Abū Bakr Muhammad Ibn ʿAbd al-Malik Ibn Ṭūfayl al-Qaisī, the famous Spanish philosopher of twelfth century A.D., is one of those great thinkers whose fame obscures their real contribution. Glowing tributes are paid to his genius. His name is mentioned with reverence. But his philosophy has failed to arouse sufficient notice at the hands of the critics. Historians of philosophy devote but a few pages to the exposition of his views, and this exposition is often one-sided and misleading.

This attitude, however, is not due to any deliberate misrepresentation or malice. The form which Ibn Ṭūfayl has adopted for the expression of his views is mainly responsible for it. Ibn Ṭūfayl has chosen the form of a philosophical romance as the medium of his philosophy. The name of his only philosophical work available to us is 'Ḥāyy Ibn Yaẓān'. It is the story of a human child found on an uninhabited island near southern Indian coast, probably Ceylon. This child, Ḥāyy Ibn Yaẓān, uninfluenced by any human society and uninstructed by any human teacher, learns to satisfy his
various practical needs and arrives at the highest truths of science, philosophy, religion and mysticism, through Divine guidance and with the help of his native intelligence and other faculties.

Ibn Tufayl shows greatest dexterity in maintaining the interest of the reader and in making his account appear natural and realistic. His style is fascinating and his expression is clear and forceful. These qualities have earned immortal fame for Ibn Tufayl and his work.

It would not be out of place here to mention a few tributes paid to Ibn Tufayl by various writers. Etienne Gilson describes him as a man of encyclopaedic knowledge whose learning far exceeded the knowledge of the Christians of his times.² A.S.Fulton regards his work 'Hayy Ibn Yaqzān' as one of the most interesting works of the Middle Ages, and a work difficult to match in the whole literature of Islam.³ Paul Bronnle considers the story written by Ibn Tufayl as a work of such immortal beauty and eternal freshness that will not fade with the passage of time.⁴ A.J.Arberry and Sir Thomas Adams, referring to the celebrated 'Philosophus Autodida-
ctus' (the Latin version of 'Hayy Ibn Yaqzan' by Edward Pocock of Oxford) tell us that it attracted the notice of no less a philosopher than Leibniz and won praise from him.

Inspite of these eulogizing comments we are sorry to note that an adequate and detailed analysis of the philosophy of Ibn Tufayl has not been attempted so far. In fact the attention of most of the critics has been arrested by the dramatic aspect of the story of 'Hayy Ibn Yaqzan'. That is why, in most accounts of Ibn Tufayl, we find that greater attention is paid to the story of 'Hayy Ibn Yaqzan' than to its philosophy.

Unfortunately, the same attitude seems to characterize most of the translations of 'Hayy Ibn Yaqzan' which seem to have the motive of providing an intellectual entertainment to the public. This is borne out by the fact that practically all English translations of 'Hayy Ibn Yaqzan' omit the Introduction with which Ibn Tufayl had prefaced his work. A.S. Fulton is frank enough to admit that he, following the example of earlier translations, had omitted the Introduction because it contained nothing of general interest. This admission is a sad
reminder of the fate of Ibn Tufayl at the hands of his superficial admirers. Introduction is often the most vital part of the work of an author. It was more so in case of Ibn Tufayl who had chosen the indirect method of a story for communicating his philosophical views. His Introduction is really a great aid in understanding the main purpose behind the story and in determining the true character of his philosophy. But in the absence of this guiding light different critics and historians of philosophy have picked up this or that element from his philosophy which has struck them as most important.

As pointed out earlier, the story-form of 'Hayy Ibn Yaqzan' has also served to obscure the real meaning of Ibn Tufayl. Ibn Tufayl had made 'Hayy Ibn Yaqzan' the mouth-piece of his philosophy. His philosophy does not come before us in its complete form at any stage. It grows, step by step, with the development of his hero. Sometimes the latter stages correct and modify the conclusions previously arrived at. One has to build up the whole philosophy with these scattered elements like the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle. Moreover, the book 'Hayy Ibn Yaqzan' is such that it does not yield its treasures at the first glance. It is to be read again and again to
form a coherent and comprehensive view of its philosophical content.

However, 'Hayy Ibn Yaqzan' has remained for several centuries the most popular book of Muslim Philosophy in the philosophical circles of Europe. No other work of Muslim philosophy, perhaps, has had so many translations and editions in various European languages as we find in case of this book.  

Another proof of the greatness of Ibn Tufayl as a thinker is supplied by the fact that Ibn Roshd, who is acknowledged to be the greatest Muslim philosopher by most of the modern critics, was a pupil of Ibn Tufayl. It was Ibn Tufayl who had introduced Ibn Roshd to the court of Caliph Abū Ya'qūb Yūsuf and had urged on him to write on Aristotle's works.  

Ibn Tufayl deserves our attention for several reasons. His critical attitude and caution in accepting anything as true without sufficient evidence or sound logical reasoning, his avoidance of extreme points of view of different schools, his novel solutions of several problems of philosophy and the modern spirit of some of his ideas and views entitle him to be ranked
among the pioneers of modern philosophy. We cannot go in further details here as these are the points which are to be discussed and substantiated at relevant places in our Thesis.

It is, however, gratifying to note that recent times have seen an increasing interest in the philosophy of Ibn Tufayl, particularly among the 'Arab writers. Some books have recently appeared on Ibn Tufayl. Some Encyclopaedias and Histories of Muslim philosophy in 'Arabic have started paying greater attention to his life and work. But the treatment of his philosophy is still sketchy and brief. Many important aspects of his philosophy do not get as much light as they deserve.

In this thesis I have discussed several critical issues about Ibn Tufayl's philosophy. I have tried to discuss his philosophy in relation to his period, in relation to his predecessors, and in relation to subsequent philosophical thought. I have further endeavoured to determine the true character of his philosophy and the exact nature of his contribution, which will enable the reader to assign him his due place in the history of human thought.
1. Ceylon has been selected as the scene of the story probably because, according to a religious tradition, the first man Adam is believed to have descended on earth at this place. Moreover, the 'equable and moderate temperature' of the place is utilized by the author for supporting the version of the spontaneous birth of 'Hayy Ibn Yaqzan' through the interaction of natural elements. Cf. The History of 'Hayy Ibn Yaqzan' (Simon Ockley's translation as revised by A.S. Fulton), pp. 39-42.


7. I have translated this Introduction, probably for the first time, in English and attached it to this Thesis as an Appendix.
8. For instance, De Boer (in The History of Philosophy in Islam), and O'Leary (in Arabic Thought and its Place in History), and some other writers also have given central importance to the problem of the relation of Religion and Philosophy. No doubt, the concluding portion of 'Hayy Ibn Yaqzan' suggests that. But after going through the Introduction one will hesitate to accept this point of view, as we shall discuss in Ch. V of this Thesis.

9. Some of the important translations and editions are mentioned below:

(i) Hebrew translation and commentary by Moses of Narbonne (14th century).

(ii) Latin version from Hebrew by Pico della Mirandola (15th century).

(iii) Latin translation under the title Philosophus Autodidactus by Edward Pocock Junior (with'Arabic Text), 1671.

(iv) Reprinted, 1700

(v) First Dutch translation from Latin by J. Bouwmeester (a friend of Spinoza), 1672.

(vi) Republished at Amsterdam, 1701.

(vii) Another issue with original 'Arabic Text and notes by the Orientalist H. Reland, 1701.
(viii) English version by George Keith the Quaker, 1674.

(ix) Another English translation by George Ashwell, 1686.

(x) Another English Translation from Arabic by Simon Ockley, 1708.

(xi) Reprinted, 1711.

(xii) Again reprinted, 1731.

(xiii) The Life and Surprizing Adventures of Don Antonio de Trezzanio (A Crusoe story paraphrased and modified from Ockley's version) anonymous, 1761.

(xiv) The Awakening of the soul (A translation of the selected portions of 'Hayy Ibn Yaqzan') by Paul Bronnle, 1904.

(xv) German translation from Latin by George Pritius, 1726.

(xvi) German translation from Arabic by J.G. Eichhorn, 1783.

(xvii) French translation with Arabic text by Leon Gauthier, 1900.

(xviii) Spanish translation by F. Pons Boigues, 1900.

(xx) Russian translation by Angel Gouralex Palencia, 1936.

Note: Besides these there have appeared two Urdu translations recently, one by the writer of these pages (1952) and the other by Dr. S. Mohd. Yusuf (1955).


11. Cf. (i) ابن طفيل وقصه حن بن بقتان (عبي) - عبر نورى صفحه 31
   (ii) ابن رشد - محمد برسن فرنگ محل (آردو) صفحه 39

12. تاريخ فلاسفه الإسلام تاليف محمد لطفی جمعه (آردو ترجمه
   از دکتر سریون الدین) صفحه 148

13. Cf. (i) ابن طفيل وقصه حن بن بقتان - عبر نورى
   (ii) نظریه ابن طفيل - الدكتور عبد الحليم محمود

14. Cf. (i) اعلام الفلسفة العربية
   (ii) تاريخ الفلسفة عربہ خلاле الخلایری - خليج الجر
   (iii) تاريخ فلاسفه الإسلام - لطفی جمعه
   (iv) دائرة المعارف الإسلامي
   (v) الفلاسفة في الشرق - يوسف محسن