dilemma of reconciling itself to the complicated, incomprehensible external factors, some of which we have discussed. This age expects any religion, to make endless compromises of its principles with moral, social, political and economic evils. Most institutions today are filled with corruption and hypocrisy. It is natural for the modern man to be curious about any faith historically. But, in the process, he becomes an atheist or an antagonist of the gravest order, so much so that the whole life appears to have lost all charm, meaning and purpose. Religion at the hands of such frivolous intellectuals, such a mode of thinking has created great havoc. It has adversely affected the modern Muslim in particular position, by inducing him a feeling of inferiority.

"Throughout the Middle East, modernist intellectuals were shaped with western system of thought and valuation. Many of them went to school in the West or were educated in Western Universities between Cairo and Istanbul. They were trained to think like modern men."17

"The progressive young Syrian bureaucrat echoed dozens of respondents interviewed. He said, "When we see the lives of the

17 Daniel Lerner with an introduction by David Reisman, The Passing of the Traditional Society, Modernizing the Middle East, The Free Press, a Division of Macmillan Co, N.Y. 1964, P-408.
people in the West at the cinema and compare that with our own lives, we find that we still have a long way to go before obtaining their level. The films are like a teacher to us who tells us what to do and what not".18

"Among the common people, the psychological problems of modernization are much more rudimentary. What is required is to 'motivate' the isolated and illiterate peasants and tribesmen who comprise the bulk of the area's population, to provide them with clues as to what the better things of life might be".19

Such is the consequences of shallow criticism and borrowed western materialism. Moreover, it has been a fashionable practice among most modern muslims to indulge in far-fetched interpretation of Quran in order to justify their weaknesses and short-comings. Islam has to face the choice between being ridiculed and scorned by the western society and the life, or follow those strictures of Quran which in Islam, are most keenly appreciated and esteemed. However, Islam would surely go a long way in the world of religions only its followers were more discriminative than fanatics, more sincere than just following the dictates like slaves. There should be, in the followers themselves, an urge to respect Islam, for it has shown the path of right way of living here on earth, and promised peace, hereafter. Even for those who refuse to entertain the concept of life hereafter, would sometime in their lives, discover that they inwardly

18 Daniel Lerner with an introduction by David Reisman, The Passing of the Traditional Society, Modernizing the Middle East, The Free Press, a Division of Macmillan Co, N.Y. P-400
19 Ibid, P-411.
urge to know the purpose of their present lives. The problem of food and shelter no doubt, over rule and over power every other query on this earth. The excuse lies with such masses, but not with the rest of the people. And hence the inner need to clinch to something superior, something powerful. Religion has its seeds in the interior of the man whatever be its external manifestations. Primitive man expressed it in totems; refined men expressed it through religions. Thus, Islam being one of the major eleven religions of the world has nevertheless, primitive characteristics carried along its development, inspite the fact that it is the revealed religion. Such practices do creep in the body of the religion, not theoretically but practically. It is not possible to add or substract what the revealed religion has stated.

However, it may be onserved that the influence of other religion, its customs may be adopted. But such adoptions are just ethical and hence do not pose any serious harm to the very fibre of the religion.

Recent age cannot escape the enignatic task of striking a compromise between two different religio-cultural systems. Especially, the relationship of Islam with West has peculiar dimensions. For the reasons, both historical and political, Europe was in a position to feel threatened by Islam. At times, such presures resulted in projecting a distorted image of Islam. Upon its dominance over Eastern Asia, Europe viewed Islam as an obsolete, timid and irrelevant religio-cultural system. Its attitude towards Islam was negative. However, such obsessions
had not come to stay forever. Recent approach is more balanced and mature. Islam will remain indebted to Western Scholars for bringing limelight, its glories, teachings and lofty ideals. Nevertheless some sporadic political interests tried to distort some Islamic concepts like God's revelation of the religion, to Prophet Muhammad (S.A.), his authority to receive the revelation, his life and his mission. These aspects have remained targets of attack, misinterpretation and ridicule. Islamic teachings too were questioned for their originality. They are said to have been borrowed from Judaism and Christianity. Not only throughout the middle ages, but even upto our times, there were the common themes of criticism. Instead now, a healthier approach of comparative studies is adopted, where no religion can ever claim total independence of its surroundings. As a result, all contemporary religions will reflect, more or less, the doctrines prevalent then.

However, the general impression remained that these western thinkers were not interested in the genuine information of Islam. Rather, they selected controversial issues like crusades, polygamy and paradah system. Needless to elaborate that these strictures of Quran are not strictly followed today in the spirit of religious doctrines. If followed, then they are practiced for different reasons. This fact speaks a great deal about the non-relevance many religious teachings of Islam, but then, with the change in social pattern, this was long overdue.
The position of Islam today has been made ambiguous by the factors external to it, as well its followers. Eternal factors mainly constitute of the opinions and influence of the western societies. For example, the western author seems to be strongly influenced, even unconsciously, by the difference between the two cultures. At times, there are striking remarks suggesting the superiority of western culture, at times, it is brought out in refined manners and elegant language. Yet, the fact remain that the tendency of the western thinker is less favourable in the estimation of Islam. However, their phenomenon may be whipped aside, as there is often an urge, almost instinct, to judge one's own culture as superior to the rest.

William Robertson Smith observes -

"It is indeed a great fault of the religion of the Prophet that it lends itself so easily to prejudices of the race among whom it was first promulgated, and that it has taken under its protection so many barbarous and obsolete ideas, which even Mohammad must have seen to have no religions worth, but which he carried over into his system in order to facilitate the propagation of his reformed doctrines. Yet many of the prejudices which seem to us most distinctly, Mohammedan have no basis in the Koran."

Formidable tendency as yet, is the one in what, at one stroke, 'orientals', 'Arabs', 'Semiter', 'Muslim' etc, are reduced

20 Quoted by Edward W. Said in his Orientalism, P-236.
to the level of monolithic object, denying any separate existence, or individuality to them.

The new era has created tensions in Islam, but it has also been at a time of renewed political success. Muslim countries from Morocco to Pakistan have gained or maintained their independence. Though the hope of a union or alliance of Muslim nations has not been realized, Islam has experienced a new resurgence of power. The Muslim faith is spreading in Africa, where the attraction of its simple monotheism, its emphasis on brotherhood and the contrasting intolerance and race consciousness displayed by some Christians have made Islam a powerful rival of Christianity for the all glance of the uncommitted Negro mind.

Such sweeping generalizations about different people following Islam has been possible because the western scholars have accepted a criterion of entitling a people as Muslims. This criterion has the characteristics of the Muslims following Islam in 18th century, as is presented by the classical literature. According to modern western scholars, Islam of today is revived from classical literature, where it lay dormant. In practical life, Muslims had to face the indignation of being regarded as the worthless and down graded remnant of that standard image of the Muslims of 18th century. However, the political freedom of Muslim states from western yoke after the second world war has changed the status of Islam. Now they can sprawlingly re-establish in their countries, the tarnished image of Islam, if they attempt. There can be the revival of the sound cultural values, now with
renewed zeal and enlightenment and the gravity of experience. The Muslims of today cannot be denied their reality and existence; the west has come to terms with his fact.

The significant distinction between the other revealed religions and Islam is that the Testaments are a revelation of God, while the Qur'an is a revelation from God. Any religion having its hold on people for last fourteen centuries must have something, fundamentally significant and meaningful to say to its people, to every man. Islam has carried out this difficult task efficiently.