ABSTRACT

Ibn Ṭufayl occupies an important place in the history of Muslim thought. He was the patron, and according to some traditions, teacher of no less a philosopher than Ibn Roshd. In the words of Etienne Gilson, 'he was a man of encyclopaedic knowledge whose learning far exceeded the knowledge of the christians of his times.' A.S.Fulton regards his work "Hayy Ibn Yaqqān" as one of the most interesting works of the Middle Ages and a work difficult to match in the whole literature of Islam. The importance of the work can be judged by the fact that it has had its translations in all important languages of Europe.

But with all this his philosophical contribution could not receive full justice at the hands of the critics and historians. It is because of the fact that Ibn Ṭufayl has chosen the form of a philosophical romance as the medium of his views. In his only philosophical work, Hayy Ibn Yaqqān, he has depicted the story of a human child who, in the course of his development, uninfluenced by any human society and uninstructed by any human teacher, discovers the highest truths of science, philosophy, religion and mysticism. However, the charm and interest of the story often obscures the real philosophical content behind it. The book does not yield all its treasure at
one glance. The philosophy contained in the book has to be dug out and reconstructed for the purpose of systematic exposition and critical evaluation. It is this task which has been attempted in the present Thesis.

Chapter I of the Thesis is a sort of introduction dealing with the general importance of the work of Ibn Tufayl and the reasons why it was chosen for the study.

Chapter II deals with the background of Ibn Tufayl's period. The philosophy of an individual does not grow in a vacuum. It has organic relation with the environment. Ibn Tufayl flourished in the days of Al-Muwahhidūn (the Unitarians) of Spain. The Muwahhid caliphs were great patrons of learning and, at the same time, very orthodox in matters of religion. In their private capacities they enjoyed the company of philosophers and presided over their discussions. But in their public policies they did not tolerate any deviation from the orthodox way of religion. This naturally resulted in a compromise between religion and philosophy. Philosophy was considered to be the privilege of the chosen few and the religion was meant for the masses. But if the two disciplines had to flourish side by side some basic harmony between them had to be discovered. It was this challenge which Ibn Tufayl tried
to meet through his philosophy. But in the presentation of his ideas he had to be careful lest he should give a rude shock to the public opinion. This caution is reflected in the indirect story-form which he has chosen for conveying his views.

In chapter III the facts about the life of Ibn Tufayl have been collected from different sources and some misrepresentations have been critically examined.

Chapter IV gives a summary of the life-history of Hayy Ibn Yaqzan, following as faithfully as possible the original form and sequence of events as given by Ibn Tufayl. It was necessary to give a first hand idea about the work of Ibn Tufayl before attempting a systematic exposition and critical evaluation of the philosophy contained in it. This chapter also throws light on the style and the masterly way in which Ibn Tufayl has treated his theme.

In chapter V philosophic doctrines of Ibn Tufayl have been systematically presented under various heads. On the face of it this presentation seems to be a very simple affair but in reality it has involved many readings of the book and much mental manipulation, putting together scattered fragments of Ibn Tufayl's philosophy, and giving
them the look of an organic whole. In this chapter the writer of the Thesis has also tried to reconcile some apparently divergent trends of Ibn Ṭufayl's philosophy, for instance, rationalism and mysticism. Moreover, some modern trends of his philosophy have been brought to clear relief, emphasizing those points on which he has anticipated some pioneers of modern thought, such as Bacon, Descartes, Hume and Kant. Ibn Ṭufayl's contribution to the philosophy of Language has also been explained and discussed critically. The type of mysticism that is professed by Ibn Ṭufayl and his mystic experiences have also been described at length to bring to light the Ishraqī and neo-Platonic elements of his philosophy. Lastly, Ibn Ṭufayl's views on the relation between religion and philosophy, which reflect the trends of his period, find place in this chapter.

Chapter VI deals with critical analysis and evaluation of Ibn Ṭufayl's philosophy. It comprises several sections each one of which could have been treated as an independent chapter. But in view of the unity of purpose underlying these sections they have been included under the same chapter. A brief outline of these sections is as follows:
Section I deals with Ibn Ṭufayl's purpose in writing the book. In this connection the views of different critics and writers have been critically examined and some misconceptions have been removed. The writer of the Thesis has maintained, with sufficient arguments, that "Hayy Ibn Yaẓān" is not an allegory in the ordinary sense of the word. It is as direct an expression as possible of the inner experiences of a mystic philosopher.

In sections 2 and 3 a comparative study of Ibn Ṭufayl's Ḥayy Ibn Yaẓān has been attempted with somewhat similar Recitals of Ibn Sīnā, Al-Ghazālī, Suhrawardī, Ibn Bājjā and others.

Section 4 deals with the debt of Ibn Ṭufayl to his predecessors. In this connection points of agreement and disagreement between Ibn Ṭufayl and some earlier philosophers like Plato, Aristotle, Plotinus, Al-Fārābī, Ibn Sīnā, Al-Ghazālī, Shahrastānī, Ibn Masarrah, Ibn Bājjā have been discussed and some misconceptions have been cleared. The writer of the Thesis has been led to the view that Ibn Ṭufayl was not committed to following any particular philosopher or philosophy but he freely borrowed acceptable elements from every source and moulded them into a pattern of his own.
Section V deals with the identification of Ibn Tufayl's position. The question whether he is a Rationalist or an Empiricist or a Mystic or what has been critically examined.

Section VI brings to light the traces of Ibn Tufayl's influence in the philosophies of Ibn Roshd, Ibn al-'Arabî, Moses Maimonides, Thomas Aquinas, Roger Bacon and some other European philosophers. It also points out, with probable reasoning, the influence of Ibn Tufayl's Hayy Ibn Yaqzān on Defoe's Robinson Crusoe.

Section VII sums up the contribution of Ibn Tufayl to the development of human thought.

The Appendix gives the English translation of Ibn Tufayl's Introduction to Hayy Ibn Yaqzān, probably for the first time. This Introduction furnishes most valuable light for the understanding and interpretation of Ibn Tufayl's philosophy.

All available literature on Ibn Tufayl and other relevant books have been consulted in writing this Thesis.
The Thesis, in the humble opinion of the writer, makes the following contribution or contributions to the field of knowledge:

It gives a thorough and detailed exposition of Ibn Tufayl's philosophy for the first time.

Facts about the life and period of Ibn Tufayl have been critically examined and their bearing on his philosophy has been discussed.

Several aspects of Ibn Tufayl's work, Ḥayy Ibn Yaqẓān, have been critically discussed from new angles. For instance, Ibn Tufayl's purpose in writing Ḥayy Ibn Yaqẓān, the question how far Ḥayy Ibn Yaqẓān is an Allegory, a comparative study of Ḥayy Ibn Yaqẓān with somewhat similar recitals, Ibn Tufayl's debt to his predecessors and his influence on subsequent thought, his contribution to Induction and philosophy of Language, the modern spirit of his philosophy and such other questions have been raised and thoroughly discussed, for the first time, in this Thesis.

The Thesis, in short, corrects many misconceptions and misrepresentations about Ibn Tufayl and brings out his real contribution to philosophy. It determines the true place of Ibn Tufayl as one of the forerunners of Modern thought.