

The Concept Of Intuition, Revelation, Prophetic And Mystic Consciousness, And Cultural Value Of Finality Of Prophecy In Islam (Sheikh Ahmad Sirhandi, Iqbal And Dr. Fazlur Rahman)

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Abstract

The brainchild of European modernism, Cartesian mindset stays revelation and mystic religious consciousness doubtful or even invalid on account of its having no empirical value. Being leader on the realm of science and social sciences, Europe triggered same attitude through her hegemonic secular intellectual traditions and epistemologies in Eastern hemisphere. Iqbal instead of succumbing to the European narrative brings forward his own coherent and well knitted weltanschauung derived and distilled from Quran, available in tools, techniques and methods of modern scholarship and philosophical discourse. Iqbal's mystic thought builds edifice on the telling, modern and revolutionary mystic Enlightenment movement and ideas of Sheikh Ahmad Sirhandi while Dr. Fazlur Rahman extends and enhances the legacy of both with his own keen, consistent and rare insight of the Quran in terms of modern scholarship. This paper intends not only to bring forth the same which establishes the objective validity of religious consciousness but also draws clear lines between Prophetic and mystic consciousness and signifies what cultural value lies inherent in the concept and creed of finality of prophecy in Islam, as well. This paper is

based on qualitative research. It traces origin and development of the mindset which rebuked religion in its entirety on the basis of what historical factors? To what extent religion and religious consciousness stands relevant to our world which is standing on the cusp of climatic catastrophes and precipice of nuclear war? Riddled with the bullets of imperial designs, intellectually and morally starved Muslim World, standing on the threshold of utter subjugation once again, could and can resuscitate herself if it appreciates the true cultural value and responsibility inherent in the idea of finality of prophecy in Islam. This paper tends to rediscover the same vigor and spirit of the idea self-evident in pristine Islam.

Key words: Prophecy, mysticism, empiricism, Europe, consciousness, Islam, Prophet, saint.

Introduction

The grandeur and magnitude of Iqbal's broad-gauge scholarship and its impact on Islamic thought in sub-continent and abroad is tremendous and immense. "Strictly speaking the only philosopher of modern Islam is Sir Muhammad Iqbal (d.1938) who, in his *Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* seriously attempted to formulate a new Muslim metaphysics with due regard to the philosophical traditions of Islam and the more recent developments in the various domains of human knowledge...it constitutes so far the only really serious attempt on the part of any modern Muslim to restate the philosophical position of Islam.¹" Though the apologetic lot of Muslim modernists entertained aversion about Islamic mysticism and took it as an unsafe prop to rely upon against western modernity; Iqbal's is a thought soaked in mystic consciousness, metaphysics kneaded in faith and well draped in Sufi Weltanschauung so much so that Fazlur Rahman remarked "Iqbal has but simply rendered in magical poetry what Sheikh Ahmad, the Majaddid, had preached as his central theme three hundred years before²." Iqbal Ahmad categorizes him as "one of the last great mystics.³" Still, whatever the tapestry of thought he weaves and brings forth responds justly to the tradition, equitably to the reason and fairly to the intuition. However, the piles of literature about him are interpretive not analytical or critical. So, the man who wrote "there is no such thing as finality in philosophic thinking⁴" probably has assumed the status of finality in Muslim intelligentsia obviously to perpetuate intellectual stagnation. "Although this amount of literature which has been written on Iqbal is much greater than what has been written on any other Muslim poet. There is still nothing available which does justice to the humanity and complexity of the man, and to his deep involvement with and life-giving response to the deadness of the world in which he lived... Still another reason seems to be the medieval type of love for the obscure and the abstract which is characteristics of many of our scholars and which tends to paralyze their minds and prohibit the development of genuine and creative research among us. Such scholars tend to do only static research, warm and human iconoclast ... as a cold and forbidding idol⁵".

Europe's utter infatuation with empirical sciences and swaggering confidence of its mastery over the nature culminated in refutation of religion. Western modernity is defined in definite terms that it is a departure from mythos (religion) to logos (rationalism). Her reaction against millennial church rule together with scientific and technological hubris transpired in Cartesian approach. The reality is what mind and empirical sciences affirm. Thus, if not religion, the higher psychology, the religious experience, the mystic consciousness of which religion is a product, was denied because it is beyond the pale of reason. The bearers of such experience are termed psychopath; metaphysics as a 'justified poetry' or a 'vital lie' or a mere 'as if' to regulate thought and conduct or a legitimate play of the grown-ups. Pascal said "the heart has reasons that reason does not know⁶". "Religious fervor is the backbone of scientific research" remarked Einstein.

“get it inscribed on main gate of the temple of science that without faith no one should dare to enter it”⁷ said Max plank. These and others are a few voices that affirm religion, after renaissance however, the major impulse of European culture was, had been and is irreligious.

The whole edifice of metaphysics and religion stands on “intuitive experience”. On same premise Iqbal starts in first lecture by describing religious experience which is intuitive and immediate. The word intuition is derived from the verb which means looking at, and its extended use seems to have originated as a metaphor from sight. It is a sort of mental inspection in which a direct revelation is made to mind, comparable to the direct revelation which accompanies the exposure of physical object to mind. Quran terms such experience as bayyina (clear evidence, decisive proof). “Perhaps the spirit is a power or a faculty or an agency which develops in the Prophet’s heart and which comes into operation when needed, but it originally does “descend” from “above”⁸.” Prophet Muhammad, Noah and Saleh and Shoaib claimed same bayyina as a proof of their Apostleship (11:17; 11:28; 11:63; 11:88). Though bayyina is often used for miracles, it is also used in Quran to mean the Revelatory Spirit- either as a revelatory power within a Prophet or as a Divine Messenger to the Prophet. It is a faculty by which Prophet mentally heard the words of Quran and mentally saw the Quran being recited by the Spirit of Revelation. And though Quran described itself miracle, no other revealed Book is described in Quran in this way. The reason being that so far other prophets are concerned their revelatory or intuitive experience was a miracle par excellence (like Muhammad they mentally heard and saw revelation to be recited to them), however after coming out of their revelatory state they presented the Divine idea in their own words. On the other hand, Quran was also a word of God its diction, linguistic nuances, poetics defies description and thus inimitability and indelibility of Quran is a miracle.

Descartes and Lock use intuition to mean apprehension of indubitable, self-evident truths. To Descartes “intuition is not the fluctuating testimony of senses, nor the misleading judgement that proceeds from the blundering construction of imagination, but the pure intellectual cognizing of which an unclouded and attentive mind is capable, a cognizing so ready and so distinct that we are wholly freed from doubt that which we thus intellectually apprehend”⁹. Lock describes intuitive knowledge as “the clearest and most certain that human frailty is capable of. This part of knowledge is irresistible, and, like bright sunshine, forces itself immediately to perceived, as soon as ever the mind turns its view that way, and leaves no way for hesitation, doubt, or examination, but the mind is perfectly filled with the light of it”¹⁰. Intuitive knowledge is immediate experience of Reality “we can claim for those whom we call mystics- and, in a lesser degree, for innumerable artists and contemplative souls- that experience at its fullest and deepest does include the immediate apprehension of an unchanging Reality, and that this apprehension, in one form or the other, is the sheet-anchor of the religious consciousness.”¹¹ According to Sheikh Ahmad Sirhandi, “Sufi divide the constitution of the human spirit into five broad layers: the heart (qalb), the spirit (ruh), the inner (sirr), the hidden (khafi), the hiddenmost (akhfa). These, in a formal manner, indicate the regions of human consciousness and trans-consciousness. The first of these, the heart, is a bridge between the physical and the spiritual and exhibits characteristics of both”. Iqbal states that according to the Quran, the heart or qalb (the seat of intuition) is “something which ‘sees and its reports, if properly interpreted, are never false”¹². Professor Nicholson writes “the qalb, though connected in some mysterious way with the physical heart is not a thing of flesh and blood. Unlike the English ‘heart’ its nature is rather intellectual than emotional, but whereas the intellect cannot gain real knowledge of God, the qalb is capable of knowing the essences of all things, and, when illuminated by faith and knowledge, reflects the whole content of the divine mind, hence

the Prophet said, “My Earth and My Heaven contain Me not but the heart of My faithful servant contains Me¹³”.

Iqbal elaborates salient features of intuitive (mystic experience). A) it is indubitable. Being a faculty of heart, it sees and reports right. “Intuitionism is the theory which asserts, in the face of all skeptical criticism, that absolutely certain knowledge occurs in human experience”. B) it is an immediate experience of reality. The locus point of intuitive experience is perception and it involves no sensation. Plato said “intuitions come in a flash¹⁴”. “God is not a mathematical entity or a system of concepts mutually related to one another and having no reference to experience¹⁵”. “God is a percept not concept¹⁶,” said Ibn Arabi. C) intuitive experience possesses an unanalyzable wholeness as against discursive consciousness. “The rational consciousness involves analysis and synthesis but in mystic consciousness all the diverse stimuli run into one another forming a single unanalyzable unity in which ordinary distinctness of subject and object does not exist.¹⁷” In discursive consciousness definite consciousness of the whole comes after consciousness of the parts, opposite is the case of intuitive consciousness. Whatever we intuit is present all at once. Thus, intuitive consciousness is totalistic, not progressive or additive. D) Iqbal have a firm belief in an objective validity of mystic experience. To him, intuitive experience is not “a mere retirement into the mist of pure subjectivity¹⁸”. He (mystic) is in direct communion with the ‘Other’ and momentarily loses consciousness of himself as a distinct and private personality”. But he emerges from his experience possessing a Supreme Richness-unspeakable Concreteness-overwhelming Aliveness, having been a witness to that Being which Becoming all its worth.¹⁹ E) Mystic experience bears a magnitude and an amplitude which is liable to incommunicability. The oft repeated objection against objective validity of intuitive experience is its inexpressibility so its reality cannot be established. Evelyn Underhill says “if expressibility be indeed the criterion of the real, as some philosophers have dared to suggest- and this leads us to the strange spectacle of Real World laboriously keeping pace with the expanding vocabulary of man-not only our mystical but our highest aesthetic and passionate experiences, must be discredited; for it is notorious that in all these supreme ways of human knowing and feeling, only a part of that which is apprehended can be expressed; and that the more complicated and soul-satisfying the experience, the more its realization approximates to the mystic’s silence where all lovers lose themselves²⁰”. F) according to Iqbal intuitive experience reveals Reality as an eternal ‘now’ and reveals the unreality of the serial character of time and space. Both the prophet and the mystic return to level of ordinary experience, but the return of the prophet is of greater meaning than that of the mystic. G) Iqbal is not prepared to admit that the knowledge of the Ultimate Reality is obtainable only by intuition but declares that reason or thought is also capable of giving us knowledge. Aggregate of his statements point out that one can reach the Ultimate Reality both by mystic experience and by ratiocination. Mystic experience spring from the heart but it is not qualitatively different from normal experience. “The seat of intuition is the heart which in the beautiful words of Rumi, feeds on the rays of the sun and brings us into contact with the aspects of Reality other than those open to sense perception²¹”.

Iqbal is inheritor of two mutually exclusive and due to historical factors inherently hostile philosophic and mystic traditions of Islam and due to his poetic temperament seems incapable of collapsing two extremes into the middle position. Sufis claim truth for intuition, and philosophers for reason. The religious thought of Muslim philosophers had been that “on all the points where the frontier of religion and rational thought met, the two neither reached utterly different results not yet were they identical but seemed to run parallel to one another. This happened not on one point but all along the line where the traditional theology and philosophy faced one another. From this fact of systematic parallelism, the philosophers made the saltus

mortalis and concluded that 1) philosophy and religion were ultimately tackling exactly the same questions, dealing with exactly the same facts and in exactly the same way, 2) that the Prophet was, therefore, primarily a philosopher, but 3) that since the Prophet's addressee were not the intellectual elite but the masses, who could not understand the philosophic truth, the Prophetic Revelation naturally catered for their needs and talked down to their level in terms intelligible to them²²". Philosophers failed to differentiate between religio-moral and intellectual cognition. They failed to realize that religio-moral experience, although it certainly has a cognitive element, radically differs from other forms of cognition in the sense that it is full of authority, meaning and imperviousness for the subject whereas ordinary form of cognition is simply informative. A man who has a genuine religious experience is automatically transformed by that experience and he is equally capable of transforming the patterns of human behaviors. Thus, history tells the culture and civilization were the bestowal of a fisherman (Jesus) and shepherd (Moses and Muhammad).

On the other hand, Sufis claim that reason is limited and fallible and the attainment of the truth is a sheer prerogative of intuition which is infallible and beyond the reach of reason. To Ghazali philosophic enquiry into the ultimate nature of God had yielded no results, he turned to Sufism not for gaining that knowledge in another way but to live through the verities of the Faith and to test those verities through the Sufi experientialist method. He emerged successful with the conclusion that 1) only through the life of heart faith can be acquired and 2) Sufism has no cognitive element. So, he castigated men of ecstatic deliriums. Here, we see an agreement between al-Ghazali and Sheikh Ahmad sirhandi that Sufi experiences yield no cognitive content. However, Ghazali molested philosophy in his Tahafat al-philasipha "The Refutation of Philosophy". Philosophy is an instinctual feature of human life, when such vital instincts are suppressed, life finds other avenues right or wrong to prop them up. The vacuum of philosophy was filled by Ibn al-Arab (d:638/1240) the apostle of theosophical mysticism in Islam. In the beginning of his magnum opus entitled "The Meccan Revelation" (al-Futuhat al-Makkiya) he discussed the ways of knowledge and concluded that intuitive revelation (kashf) is the highest and the only source of cognition. "This theosophic Sufism was nothing more or less than pure philosophy masquerading under the name of Sufism- a movement which had begun with the ideal of moral edification. The fact is that philosophy, after Ghazali, went underground and reappeared with the name of theosophical intuitionism. The pantheistic content of this theosophy apart, the greatest disservice that it did to the intellectual life of the Community was the sharp cleavage it made between what it called "Reason" and "Kashf" and claimed the latter for itself in order to seek security under its supposedly unassailable citadel whereas "Reason" was declared to be absolutely fallible²³". It was mistakenly assumed by the latter generations of Muslims that Ghazali refuted philosophy by faith ignoring a fundamental key point that whereas faith can be rejected, reason cannot; it can only be refuted. And that which refutes is ipso facto reason. So, philosophy cannot be refuted except by another philosophy.

Along with his claims that one can reach the Ultimate Reality both by mystic experience and ratiocination, in the same breath, Iqbal pointing to Ghazali's denial of claims of philosophy says "He failed to see (i.e., in his denial of the claims of philosophy) that thought and intuition are organically related²⁴". But if thought and intuition are organically related, neither of them can operate on its own, both are integral to each other and must work together. But the cleavage or gulf between reason and intuition (kashf) struck and effected by Ibn al-Arabi had become too wide to be bridged. The doctrine of Sufi gnosis (marifa) introduced and developed by him got wide acclaim among the masses. Furthermore, it was developed into a monistic doctrine, but instead of being given out as a product of reason it was issued in the name of mystic intuition. In Persia transplant of Ibn al-Arbism (monism) onto Avicenna's theory of Being proved auspicious and

conjunction of the two produced a very lively flowering of speculative mysticism or mystical philosophy, Persian poetry-e.g. Rumi and Jami was the manifestation of the former and the latter found expression in Mulla Sadra's prose. Hama ust –all is God was the keynote of this thought. When this product reached India, its fusion with patent Vedantic monism increased its force manifold. So, the synthesis of ibn al-Arabi, Baba Guru Nanak and Kabir Das on political plane culminated in Akbar's Deen e Ilahi though both Muslims and Hindus denied to endorse it. Here, was the personality of Sheikh Ahmad Sirhandi who not only challenged Akbar's Din e Ilahi but also vehemently refuted Ibn al-Arabi's monism by all available resources of religious norms and higher psychology i.e., Sufism for he himself was practicing Sufi of Naqshbandi order which is pioneer of introducing new Sufi techniques in Central Asia and Sub-continent. Sheikh, in his metaphysical critique of ibn al-Arabi severely rebuked his doctrine of Sufi gnosis "before the Sheikh (Ibn al-Arabi) none among this group (i.e., Sufis) has spoken of this knowledge and these mysteries- not in this fashion. No doubt, utterances of unity and union (with God) have come from them under the seizure of intoxication (i.e., in the state of ecstasy) and they have cried out 'I am God' or 'Glory be to me', but they have not been able to formulate and express the (precise) manner of this union and unity. The Sheikh has, therefore, become the confirmation of the earlier Sufis and the argument for the later ones.²⁵"

Though Ulama had rightly pointed out that Sufi gnosis was condemned to privacy and each man's marifa would be his own yet the herculean task of intense intensity and immense magnitude for Sufis, orthodoxy and intelligentsia of every hue and color was to rehabilitate Sufi "intuition" into framework of reason. Reason has two parts i.e., the reason of the heart that might be termed perceptive reason and the reason of mind that is capable of formulating its findings that might be called formulative reason. As both are organically related, no workable boundary could be drawn between the two intertwined inseparables, with only a marginal difference that "intuition (perceptive reason) is only a higher kind of intellect²⁶".

However, the incorrigibility and infallibility of Sufi gnosis that has assumed dictatorial status though late yet on terms tenable was questioned and revamped by Sheikh Ahmad Sarhandi. The Sheikh with his own incessant religious experiences gradually arrived at and established the relativity of the truth of mystic experience. He himself had experienced unity of being in his early mystic developments, later experience revealed the inadequacy and partially illusory character of the experience. Thus the corrigibility of the earlier mystic experience by later, more adequate ones is the cardinal doctrine of Sheikh Ahmad. He says beyond the one gnosis there is a higher one and further than this experience another. Those who are imprisoned in this station are prevented from many [higher] perfections and stations. Probably the Sheikh is single one who was capable enough to state his mystic experiences in terms intelligible. He observes "this kind of misapprehension, viz., that the mystic, at the time of the non-revelation of the ultimate truth (asl) , mistakes its adumbration (zil) for it, occurs quite frequently, and so the subject asserts the adumbration to be the last truth. That is why a single type of experience (maqam) several times (in a spiral, as it were, but at each level more adequately). The reason is that each type manifests itself only through its (progressively adequate) adumbrations...if people ask: How it can be ascertained that the last experience is the last and the highest level of its manifestation, so that it may be regarded as "true"? I answer that the mystic's (new) consciousness of the adumbrative character of earlier experiences is an irrefutable testimony (shahid-i-adl) of the truth of the last experience [in series] because this consciousness [of their inadequacy] did not exist when these experiences obtained²⁷".

Though the idea of the "grades of truth" was accepted among some philosophers yet the same as a theory or a rule or a principle was alien to the field of mysticism. For to mystics, the mystic insights are direct and

immediate and confer a character of incorrigibility and even of infallibility upon them as opposed to rational knowledge which is fallible and unreliable. In practice, however, Sufism has been critical and corrective of its methods and findings, which in theory it always disdained and abhorred to recognize for it violates the sanctity of their privileged cognitive claims. So, whatever has been tacitly recognized by Sufis Sheikh Ahmad accepted as a rule, theory or principle. Obviously, mystic experience has a great sense of authority and certainty but it does not mean that a particular mystic experience cannot be challenged and partly falsified by a subsequent more adequate one. Thus, if mystic experience is subject to correction how it can claim absolute truth for itself. Hence what is true for rational truth is also true for the truth of mystic experience.

Iqbal accepts Sirhandi's theory of the relativity of the truth of mystic experience lock, stock and barrel. "The very fact that religious life is divided into periods indicates that like the student of scientific method, the practical student of religious psychology learns to sift experience critically in order to eliminate all subjective elements, psychological or physiological, in the content of his experience with a view finally to reach what is absolutely objective²⁸". Pointing to the validity of mystic experience he pointedly remarks "no doubt he has his pitfalls and illusions just as the scientist who relies on sense perception has his pitfalls and illusions. A careful study of his method, however, shows that he is not less alert than the scientist in the matter of eliminating the alloy of illusion from his experience²⁹." Iqbal recurrently emphasizes that "intuition is not a faculty of knowledge qualitatively distinct from reason or perception, but rather as a quality which is implicit in cognition at every level³⁰".

However, it had been a Sisyphean task of bridging the gulfs between traditional theology and mysticism. Whereas the Sufis put all their eggs into the basket of intuition thinking intellect as an unsafe prop to rely upon the major thrust and drift of orthodoxy gravitated towards pure reason. "But what was needed was an adequate framework which would rehabilitate the Sufi "intuition" into reason by bringing out the true nature of the latter as both perceptive and formulative. In this way, the Sufi "intuition" should have been made chargeable with publicity, so to say, and accountable to true reason, as must be the case in the nature of things³¹". However, there remained a yawning gap between the two and whenever the organic relationship between perceptive and formulative reason is thus cut in a society, it can never hope to keep alive any intellectual tradition of a high caliber. The macabre outcome of this gulf was an unintegrated spirituality because mystic consciousness unlike prophetic consciousness proved unable to integrate the world consciousness and the God consciousness. While the Ulema failed to rehabilitate Sufi intuition into reason the Sufis could not accommodate reason in Sufi gnosis. Some sober and orthodox Sufis attempted to devise a set of antithetical and complementary categories (unity and plurality; sobriety and intoxication; presence and absence etc.) to do justice both to inner experience and its outward testing and formulation. It proved inadequate to strike harmony between reason and intuition the desideratum of Islam. It was a person of originality and perception Sheikh Ahmad Sirhandi who was equal to the task. "His work demonstrates, through a genuine dialectic of religious experience, the true organic nature of the inner experience and the reality of the external world, necessitating a subsumption of the former to the latter, of the intuitive perception to the moral order³²". He turned the tables against the Sufis by turning the tide in favor of world affirming attitude.

Now after elaboration of intuitive faculty we proceed forward towards the understanding of Revelation. Iqbal defines revelation in an all-embracing comprehensive term "Indeed, the way in which the word wahi (inspiration) is used in the Quran shows that the Quran regards it as a universal property of life

(99:5;41:12;16:68-69;8:12;28:7;5:111); though its nature and character are different at different stages of evolution of life. The plant growing freely in space, the animal developing a new organ to suit a new environment, and a human being receiving light from the inner depths of life, are all cases of inspiration varying in character according to the needs of recipients, or the needs of the species to which the recipient belongs³³". His statement regarding revelation is neither new nor under the impact of modernity, Shah Wali Allah holds the similar view. He says "the natural law ordained by God has provided for each species a sharia (i.e. a course of conduct) which is transfused in the heart of each individual member of the species. Likewise, God has inspired man to instinctively pursue his beneficial ends (irtifaqat i.e., an elaborate and sophisticated political order with institutional networks) with regard to these necessities³⁴." Thus, as far man is concerned Revelation had been a mode of economizing individual thought and choice by providing ready-made judgments, choices and ways of action through the institution of prophethood. Jamal al-Din Afghani says man is entitled to each and every status, honor or dignity except prophecy. When Meccans asked why this Quran was not sent down upon some big man in the two cities [Mecca and Taif]? (43:31). Quran replied in both religious and naturalistic idiom. Do they distribute the mercy of God? (43:32). This is couched in a religious idiom on the other hand it is said "God knows where to put His Messenger-ship" (6:124) - this statement is cast in naturalistic idiom and tells that there are somewhat credentials required for the bestowal of prophecy. When God told Abraham He was going to appoint him leader of men (whether He had chosen him or Abraham had earned this by various deeds including his willingness to sacrifice his son) and Abraham asked about the destiny of his progeny the answer was that "My promise does not extend to unjust ones (2:124). Similarly, Quran refers to seventeen Biblical personalities from Noah to Abraham onwards saying "We chose them and guided them to the right path (6:83-86) but in the same breath declares "but if they had associated [anyone with God], all their previous deeds would have come to naught (6:87). Hence though prophecy is a mercy of God a sort of meritocracy seems inherently operational in this selection. The unjust ones from Abraham progeny are not entitled to this mercy, if any of the Prophets had associated anyone with God not only would have been banished from the office his all-previous deeds would have come to naught.

The understanding of the manner of Revelation essentially requires the comprehension of the two key terms employed by the Quran Amr (command) and the Gabriel (Holy Spirit or the Trusted Spirit) regarding Revelation. The Amr is what Quran calls the "Preserved Tablet" (Loh e Mehfooz), or Mother of all Books (umm al-kitab). The Amr is the universal key book wherein rules governing the affairs of the universe are laid out, Tabari translates it as the affairs of my Lord. It contains everything, yet the essence of it is its imperatives for man. "It is the essence of this Primordial Book or amr from which the Spirit or the Holy Spirit comes, enters into the hearts of the prophets, and bestows Revelation thereupon; or whence the Spirit is brought by the angels to the hearts of the Prophets³⁵". This "Preserved Tablet" is the source of all Books including Quran. There is nothing dry or wet which it does not contain or constitute (). Hence God's Prophets are recipients of some extra-ordinary power which emanates from the source of all being which fills their hearts with light whereby they see and know things which others are unable to. This happening is too phenomenal and rational that the recipient with conviction such a great enters the arena of history to change the human behavior and life patterns with determination that defies description, of which no parallel ever had been seen in philosophers. For the religious knowledge is impervious and have authority, authenticity and meaning which for the latter is terra incognita. Thus, this is the "Preserved Tablet" wherefrom all revealed books take rise, is also termed "the Hidden Book (56:78) and the Mother of all Books (13:39) from which also comes the confirmation and cancellation of revealed verses (13:39). Now,

what are the modes of Revelation? Suyuti explained various modes that hardly can sustain the queries of modern mind but Quran however elaborates three modes “it does not belong to any human that God should speak to him [directly] except by Revelation [i.e., infusion of the spirit] or from behind a veil [i.e., by a voice whose source is invisible] or that he should send a [spiritual] Messenger who reveals [to the Prophet] by God’s permission what he wills-... (42:51-52). The Jews of Madina on the request of Meccan pagans had asked three questions including what is al-Ruh to refute Muhammad. For about six months more the Revelation remained suspended. The cheered Jews and Pagans claimed God has forsaken Muhammad, while as Tariq Ramadhan explains the temporary suspension of Revelation was intended to establish the fact that the source of Revelation was somewhere else “He speaks not from his own desire-it is but a Revelation vouchsafed to him (53:3). Then chapter 17 presented answers separately and employed construction *ruh min amrina* or *ruh min amrihi* . they ask you concerning the spirit The matter of spirit belongs exclusively to the domain of God and you have been given little knowledge of it (17:85). Though it is tempting to translate as the Spirit by Our command yet the fabric of Quran endorses here “the Spirit of Our Command”.

The Quran says that the locus of Revelation are the hearts of the prophets. “Do they say that he [Muhammad] has forged [the Quran] as a lie upon God? If God wills, He shall seal up your heart [so that there will be no more Revelation]” (42:24). Furthermore, “if We willed, we would surely remove the Revelation We have given you; then you will find no one who can help you with it despite us”(17:86). However, despite the fact that Quran took 23 years to be revealed for reasons enunciated (25:32; 17:105) it was first revealed as a whole (an implicit or embryonic form- out of which full fledged details were developed gradually and as occasion arose) on a certain night in the month of Ramadhan. “We have sent [the Book down] on a Blessed Night, since we were going to warn [mankind]. In it [that Night] every matter of wisdom is decided upon- as a Command from Us..(44:3-6; also see 2:185; 97:1-4)”. In this context Abul Kalam Azad’s statement seemed justified that “Prophecy is a seed that God puts in the hearts of prophets and the same differentiates into an embryonic form, grows into plant, into branches and leaves and turns into a full-fledge tree in the flesh and blood of History. Ghazali and Shah Wali Allah held that the Quran was first brought to the lowest heaven i.e. the Prophet’s heart. Quran also validates this view. “Have We not opened your heart and relieved you of the burden which was breaking your back (94:1-3)”. Though Muhammad had no conscious effort or desire to become Prophet (if God so willed, I would not be reciting it to you 10:16), the sensitivity of orphanage and the plight of humans before him had riddled his soul with theological questions of first order and he would retire to the Cave of Hira for an intense meditation. It was on certain Night that Quran was revealed in its entirety in an embryonic form and “relief from the burden was then effected once and for all” although another burden of executing the Message was lodged (73:5). Thus, potentially total Revelation had made contact with the Prophet’s mind and this first event of “breaking the ground” ensured that the Message as a whole had a definite and cohesive character.

Fazlur Rehman believes the Revelation vouchsafed to Prophet produces an actual mental sound, not a physical sound, and an idea-word not a physically acoustic word which he enclothes in feeling-idea-word complex. He says so far as the infallibility of the Revelation is concerned it is from God, the total otherness of the Revelation is established by the Quran “Do not hasten your tongue with it [the Revelation] to anticipate it. It is Our task to collect it and recite it. So, when we recite it follow its recital and then it is also our task to explain it” (75:16-19; 20:114). However, it might also be termed as the word of Muhammad for the heart of Prophet is not like a letterbox nor the Prophet was like postman because the heart the thought and the conduct of the prophet are also involved in nurturing and sustaining to the seed of prophecy. The

heart of the Prophet to Fazlur Rehman seemed to have an organic relation with the phenomenon of Revelation.

However, to Iqbal there is no qualitative difference between Prophetic and mystic consciousness. The highest state of mystic consciousness transforms the heart to invite Revelation. Furthermore, on the line of Avicenna he draws parallel between philosophic quest and Revelation for the objective of both is same, i.e., acquiring knowledge. His reliance on mystic experience or intuition for the observation and the grasp of Absolute Reality brings mystic intuition at par with Revelation raising question that how a mystic capable of acquiring knowledge of an Ultimate Reality through such an experience can need Prophetic Revelation for guidance? Fazlur Rahman utterly believes in internality of the Revelation. To him there was some channel for the movement of moral law from its source to the heart of Prophet. The Prophet's self in Quranic moments was extended so much that it would harmonize and identify itself with the moral law. In this state of self-ascension the Prophet's expression of this moral law is Quran. To him Gabriel Speaks from the heart of Prophet rather than an external figure descending from heaven and conversing with Prophet at times in presence of companions as portrayed by many traditions which were brought forth to establish the "Otherness of Revelation" in an intellectual milieu wherein people of other religious traditions particularly Christian ideas were making inroads. The Muslim scholarship at that juncture was not rich enough to infer the consistent understanding of the Revelation from the tenor and the fabric of the Quran.

However, an Algerian scholar Malik Bennabi (1905-1973) postulated an externality of the Revelation demarcating clear line between intuition/ inspiration and the phenomenon of Wahy which means a spontaneous and absolute knowledge of a non-conceived or even inconceivable object. In "Quranic Phenomenon" he says "...from the intellectual point of view, intuition does not induce any observable certainty on the part of the subject. It rather creates a semi-certainty which corresponds to what one would call a postulate. It is a knowledge whose proof is a posteriori. It is this degree of uncertainty which psychologically distinguishes intuition from Wahy. Now, Muhammad's conviction was absolute, with the assurance in his eyes that knowledge revealed to him was impersonal, incidental and external to his self. These characteristics were so evident to him that there could never remain any shadow of doubt in his mind as to the objectivity of the 'revealing source'. This is a primary and absolutely necessary condition for the personal conviction of the subject. [...]. Is it by intuition that Muhammad himself could interpret the gestures of the mother of Moses, who abandoned her child to the currents of Nile? Is it also by intuition that he would have distinguished two kinds of intuitions in his verbal acts? One kind would include the verses of the Quran-since as sonorous syllables, it is part of those verbal acts- which he ordered immediately for transcription and the other, the Ahadith, which he simply confided to the memory of his companions? If it were not for this clear awareness of this duality, so separated on the part of the subject, a similar comparison would simply be absurd³⁶". Bennabi argues that conviction of Muhammad stands as a direct evidence of the Quranic phenomenon and its supernatural character. Muhammad must have established two criteria to support his conviction, i.e., Phenomenal Criterion and the Rational Criterion. Explaining the first instance when Muhammad was dazzled by the light at the distant horizon as a 'double sensation' Bennabi asks "Did he really hear and see this form? Or was this audio-visual sensation a mere subjective image [as Fazlur Rehman alludes], surging through him as a result of a painful emotion that had driven him to the edge of chasm? Was he the victim of overexcited senses?³⁷"

Though Fazlur Rehman says that Muhammad (PBUH) mentally heard and saw Revelation and the words were not physically acoustic, actual mental sounds were revealed to him, still his categorization of the

verses (signs) of Quran into ayat, Bayyinat, Burhan and Sultan on the basis of their impact and intensity is proof enough to suggest that he firmly believes in the phenomenological, rational and supernatural character of the Quran. To him, Ayat are the signs which can be perceived or ignored like natural phenomena as the lengthening and shortening of the days, rains, winds etc. while bayyinat are the signs which might be perceived or misperceived but never be ignored like the Prophets faculty of receiving Revelation is termed Bayyina which the obdurate ones misperceive terming it sorcery but cannot deny the supernatural character of the same. The Burhan are the signs which are stronger than bayyina and being a “demonstrative proof” contains a factor of compelling rationality, however while the bayyinat are passively irresistible Burhan is rationally and psychologically compelling. Quran terms itself Burhan. How Josef cried I am in the grip of Nafs al-Ammara when his mutual fascination with Egyptian lady turned into excitement? He saw Burhan from his Lord that was a kind of proof capable of controlling and diverting the course of extremely powerful instinct (12:24). However, even stronger than Burhan is Sultan means authority, power, a “Knock down proof, best translated as “that which overwhelms without leaving any real alternative”, or to cause someone to overwhelm or overpower someone else with physical force. “O species of jinn and men! If you [think you] are able to penetrate the corners of the heavens and the earth, then [go and] penetrate- you shall not be able to penetrate except on the basis of a sultan (55:33)”. Thus, sultan constitutes the meaning of physical or coercive power. Hence, the differences among all these terms are of quantity or degree of persuasive power.

However, Fazlur Rehman not only questions Iqbal’s approach that knowledge of Ultimate Reality is possible through philosophic quest also like religious experience but his exposition of the phenomenological aspects of Revelation at times sounds aesthetically more scenic and persuasive than Bennabi. For example, he says of course Muhammad would have listened the stories of earlier prophets, still “under the impact of his direct religious experience, these stories became revelations and were no longer mere tales. Through this experience, he cultivated a direct community with earlier prophets and became their direct witness: “you were not [O Muhammad!] upon the western side when we decreed to Moses the Commandment, nor were you of those witnessing [at the time]. But we raised up [many] generations [afterwards] who have lived too long [to keep the original experiences alive]. Neither were you a dweller among the Midianites (28:45)”. In this experience we see the points, lessons and content as well transformed. However, while Bennabi seemed cocksure that knowledge revealed to Muhammad was impersonal, incidental and out of his “Self” Fazlur Rehman rigorously establishes that despite being impersonal and incidental its (revelation) substantial organic link with the recipient’s self is irrefutable. Pointing to the Ascension of the Prophet (53:5-18) he concludes that “these revelatory experiences involved an expansion of the Prophet’s self by which he enveloped all reality and which was total in its comprehensive sweep- the reference in both cases is to an ultimate, be it “the highest horizon” or the “furthest lote-tree³⁸”. Furthermore, at times revelation came through dreams as well, if so, how it can be out of the recipient’s self.

Now, we see whether the finality of the prophecy in Islam is mere a dogma or a rational fact. Orthodoxy takes it as a dogma, critical Muslim scholarship treats it otherwise. To Iqbal, the advent of Islam was the birth of inductive intellect which makes man not only the master of his environment but master of this mastery as well. In ancient times, prophecy through psychic energy (prophetic consciousness) had been a source of economizing thought and choice by delivering ready-made judgments, choices and behavior patterns, however, with the birth of reason and critical faculty, life, in its own interests, inhibits the formation and growth of non- rational modes of consciousness which had been a norm of immature human

society. Life as a collective entity through evolutionary process had grown to maturity by traversing a long journey from infancy to adulthood and could not ever be kept in leading strings or on crutches, and for actualization of his fuller potentials man must finally be thrown on his own resources. This is because “in Islam prophecy reaches its perfection in discovering the need of its own abolition (5:3)...the Prophet of Islam seems to stand between the ancient and the modern world. In so far as the source of his revelation is concerned, he belongs to the ancient world; in so far as the spirit of his revelation is concerned, he belongs to the modern³⁹”. In Prophet of Islam life discovered other sources of knowledge, by reorientation he put life on multiple tracks suitable to its multi-dimensional tasks and achievements. So, Iqbal concludes that be it the abolition of priesthood and hereditary kingship in Islam, Quran’s thrust on reason and critical faculty to probe into the natural phenomena and discern the ultimate causation behind these to reach the Uncaused Reality or Unmoved Mover, view of History as a source of knowledge, are all different aspects of the same idea of finality of prophecy in Islam. However, as sociologists believe, the facts dawned on primitive mankind through revelation or mystic institution, now have become a normal fact or natural experience of mankind, hence the idea of finality does not suggest that mystic consciousness which qualitatively does not differ from the prophetic experience, has now ceased to exist for Quran still regards Anfus (self) and Afaq (world) as sources of knowledge (41:53). So, the mystic experience must now be regarded as a perfectly natural experience, open to critical scrutiny like other aspects of human experience. But he deems conservatism as bad to religion as to other departments of life pointing that medieval era’s Sufi techniques bearing no fruits have lost validity in the light of evolved human psychic developments. Naqshbandi order, according to Iqbal, has succeeded in devising new patterns of mystic experience.

However, Iqbal deems in the cultural value of the idea of finality of prophethood a major contribution of Islam to the modern civilization. Before Islam various religious traditions i.e., Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Christianity had been indulged in constant expectation of the coming of Reformer without whom history was deemed as an irredeemable phenomenon, and of which they have become irretrievable prisoner. Islam, through the idea of finality of prophecy presented a psychological cure of history to the modern world. The Perpetual attitude of expectation and looking forward to the coming of Zoroaster’s unborn child was the hallmark of Persian civilization and through cultural exchanges it made inroads into the fabric of Islamic thought with somewhat modifications, the mind-numbing fatalism and predestination ideologies suiting well to the Umayyad Rule got wide currency in the theological framework of orthodoxy. However, Ibn Khaldun with his own view of history has refuted the alleged revelational basis in Islam of an idea similar.

Muslims hold that with and through Islam and its revealed book, man has reached rational maturity and there is no need for further religion. This concept of human maturity culminated in two different approaches to religious life in Judaic-Christian West and the world of Islam. In the midst of Enlightenment Movement, Descartes declared that man has grown enough “now reason can stand on its own” and we can dispense with divine guidance relegating religion to private life. However, to Islam moral fulfilment is a Sisyphean task which requires perennial struggle “man has certainly not yet fulfilled God’s [primordial] command” (80:23). Life keeps on bringing new challenges, responding them requires constantly seeking guidance from Divine Books, especially Quran. Now, understanding of Divine guidance does not depend on chosen personalities but has become a **collective function**. History endorses the proposition of the finality of the mission of Muhammad by the fact that no global religious movement has arisen since Islam with the exception of Sikhism that too born out from the womb of monism and unlike a full fledged religion is a synthesis of subcontinent’s native religious traditions. It was under the impact of Ibn al-Arabi’s monism charged with Vedantic monistic ideas particularly expositions of Guru Nanak and Kabir das that

culminated in Akbar's Din e Ilahi which was refuted both by Muslims and Hindus. After Muhammad there had been claimants of new religions but no one was successful. Having no Revelational basis Sikhism cannot be termed religion in normative sense or popular usage.

However, the idea of finality puts heavy responsibility on the Muslims to stay put to the perennial task of society building and steering the wheel of history on moral track is collective function of the community which is obligation rather than a privilege yet it has been taken as a privilege by the Muslims. The severity of the task that idea of finality puts as a collective responsibility on community to establish moral social order on the earth is no less than the Messenger himself assumed and executed who was metaphorically told that earth despite its vastness, mountains despite their firmness and heavens despite their heights frightened to shoulder. However, to Iqbal the nexus of dictatorship, orthodoxy and mysticism divested the community of the enterprise of establishing moral order on the earth and the collective responsibility or obligation was buried under the debris of their mutual interests. It was Ibn Tamiya and Sheikh Ahmad Sirhandi who stirred the calm waters to resurrect the original elan of Prophetic Message, both were prisoned and mysteriously died. In modern era the same spirit found expression in Sayyed Jamal al-Din Afghani who met the same fate. Iqbal's vision of Pakistan was the fulfilment of same obligation, but unfortunately it became a secular elite capture. Fazlur Rahman had twice declined the offer of professorship at Punjab University, but he resigned from McGill when Ayyub khan invited him for the grand project of Islamic revival and reform in Pakistan. He was expelled on the pressure of orthodox circles and Ayyub khan's political rivals. Ayyub khan in his diary termed the incident bad omen for Pakistan and Islam.

To differentiate between prophetic and mystic consciousness Iqbal refers to the statement of Abdulqudus of Gangoh that Muhammad of Arabia ascended the highest Heaven and returned. I swear by God if I had reached there, I should never have returned. To mystic the repose of unitary experience is ultimate and he does not wish to return, and when he does return, as he must, his return does not mean much for the mankind at large. For prophet, the unio mystica is awakening within him of latent forces to inject an **open values system** in the flesh and blood of history. The prophet's return is creative, constitutes content in terms of life and movement to create new patterns of behavior for mankind. "In its creative act the prophet's will judges both itself and the world of concrete fact in which it endeavors to objectify itself. In penetrating the impervious material before him the prophet discovers himself for himself, and unveils himself to the eye of history⁴⁰". Mystic's orientation is to oneself whereas a "disinterested other-orientation is the distinctive feature of the prophetic model⁴¹". God comes to prophets as a moral challenge to mystics as a gratifying physiological experience or object of contemplation or intellectual curiosity; to prophets as audio-video sensations while to mystics as an ineffable screen shot. In prophetic experience the subject postulates and confronts what is understood to be a supernatural Transcendental Speaker offering solutions to the problem with a personality of such forcefulness that His ethical-political demands brook no denial. In prophetic experience the subject is transformed into an active agent of His will to change the social order for the affective, cognitive and conative aspects of the subject are all involved in prophetic experience. The supramundane will that sanctified the prophetic mission renders the traditional order illegitimate and unwarranted, thus the prophets neither have been popular nor popularity seeker. The words and structure of the language recorded in the brain of subject are of pervasive importance in the content and process of thought. "The sense of injustice, in prophets, is normally more developed and readily aroused than the capacity to determine what is just⁴²". The mystic's experience is ineffable not only because no psychosomatic experience be adequately described and conveyed to others who have not undergone it themselves but because the "content" of the mind is bypassed in this state of consciousness. For in mystic

experience neither dialogue is conducted with Transcendent Reality, nor cognitive content appears. This fact defines the voluntary passivity of the mystic and involuntarily produced dynamism of the prophetic experience. The mystic experience entails wavelike sequence of pleasurable sensations which modern psychology terms electrical discharges impinging upon the reward centers in the midbrain.

The mystic experience constitutes ethical emotional and social neutrality and in sharp contrast to prophetic model is devoid of cognitive formulation. They seldom turn their insight if any to fertile direction because of the disdain in which they held the temporal world, the “world of the people”. “Whether or not this experience had any other content- eminent Sufis themselves, like al-Ghazali and al-Sirhandi, thought it had none, and this view seems to me both intelligible and correct- it was mostly either neutral to social morality or even negatively related to it⁴³”. Regarding spiritual quest of al-Ghazali Fazlur Rahman writes “philosophic enquiry into the ultimate nature of God had yielded him no results; hence he did not turn to Sufism to gain this knowledge in another. He neither wanted nor hoped for any occult miraculous knowledge. His purpose was to live through the verities of the Faith and to test those verities through the Sufi experientialist method. He succeeded. The test confirmed his faith and he concluded (1) that it was only through the ‘life of the heart’ that faith could really be acquired and (2) (and what is of at least equal importance) that Sufism has no **cognitive content or object but the verities of the Faith**. He, therefore, disallowed the pretensions of theosophic mysticism and castigated the men of ecstatic delirium⁴⁴”. However, the doctrine of gnosis formulated and popularized by Ibn al-Arabi claiming infallible cognitive content was nothing more or less than philosophy masquerading under the name of Sufism. The Philosophy after it had been attacked by al-Ghazali, went underground and reappeared in the name of theosophic intuitionism with a revenge and took a heavy toll on the intellectual life of the community.

Other religious traditions also endorse the contentless-ness of mystic experience. “Koestler reports a large measure of agreement among various sources as to the mystic union: physiological “hibernation”, consciousness without content other than itself, a state of bliss preceded by a shapeless radiance that blanks out the mind, and a return from the experience without any positive recollection⁴⁵”. So far as Indian mystic traditions are concerned “common to all Indian methods and philosophies of self-absorption is the induction of mystical experience through the technique of withdrawal of affect, will and attention from ego’s extra and intra organismic environment and processes on the basis of years of ascetic training designed to habituate the adept to the suppression of all emotional attachments⁴⁶”. Thus, for the adepts, mysticism is an arduous path to psychophysiological experience rather than a conceptual discovery. In Buddhism “Nirvana is the advocacy of disciplined detachment from life’s goals, values and standards. The recommended attitude is one of affective and moral neutrality, since passion (including ethical passion) is the root of the senseless striving for the delusive ephemerality of the world of action which interfere with the serene equanimity introductory to and constative of the mystic union, itself, ironically, a most transitory phenomenon. Hence, to the mystic seeker, “there are neither problems nor solutions in the trance; only a divine “fluid” to be savored. In this perspective neither tragedy and its catharsis nor history find a place. No fulcrum for ethical effort is provided⁴⁷”.

Gautam Buddha presented his example rather than a message to his followers. On account of contentlessness or scarce content by some he is viewed as mystic rather than a prophet. A legend suggests that after enjoying for forty-nine days immersion “in the stream of the bliss of the awakening”, [the awakened one] understood that what he had experienced was beyond speech; all endeavor to talk about it would be vain. He determined, consequently, not to attempt to make it known”. This is because “in contrast, in other

words, to the other great teachers of mankind (Zarathustra, Confucius, Jesus) Gautama – is known properly as the silent sage for in spite of all that has been said and taught about him, the Buddha remains the symbol of something beyond what can be said and thought.⁴⁸”.

However, in Muslim tradition itself, there prevail different approaches to draw distinction between prophetic and mystic consciousness. When Sufi gnosis assumed the status of infallibility, swollen Sufi ego and resultant narcissistic hubris brought mystic consciousness not only at par with prophetic but beyond and above the prophetic model. Instead of inferring from the explicit teaching of the Prophet, Sufis brought the personality of Prophet in cross-hair of their argument and zeroed in on the solution of this imbroglio. They reached a conclusion that Muhammad had two radically different aspects- wilayah and nubuwwah : by virtue of former he was a saint; in latter capacity he was promulgator of Sharia for humanity at large. To bring clarity, they developed certain pairs of antithetical categories like “intoxication” and “Sobriety” (صحو وسكر), annihilation and restitution (فنا وبقا) etc. In state of intoxication and annihilation Muhammad was a wali, a saint and as such he was with God, while in alternate state he was a nabi, a prophet, and was with the people. To be with God is more auspicious than to be with people, so saintliness stands higher than prophethood. Prophetic task is to bring order in this world of empirical objects hence he necessarily sinks below the level of saint who resides in the realm of spirit and consequently the life of Sharia is at a lower level than the saintly life, or “the beginning of the saintliness is the end of prophethood”. By devising the antithetical categories Sufis came much near to the “Law of Alternation⁴⁹” as articulated by Professor H.E Hocking. But they could not turn their correct insight to a fertile direction, the reason being that mystic consciousness, unlike prophetic consciousness, is unable to integrate the world consciousness and the God-consciousness and there remains in it a dualism which is sought to be overcome by affirming an identity.

Orthodoxy defended sharia against the rising tide of mysticism yet failed to articulate its position. It even accepted the doctrine of Sufi gnosis but reduced its validity and scope to the subject itself. On the other side of the spectrum, Sufis kept their horses running and built a specious spiritual hierarchy parallel to the prophetic model and along with it an office of Seal of the saints on the pattern of Seal of the prophets was created and Ibn al-Arabi with a subtle scheme of thought assumed this office. So, we think mystic status rather than mystic experience or Enlightenment kept growing, prospering and progressing forward. Conservatism is as bad to religion as to the other departments of life says Iqbal while pointing to the static attitude of inert mysticism. Advancement and evolution of life had necessitated new Sufi techniques while Sufis remained content with medieval methodologies. Consequently, comprehension of the subtle difference between prophetic and mystic consciousness remained a riddle, wrapped in a mystery, inside an enigma. In the long chain of mysticism, it was Sheikh Ahmad sirhandi of Naqshbandi order known for new Sufi techniques, whose innovative mystic experiences solved the puzzle with ingenuity unparalleled in the history of higher psychology.

Sufism from the outset had drawn a sharp line between Tasawwuf and Sharia, the Inner and the Outer, the Eternal (alam al-amr) and the Temporal (alam al-khalq). Moreover, the alam al-amr or the Eternal is a spiritual order and the Temporal is the world of empirical objects. **The bane of Sufism has been the yawning gulf between the spiritual order and the world of empirical objects, the lack of integration between the two, dislocation between spiritual and temporal world, severed organic relation between the Inner and the Outer.** Due to this dislocation Sufis held the world of spirits more esteemed than the Temporal world, Sheikh Ahmad raises the question how the world can be inferior to the spiritual world when it is purpose of creation and focus of God’s attention? Thus, the conventional Sufi view lacks spiritual

prohess as well. The Sheikh in light of his own mystic experiences unravel the two strands prophetic and mystic experiences. The spiritual order is nothing but the *alam al-amr*, the attributes of God projected into the world. Mystic's flight carries him through the Divine attributes and Names, each with different intensity and meaningfulness. These are the stations identified as "the saintship of the saints", the saintship of the prophets", the saintship of the angels". There is no region or station prohibited to the traveler provided he possesses the necessary gifts. But now something momentous happens. "The apogee of the spiritual journey takes us to the highest Divine Name- Being and its opposite non-Being (Earth). At this point the journey man rediscovers the world which he had left behind long ago. The pure mystic, the saint, must stop there, for having renounced the World, he is unprepared to enter into this highest spiritual reality. It is the prophet alone who has kept his 'earth' intact that is capable of entering into this field which is nearest to God: "the acquisition of these [highest] perfections is peculiar to the prophets, and their perfect followers too can, through the leadership and mediacy of the prophets, share in them. Among the constituent elements of man, it is earth which is entitled most and primarily to these perfections...and since this element is peculiar to man, the qualities of man emerge inevitably superior to those of angles...for what earth has attained, nothing else has⁵⁰"...in fact, according to the Sheikh among different rungs of the spiritual ladder earth is the lowest of the low and the highest of the high for the seeker starts from earth and when he reached the highest Divine Name the top-notched station, he finds there the world. What a similarity between this view and Iqbal's philosophy of self.

Sufis had devised pairs of some categories like effacement and restitution (*fana o baqa*), intoxication and sobriety (*sakr o sahw*), Ascent and descent, Unity and plurality less to draw difference between prophetic and mystic experience and more to accommodate sharia in their subtle scheme of thought but the cosmetic measure failed to yield results on account of conservative Sufi techniques and resultant immature spirituality. They said saintliness being God-ward lies in effacement, intoxication, ascent and unity while being pro-people the prophetic office requires opposite states. Sufis talked about mystic sobriety and descent as well but failed to integrate the opposite states so that they could understand the dialectical character of the experience. Sufis insisted that Prophet even in his moment of ascent is facing world-ward i.e., creation while the saint looks God-ward therefore, saintliness stands higher than prophecy and that saintliness belongs to higher level and prophecy to the lower.

Sheikh Ahmad resumes the same doctrine but in light of his own mystic ingenuity gives it an entirely new orientation, unparalleled and unprecedented in the whole range of Sufi literature. To him, the ascent and descent are not two mutually exclusive or dislocated experiences- a higher and lower- but constitute two moments of a single experience. There is an organic link between the two which reduces them to an integrated whole and determines their proportion. According to sheikh both the pure mystic and the prophet have an ascent and a descent and against Sufi claims prophet too like mystic in ascent is facing God-ward. Thus, it is wrong to claim that mystic experience occurs at the heights while the prophetic function belongs to the lower depths. In fact, prophet goes higher than the pure mystic does. The mystic is actually debarred from those higher reaches which are the province of prophetic consciousness. The perfections of prophecy occur in ascent wherein prophet is facing God-ward. Hence whereas the prophetic experience in its comprehensive sweep is holistic and all embracing the mystic's approach is atomistic, truncated, partial, piecemeal and resultantly half-baked are his statements. However, the one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind, in whole history of mysticism or even religions, was the integration of the two moments and to establish the meaningfulness of the prophetic experience for the world on the part of Sheikh Ahmad. He enunciated a law of higher psychology which he repeatedly applied to himself and benefited from it.

The law states that “the descent occurs proportionately to the ascent” which he termed law of proportionality of Experience and Creativity. The prophet comes lower down to act in the flesh and blood of the temporal (the world, history) simply because he has gone highest: **which fact bestows an inherent impulsion and fecundity upon his experience to become historic**. The pure mystic never comes down quite to the earth, because he has never been quite in the heaven: “in its downward movement saintship does not wholly (ba-kulliyat) face the creation: only its exterior is with the world while its inner is with God. The reason is that a saint starts moving downward without having completed all the stages of the ascent. Inevitably, then, he is constantly being held back and haunted by his care for the side of the ascent and cannot fully be with the world. The prophet, on the other hand, comes back after having been ‘there’ and hence can devote himself entirely to his mission to humanity. You should understand this point because no Sufi has ever spoken of these noble mysteries. Apprehend well that the element of earth just as it had outstripped all others in the stages of ascent, so in descent it comes lowest down. Why should it not so descend lowest, for its natural place is there.? And since it descends so towards the bottom, it is inevitable that the mission of the prophet should be the most complete, all-embracing and beneficial to humanity⁵¹”.

Shaikh Ahmad in contradistinction to the common run of Sufis, in his theological framework, gives supreme importance to the world affirming attitude. The spiritual order where Sufis build their nests is prone to inertia and less fertile for development in sharp contrast to the Earth. The calm waters of the spiritual order cannot turn a drop into a pearl, it is here on the earth the stormy waters with wave upon wave, currents and cross-currents make pearl out of a drop. Spiritual order is free from troubles, warfare; serene full of peace, tranquility, and quietude. The residents of this order-the angles and the mystic-are like dead instruments in the hand of God without having free will. But out and down here in the realm of earth, are storms, warfare, troubles, rebellions; God cannot take it for granted, here is a set-up, paraphernalia and infrastructure quite enough for man to realize his potentials which is the *raison detre* of the Creation. The *alam e amr* is intoxicated, and in its state of effacement, cannot oppose God. But the elements which are relevant to prophecy are in state of sobriety, retain the choice of disobedience, this quality renders this world the lowest of the low and the highest of the high. When the monistic doctrine of Ibn al-Arabi had fertilized with Hindu Vedantic philosophy it cast the reality of the world into doubt terming it a mere illusion (*maya*). Impotent Sufi techniques and practices had become the order of the day. This is because says Fazlur Rahman “while Descartes was trying to establish rationally God’s existence which was in doubt, Sirhandi is attempting to establish the real existence of the world which was being doubted by the Sufic-Vedantic monism⁵².” Sheikh Ahmad did not rejected monism as is commonly believed, he refuted the doctrine on the ground of its inadequacy and as an impediment to further development. He himself, in the earlier mystic marathon had experienced the Unity of Being, but later experience revealed the inadequacy and partially illusory character of the experience of the Unity of Being. To Sheikh, the experience is genuine and valuable, but unless it is transcended, it impoverishes the personality and becomes harmful.

The warp and woof of an intellectual reflects the social milieu and forces of history prevalent in his era, and so one can assume that Sheikh Ahmad stands on the other extreme as against Ibn al-Arabi, yet a keen observer finds in him the resurrection and resuscitation of original flair of Islam. He believes that greatness lies in redeeming the history rather than enjoying the intoxication of spiritual order as the Sufis are wont to. To him, the earth which began its humble career at the lowest rung of the ladder as non being, when transformed by God and man, far outstrips the angelic realm and throws the purely spiritual flights of the pure mystic into semi-reality. For it is the positively active principle of evil, which when transmuted into active goodness, manifests the greatness and glory of God. Sheikh very boldly writes to his son that “the

perfections of the spiritual realm are an introduction and a ladder to the perfections of this empirical world. A genuine insight in the spiritual must result in a meaningful and fresh contact with this world. If it fails to integrate with the earth its net value is no more than ecstasies and mystic deliriums. He proclaimed that the mystic path and spiritual experience (tariqat and Haqiqat) which constitute saintship are the servants of the sharia which arises from the prophetic office. This insight he says is borrowed from the Light of Prophecy. He enumerated three stages of spiritual journey 1) the formal sharia from which one must go to 2) the spiritual reality (haqiqat) which will develop into 3) the spiritual reality of the sharia (Haqiqat e sharia). Here like al-Ghazali Sheikh Ahmad reaches a same conclusion that spiritual experience is a touch-stone to check the veracity and validity of religious values rather than a source of Sufi gnosis or cognitive content.

There is a Britain proverb that “Britain has invented a new missile. It is called a civil servant-it does not work and it cannot be fired. Sheikh Ahmad pointing to the Sufi’s moral gymnastics that does not play role in resetting the balance of earth, thinking it irretrievable and irredeemable then what is the worth of their so-called spiritual experience. Sheikh Ahmad takes an irrefutable position “the fire and the ferment (of the mystic experience) are necessary for the final product, but it is no good if the very substance is burnt out in the process⁵³”. The litmus test of the Sufi experience is how and to what extent it reorients and redirects life on earth. Sheikh Ahmad poignantly remarks that the science of prophets is the book of God and the Sunnah of the Prophet and the science of the saints is (Ibn al-Arabi’s) *Fusus al-Hikam* and *Futuhat makkiyah*. you may judge (the state of) my garden from the nature of my spring.

Sheikh Ahmad on the criterion of Law of Proportionality judges the relative worth of both saints and the Prophets. Whichever knower of God (arif) has greater kinship with the spiritual realm, he is more advanced in qualities of saintliness, and whoever has a greater kinship with the world of creation is more advanced in the qualities of Prophethood. However, the Sheikh says spiritual experience indicates relative worth, not an absolute one. Thus, sheikh boldly proclaims the relative superiority of Jesus over Moses, but an absolute superiority of Moses over Jesus. Jesus as a member par excellence of the spiritual realm is a great saint and as such may be regarded higher than Moses, but as a prophet Moses far excels him. Thus, for Moses is a magnitude and grandeur that Jesus does not possess. In conclusive remarks Sheikh says that Jesus was assisted by the Holy Spirit, so he belongs to the spiritual realm-is essentially a saint; while Moses demanded of God that he should show Himself unto him (rabbi arini 7:143). Jesus was content with his spiritual experience; Moses wanted a perceptual experience of God.

The performance of miracles had been the fulcrum of traditional Sufism for characterizing the greatness of prophets and saints. Sheikh Ali Hajveri in *Kashf al-Maajub* for perhaps objectivity though consciously avoids the statement of miraculous stories, yet while talking about his predecessor and contemporary saints he does not forget to state that the subject was capable of miracles; however, the commonplace literature of Sufism is all about miracles. But, to Sheikh Ahmad miracles are an auxiliary concomitant of saintship and not an essential part of it. However, in accord with traditional Sufism he differentiates between the miracles of saints and those of prophets but on his own terms. The saint performs miracles in state of ‘intoxication’ while prophet works miracle in state of ‘sobriety’.

Sheikh Ahmad in light of this difference draws certain fundamental radical conclusions. First, the miracles of saint occur, where the laws of nature, all series of cause and effect (alam al-asbab) disappear. At this time the saint is not in this world, being out of touch with it, has little to offer to the world. According to law of proportionality the saint neither goes higher nor comes lower, on account of his immature descent

the miracles of the saint does not signify his spiritual greatness. Secondly, though automatic yet not autocratic this gigantic machine of universe is a great miracle of God, and so are the natural phenomena based on unalterable laws of cause and effect which cater to the reason and wisdom of man. The balance, the harmony, the symmetry, the precision and the accuracy in the scheme of universe impels only a man of reason and wisdom to say “O Lord you have not created this (world) in vain (3:191)”. The annulment of causes is the annulment of reason and wisdom. The purpose of causal processes is to make man endeavor whereby he both realizes his own potentials and truly appreciates the meaning of God for the world. The struggle to realize his capacities and comprehend the meaning of God for the world is intrinsic to man (90:4; 7:172). [even thus, o men,] are you bound to move onward from stage to stage (84:19). The fragile his being and the hard his lot, man’s arduous journey is in fact a painful toiling towards the Sustainer (84:6), for it is struggle wherein the laws of life unfold. The prophetic consciousness makes history a field of Divine activity by socially gearing men into perennial moral struggle. The mystic consciousness on the other hand divested man of his struggle and put all his endeavors to rest and enjoys unitary repose which is means to an end not an end itself by prophetic measures.

Now, a cursory glance on today’s world where does it stand in relation to prophetic and mystic consciousness. Though, the men have been created with equal potentials and capabilities irrespective of their oriental or occidental origins yet the Western narrative sees the world on the basis of binary typology which divides the world into two unequal halves i.e., the supreme West and the inferior East. The Western mind believes that in each and every sphere of life the Western man far excels the Eastern. He alludes this superiority at times to his special genius the Faustian Spirit as Spangler termed or to his racially being more evolved and advanced as Hegel, Earnest Renan and majority believe. The power, peace and prosperity of the West is presented as a proof. Some scholars say that Aristotle’s scientific temperament by the works and commentaries of Averroes made headway in Western hemisphere while Plato’s intuitive attitude found place in the Eastern hemisphere. This is because the West is materialist and the East is spiritual. According to Spangler it is an anti-classical spirit of European culture that brought it to the helm of affairs while the classical cultures of China, India and the Mediterranean world lagged behind. However, there is a religious connotation of the problem as well. The prophetic consciousness creates a sense of responsibility to the present and future of human history along with improvement of life on earth, on the other hand the mysticism with its foundations in affective and moral neutrality supports the traditional social order out of a basic indifference to the things of this world. Thus, it is prophetic weltanschauung, derived from Old Testament and the New, in the Western hemisphere, which carved out a powerful, peaceful and prosperous destiny of the West, whereas no similar influence was able to make itself felt once mysticism had established itself in the orient. Robert Oppenheimer with an incisive analysis says that “a sense of responsibility to the present and future of human history manifested in the Old Testament and the New which “is probably a decisive reason for the growth of ...the modern world of science. He furthers his argument by saying that “I believe that the idea of the improvement of human life on earth provided the air for the great fires of science.⁵⁴” It is believed that the Old Testament genesis myth expresses the notion of man’s mastery of the nature but the Hebrew genius was for ethics not the comprehension of nature’s law. The unique confluence led to the great world of today we live in.

Some analysts believe that the West after renouncing religion in its socio-economic and political life gushed forth into an impressive unprecedented gigantic civilization. Thus, modern civilization stands on the ashes of religion. However, the equally convincing argument is brought forward that the slogan of French Revolution “the Equality, the Liberty, the Fraternity was based on religious values rather than atheism.

From the womb of French Revolution took birth an egalitarian western society. A great achievement that the West failed to share with the underdeveloped East. However, European renaissance was an all-embracing revolution, wherefrom gushed forth action-oriented movements which transformed the essence of western society. It is believed that it was his prophetically derived passion for social justice and capacity for moral indignation which motivated Marx's break with Hegelian thought when he realized "that Hegel's system of total comprehension leads to the reconciliation of the mind with the world as it is...[instead of revolutionizing it]. On the other hand, in Eastern phenomena the self-oriented mysticism's enlightenment has struck the intellectual reconciliation of mind with the world as it is so much so that it culminated in ahimsa (non-violence).

Today our world stands on the precipice of self-annihilation on account of nuclear arsenals and climate change. Our planet stands in great need of Prophetic passion and consciousness to be resuscitated to redeem the world from multi-facet corruption (fasad fil-arz) and moral morass. There is no such privileged point in human history where man should proclaim that now he can dispense with Divine guidance as Descartes pointed out and it became new normal of Western Culture which had brought life and human civilization on the verge of 6th extinction. In present circumstances religion seemed the one and the only force which can save man from himself. The cultural value of the idea of finality of prophecy in Islam states that seeking divine guidance now have become a collective function. It is an obligation rather than a privilege. The Quran demands Muslims to establish a political order on earth to create an **egalitarian and just moral social order** (80:23). For the fulfillment of this task Quran envisages a cooperation between likeminded communities. "O people of the Book! Come [let us join] on a platform [literally: a formula] that may be common among us- that we serve naught except God (3:64). Iqba's concept of composite nationalism which seeks unity among the Abrahamic family of religions and Zoroastrianism is derived from the same verse and distilled from the tenor of Quran. Dr. Fazlur Rahman employs this verse in more concrete form by the statement that here like-minded communities are being asked to cooperate in building an **ethico-social world order**, this cooperation is not a sort of contemporary "ecumenism" where every religious community is expected to be nice to others and extends its typical brand of salvation to others as much as it can! For Islam there is no particular salvation: there is only success [falah] or failure [khusran] depending on whether the execution of the Trust i.e., the establishment of world moral order is accomplished or not. This immense prophetic task stands in need of **tremendous initiative which requires active cooperation of the people of the East and the West and due to being the carrier of the last perfect revealed book al-Quran the Muslims should be the pioneer of this enterprise**. Ibn Taymya's words seemed coming from the heart of Quran "the goal of human life is neither the philosophic contemplation of God nor the mystic type of love of him- for each of these leads to the doctrine of the Unity of Being, of the identity of the world and God and so to the absolute inanity of God and man- but the active concept of Ibada, a knowledge of God's will and its fearless implementation in life. God is not something to be merely perceived, or admired or cherished but must be recognized as the One to whom alone our allegiance is due. This recognition alone is describable as Tauheed (Monotheism) and it alone can inspire the attitude of Ibada⁵⁵".

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