Islam and the Modern Age

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Zakir Husain Institute of Islamic Studies
Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi

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Editorial

The latest issue of *Islam and the Modern Age* that you now hold in your hands represents, in many ways, the earnest efforts made under the proactive leadership of the current Vice Chancellor and the Registrar, Jamia Millia Islamia (JMI). Though this university has always embraced and promoted the values of deep and sustained intellectual enquiry, critical reflection and scholarly innovation – the very keystones of its academic objectives and mission, these pursuits have seen renewed momentum and accelerated growth in the recent times. It continues to offer thought-provoking academic perspectives, engage with contemporary debates and foster meaningful dialogue across disciplines while actively participating in the on-going exchange between local priorities, national concerns and the wider global academic discourse. In doing so, JMI contributes significantly to the evolving and growing intellectual conversations on modernity and pressing challenges confronting our world today.

As an essential part of the university's academic fabric, *Islam and the Modern Age* plays an important role in furthering the educational mission envisioned by the Vice Chancellor and the Registrar, JMI, in consonance with the National Education Policy. Their focus on the academic excellence and the cultivation of thoughtful and socially responsible scholarship continues to guide and inspire our collective intellectual pursuits.

What makes this issue of *Islam and the Modern Age* particularly important is the inspiring news of the achievement of 32 civil service aspirants from our university who have successfully cleared the country's most prestigious and highly competitive examinations. It is a milestone that reflects the academic rigour and spirit of excellence nurtured on our campus. This outstanding accomplishment bears a testimony to our institution's powerful and continued pursuit to intellectual discipline, meticulous preparation and the cultivation of

public-spirited leadership, all instilled within our campus under the leadership of the Vice Chancellor and the Registrar. The university authorities believe that it demonstrates not only the aspirants' personal persistence, determination and their scholarly dedication but also the university's permanent legacy of developing socially conscious and intellectually fortified individuals. It is a proud moment that underlines our institution's tradition of brilliance and excellence, mentoring culture and holistic approach to education.

Needless to say, JMI serves as a lively hub for nation-building where the engagement with societal progress is not merely aspirational but actively pursued. The Vice Chancellor and the Registrar have inspired its alumni to make contributions across a wide spectrum of public and private sectors. They have also created a thriving culture of alumni participation, encouraging them to give back to their alma mater in support of its development and growth. Today, our university stands at a defining moment in its journey, emerging as a distinguished treasure-house of knowledge where tradition, cultural heritage and contemporary thought converge. Our attainments now span varied domains like academics, research, arts, innovation and community engagement, making the university a dynamic space for transformative learning and social responsibility.

Our institution, under the far-sighted leadership, has widened its intellectual vistas through key strategic enterprises that enrich educational quality, promote interdisciplinary research and create a student-centred, inclusive learning environment. Developments in infrastructure, instructive novelty and international collaboration continue to strengthen its International standing.

The dedication of JMI to pluralism and communal harmony is a typical feature. These values are intricately woven into the everyday life of the campus. Diversity is not only generously acknowledged here but also actively celebrated. The inclusive celebration of national and religious festivals serves as a vibrant expression of the university's ethos of unity in diversity. These moments of collective joy and mutual respect create a sense of belonging that rises above individual backgrounds. This spirit of togetherness and inclusivity betters the social fabric of campus life and inculcates in students a deeper understanding of coexistence and empathy.

True to its unique character, JMI offers a complete educational journey spanning from nursery-level to the highest levels of doctoral research. This range represents the university's deep-seated belief in nurturing learners at every stage. By integrating early education with advanced academic pursuits, the institution fosters a holistic, character-building environment that prepares students for both national service and global citizenship.

These days, the campus of our university is alive with the vivacious energy of aspiring students eager to secure admission to the wide range of courses JMI offers. The diverse group of candidates reflects the institution's broad and wide-ranging appeal and academic reputation. The on-going entrance examinations are conducted with efficiency, objectivity and fairness, ensuring a smooth and well-organised experience for all. The Vice Chancellor and the Registrar, JMI, make it sure that the university extends thoughtful care to the parents and the guardians who accompany the candidates, upholding its tradition of hospitality. The warm and cordial environment on the entrance exams days speaks volumes about our university's devotion to merit and its commitment to creating a humane and supportive admission process.

Rooted in the ethos of Indian nationalism, our university has long stood as a guiding light of intellectual resistance, cultural and national pride, and social reform. It is in keeping with these very values that we strongly condemn the ruthless, barbaric and cowardly act of terrorism in Pahalgam that claimed innocent lives. In this moment of profound loss, our hearts go out to the grieving families who have lost their loved ones in this tragic act of brutality. Their grief is ours and their pain echoes deeply within our university community. We mourn with them, stand beside them and hold them close in our thoughts and prayers. As we offer our heartfelt condolences and firm solidarity, we also reaffirm our commitment to peace, compassion and unity, values that must guide any society determined to reject hatred and violence in all its forms. Let this painful moment strengthen our collective resolve to build a future anchored in understanding, empathy and humanity.

In an era of paradigm shift and rapid intellectual transformation, *Islam and the Modern Age* stands as an appropriate platform for scholarly exchange. Each issue aims at documenting research and igniting dialogue across traditions, disciplines and perspectives. The articles featured

here are the products of meticulous thinking and a sustained focus on advancing knowledge. While forging a meaningful connection between traditional values, culture, heritage and modern ideas, innovation and advancement, the journal seeks to illuminate, inviting you to reflect, engage and contribute. We extend our sincere appreciation to all the learned contributors whose insightful articles have enriched this issue. Their scholarly generosity and dedication to advancing meaningful dialogue make this issue a vibrant space for academic excellence. Please enjoy reading the articles!

A. Naseeb Khan

PROF ABDUL MAJID QAZI

Methodological and Linguistic Appraisal of the English Translation of the Quran[1] by Dr Zafarul-Islam Khan

In recent times, an English translation of the Qur'an by Dr. Zafarul Islam Khan has been published, earning considerable recognition and approval within academic circles. The rapid issuance of its second edition stands as a clear indicator of its widespread appeal and scholarly endorsement. This paper presents a detailed review of Dr. Khan's English translation of the Qur'an, commencing with an examination of its necessity and contextual background. It provides a succinct overview of the historical trajectory of Qur'an translations into the English language, accompanied by a brief introduction to some of the most eminent translators and the distinctive characteristics of their works.

After addressing the inherent complexities of translating the Qur'an and outlining the essential prerequisites for a successful translation, the paper focuses on Dr. Zafarul Islam Khan's methodology, with particular attention to the appendices appended at the end of his work. The priorities and strategies employed by Dr. Khan in his translation are meticulously analyzed, followed by a comparative assessment of his translation alongside that of Dr. Tarif Khalidi, a contemporary translator of the Qur'an.

In addition to appraising the evident merits of the publication's presentation and printing quality, the article concludes with a nuanced discussion on the intricate balance between translation and interpretation, emphasizing the imperative of preserving accuracy and fidelity to the original text.

BACKGROUND

Every devout Muslim is naturally drawn to the Holy Qur'an in pursuit

of a deeper consciousness and a more profound understanding of faith. In the act of recitation, one often finds oneself reflecting on its verses, seeking direction, wisdom, and insight into their meanings. In these moments, translations and commentaries are consulted to gain greater clarity and fulfillment. Yet, rather than quenching the thirst for understanding, such efforts often seem to intensify it.

It is likely that after experiencing this very struggle repeatedly, Dr. Zafarul Islam Khan embarked on the monumental task of revising the English translation of the Qur'an by Abdullah Yusuf Ali. This particular translation, widely regarded as superior in both its publication and popularity, had long been acknowledged for its excellence.

However, during the process of revision, the texts and manuscripts underwent alterations so extensive that they transcended the boundaries of mere modification. In Arabic, there exists a proverb for this: اتسع الخرق على الراقع , meaning that the gap had grown so large that it was no longer possible to be repaired .

At this juncture, Dr. Khan recognized that continuing to rely on Abdullah Yusuf Ali's original work was proving to be an arduous and time-consuming endeavor. As a result, the translation project was redefined as an independent undertaking, ultimately culminating in the current version—an enduring testament to the pursuit of perfection in conveying the divine message.

The Holy Qur'an, as the eternal and divine scripture, is immune to the limitations of time and space, continually offering freshness and relevance. It is impervious to the constraints of linguistic decay, as its preservation is divinely guaranteed. In contrast, any translation, while valuable, is inherently a human endeavor and thus bound by the inherent limitations of linguistic rules and conventions.

Each written text is a language product which exists within the confines of specific time and place, and the interpretation of the meanings of the Holy Qur'an is a dynamic and ongoing process. This evolving interpretation reflects the eternal nature of the guidance embedded within the sacred text and ensures that its wisdom continues to illuminate generations across time.

A BRIEF EXAMINATION OF ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS OF THE HOLY QUR'AN

Among the languages of Europe, Latin was the first in which the meanings of the Holy Qur'an were translated. This pioneering translation was undertaken in 1143 by two clerics: the English priest Robertus Retenensis and the German priest Hermann, under the supervision of Peter the Venerable at Cluny Church in Southern France. According to Arberry, this translation was widespread in manuscript form.[2] However, other accounts suggest that its dissemination was halted due to strong opposition from the Church, which feared that the translation might serve as an introduction to Islam and contribute to its growing appeal. This opposition succeeded, and after being concealed in a church vault for four centuries, it was finally printed in Basel, Switzerland, in 1543 by Theodor Bibliander.

This early translation was far from a scholarly or faithful rendering of the Qur'an, nor was it published in the spirit of enlightenment or academic integrity. The distinguished orientalist and Qur'ānic translator A.J. Arberry described it as "It abounds in inaccuracies and misunderstandings, and was inspired by hostile intentions"[3] and noted that its production was fuelled by a spirit of hostility. The history of Qur'ānic translation into European languages is inextricably linked to the Crusades against Islam and a concerted effort to distort its teachings. One of the primary catalysts for this animosity was the defeat of the united European forces by the Islamic army during the Crusades, particularly their humiliation on the plains of Palestine after a century of warfare. Another significant grievance was the unexpected fall of Constantinople in 1453 to Muhammad al-Fatih, a blow that deprived the Byzantine Empire of its eastern stronghold and marked a profound psychological and cultural wound for Europe. Furthermore, the advanced Islamic civilization of Andalusia in southern Europe, with its profound intellectual and cultural achievements, consistently overshadowed and humbled the West.

In this historical context, the deeply entrenched hostility towards Islam and the Qur'an by the Crusader world is not difficult to comprehend.

The above-mentioned Latin translation of the Qur'an laid the

foundation for subsequent translations into European languages. Over time, more than seventy-five translations were produced by Orientalists in all major European languages. The predominant aim of these translations was to perpetuate hostility towards Islam and to seek revenge for the Crusaders' military defeats. As a result, these works frequently sought to undermine the Qur'an's teachings and cast aspersions on Islam. Within the realm of English translations alone, there are over one hundred versions, which can be classified into three primary categories.

1. Translations by European Orientalists

Most of these translators were clergy or devout Christians, for whom translating the Qur'an was seen as part of a larger religious and ideological crusade. Their objective was to express doubts and misgivings about the text in a systematic manner. To them, the Qur'an was neither a divine scripture nor Muhammad a prophet, but rather the work of an ordinary individual from Makka. Their intent was to diminish the status of both the Qur'an and the Prophet by employing every possible form of hostility to ridicule the text and its themes.

The first English translation of the Holy Qur'an was undertaken by Alexander Ross, relying heavily on the French translation by Sieur Du Ryer. Published in London in 1649, it inherited many of Du Ryer's errors, making it an unremarkable and flawed translation. Alexander's peers in the field of orientalism were unsatisfied with his superficial work. A more influential figure is George Sale, whose translation, first published in 1734, became widely popular across Europe. Another notable name in English Qur'ānic translations is E.H. Palmer, whose version was published in London in 1880.

The distorted approach of many Orientalist translators is exemplified in J.M. Rodwell's translation (published in London in 1861), in which he altered the order of the surahs of the Qur'an. Similarly, Richard Bell followed suit with his own revisionist translation (published in Edinburgh in 1939)[4], which further obscured the original structure and meaning of the text. As Arberry observed, these altered orders rendered the translations practically unreadable. The rearrangement of verses and chapters added a layer of confusion, transforming the translation into a convoluted puzzle. "As he set up his translation in a kind of

tabular form to indicate his views of how the discourse originally ran, it is virtually unreadable"[5]

Such translations stand as stark evidence of academic betrayal and intellectual dishonesty. They will be forever recorded in the history of truth and ethics as emblematic of disgrace. Among the Orientalist translators, A.J. Arberry's rendition is relatively superior in linguistic quality and less driven by animosity than his predecessors. His translation, first published in 1957, represents a more measured approach to the task.

Among these Orientalist translators, there is also the case of N.J. Dawood, an Iraqi-born Jewish scholar, whose 1956 translation of the Qur'an published in London retained certain distorting tendencies. His translation reflects a legacy of bias, recalling the tradition of manipulating sacred texts—a practice that has long been carried by the ancestry of these translators in their treatment of the holy books of their religion.

A common thread among these Orientalist translations, besides their rejection of the Qur'an as the Word of God and their vilification of Prophet Muhammad (saws), is the consistent manipulation of verse order, erroneous translations, and the omission of significant portions of the text.

It is important to note, however, that over time, there are discernible improvements in these translations. As successive Orientalists sought to avoid embarrassment, the quality of their work began to reflect a more cautious approach. This gradual refinement may be due to awareness that these translations would serve as lasting records of their scholarly rigor, and that excessive hostility and errors would ultimately damage their reputations. As the learned English translator Muhammad Marmaduke Pickthall aptly stated: "It may be reasonably claimed that no Holy Scripture can be fairly presented by one who disbelieves its inspiration and its message."[6]

2. Surprisingly, a considerable number of Qadianis have produced English translations of the Holy Qur'an, with their total count approaching three dozen. This endeavour served two primary purposes: firstly, to give the impression to the general Muslim community that they still remained a part of Islam, with the Qur'an itself being considered by them as their religious book. And that it stood as irrefutable evidence

of their allegiance; and secondly, to offer subjective interpretations of Qur'ānic verses that would ostensibly validate their leader's status as divinely appointed.

On one hand, while the principal objective of the Orientalist translators was to undermine the truth, the Qadiani translators aimed to distort falsehood as truth, seeking to shelter themselves under the Qur'ānic text. Notable Qadiani figures, alongside the dates and locations of their translations, include Muhammad Ali (Lahore, 1917), Sher Ali (Rabwah, 1955), Zafarullah Khan (London, 1970), Salahuddin Pir (Lahore, 1960), Malik Ghulam Farid (Rabwah, 1962), and Firozuddin Ruhi (Karachi, 1965).

4. Pickthall

Prior to the dawn of the 20th century, no Muslim scholar had undertaken a translation of the Holy Qur'an into English. It was not until the early, earnest efforts of various Muslim translators that the first authentic and reliable translation was accomplished by the English convert, Muhammad Marmaduke Pickthall. Published in 1930, this translation quickly gained prominence. Pickthall, a writer, journalist, and educationist, had visited the Arab world on two occasions and had worked in the educational department under the Nizam of Hyderabad. This project, which he undertook during his time in the region, was dedicated to the Nizam in its first edition, printed in London, as an expression of gratitude for the support he received in completing the translation[7].

In the preface to his translation, Pickthall details the consultations he had with prominent scholars, including Sheikh Al-Azhar Mustafa Al-Maraghi, whose revisions, insights, and advice proved invaluable in refining the work. The second section of the preface offers a succinct yet profound introduction to the biography of the Prophet (saws), covering essential milestones in his life, the stages of Qur'ānic revelation, and the history surrounding it.

Pickthall meticulously provided the chronology of each surah and included foundational details before each one. Additionally, he offered concise explanatory notes at strategic points throughout the text. His translation was the result of thorough research and careful reliance on trusted sources of *tafsir* (interpretation and commentary). Despite his

precision and attention to detail, Pickthall opted for a classical style of narrative and formal language in his translation, which, while academically rigorous, resulted in a style that, although modern, appeared somewhat archaic. This led to the perception that the translation was not sufficiently accessible or fluid for the average reader.

ABDULLAH YUSUF ALI

The second major and reliable translation was undertaken by Abdullah Yusuf Ali, published in Lahore between 1934 and 1938. A barrister by education and a civil servant by profession, Yusuf Ali hailed from Mumbai. His translation garnered immense popularity, particularly due to the extensive explanatory notes and elucidations included in the work. For a considerable period, Yusuf Ali's translation held a prominent position in English-language Qur'ānic translations. It was selected by the King Fahd Complex for the Printing of the Qur'an in Madinah, with millions of copies distributed worldwide, making it widely accessible to readers.

However, over time, the translation was subject to several revisions, in which some errors were rectified. Notably, certain opinions expressed in his commentary were found to conflict with the consensus of the Islamic scholars, leading to a gradual decline in the publication of his work.

MUHAMMAD ASAD

The renowned convert Muslim intellectual Muhammad Asad's translation of the Quran is highly regarded and well-known. This translation was first published in Gibraltar in 1980. Asad, born into a Jewish family in Austria, embarked on a remarkable journey of intellectual exploration and spiritual discovery. A distinguished scholar and thinker, he is considered one of the foremost seekers of truth. After years of profound research and personal reflection, Asad chose the path of guidance, ultimately converting to Islam. His scholarly insights into the translation of the Quran and his deep understanding of the Arabic language are unparalleled, particularly his grasp of the unique nuances of Arabic, which distinguish it from other languages.

Muhammad Asad spent an extended period in the deserts of the Middle East, living among the Bedouin communities. This immersive experience allowed him to uncover the intricate subtleties of the Arabic language—its sounds, words, and rhythms. Through this prolonged exposure, he gained unparalleled linguistic insight, establishing a profound connection with the language. His intimate engagement with the desert life became the foundation for his exceptional vision and linguistic expertise. The revelations he offered regarding the inherent gaps between translation and the original Arabic text of the Quran are invaluable contributions to the philosophy of linguistics.

Asad's thesis contends that mastering the Arabic language through books, grammatical rules, and conventional pedagogical methods is insufficient to truly understand Arabic literature, especially the language of the Quran. He argued that full familiarity can only be achieved by immersing oneself in an Arabic-speaking environment, one where the language is spoken with deep and pure linguistic taste. This, he believed, is essential for a profound connection with Arabic phonology, as it establishes an indelible imprint on both the conscious and subconscious mind.

In his analysis, Asad identified a significant challenge in translating the Quran into European languages—one that extends beyond the vast linguistic differences between Arabic and European languages. He highlighted another critical obstacle rooted in the European world view. According to European thought, the material and the spiritual are two distinct realms that can never truly be reconciled in practice. In contrast, the Quran's view of existence is founded on the unity and harmonious balance of both realms—spiritual and material—which serves as the basis for its message and guidance.

Muhammad Asad's approach to Qur'ānic translation is distinct from that of other translators. As he himself noted, "It is an attempt—perhaps the first attempt—at a really idiomatic, explanatory rendition of the Qur'ānic message into a European language"[8]

In addition to his translation, Asad provided extensive interpretations and explanations, drawing upon a variety of sources. Among the commentaries he referenced, the *Al-Manar* of Muhammad Abduh and Rashid Riza stands out as particularly influential. He was deeply inspired by Muhammad Abduh's reformist ideas and thought.

Asad's rationalist perspective often led him to diverge from the views of traditional commentators, which sometimes set him at odds with mainstream interpretations. His independent approach to understanding the Quran, grounded in reason and intellectual inquiry, prevented his translation from achieving the widespread recognition he had hoped for.

SOME OTHER TRANSLATIONS

Abdul Majid Dariyabadi, a distinguished Urdu writer, first published his translation of the Qur'an in 1941 in Lahore. His work is accompanied by succinct yet insightful explanatory notes on comparative religions, which have garnered significant scholarly attention. Similarly, the translation of the Qur'an by Dr. Taqiuddin Hilali and Dr. Muhammad Mohsin Khan, which is widely regarded for its clarity and precision, is available through the King Fahd Complex for the Printing of the Holy Qur'an in Medina. T. B. Irving, an American intellectual who embraced Islam, presented a translation of the Qur'an into contemporary in American English, which was subsequently published in 1985, in Vermont.[9]

Since the dawn of the 20th century, Muslim intellectuals have endeavoured to render the Qur'an into English—the lingua franca of modern global discourse—thus facilitating broader access to the sacred text. This on-going quest for the most accurate and accessible translation remains a vital area of academic exploration. However, it is essential to critically examine how many of those who ventured into this domain were adequately equipped for such a monumental responsibility, and how many succeeded in fulfilling it with the requisite scholarly rigor.

In the 21st century, this trend has only intensified, as contemporary challenges have further underscored the centrality of the Qur'an in guiding humanity. The increasing prevalence of English translations of the Qur'an over the past two decades reflects the growing recognition of its pivotal role in the modern world.

In India, the translation and commentary of the Qur'an by Maulana Waheed Uddin Khan, originally published in Urdu under the title *Tazkeer Al-Qur'an*, has been followed by an English rendition, revised by Dr. Farida Khanum, which has been in circulation for over

fifteen years. Similarly, after the publication of Mufti Taqi Usmani's renowned Urdu translation and commentary, an English version of his work has also been disseminated in Pakistan, contributing significantly to the growing trend of the Qur'ānic Studies.

It is important to acknowledge that some translations have emerged from specific sectarian perspectives, with the explicit intent of promoting particular theological doctrines. In such cases, the focus often shifted from a neutral or universal interpretation of the Qur'ānic text to the promotion of the ideas and beliefs of specific sects, such as Shia and Barelvi thought. For instance, the English translations of the Qur'an by SV Mir Ahmad Ali (1964, Karachi), MH Shakir (1982, New York), and Syed Saeed Akhtar Rizvi (1980, Tehran) are commonly understood to reflect the Shia interpretation of the text. Similarly, Hanif Akhtar Fatemi's English rendering of Maulana Ahmed Raza Khan's Urdu translation, published in Lahore, is indicative of the influence of the Barelvi perspective.

A notable example of the intersection between Urdu translation and its influence on English translation is the Tafheemul Quran of Seyyed Abul A'la Maududi. Muhammad Akbar based his English translation upon this work. It was published in Lahore in 1967 and had gained attention of readers.

TRANSLATION OF QURAN BY DR ZAFARUL-ISLAM KHAN

Dr. Zafarul Islam Khan is a distinguished scholar of Arabic and Islamic studies, renowned for his profound expertise. He hails from a family with a long-standing commitment to intellectual pursuits, where the foundation of knowledge is anchored in the original sources of Islam; Qur'an and Sunnah. His understanding of religion is independent of specific traditions, emphasizing direct engagement with the sacred texts.

Dr. Khan's mastery over the Arabic language is extensive, encompassing a deep awareness of the etymology of Arabic words, the syntactic intricacies of the language, and the rich complexity of its sentences and stylistic nuances. His bond with the language is both intellectual and emotional, cultivated over more than five decades of dedication and study. In this respect, he epitomizes the criteria set forth

by the renowned thinker and translator, Muhammad Asad, for an ideal Qur'ānic translator.

As a translator, Dr. Khan not only possesses a profound understanding of the Qur'an's divine message but also holds an authoritative position in historical analysis, journalistic insight into current affairs, and intellectual thought. His sharp observation brings into focus the contemporary intellectual and societal landscape, revealing it as though it were an open book. He is acutely aware of the linguistic sensitivities and evolving narrative trends of the modern age, understanding precisely what kind of expression is required to address the intellectual and spiritual needs of today's generation.

INTRODUCTION

Under the section titled "Translator's Notes,"[10] the distinguished translator provides a preface that thoughtfully introduces the essential message of Islam and the Holy Qur'an. This section highlights the beginning of revelation, the different stages of the Prophet's life, and the unfolding of the Qur'ānic revelations, as well as their subsequent compilation and arrangement. The translator presents these topics in a smooth, engaging, and accessible manner, making complex ideas easier to understand.

The preface also delves into the necessity, background, and methodology of the Qur'ānic translation. By analysing the Qur'ānic teachings through contemporary language and expression, the translator emphasizes that the Qur'an has continued to provide guidance for both worldly and spiritual success for over fifteen centuries. Its guidance is universal, relevant to all aspects of life—individual and collective, minority and majority, East and West—making it a source of mercy applicable across all times, places, and forms of life.

In the second part of the preface, titled "Introduction to the Qur'an,"[11] the translator offers a comprehensive historical overview of the Holy Book. This section covers the names and attributes of the Qur'an, its miraculous distinctions, the stages and conditions of revelation, the first and last revelations, the structure of the Qur'ānic text, the number of surahs and verses, and the various methods of recitation. The translator

also explains the meaning of abbreviated letters, the Qur'an's role as a source of law, Qur'ānic sciences, schools of Tafsir, and the authority of different interpretations. Additionally, it explores the scientific indications within the Qur'an, the Qur'ānic narration of historical events and personalities, and the contrast between biblical and Qur'ānic narratives. The preface further addresses the history of the Qur'an's printing and the translation of the Qur'an into other languages, with particular focus on the broader history of its translation into English.

APPENDICES

THE PROPHET

In consideration of the readers' needs, the learned translator has thoughtfully appended the most significant discourses on faith alongside the translation of the *Holy Quran*. These appendices, rendered in a lucid and accessible manner, serve as an invaluable resource for understanding the essence of Islam and its foundational teachings, which lie at the heart of the Qur'ānic message. Among these, the translator has included an introduction to Islam and a brief curriculum of its core principles, both of which are indispensable for grasping the profound wisdom of the Qur'an.

Furthermore, the translator has meticulously compiled a comprehensive chapter on the Prophet's biography (*Seerah*), which stands as an essential prelude to understanding the Qur'an. To fully appreciate the message of the Holy Qur'an within its proper context and its implications for human conduct, a brief yet insightful overview of the Prophet's life is of paramount importance. The Qur'an does not present a distant, abstract philosophy or a mere depiction of idealized virtues meant to be admired as a poetic narrative. Rather, it offers a practical framework for life—a system of ethics, culture, and conduct that is deeply aligned with human nature and perfectly attuned to its inherent needs.

To illuminate this fundamental principle, the Qur'an itself presents the life of the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him) as the ultimate exemplar of its teachings. He was, in every sense, the living embodiment of the Qur'an—its first recipient, its foremost reader, its first memorizer, its most profound commentator, and its most faithful

practitioner. In contemporary terms, one might even regard him, as the living model of the Qur'ānic message. His life was a practical interpretation of the divine text, and his actions and character remains an eternal model for humanity.

Thus, the message of the Qur'an and the Messenger are inextricably intertwined. Recognizing the profound significance of this connection, Dr. Khan has presented an engaging and insightful introduction to the *Seerah*, offering an analytical review of the pivotal events in the Prophet's life and the early history of Islam. These pages provide not only a historical account but also a deeper understanding of how the Qur'ānic teachings were manifested in the life of the Prophet, offering timeless guidance for all of humanity.

BEAUTIFUL NAMES OF ALLAH

The worldview presented in the Qur'an establishes that the centre of gravity of the entire universe is Allah Almighty, the One who is transcendent and free from all dependencies, while the entirety of creation is inherently dependent upon Him. Among His creations, humanity occupies a unique position, elevated through the divine gifts of knowledge and intellect. With this elevation, however, comes profound responsibility. Chief among these responsibilities is the pursuit of the knowledge of Allah, a quest that lies at the heart of human purpose and spiritual fulfilment.

To illuminate the path of guidance and provide clarity in this pursuit, the Holy Qur'an contains numerous verses that elucidate the attributes of Allah. The Qur'ānic approach is deliberate and profound: it emphasizes the affirmation of Allah's sublime and praiseworthy attributes, while refraining from mentioning those traits that are unbefitting of His divine majesty. To even allude to such attributes in the context of Allah's perfection would be incongruous and irreverent. Thus, the Qur'an directs the human intellect toward contemplation of His greatness, purity, and transcendence.

In recognition of the depth and complexity of this subject, the distinguished translator has meticulously compiled an extensive appendix dedicated to the names and attributes of Allah as mentioned in the Qur'an and Hadith. This appendix not only provides their

meanings but also offers references and contextual insights, serving as a valuable resource for those seeking to deepen their understanding of divine wisdom.

INTRODUCTION OF THE PROPHETS MENTIONED IN THE HOLY QURAN

The Holy Quran offers glimpses into the history of mankind, illustrating the distinction between right and wrong. These narratives are a profound repository of lessons and wisdom. Throughout history, more than one hundred thousand prophets were sent to various regions and eras. The experiences of some of these prophets have been recounted repeatedly, providing insights into the laws of nature that can be deduced from the cyclical patterns of history and its rigorous analysis. History, in itself, is a vast treasury of experiences. While the Holy Quran is not confined to any specific theory of historiography, it employs a unique approach, offering hints and lessons through the brief yet carefully selected highlights of human experiences and character.

The history of the prophets and their nations is, in essence, a recurring narrative of the eternal struggle between good and evil, and the confrontation between faith and disbelief. From this, it becomes evident that righteous individuals faced trials and tribulations in every era and every land, causing history to repeat itself time and again. Yet, in the end, it was always the righteous who emerged victorious. The history of the prophets also underscores the fact that Islam, with its message of monotheism, has consistently been the central theme of every prophet's call. However, the response to this divine invitation was never one of garlands or enthusiastic welcome; rather, it was met with hostility, insults, and persecution in every conceivable form.

Regarding the prophets explicitly mentioned by name in the Quran, the distinguished translator has provided a brief yet comprehensive introduction to each, supported by authentic references in the footnotes. Additionally, at the end of the work, a complete list of these prophets has been included in the form of an appendix, arranged in dictionary order. This list features the name of each prophet alongside the reference to the Qur'ānic verse in which they are mentioned for the first time.

DICTIONARY OF ISLAMIC TERMINOLOGY

The terms initially employed to express the diverse concepts, acts of worship, and doctrines presented by Islam gradually evolved into precise terminology with designated meanings. These words, over time, acquired specific lexical significance, surpassing their conventional dictionary definitions. For individuals without prior religious education, accessing the precise meaning of many of these terms can pose a challenge. In response to this necessity, the distinguished translator has meticulously compiled a comprehensive dictionary of these terms, which has been included as an appendix. This extensive fifty-page dictionary organizes the terms alphabetically, providing their meanings in a clear and coherent manner.

DETAILED INDEX OF QUR'ĀNIC TOPICS

The translator has also prepared a thorough and highly valuable index of the topics addressed in the Holy Quran, which is appended with the translation. This thematic index spans one hundred and fifty pages, offering a meticulous and comprehensive categorization of Qur'ānic topics. The arrangement of topics within this index is designed to facilitate easy navigation for the reader. While typical indexes may feature straightforward entries such as personalities, places, nations, tribes, and well-known concepts, this index stands apart due to its profound research quality and the vast intellectual diversity of the subjects it encompasses, along with the nuanced inferences that can be drawn from them.

Dr. Zafarul Islam, renowned for his expertise in research methodology, has brought his academic acumen to bear on this index. His rigorous scholarly approach is evident in the detailed and analytical manner in which the Qur'ānic topics are presented, making it an indispensable tool for anyone engaged in scholarly research. The index ensures that the Qur'an is more accessible and useful for researchers seeking a deeper understanding of its content.

The expansive preface at the beginning, coupled with the numerous appendices at the end, transforms this translation of the Qur'an into a highly informative and indispensable Qur'ānic encyclopaedia. It

provides a wealth of essential information related to the Qur'an, explained with precision, contextual accuracy, and scholarly depth, making it an invaluable resource for anyone seeking a profound understanding of the sacred text.

THE AESTHETICS OF QUR'ĀNIC STYLE AND THE CHALLENGES OF TRANSLATION

Translation is an act of subordination to the original text, a form of companionship that flourishes beneath its shadow. It's ideal quality lies in its ability to serve as a faithful reflection of the original linguistic form while accurately conveying its meaning and spirit. However, the long history of science and art, enriched by experience and observation, has demonstrated that the extraordinary masterpieces of thought and art elude the full grasp of translation. Despite the most diligent human efforts, an insurmountable gap persists between the original and its translation—spanning thought, meaning, and the very essence of language and expression. The popular Italian proverb "Traduttore Traditore" translation is a traitor, seems to convey the same reality.

The Holy Quran, a divine guide to innumerable concepts pertaining to human life, is deeply rooted in the vast and intricate world of Arabic linguistic styles. The Qur'ānic stylistics itself constitutes a profound subject within the field of linguistics, encompassing rare and unique forms of diversity unparalleled in other languages. Even the extensive and rich corpus of Arabic literature falls short of encapsulating the entirety of these stylistic nuances. Given this reality within Arabic, one can only imagine the immense difficulty of conveying these meanings in other languages and providing suitable alternatives to such distinctive styles.

The first challenge in translation lies in the selection of appropriate equivalent words. Each word in a language embodies a specific concept, serving as an authentic reference to the entire historical and cultural context of that concept. To remove a word from its context and replace it with another is to risk fracturing the entire edifice of thought and meaning. Language, after all, is a mirror of a nation's way of thinking, social norms, environment, and cultural identity. Often, certain words rooted in a specific cultural or civilizational background lack exact

counterparts in other languages. This is the formidable challenge that confronts the translator of the Holy Quran at every turn.

After extensive research and profound contemplation, when the translator finally fulfils the responsibility of rendering the text through words and paraphrases that align as closely as possible with the requirements of the original, a comparison between the original and the translation reveals a stark contrast. The translator becomes acutely aware of the chasm between the divine language of the Quran and the earthly language of the translation. Even if the translator succeeds in selecting words and achieving a comparative appropriateness of style, the next stage presents an even greater challenge. This stage involves giving final form to the thought and expression, ensuring that the revelation of this divine book of guidance descends upon the reader's heart with clarity and impact. The translation must possess a transparency that allows the reader to stand face-to-face with the guidance of the Quran—a task of immense complexity.

Certain difficulties and imperfections are inherent to the translation process. The Arabic language, particularly the Qur'ānic language, is renowned for its mesmerizing sound harmony, which resonates deeply within the heart. Yet, even the faintest echo of this harmony is impossible to replicate in any translation. Similarly, the aesthetic qualities of the Qur'ānic style defy imitation.

In the light of these subtleties, scholars never claim to be translating the Holy Quran itself. Instead, they describe their efforts as translations of the *meanings* of the Quran. This distinction acknowledges that the translator, after adopting an interpretative approach, conveys the text through that lens. While there may be room for agreement or disagreement with the translator's interpretation, the choices of translators remain valid within the framework of their perspective.

It is essential to clarify a fundamental principle: there will always be a distinction between the original and its translation. The original text possesses the unique ability to encompass multiple meanings within a single expression, while the translation is constrained by the necessity of limiting itself to a single interpretation. In doing so, it inevitably narrows the vastness of the text, overlooking the multiplicity of meanings that the original so effortlessly contains.

THE RIGHT BALANCE OF TRANSLATION AND INTERPRETATION

The delicate equilibrium between translation and interpretation is paramount when engaging with the Qur'ānic text. A precise comprehension of a significant part of the Qur'an cannot be achieved through translation alone, as it inherently falls short of capturing the depth and nuance of the original Arabic. Without the inclusion of essential details—such as jurisprudential rulings, historical context, and the circumstances surrounding the revelation of specific verses—the reader remains distanced from the text's true essence. Relying solely on translation erects a barrier of estrangement, depriving the reader of the guidance and enlightenment he seeks. As such, the reader is entitled to a thorough and satisfying elucidation of the verses.

Some translators have recognized this necessity and attempted to address it by embedding extensive explanatory notes within brackets alongside the translation. However, this approach often results in the commentary overshadowing the original text, disrupting its coherence and overwhelming the reader with fragmented information. For instance, the translation by Dr. Taqiuddin Hilali and Dr. Muhammad Mohsin Khan, despite its many merits, is marred by an overabundance of parenthetical explanations, which impede the fluidity of the text and blur the distinction between the original translation and supplementary commentary.

In general, a discerning and erudite author tailors his work to the intellectual capacity and cultural needs of his intended audience, carefully calibrating the tone, style, and depth of discussion. While a Qur'anic translator does not have the liberty to alter or select the subject matter, he does possess the authority to adopt stylistic strategies—such as elaboration or conciseness—based on the requirements of his readers.

Conversely, some translators have confined their role to rendering the verses into the target language, abstaining from providing any form of interpretation, explanation, or commentary. This approach, adopted by a notable number of translators, has its own limitations. For example, a new translation by the Palestinian scholar Prof. Tarif Khalidi is celebrated for its fluid and idiomatic language, yet it lacks explanatory notes. Consequently, readers often find themselves yearning for

additional context and clarification, which diminishes the translation's overall effectiveness and leaves its potential impact unrealized.

THE TRANSLATOR'S METHODOLOGY IN TRANSLATION

Accessing the correct meaning is paramount in comprehending any general linguistic text, though errors in such endeavours do not carry catastrophic consequences. However, the understanding of the Qur'ānic text stands apart, as it bears profound implications for the success of one's worldly life, the salvation in the hereafter, and the preservation of faith. Consequently, a precise understanding of the divine intent is indispensable before undertaking the translation and interpretation of the Qur'an into another language. While no translation can ever match the unparalleled quality of the Qur'an's original Arabic text, minimizing errors in both comprehension and interpretation remains a significant achievement. All scholars of Qur'ānic studies and exegesis universally acknowledge their reliance on the same foundational principles.

The learned and conscientious translator has refrained from depending solely on linguistic prowess to decipher the sacred text. Instead, he has turned to the rich legacy of exegesis, a tradition that traces its origins to the Prophet's era and has flourished across subsequent generations. The translator has strived to render the meanings in clear and fluent English, adhering closely to both the literal and spiritual essence of the Qur'ānic text.

In the preface, the distinguished translator outlines the methodology and interpretive strategy employed in this work. It is evident that the target audience comprises English-speaking readers unfamiliar with Arabic yet eager to understand Islam directly from its primary source. The priorities of translation and interpretation have been carefully tailored to meet the needs of such readers, whether Muslim or non-Muslim. The translator elaborates on the following points:

- Brief explanatory words are inserted in brackets within the translation where necessary.
- Footnotes provide additional details and explanations where deeper context is required.
- The commentaries avoid overly technical or specialized

discussions, focusing instead on explanations relevant to the general reader. These include interpretations of terms, historical contexts, descriptions of events, introductions to prophets and historical figures, and insights into places and nations mentioned in the Qur'an.[12]

- In instances where a word or verse permits multiple interpretations, the translator selects the meaning most aligned with the context, while alternative interpretations are given in footnotes.
- Linguistic and syntactical intricacies are omitted, as they are deemed unnecessary for the general reader.
- Where no precise English equivalent exists for an Arabic term, the translator provides a full explanation in the footnotes.
- The commentaries maintain brevity, offering just enough detail to enable the reader to grasp the meaning and context of the verses.

The translator acknowledges reliance on primary sources of exageses, Hadith, and foundational Arabic lexicons, with Abdullah Yusuf Ali's translation serving as a key reference.[13] The overarching objective is to present the divine message as it was understood in the early centuries of Islam.[14] To this end, the translation employs simple language and a modern style, ensuring accessibility for contemporary readers. Since Dr. Khan originally started this scholarly project as a revision of Abdullah Yusuf Ali's translation, there are similarities in many places between the two translations.

A defining feature of this translation is its avoidance of imposing pre-conceived ideas or theories.[15] The translator refrains from offering speculative or philosophical interpretations, adhering strictly to primary and reliable sources of exegeses, Prophetic Traditions, and Seerah.[16] Similarly, the commentary avoids unnecessary comparisons between Jewish, Christian, or differing Islamic perspectives, focusing instead on the core divine message.

Dr. Zafarul Islam Khan has made a significant effort to address the evolving challenges of the modern age through the teachings of the Holy Quran. In his commentaries, he provides brief guidance on the issues faced by minorities within the contemporary Nation-State system, as well as the problems encountered by Muslims and Muslim minorities living in such states. Similarly, he addresses other social, economic, and

political issues requiring Islamic guidance in today's changing world—issues not explicitly covered in traditional religious literature. By doing so, Dr. Khan has responded to a critical need of the time, offering relevant solutions grounded in Qur'ānic principles.

The translator maintains a clear and unequivocal stance: any narrative about the Qur'an or Islam that diverges from the understanding of its earliest addressees and scholars is deemed unacceptable.[17] In addressing scientific facts mentioned in the Qur'an, the translator highlights them in footnotes while emphasizing the principle that Qur'ānic truths are immutable and definitive, in contrast to the evolving nature of scientific theories.[18]

A thorough examination of the translation reveals the translator's unwavering commitment to the methodology outlined in the preface. Consistency and quality are maintained throughout, reflecting the translator's dedication to the project. The preface and appendices, which I had the privilege of reading and reviewing, are both captivating and enlightening, addressing contemporary questions that may arise in the minds of readers.

While there can be grounds for disagreement with some of the commentators' viewpoints, it is worth noting that he has substantiated each opinion with references from classical exegesis literature and has provided their detail in the footnotes. Similarly, he has heavily relied upon the accounts of Ibn Ishaq and Al-Waqidi for the historical accounts of the life of the Prophet PBUH. While these sources are undoubtedly among the earliest, some latter and recent researches in Seerah literature have yielded sources with greater reliability and depth of insight. These could have proved more refined references for the study of the life of the Prophet.

I conducted a comparative study of this translation alongside other notable English translations, including those by Abdullah Yusuf Ali, Pickthall, Taqiuddin Hilali, Muhammad Mohsin Khan, and Muhammad Asad. This comparative analysis proved to be one of the most intellectually enriching endeavours of my life. It underscored the remarkable efforts of these devoted servants of the Qur'an, each of whom has contributed to illuminating the beauty and grandeur of the Book of Guidance.

Every verse, sentence, and word undergoes rigorous scrutiny, passing

through countless tests before the translation reaches its final form. Once in the hands of the reader, a new phase of evaluation begins, as the reader assumes the role of an examiner, assessing the translation against his own standards of quality. Regardless of which translation emphasizes linguistic elegance or aligns more closely with the spirit of the text, a profound sense of respect and admiration emerges for these dedicated servants of the divine word. In principle, it is closer to observation and reality that a particular translation may be considered preferentially better in comparison, but this does not mean that all its contents are absolutely the best. The reason for this is that the main goal in translation is meaning, but to reach this goal, translators use different words or expressions. By reading them, an informed reader can guess which expression covers the meaning better and which interpretation lacks the required concentration.

This comparative study has deepened my appreciation for this translator's dedication, intellectual integrity, and commitment to moderation. By drawing from authentic sources and maintaining a disciplined approach, this translation has earned a well-deserved reputation for reliability and trustworthiness.

METHODOLOGICAL AND LINGUISTIC COMPARISON OF TRANSLATIONS BY DR. TARIF KHALIDI AND DR. ZAFARUL ISLAM KHAN

Dr. Tarif Khalidi's translation of the Qur'an has been accessible for a decade. A renowned intellectual of Palestinian Arab origin, Dr. Khalidi received his education in England and America. He served as a professor of history at the American University of Beirut and later as a professor of Arabic at the University of Cambridge. Equally proficient in Arabic and English, his translation is also available in a Kindle edition. Over the past several years, I have frequently consulted his work, which prompted the decision to undertake a comparative study of his translation alongside that of Dr. Zafarul Islam Khan.

Both the translators are near contemporaries, though Dr. Khalidi is a decade older. Primarily a historian, Dr. Khalidi's academic journey began in the Arab world and culminated in the West. His teaching career has spanned both Eastern and Western hemispheres. In contrast,

Dr. Khan's educational trajectory took him from India to Egypt and finally to England. His professional life has been equally diverse, encompassing academic engagements in England, North Africa, and India.

An intriguing point of connection between the two scholars lies in their ties to Palestine. Dr. Khalidi hails from Jerusalem, the capital of Palestine, while Dr. Khan is a dedicated and active scholar of the Palestinian cause and an expert in its history. Both are distinguished contemporaries, excelling in linguistic prowess, intellectual diversity, and contemporary awareness. These shared attributes, along with their significant similarities, provide a reasonable basis for this comparative analysis.

The comparison yielded several noteworthy findings. Dr. Khalidi's translation undoubtedly reflects modern and popular English styles, characterized by an engaging and accessible interpretive approach. He has aptly titled his work *The Qur'an: A New Translation*, targeting readers with the academic and cultural background to grasp meanings from a straightforward translation. Consequently, his work omits explanatory footnotes or references to classical exegetical sources. Instead, it includes a six-page appendix offering brief explanations of select Qur'ānic terms and personalities.

Under the heading "For Further Study,"[19] Dr. Khalidi provides a list of modern literature on Qur'ānic studies, including works by prominent American Orientalist Jane Dammen McAuliffe, such as the *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'an* and the *Cambridge Companion to the Qur'an*, as well as Michael Cook's introductory book on the Qur'an. He also acknowledges contributions by Muslim scholars like Dr. Fazlur Rahman, Dr. Muhammad Arkoun, and Dr. Nasr Hamid Abu Zaid, though their intellectual approaches are often considered controversial within traditional Islamic scholarship. While Dr. Khalidi critiques the negative attitudes of some Orientalists, his inclusion of these authors suggests a vision for his translation as an academic resource rather than a profound traditional exegetical work.

In his introduction, Dr. Khalidi highlights the Qur'an's narrative styles, describing them as "vertical" and "horizontal." He explains his translational strategy, noting that Qur'ānic verses often interconnect thematically. To reflect this, he groups verses into paragraphs[20], marking

only the final verse of each paragraph with its number. Linguistically, he admits to favouring interpretive innovation in English, occasionally prioritizing idiomatic expression over strict fidelity to the original text. He also employs varied English terms for the same Arabic word when used in different contexts.

In contrast, Dr. Zafarul Islam Khan's translation prioritizes closeness to the original text. He views the language of translation as a means to access the Qur'an's essence, ensuring that the medium does not overshadow the message. Despite this focus, Dr. Khan maintains a high standard of linguistic quality and stylistic elegance. He grounds his understanding in authentic exegetical sources and the perspectives of the early Arab addressees of the Qur'an. Dr. Khan exemplifies meticulous care in interpreting the Qur'anic text, adhering to traditional methodologies.

While Dr. Khalidi emphasizes modern Qur'ānic studies with an independent outlook, often prioritizing Orientalist research, Dr. Khan remains firmly rooted in classical scholarship. The Qur'an, as the divine revelation and the eternal proof of the Prophet's prophethood, demands a reverent approach. Dr. Khalidi's inclusive attitude, which accommodates perspectives that do not regard the Qur'an as the word of God, leaves room for critique.

Despite these observations, Dr. Khalidi's translation enjoys broad appeal. Even with disagreements or reservations about certain priorities, the value and utility of his efforts cannot be dismissed. However, when it comes to preference and authenticity, Dr. Zafarul Islam Khan's translation stands out for its linguistic precision, fidelity to the Qur'ānic spirit, and reliance on authoritative sources.

Dr. Khan's translation, complemented by a comprehensive introduction and appendices, employs a methodical and elegant presentation. This approach facilitates the reader's journey toward deriving guidance, success, and righteousness from the Qur'an, the ultimate book of divine direction.

PRINTING QUALITY

The aesthetic and functional qualities of a book's printing play a pivotal role in enhancing its appeal and utility, regardless of the intrinsic

merit of its content. If the typography is substandard, the font size too diminutive, or the layout poorly designed, the book's effectiveness and allure are significantly diminished. However, this particular translation of the Qur'an stands as a testament to both scholarly rigor and the publisher's refined taste. It exemplifies excellence in printing, boasting a harmonious blend of aesthetic and practical elements. The text is rendered in a clear, appropriately sized font, with judicious spacing between lines, ensuring readability and visual comfort.

A notable feature of this edition is its meticulous organization. Each translated verse is accompanied by its corresponding verse number, preceded by the surah number, facilitating easy navigation. The original Arabic text and its translation are presented in a balanced, parallel format, allowing the reader to effortlessly align each word of the translation with its source. This typographic precision, particularly in accommodating two distinct scripts on the same page, is a remarkable achievement that will be especially appreciated by those familiar with the complexities of multilingual typesetting.

Furthermore, the explanatory notes are thoughtfully arranged, with annotations relevant to each page conveniently placed alongside the text. This thoughtful design ensures that readers can seamlessly access supplementary information without disruption. Complementing these features is the book's robust binding, which not only ensures durability but also enhances its aesthetic appeal. Together, these elements elevate this translation of the Qur'an to a masterpiece of printing artistry, setting a benchmark for excellence in book design.

CONCLUSION

The foremost prerequisite for successful translation lies in the translator's complete mastery of the two languages involved in the textual exchange, coupled with a profound understanding of the cultural landscapes and literary traditions of both. A comprehensive study of their histories is equally indispensable. While creativity is not explicitly cited as a requisite for a translator, the practical experience of composing and compiling works in both languages serves as the ultimate testament to this skill. Against this backdrop, the translation of the Holy Qur'an under consideration stands out as exceptionally distinguished, as its

author possesses unparalleled expertise in both Arabic and English, evidenced by his authored works in both languages and a wealth of documentary evidence attesting to his invaluable contributions.

A thorough examination of this translation reveals the translator's profound familiarity with the stylistic nuances of Arabic and English. From lexical choices to sentence construction and structural coherence, every linguistic element bears witness to his erudition. The sublime text of the Holy Qur'an, a repository of miraculous meanings, is rendered with remarkable fidelity in this translation, demanding thoughtful engagement and deep comprehension from its readers.

In alignment with contemporary needs, the translator has adeptly conveyed the essence of the Qur'ānic message and the fundamental tenets of Islamic teachings in a manner that is both accessible and compelling. By including a preface, he has addressed a significant need for the general reader. Furthermore, the concluding section features a comprehensive and analytical biography of the Prophet, which serves as a vital component for the practical understanding of the Qur'ānic message. The addition of a detailed index of Qur'ānic topics as an appendix elevates this scholarly work to the stature of a concise yet exhaustive Qur'ānic encyclopaedia.

Achieving linguistic clarity and impact without compromising quality in translation is a formidable challenge. However, when one resolves to embrace difficulty and uphold excellence as a standard, obstacles are rendered surmountable. This translation exemplifies such a resolve.

The Holy Qur'an is a living scripture, one of whose attributes is described as "لا تبلى جدته"—its freshness never diminishes. Its perpetual vitality and timeless influence stand as enduring miracles. Just as the circumambulation of the Kaaba represents an unceasing and insatiable cycle of devotion, so too do the recitation, memorization, transcription, translation, and interpretation of the Qur'an manifest the unwavering faith of believers. Like the unending cycle of dawn and dusk, this tradition will persist until the Day of Resurrection. The Qur'an remains the wellspring of life and the focal point of spiritual attraction, infusing the world of faith with unceasing vitality.

From the moment of its revelation to the present day, there has not been a single moment in history when the Qur'an has not pulsated

through the hearts, minds, and tongues of its adherents. Caravans of intellect and passion have bowed in reverence before it, drawing from it the light and energy of faith. This legacy of devotion will continue unabated, with the same fervour and dynamism, into the future.

NOTES

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ROHMA JAVED RASHID

The Politics of Piety: Shah Waliullah's Hajj, 'Revivalism' and the Political World of Eighteenth Century Delhi

INTRODUCTION

By the eighteenth century, the Muslim consciousness of being part of the larger Islamic community around the world had come to fruition. The travel to the holy cities of Makka and Medina incumbent on all Muslims of means had encouraged many to traverse the ordeals of the sea to undertake this virtuous journey. Among the thousands who made this journey in the eighteenth century was the Islamic scholar Shah Waliullah, the famous Naqshbandi Sufi of Delhi. Unlike most people however, Shah Waliullah longed to make this journey not only to seek spiritual succor but also to acquire knowledge of Islam. Facing stiff resistance from his family, he made this journey in the year 1730 returning to Delhi two years later only to find the city reeling under the pressures of a declining Mughal empire and a community thrown into disarray. It was at that time Shah Waliullah articulated a set of ideas that have been invariably identified as Islamic revivalism. The paper argues that by placing the Indian mystic in the larger category of eighteenth-century Islamic revivalist thought, scholars have overlooked the fact that Shah Waliullah operated in a very distinct intellectual and philosophical context of eighteenth-century India and therefore his ideas warrant a different approach. This paper will therefore try to study Shah Waliullah without the constraints of the mould of Islamic revivalism that make him stand alongside historical figures with whom he had very little in common.

EIGHTEENTH CENTURY ISLAMIC REVIVALIST THOUGHT

Revivalists thoughts have been an important part of histories of all religions when people exasperated by changing circumstances and rituals appeal to return to a more puritanical past. John Voll points out that in the Islamic context revivalism usually entailed a return to the Quran and the Sunnah (as opposed of course to the innovations or bid'at that appears to have taken over the society) and the practice of Ijtihad.[1] Voll also argues that most of the revivalist thoughts in Islam actually emanated from a small group of intellectuals situated in the city of Medina who became forebearers of a 'fundamentalist' Islamic ideology calling for homogeneity in practice and belief. He consequently links a series of intellectuals situated in different philosophical and geo-political contexts with ideas he identified as revivalist. In his paper on the intellectual group of Medina, Voll introduces us to a series of intellectuals in the city including Muhammad Hayya Al-Sindhi who were part of what he calls a "closely intertwined intellectual community." He believes that almost all men who were part of the revivalist tendencies in different parts of the Islamic world in the 18th century including Abdul Wahhab and Shah Waliullah were associated with this group through a network of student-teacher relations.[2]

Voll's arguments have been critiqued and revised subsequently by a number of scholars who believe that the image of a uniform and unified Islamic revivalist thought is inherently flawed. They detect extensive and significant differences and divergences in the thoughts and ideas of people who Voll invariably clubs together as adherents of the same ideas. This revision in the historiography of the Islamic revivalism has allowed subsequent scholarship to analyze many intellectuals in their own distinct contexts. Despite these revisions in most studies of South Asia, Shah Waliullah is still invariably associated with what Voll termed "fundamentalist" ideologies. Most scholars have focused on the Shah's polemical writings on the need to revive the Muslim monarchy and have concluded that that was an attempt to completely exclude anyone but Muslims from the practice of politics and power in India. Ayesha Jalal and Sugata Bose view Shah Waliullah's polemics against the Marathas as an "impetus" to the Jihad of Sayyid Ahmad of Rae Bareilly.[3] Fazlur Rehman and Ebrahim Moosa adopt a similar line of thinking

in witnessing Shah Waliullah and others of his ilk as precursors to the more "fundamentalist " Islam that eventually led to the partition in the Indian subcontinent.[4]

This aspect of his thought was also emphasized when dealing with the writings and thoughts of his son Shah Abdul Aziz. It is quite unfortunate that in an attempt to place him within the larger political aspirations of the Muslim elite of the eighteenth century, Shah Waliullah's distinct ideas have been much ignored. Scholarly attention has remained focused on his training in denominational Islamic exegesis to the almost complete exclusion of the eclectic intellectual trends that he was associated with. It is therefore necessary to begin this study with an analysis of the intellectual environment that Shah Waliullah was part of.

SHAH WALIULLAH'S EARLY LIFE AND INTELLECTUAL INFLUENCES

Born in a family of intellectuals Shah Waliullah was trained in the Islamic sciences from an early age under the tutelage of his father Abdul Rahim. A renowned scholar and mystic of his times, Abdul Rahim was approached by Aurangzeb to join state service, an offer he quickly refused. Abdul Rahim traced his ancestry to Caliph Umar and Shah Waliullah noted in his writings that he was proud of his Arab ancestry. Abdul Rahim ran his own Madrasa at the fourteenth century mosque of Kotla Firuzshah. That school was well recognized for its curriculum and attracted a number of pupils. Marcia Hermansen points that from an early age he introduced his son to works on Hadith, Quranic interpretations, jurisprudence and also on Tasawwuf. Besides these he was also exposed to other subjects like mathematics, astronomy, tibb and Persian language and literature.[5] Along with intensive training in Islamic sciences, he was initiated into the Qadiri, Chishti and Naqshbandi silsilahs.[6] Contrary to popular belief, the practice of associating with a variety of Sufi silsihas was an established practice, for that exposed a young learner to the intellectual diversity that was current in the period.

By 1719, Waliullah was allowed to take on disciples of his own and continued to teach students while practicing meditative practices. It is common in the historiography of Sufism in south Asia to assume

that Sufis and Ulema were two distinct categories of people, each practicing Islam in their own distinctive way. Sufis are seen as "liberal" in their approach to religion as opposed to the Ulema who are seen as "orthodox." This argument is a colonial invention and does no justice to the complexities of religious practices in pre-modern Islamic world. In order to become a Sufi one had to be an alim in the first place. For anyone, without the basic knowledge of Hadith, Quran and jurisprudence, could not hope to transition to the higher mystical learning that was represented by Sufism. This brief digression is necessary to understand the complexities and diversities of the intellectual influences on Shah Waliullah, he was an alim of the highest order while at the same time engaged in Sufi practices. In 1730-31, as we have seen Shah Waliullah travelled to Hejaz despite criticism from his family. He went on to the city of Medina and found the company of many intellectuals including Shaikh Abu Tahir Al Kurdi Al Madani and Shaikh Taj ud Din Al Qala'i Al Hanafi.

Scholars believe that the time Shah Waliullah spent in Medina was instrumental in shaping his world view. Most writings on the Shah believe that he went for the Hajj and returned from there bearing all the makings of a revivalist/fundamentalist who saw a return to the pristine Islamic past and the restoration of the Muslim community to its original puritanical self as the solution to all problems. In this line of thinking therefore the journey to Hejaz was instrumental in shaping his ideas. Let us now focus on this journey and see what it meant for the Shah.

THE HAJJ AND THE SUFI

In the extensive literature that exists on the epistemological writings on Sufism, the Hajj is treated as an important part of the Sufis spiritual journey. However, the texts make a sharp distinction between the spiritual/internal and material/outward expressions of this journey.[7] The texts mention two types of Hajj, the Hajj Al Ghayba and Hajj al Hudur. The first is 'hidden' journey where the pilgrim performs the rituals without ever 'seeing' the beloved and the second is the 'visible' journey where the beloved in all His glory becomes visible to the pilgrim. These spiritual dimensions aside for the pilgrims the Hajj

also had social, economic, and political concerns for many pilgrims. It was customary for instance, in the Mughal times for the emperor to send people on Hajj to bolster a religious image of the empire. Akbar had sent a retinue of pilgrims for the Hajj in 1580s. We also have the example of Gulbadan Begum, Akbar's aunt who led a group of women from the Harem for Hajj in the year 1577. Ruby Lal points out that besides being a spiritual journey, for Gulbadan, that Hajj was also an expression of freedom from the norms that were being put into place to control the lives of the women of the zenana by Akbar.[8]

Why did Shah Waliullah undertake that journey? We have already seen above that for him the journey was not just spiritual, it was also about acquiring knowledge. Travel in the pursuit of knowledge is one of the important commandments of Islam and this seems to have been the driving force for Shah Waliullah to undertake this journey despite stiff resistance from his family. Before his journey, he visited the shrines of some of the most important Sufis in the country including that of Ali Hujwiri in Lahore. Once in Makka, he performed the rituals of Hajj and left for Medina. In this period, Medina was the center of the cosmopolitan movements of Islamic scholars from around the world. It was a hub of intellectual exchange and we are told that Shah Waliullah interacted a series of scholars here and also had a series of visions and dreams. He recorded these in the text *Fawaid-ul-Haramain* upon his return from the journey. Hermansen points out that the mystic saw in these visions an acceptance of his spiritual quest.[9] On his return journey, Shah Waliullah visited the cities of Gwalior visiting the Dargah of Shaikh Ghaus, the famous Shattari Sufi before returning to Delhi.

We find hardly any evidence to support the traditional argument that Shah Waliullah had completely reverted to a puritanical/revivalist and Arab inspired Islam soon after his return from Hajj. So the articulation of his political, social and moral ideas must be grounded in other developments that were taking place around the mystic after his return to the city. It is to these that we must turn to now.

SHAH WALIULLAH AND THE POLITICAL WORLD OF EIGHTEENTH CENTURY DELHI

It is important to consider the socio-political context of Hindustan before we discuss his political thought. Shah Waliullah was born at

the time when the Mughal Empire was beginning to lose its sheen. Although most people in Delhi could not have anticipated the utter chaos that followed the death of Aurangzeb in 1707, the fact that things had changed for the Mughals would certainly have occurred to most inhabitants of the city. The cracks in the Mughal system had begun to show from the late 17th century onwards. However with his imperial acumen, Aurangzeb had kept the empire intact. Soon after his death, many groups who had been on the margins of Mughal society staked a claim for political power. In the vicinity of the imperial capital, the Jats had rebelled repeatedly infesting the supply lines of the Mughal Empire leading to a complete collapse of Mughal administration in the region. Further west, the Punjab had seen the rise of the Sikhs who offered stiff resistance to the Mughal attempts at controlling the province. In the Deccan, the Marathas had been undefeated since the seventeenth century. Emboldened by the declining Mughal power, they began to expand their operations in the heartland of the empire. Perhaps the most worrying development was the trust deficit that was created between the Mughal emperor and the nobility.

From the 1720s onwards when Shah Waliullah was busy with his intellectual pursuits, some nobles had made up their minds to withdraw themselves from imperial politics and find autonomous enclaves within the ambit of the Mughal Empire. Murshid Quli Khan in Bengal, Sadat Khan in Awadh and Nizam ul Mulk in Hyderabad founded autonomous Nawabis and preferred to work outside the structures of the Mughal Empire.[10]

The empire's borders in the North West were compromised repeatedly. It began with the invasion of Nadir Shah in the year 1739 which was followed by the repeated invasions from Ahmad Shah Abdali. These invasions not only weakened the already weak foundations of the Mughal Empire but also created immense anxiety in the elite circles. The articulation of this anxiety took many forms. From the court chroniclers who wrote Ibratnamas or books of admonition to poets who composed poignant Shahr Ashobs about the lost glory of the Mughal Empire, the intellectual elite especially in Delhi appeared to have been caught in a whirlwind of uncertainty. To them the loss of power by the Mughal state was emblematic of the decline and disappearance of the world as they knew it. They saw this as a calamity so huge that had the potential to destroy everything they held dear. In the rise of resistance

at the regional and local levels of power, they saw the rise of Mufsids and Fitna.

It is obvious that Shah Waliullah, an integral part of this social class experienced similar emotions in the eighteenth century. However unlike the others, Shah Waliullah did not merely articulate his fears and concerns about the situation at hand but chose to rectify it. As part of the class of Ulema who have been traditionally identified in the Islamic world as advisors to kings, Shah Waliullah took it upon himself to offer solutions to the problems facing not just the Mughal state but also the Muslim community in general. While not referring directly to the causes of Mughal decline, he tells us about the Byzantine empire and its loss of power in his book Hujjat Allah Al Baligha. He writes:

> You should know that the Persians and the Byzantines, since they had passed on hereditary rulership for many generations and had become engrossed in the pleasures of that world forgetting the next world, and that the devil had gained mastery over them-had become deeply involved in life's comforts, and they prided themselves on these. Scholars travelled to them from the far horizons to discover from them the fine arts of living and its comforts. Thus they continued to practice them, and some of them became more excessive in them than others and they showed off to one another in this regard, until it was said that they used to rebuke those of their leaders who wore a girdle or a crown whose value was less than a hundred thousand dirhems, or who did not have a lofty palace, a bath tub, a bathing pool, and gardens, who did not have swift riding animals and handsome slaves, who was not expansive in dispersing food, and who did not wear beautiful clothes. The citation of these would take a long time, and what you see with your own eyes of the conditions of kings of your countries makes recounting these unnecessary for you. All of this had penetrated the foundations of their way of life, and could not be removed from their hearts even if they were cut to pieces. Due to this, an incurable disease was engendered in all of the parts of the city, and a great calamity. None remained of their markets or villages, nor their rich or their poor who had not been overwhelmed, dominated, and weakened by it, and in whom it had provoked sorrows and anxieties without limits. This is because these things are not obtained without significant expenditure of wealth, and such wealth is only acquired through multiplying the taxes on the peasants, merchants, and their like, and oppressing them……God decreed the removal of their empire in favour of (the Prophet's) empire, and their leadership in favour of the Prophet's leadership, and that Khusrau would be destroyed and there should

be no Khusrau after him, and that Caesar would be destroyed and no Caesar should follow him.[11]

Shah Waliullah witnessed up close the crisis of the empire and using the shortcomings of the Byzantines he warns about possible outcomes of what was going on in India at the time. He appeared to be exasperated by the lack of political will at the Mughal court to improve the situation at hand. He critiques the 'decadence' that had become synonymous with the cultural and social life of the Mughal court and the larger population of the city of Delhi and urges people to change before a major calamity befalls them. He was also aware of the economic reasons of the crises and in what he wrote above one finds his acute understanding of the relation between excessive economic pressures on the people and the decline of Empires.

He found that the solution to the problems facing the state and the community lay not only in a political reform of the state but also in a social and moral reform of the community. This he believed could be done by returning to the study of the Ahadith. The Hujjatullah Al Baligha was a step in this direction. He tells us of the vision he had while he was in Makka of the Prophet's grandsons Hasan and Husayn appearing to him handing him a broken pen, then repairing it and saying "This is the pen of our grandfather, the Messenger of God, may God's peace and blessings be upon him."[12] In another vision he tells us that the spirit of the Prophet appeared to him and covered him with a robe. He concluded from these visions that he had been given a mandate by God himself. He writes:

> Then my Lord inspired me, after a time, of what He had written for me with the exalted Pen, that someday I would undertake this important matter, and that "the earth would be illuminated with the light of its Lord and that the rays of light would be reflected at the time of sunset, and that the divine law of Muhammad (saws) would shine forth in this age by being presented in long and loose-fitting robes of demonstrative proof. [13]

In this text Shah Waliullah urges members of the community to adopt the path of virtuousness and reject the path of the devil. He urges men and women of the community to not give into their baser instincts and remember that the following of religious injunctions in one's everyday life would much benefit their moral standing as Muslims.

He also witnessed many schisms within the community which he felt were responsible for its fall and decline. In order to address these issues, Shah Waliullah wrote extensively. He wrote didactic texts trying to warn the community of the depths it had sunk to, he wrote letters to those in power urging them to repent for their sins and wrote polemics against sectarian differences that existed in the community. Shah Waliullah strove to unite the Muslim community and bring it on to the path of righteousness.

CONCLUSION

Like all historical figures, Shah Waliullah was a man of his times. He grew up in a particularly precarious time when the larger Islamicate world was going through a series of crises. His intellectual universe was expansive, his knowledge of politics and religion was deep and so was his concern for the political and moral situation of the Muslim community. While as an intellectual he tried to make sense of the situation he found his world in, as an Alim and a Sufi of the Naqshbandi silsilah which encouraged political participation by the mystics he tried to offer solutions to the crises he saw around him. His observations were as political as they were religious, spiritual, and moral. Shah Waliullah's piety and his politics went hand in hand giving his thoughts and ideas a complexity that the category of 'revivalism' alone cannot explain.

NOTES

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DR. MOHAMMAD AJMAL

Madrasa Curriculum vis-á-vis Modern Education System in India

ABSTRACT

Madarsas and maktabs have been providing Islamic traditional education in India. They have helped in promoting literacy among Muslims. Over the centuries, they have produced academics and administrators such as Sher Shah Suri, Abul Fazal, Faizi, Todar Mal, and Fatehullah Shirazi, among a host of others. Raja Ram Mohan Roy, the Hindu reformer and the founder of the Brahmo Samaj, had got his basic education in a Madarsa.

At present, there are thousands of Islamic schools (Maktabs) spread across India. Most of the mosques have primary religious schools or maktabs attached to them, where Muslim children learn to recite the Qur'an and the basics of faith. For children who desire to specialize in religious studies and get trained as imams and maulvis, are enrolled in numerous large seminaries or Madarsahs exist throughout the country, with each sect of Muslims having its own chain of institutions. For many poor families, Madarsas are the only source of education for their children, since they charge no fees and provide free boarding and food to their students. Given the dismal level of access to education, and the increased mistrust against the curricula of government schools, Madarsas are often the only available educational option for children from poor Muslim families who have the dubious distinction of being, along with Dalits, one of the least educated communities in India.

Currently the system and scenario of education has completely changed, but the curriculum of madrasa remains the same with just a little addition of a few new subjects. The following lines will try to highlight the challenges faced by madrasa graduates and possibilities of

improvment or changes in the stereotypical type of curriculum taught and trained in Indian Madrasas.

Keywords: Madrasa curriculum, School curriculum, Modern education system in India, Challenges, Prospects, Indian Muslims

INTRODUCTION

Through depth study of history, any Madrasa like we have today is hardly seen even till the end of the fourth century of Hijrah. However, knowledge lovers and its seekers at different fronts of wide spread Islamic empires were engaged in the promotion of knowledge. The credit for establishing regular educational institutions goes to the Seljuks (1037-1140 AD) and Fatimids. (909-1171 AD)However, the Abbasid period is distinguished in the sense that all the intellectual development, scholarly achievements and the best collections of knowledge and art of the Muslims are a commemoration of this period. In the city of knowledge Baghdad, knowledge seekers quenched their thirst for intellect from far-flung places. Verandas of mosques, caves of Khanquahs, cottages of Ulama, happened to be the centres of learning and teachings. During the Abbasid period (750-1258 AD), influential and aristocrat rich people started trying to excel in the formation of Madrasas, because of which many educational institutions were established and Muslims began to reach the zenith of the acquisition and promotion of knowledge and wisdom. Abdur Rahman I (731-788 AD) laid the foundation stone of the Mosque of Cordova (785-971 AD) in Spain which was considered to be the highest learning centre of the world. Its foundation came before the "University of Azhar" (972 AD), in Cairo and the "Al-Nizamiyya of Baghdad" (1065 AD) in Iraq where not only Muslims but also Christians from the continents like Europe, Africa and Asia used to study . Abd al-Rahman I's successors developed the University of Cordobaand honored and patronized the scholars and established 32 Madrasahs in the Dar al-Khilafah of Cordoba, which provided free education.[1]

The period of the middle of the fifth century of Hijrah is of great importance in the establishment of higher educational institutions and the promotion of knowledge and education. In the same era, in 1065, the

Seljuk vizier Nizam al-Mulk (whose original name was Hasan ibn Ali) founded two big centres for higher learning in Baghdad and Nishapur called "Nezamiya" after his name, whose scope and curriculum was not limited to religious studies only, but the arrangement of teaching and research of other sciences was on a very high scale.

CURRICULA IN THE EARLY MADRASAS

Subjects taught in Madarsas are called Islamic Sciences and Studiees whichare believed to provide guidance to every aspect of human life and is based on the Qur'an and Hadith. In the early days of Islam, the followers were usually Arabs who directly could understand the language of the two sources of divine revelations. They did not need to learn all lingual subjects like non-Arabs. On the other hand, their economy was fragile and very few Arabs knew how to write. So the Prophet (saws) paid special attention within available means to meet their urgent requirements. Therefore, while some of the prisoners of war at *Badr* were offered freedom with cash compensations, some of them who knew how to write were asked to teach that to at least ten Muslims.[2]

As the time rolled by, the Companions of the Prophet (saws) went on discovering new methods to spread knowledge among the people. The First Caliph, Abu Bakr Al-Siddiq (573-634 AD) and the third Caliph, Usman bin Affan (573-656 AD) are known for their compilation of the Glorious Qur'an while Umar Farooq (582-644 AD), the second Caliph, introduced a good deal of corrections in almost every sphere of life.[3]

Till the middle of the second Hijra, the Islamic sciences were confined to Arabs. The next two centuries are known as the age of compilation and invention. When Islam spread in non-Arab countries, many new subjects were invented.[4] Arabic grammar came into existence when non-Arab Muslims failed to understand the message of Qur'an on their own. Everyday new developments forced scholars to cope with the changing need and come out with appropriate Islamic solutions. Hence, the learning materials increased, so the new subjects were added. Sciences like *Tafseer* (exegesis of the Qur'an), *Hadith* (the reports of sayings and

actions of the Prophet, saws), *Usul-al Hadith* (principles of narration of Hadith), *Usul-al Fiqh* (Islamic Jurisprudence), *Sarf (Morphology)& Nahwa* (Syntax), History, Dictionaries and so on were discovered.[5]

During 5th century of Hijrah, Imam Ghazali (1058–1111 AD) unveiled *Ilm-e Kalam* and *Mantiq* (Scholastic Theology and Logic) while countering Greek philosophies, which later became an integral part of Islamic education system.

Though the above-mentioned fields of learning were common in every Islamic country, the choices of students from place to place varied due to different local or national requirements. The Arab dominated states were inclined to the subjects like *Tafseer*, *Hadith* and *Asma'urrijal* (records of Hadith narrators). History, Literature and Poetry were popular in Islamic Spain while Persiawas fond of Logic and Philosophy. Likewise, the people of Khurasan and Mawaraunnahr (present central Asia) paid special attention to *Fiqh*, *Usul-al Fiqh* and *Tasawwuf* (spiritual and mystical dimension of Islam).[6]

AL-NIZAMIYYA MADRASA OF BAGHDAD

Al-Nizamiyya of Baghdad, one of the first Nizamiyya s, was established in 1065.[7] In July 1091, Nizam al-Mulk (1018-1092 AD) appointed the 33-year-old Al-Ghazali as a professor of the school.[8] Offering free education, it is described as one of the "biggest universities of the medieval world".[9] Ibn Tumart, the founder of the Berber Almohad dynasty (1150-1162 AD), reputedly attended the school and studied under al-Ghazali. Nizam al-Mulk's son-in-law Mughatil ibn Bakri was also employed by the school. In 1096, when al-Ghazali left the Nizamiyya, it housed 3000 students. In 1116,[10] Muhammad al-Shahrastani (1086-1153 AD) taught at the Nezamiyeh.[11] In the 1170s, statesman Beha Ud-Din ((1145-1234 AD) taught at the Nizamiyya, before he moved on to teach in Mosul.

The Persian poet Sa'di Shirazi (1210-1291 AD) studied at the Nizamiyya until 1226 AD, when he set out on a thirty-year journey. He was also among those who witnessed first-hand accounts of its destruction by Mongol Ilkhanate invaders led by Hulagu (1256-1335 AD) during the dissolution of Baghdad in the year 1258 AD. Sa'di recalls clearly days of his studies at Al-Nezamiyya in Baghdad:

"A fellow student at Nizamiyya displayed malevolence towards me, and I informed my tutor, saying: 'Whenever I give more proper answers, the envious fellow becomes offended.' The professor replied: 'The envy of thy friend is not agreeable to thee, but I know not who told thee that back-biting was commendable, if he seeks perdition through the path of envy.[12]

The Muslim rule in India began from Sultan Qutubuddin Aibak (1150-1210 AD) in Delhi. And this was the age when Central Asian Muslims devoted much importance to *Sarf*, *Nahwa*, (Morphology and Syntax) *Balaghat (*Rhetorics*)*, Literature, *Fiqh*, (Islamic Jurisprudence) *Mantiq*, (Logic) Kalam *(*Scholastic Theologo*)* and *Tasawwuf* (spiritual and mystical dimension of Islam) besides *Tafsir* (exegesis) and *Hadith (*sayings of Prophet*)*. Since the majority of Muslims who inhabited India were from Central Asia, they introduced these sciences in Indian Madrasas.

AL-NIZAMIYYA OF BAGHDAD AND ITS IMPACT ON DARS-E NIZAMI OF INDIA

Al-Nezamiyya of Baghdad played a vital role to influence the Dars-e Nizami of India. Scholars, who thought to establish the curricula and syllabi, got influenced with the curriculum of the Al-Nezamiyya of Baghdad. For the first time, Mullah Nizamuddin added books written by Indian Ulama to Madrasa curricula. There were 40 books and 13 subjects in Dars-e Nizami. Additionally, Mullah Nizamuddin added some books on mathematics and astronomy. He introduced engineering (Handasa) as a new subject and suggested a book on it. In addition to this, he replaced a few older books with more recent editions.[13]

The first Dars-e Nizami was designed to fit the needs of the time. To run the government, the Muslim rulers needed judges, doctors, educators, and administrators, for which the then Dars-e Nizami was capable of producing people in accordance with the demands of the time. One such institution, the defunct Arabic College of Delhi at Kashmiri Gate, produced eminent Indian scholars like Maulana Qasim Nanautavi, Maulana Rasheed Ahmad Gangohi, and Sir Sayed Ahmad Khan in the late 18th century AD.[14]

MADARSAS IN INDIA: 1780 ONWARDS

With the collapse of the Mughal Empire (1526-1857 AD), the British gained supremacy. The British rule (1858-1947 AD) brought about a new administrative and educational set up which changed various aspect of Indian life. The Muslim nobility lost its political power and started getting squeezed economically and educationally.[15] It gave a serious reminder to the traditional educational set up as they were deprived of their endowments in the form of free land properties and were left to depend on their own resources.

The board of directors of the East India Company (1600-1874 AD) in the early days of British domination in India, while sympathetic towards attempts to revive Indian learning, entertained no idea of introducing any system of education in the country. At the same time, the British realized that it was inescapable not to study the existing knowledge systems, especially laws, of the natives before any reforms could be introduced in the new administrative set up.[16]

In 1781, Warren Hastings (1732-1818 AD) established the Calcutta Madarsah College for Muhammedans for the study of "Muhammedan law and such other sciences as were taught in Muhammedan schools". In 1792 Jonathan Duncan (1756-1811 AD), resident at Benares, obtained permission "to establish a college in the holy city for the preservation and alleviation of laws, literature and religion of Hindus, for recovering and collecting books on the most ancient and valuable general learning and tradition whish is now existing in perhaps in some part of the globe".[17]

Interestingly, both the Madarsa in Calcutta and the Sanskrit College at Benares had one common objective: to study the Muhammedan and the Hindu laws respectively. Before introducing the Anglo-Saxon juridical system in India, the Company's magistrates and judges had to depend on Hindu Pandits and Muslim Quazis for the administration of justice. Thus in spite of the general disinclination of the Company's board of directors to introduce any system of education, the local government had to introduce both the Hindu and Mohammedan systems of education to perform the basic duty of administering law and justice. Incidentally, the Sanskrit College of Calcutta was established subsequently.[18]

The British rulers commissioned surveys of the educational institutions in the regions under their control, viz., Bengal, Bombay and Madras Presidencies. William Adam (1796-1881 AD) surveyed the native schools in Bengal and Bihar between 1835-1838 AD. In his report, Adam stated that there were a good number of native schools in Bengal and Bihar in which both Hindus and Muslims studied together.[19]

The British followed the policy of strict neutrality in religious matters. The Education Commission of 1882 AD reiterated the same position. The Indian University Commission of 1902 AD and the Calcutta University Commission 1917-19 AD also maintained the same stance of religious neutrality "in view apparently of the difficulties of the problem in a country where religion seemed to be a source of strife and disunion."[20]

Replacement of Persian as the language of the courts with the English language in 1837 AD was another blow to the Madarsa system. The Great Indian Mutiny of 1857 AD, and the subsequent transfer of authority of governance of India from the John Company to the British Crown had a very profound impact on Muslim education in India.[21] The Muslims had to face many formidable changes along with general animosity of the British rulers. They had to counter the proselytizing activities of the Christian missionaries. The Ulama and the masses rose to the occasion and started a series of Madarsas in the country.[22]

It is to be noted specially that although Dars-e Nizami was accepted as common syllabus for most of the Madrasas in India, it kept on changing through various stages at different places. Madrasas of Firangi Mahal, which beaconed the new system- 'Dars-e Nizami' had given much space to the changing world and discarded all Hadith books except one, instead they attached more importance to the subjects like Logic, Philosophy and Fiqh.[23] Whereas, in Delhi the teachers of Madrasa Rahimia kept on teaching Hadith in full length and again the Ulama of Khairabad were devotedly teaching Logic and Philosophy.[24] Therefore, Dars-e Nizami already took different shapes, much before independence of India, and was expanded into a synthesis of varied experimental curriculum with due course of time. Mufti Taqi Usmani, former Chief Justice of Pakistan, has surveyed present Madrasas in Pakistan, which are known to be following Dars-e Nizami curriculum

and found average Madrasas are teaching 72 books on 20 subjects varying from Tafseir and Hadith to Medical Science and Engineering.[25]

INITIAL STAGES OF THE MODERN EDUCATIONAL MOVEMENT

The foundation of modern educational movement in India was laid in 1853 AD when 'Lord Macaulay' (1800-1859 AD) presided over a meeting in which the participants discussed whether the Indians be educated through English medium or the Persian and Sanskrit languages remained as they were. After a hot discussion when the voting took place it was known that the number of those who voted for and against was equal. Lord Macaulay' cast his vote in favour of English and wrote in the report:

"We have to prepare a team that can represent us before the millions of our subjects. This team will be Indian as per their colour and blood but English as per their mind, understanding and opinion".[26]

In short, Ulama did not stop Muslims from modern education but they only opposed the propaganda that was against them to kill their spirit, faith and culture and undoubtedly they were right. Yes, this is also a fact that in some circumstances the balance could not be maintained and a few of the Ulama showed strictness more than required.

CONTRIBUTION OF MADRASA' TO INDIAN EDUCATION SYSTEM

In India, there are primarily two types of madrasas. Public funded Madrasas which receive no aid whatsoever from the Government. Others are associated with state governments, such as those in Bihar, Bengal, Jharkhand, and Assam. Although small, these Madrasas receive funding from their respective governments in the form of salaries and grants. As a result, apart from Islamic subjects, the curricula of these Madrasas are largely comparable to those of state-sponsored schools or colleges.

On the other hand, the first type of community based Muslim religious educational institutions are again of four types- (a) Maktab

(b) Darul Qur'an (c) Madrasa and (d) Jamia which are institutions as we call primary and high schools, colleges and universities in English[27]. Generally, people know all these four types of Islamic educational institutions as Madrasas. We should differentiate them and understand their role in the Muslim society separately.

PRESENT CURRICULA OF MADRASAS IN INDIA

Given that some institutions follow their own model, therefore, it is impossible to make any general observations about the current Madrasa curriculum. Thus, let's take a look at some renowned Islamic institutions' curriculaas the majority of India's non-governmental Madrasas are either associated with them or adhere to their educational system and curricula.

Darul Uloom Deoband

Deoband's Darul Uloom offers a thorough curriculum that is actually a synthesis of three educational institutions from recent history. The three are Mulla Nizamuddin's Firangi Mahal in Lucknow, Shah Waliullah's Madrasa Rahimia in Delhi, and Allama Fazl-e Haq's Madrasa in Khairabad.

"Darul Uloom Deoband not only protected the greatness of the subjects but also it played a key role to advance them. It has prepared a mixed syllabus that has the characteristics of the three centres (Tafsir and Hadith, Fiqh and Usool-e Fiqh, Logic and Philosophy) and is applied by the majority of Madrasas. Darul Uloom has brought about some changes in view of the changing requirements and needs of the hour. It did not reject the financial aspect of education as it attempted to go with the era."[28]

Darul Uloom Deoband's present syllabus is of four phases- primary, middle, high and specialization. Specialization on any subject, which requires extra two to five years is not compulsory; it is therefore, if a student is interested and he is eligible for the course, he can acquire expertise in any specific field after passing *Fadhilah*. It takes eight years to have received the degree of *Fadhilah* (graduate) of Islamic sciences from Darul Uloom Deoband. In the primary five (and pre-

primary two) years of Deoband's syllabi students are taught Urdu, Persian, Hindi, English, Mathematics, Geography, Arabic Grammar and Composition.[29] Although the basic requirement of knowledge for a student to deal with this modern world is already fulfilled by the primary syllabus of Darul Uloom Deoband, many Madrasas that are otherwise fully following the curriculum of Deoband continue modern subjects like, science and English to the middle standard too.[30]

Before specializing, Darul Uloom of Deoband requires fifteen years of education. This Indian institution has a vast number of unofficially affiliated Madrasas that follow its model, more particularly Madrasas in India,Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, and Sri Lanka, among other countries, adopt its curriculum.

Darul Uloom Nadwatul Ulama Lucknow

In light of the evolving circumstances and demands of the time, Nadwatul Ulama of Lucknow also made some significant changes to the traditional curriculum of the Madrasas. It encompasses a total of sixteen years. The primary stage, which lasts for five years including pre-primary classes, offers basic instruction in Urdu, Hindi, English, arithmetic, geography, general science, and other subjects. It also provides a strong religious foundation for the student body.[31]

Three years are required for the Secondary Stage. In addition to English, this stage gives students a solid foundation in Persian and Arabic grammar, literature, and composition. The higher secondary stage is a two-year program that spans the ninth and tenth years of the curriculum. In addition to teaching religious studies and Islamic sciences, it also offers instruction in Arabic, Persian, and English. In addition to Arabic literature and other areas of Islamic studies, the graduation (Alimiyat) stage, a four-year course that is equivalent to the graduation course under the western educational system, offers instruction in Islamic law (Fiqh), traditions (Hadith), and the Qur'ānic commentary (Tafsir). The Alimiyat course at Nadwatul Ulama has unique features including higher proficiency in Arabic literature and English proficiency equivalent to the Intermediate standard of the U. P. Board of High School and Intermediate Education. The Post-Graduate (Fazilah) is a two-year program that offers instruction in Arabic

literature and other fields of Islamic study. Similar to Darul Uloom of Deoband, Nadwatul Ulama of Lucknow offers facilities for conducting research, known as Takmil (Specialization), in the subjects taught at the Fazilah course.[32]

Jamiatul Hidaya Jaipur

In order to adapt to modern challenges and deal with life's realities, a new institution called Jamiatul Hidaya was founded in Jaipur in 1986. This institution actually represented the third and most recent trend in the Indian Madrasa curriculum. The same Jamia's rector, Mohammad Fazlur Rahman Mujaddidi, claims that Jamiatul Hidaya is a movement itself that aims to preserve Islamic traditions and values, disseminate religious knowledge, and instruct and train Muslims in modern science in line with current industrial and technological trends for their overall development.[33]

The Jamia is distinct from the two other groups of Madrasas led by Deoband and Nadwa due to the curriculum's emphasis on technical education. Many Madrasas have started to adopt the Jamiatul Hidaya curriculum because of its usefulness and relevance to the situation today. Madrasa Falah-e Darain in Turkesar, Gujarat, and Jamia Sabilus Salam in Barkus, Hyderabad, are the most recent examples of Madrasas that have recently adopted the Jamia Hidaya curriculum model.[34]

However, the Madrasas in India currently follow three different patterns of curriculum, each of which is independently led by Darul Uloom Deoband, Darul Uloom Nadwatul Ulama Lucknow, and Jamiatul Hidaya Jaipur.

SECULAR SUBJECTS IN MADRASA CURRICULUM

People commonly perceive that Madrasas impart education on pure theology and they do not teach secular subjects. Madrasas are repeatedly blamed to be the centers of dogmatism, orthodoxy and intolerance where a particular brand of generation is nurtured, which is very agonizing and needs to be checked on the basis of the prevailing facts. It is worth noting that one-third of the aforesaid three categories of Madrasa curricula includes purely secular subjects. For instance, all

Languages, Logic, History, Elocution, Philosophy, Scholasticism, Geography, Metaphysics, Arithmetic, Biography, Anthropology, Civics, Rhetoric, Philology, Calligraphy and all sciences are completely secular and are, somehow or the other, taught in modern institutions too.[35] The only difference is that in Madrasas these subjects are taught in Arabic that is the language of Muslims' religious scripture- the Qur'an.

The subjectsconsidered to be theological are- chapters on Glorious Qur'an, Hadith, Islamic Law, Aqaid (Beliefs), Mysticism etc., which are again partly theological and partly secular. For example, the Glorious Qur'an, which is the most pure Islamic book in the curriculum, has 6236 verses and out of these only about 500 verses are related to commandments. The rest 5736 verses are related to parables, examples, universe, and manners and so on and so forth. Likewise Hadith, the second only theological subject, includes more secular subjects than religious commandments. Fiqh- Islamic Law deals mostly with our day-to-day life and dealings with others.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRESENT MADRASA CURRICULUM

There is no denying that Madrasas have contributed significantly to the spread of Islamic teachings and education in the Indian subcontinent. Without Madrasas, the very identity of Muslims in India might have been in danger. Therefore, it is impossible to ignore the contribution made by madrasas to Muslims in particular, the Serva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) national movement, and the Universalization of Elementary Education (UEE) in general.[36]

At the same time, madrasas must acknowledge that they must adapt to the twenty-first century because significant changes are taking place and as a result, they will face a variety of fresh difficulties. The sooner these issues are investigated, the better for the community as a whole. The Madrasa system as a whole has some flaws. Here are few examples of the crucial issues involved:

(a) Absence of a centralized agency to exercise control on all Madrasas or at least on those within a particular state. Some Madrasas follow their own designated syllabus, which is a hindrance for smooth functioning and overall quality education.

All small Madrasas should be affiliated to one Jamia or at least to a major Madrasas of the state and should adopt its syllabus.

(b) Lack of modern teaching methodology in most of the renowned Madrasas. Every invention is not harmful; thus trying useful new techniques of teachings is a crying need for Madrasas.

(c) Absence of ability in the PRODUCTS to cope with the modern world. Meaningful research has become an issue of the past for the Madrasas. Present authorities of Madrasas must perform their duty to reform the curriculum at par with their counter parts to meet the challenges of the time.[37]

Indian Madrasas should undergo a thorough revision of their current curriculum in light of the aforementioned gaps in the functioning of madrasas and the fact that they are deeply rooted in the very goals of post-1857 sets of madrasas in India—to safeguard Islamic teachings and offer religious counseling to common Muslims. They must deliver outcomes that can at least satisfy the intensely religious need of the average man in the contemporary world of the twenty-first century. The following are my suggestions for changing the Indian Madrasas' current curriculum.

1. It is necessary for an Islamic scholar to know the fundamental beliefs and thoughts of the world religions that directly confront with Islam and have their preaching missions in the world. For this purpose, the present curriculum should have a permanent subject on 'Major World Religions' in which the student can have a cursory look on the history, beliefs and distinct features of major religions and sects.'
2. All of the effects that permeate through contemporary western education have their roots in English. And even today, some Ulama do not study it as a special subject; they are uninterested in Western sciences and their recent discoveries, so their comments and opinions cannot convince those who have unintentionally been duped by certain Western media. The Islamic world was in a similar predicament during the Abbasid Caliphate, when Greek Logic and Philosophy predominated everywhere. The Ulama of that era included the Logic and Philosophy books in the curriculum and confronted the threat, which eventually met

a natural demise because those philosophies were breeding false ideas. The Ulama of that time included Logic and Philosophy texts in the curriculum and fought the threat, which eventually perished through natural causes. As a result, the world of Ulama today needs to take the same kind of academic action that their predecessors did against Greek philosophy earlier.

3. The very dignity of Ulama is being ruined by the false idea that people who can read, write, and speak English are considered to be educated. Sometimes their students experience inferiority complexes. Every Madrasa should include reasonable English and computer education in their curriculum to dispel this false belief.
4. Ulama should know the developments that are taking place in the field of business and economy. The modern age has brought about so many complex and unique ways of dealings that are beyond the reach of Fiqh books taught in Madrasas. Therefore, it has become mandatory for an Alim to have needful knowledge of the modern economy. The current curriculum of Madrasas does not have even a single book on this topic. Justice Mufti Taqi Usmani, the renowned economist, asserts that he is sure 'the Fiqh students in Madrasas will grasp and cover the matters in a period shorter than the college students do'.
5. The world has been split into two opposing groups as a result of the new political and economic theories. Every developing and underdeveloped nation is engaged in a conflict between the two ideologies of capitalism and socialism. The third option from the Qur'an should be presented by Ulama in front of the general public with sound reasoning and discernment. However, in order to offer a new theory, one must first thoroughly understand the ones that already exist. Only then can one honestly compare the two and propose an intelligent solution. Madrasas must reflect on the issue and make logical adjustments to their curricula.[38]

CONCLUSION

Madrasas have a history of being autonomous institutions, even under Muslim suzerainty. All large and small Madrasas in India have reportedly

enjoyed complete autonomy in all facets of their functioning since their establishment during the Middle Ages, according to educationists and experts in the field. They have exercised independence in creating their own curricula, employing their own methods of instruction, and internalizing student training. They were never brought under the control of a common regulating or examining body, even during the Middle Ages when many of them received grants and endowments from the kings and nobles. On contrary, Indian Ulama continued rejecting government assistance believing it to be un-Islamic as well as hypocrite and antithetical.

On the basis of this study, the issues to which fingers were raised and the points thoroughly discussed under the proposed recommendations, may play a key role to reform the system of the education of Madrasas in India; if such bodies agree to adopt the solutions, it would be for interest of the Muslims society and institutions together. It is also pertinent, in the current scenario that the Madrasas in India, must come forward to maintain status-quo, as far as modern education system in India is concerned to cope with the challenges and find way out to execute the resolution.

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The Orientalists' Role in Enriching Arabic and Islamic Learning

ABSTRACT

This article explores the multifaceted contributions of Orientalists to the fields of Arabic and Islamic learning, highlighting their profound interest in the themes and the significant literary works produced by them. Despite criticism and pejorative connotation, Orientalists played a vital role in bridging the gap between East and West, particularly through their exploration of culture and religion. Beginning with an examination of the definition, history, and origins of Orientalism, the article positively delineates how scholars such as Silvestre de Sacy, Nöldeke, Goldziher, Brockelmann, Regis Blachere, John Arberry, Philip Hitti, and many others enriched Arabic studies and Western understanding of Islamic thought and culture. Their literary contributions served as foundational texts that shaped the academic landscape of Oriental studies. Moreover, the article underscores the critical role of Orientalists in the collection, preservation, and translation of manuscripts, which safeguarded invaluable literary and non-literary works for future generations. This aspect of their work not only facilitated the transmission of knowledge but also highlighted the importance of these texts in understanding the complexities of Islamic civilization for the Westerners. However, the article also addresses the inherent biases present in Orientalist scholarship, emphasizing the necessity for contemporary scholars to engage critically with these contributions. By recognizing both the achievements and limitations of Orientalism, the article advocates for a more nuanced understanding of the intricate relationship between Eastern and Western intellectual traditions, fostering dialogue and mutual respect in today's globalized context.

Keywords: Orientalism, Arabic Literature, Manuscripts, Translation, Culture, Civilization, Islamic studies, Legacy

INTRODUCTION

In the vast field of academic inquiry, the study of Orientalism has long intrigued scholars and opened doors to meaningful exploration. At its core, Orientalism represents the Western world's engagement with East Asian and, notably, Muslim Arab cultures—a dynamic that has shaped cultural, literary, and intellectual landscapes across continents. Driven by deep curiosity and a desire to bridge knowledge gaps, early Orientalist scholars immersed themselves in the Arabic language, Islamic theology, and the intricacies of Eastern thought. This dedication revealed the richness of Arabic literature and the depth of Islamic philosophical and spiritual traditions, contributing to a legacy of understanding that resonates even today.

The contributions of Orientalists have brought invaluable insights to the study of Arabic literature and Islamic themes, serving as pathways to comprehending the historical, linguistic, and cultural evolution of the Arab and Muslim worlds. Through rigorous research and translation efforts, they uncovered and preserved literary masterpieces, advancing global awareness of classical Arabic texts and Islamic scholarship. Their works have provided future generations with crucial resources for understanding Arabic literature's thematic diversity and its complex interplay with Islamic culture.

While some aspects of Orientalism have attracted critique, particularly from Muslim scholars concerned with accuracy and representation, the legacy of these scholars remains a testament to the power of cross-cultural exchange. Their achievements underscore an enduring belief in the transformative impact of intellectual exploration and the spirit of discovery, which has fostered a more nuanced appreciation of Arabic and Islamic studies worldwide. Before examining the significant body of work produced by Orientalists, it is essential to establish a foundational understanding of Orientalism—its historical origins, its pivotal role in academic development, and the unique cultural bridge it has built. This foundation will set the stage for our in-depth analysis, appreciating many

facets of Orientalist contributions to the appreciation and preservation of Eastern knowledge.

ORIENTALISM: DEFINITION AND ORIGIN

The term "Orientalism" is derived from a Latin word *"oriens"* meaning «east» (literally "Rising Sun"). This is the opposite of the term Occident. In terms of the Old World, Europe was considered to be "The West" or Occidental, and the furthest known Eastern extremity was *"The East"* or *"The Orient."*[1] It is used in art to refer to the works of many Western 19th-century artists, who specialized in oriental subjects. Initially confined to the realm of art, where Western artists depicted the romanticized landscapes and customs of the Orient, Orientalism has evolved into a multidimensional field of study. At its essence, Orientalism embodies a scholarly endeavor for the study of philosophies, history, religion, culture, language, customs, traditions and social structures of the eastern regions in general and of Islam and the Arabs in particular. Hence, an Orientalist is a scholar who deals with any of these subjects. Orientalism has broadened its scope to encompass a myriad of Eastern religions, customs, and geographies, yet amidst this expansive landscape, the focal point of Orientalist inquiry remains steadfastly fixed on the rich tapestry of Islamic culture and civilization, as well as the literary gems of Arabic literature.

In fact, interpretations of Orientalism vary among scholars and cultural observers. Some great scholars like the esteemed Arabic author 'Umar Farrūkh and Abdur Rahman Habnnaka define it as the Western scholarly pursuit of Islamic sciences, history, language, and culture. The later says: "الاستشراق هو اهتمام علماء الغرب بعلوم المسلمين وتاريخهم ولغاتهم وآدابهم وعاداتهم ومعتقداتهم وأساطيرهم."[2] 'Orientalism reflects the interest of the Western scholars in Islamic sciences, history, language, culture traditions, beliefs and myths'. But conversely Edward Said -the author of the masterpiece *"Orientalism"* (1978) - preferred a general definition as a set of knowledge related to Eastern regions that encompasses the entirety of Eastern peoples, languages, histories, and civilizations. To him, "Orientalism is a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between "the

Orient" and (most of the time) "the Occident." Thus a very large mass of writers, among whom are poets, novelists, philosophers, political theorists, economists, and imperial administrators, have accepted the basic distinction between East and West as the starting point for elaborate theories, epics, novels, social descriptions, and political accounts concerning the Orient, its people, customs, "mind," destiny, and so on."[3] This nuanced concept continues to intrigue and inspire, inviting scholarly exploration into the captivating allure of the East.

The origins of Orientalism have been a subject of scholarly debate, with various perspectives offered. Some trace its roots back to the earliest encounters between Islam and other cultures, such as the interaction between the Prophet Muhammad (SAWS) and the Christians of *Najran*. Some others pioneer Muslim scholars such as Dr. *Muṣṭafa al-Sibāi*, argues that the contact between Christians and Muslims in Andalusia marked its true beginnings.[4] However, the prevailing view, notably championed by Edward Said, posits that Orientalism as a formal system of knowledge crystallized in the 17th century. This coincided with the establishment of academic chairs in Arabic and other oriental languages in Western universities such as the Thomas Aadams chair of Arabic was established at Cambridge University in 1632, but Orientalism reached its zenith during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, a period marked by the imperialistic ambitions of Britain, France, and later the USA. This era witnessed a surge in scholarly and cultural engagement with the Orient, often serving as a tool for justifying and perpetuating Western dominance. The Anglo-French-American experience of Orientalism became deeply entwined with the project of imperialism, shaping perceptions and interactions between the East and the West.

Regardless of the origins, Orientalists delved into Islamic themes and focused on Arabic language and literature and thus made invaluable contributions to these subjects. Initially, they translated religious, historical, and literary texts from Arabic, Persian, and Sanskrit into their own languages. Over time, they immersed themselves directly in writing in Oriental languages. In the realm of Arabic poetry, they meticulously studied the works of prominent poets such as *Imru-ul Qays*, *ʿAntara, al-Mutanabbi, Abul ʿAlā al-Mʿarri, al-Hallaj,* and *Ibn Fārid*.[5] Employing historical and philological methods, along with linguistic principles and modern sciences, some focused on pre-Islamic poetry. Many delved

into Middle Eastern history, exploring the Prophet's biography, Muslim interactions with other nations and religious groups, and analyzing the concept of *'Wahy'* (Revelation) and its historical context in Islam with their own perspective. Special attention was given to the holy *Quran*, its recording, compilation, development of its written form, and variant recitations. Similarly, they scrutinized the corpus of *Ḥadith* (Prophetic traditions), questioning authenticity according to their own ideology and set agendas. While Orientalism adapted a more liberal approach towards many subjects in response to evolving global dynamics, its treatment of Islamic themes remained notably biased and influenced by colonial agendas. Despite conducting thorough studies on Islamic topics, underlying biases often compromised the objectivity of their research. Nonetheless, it is important to acknowledge and appreciate the positive contributions made within this context. In exploring the valuable contributions of Orientalists to the enrichment of Arabic literature and Islamic heritage, attention can be drawn to the following three key aspects: (1) The Orientalists' profound interest in Arabic and Islamic themes, (2) their significant contributions, (3) and their pivotal role in the preservation and collection of manuscripts and the translation of literary and Non-Literary texts:

1. Orientalists' Profound Interest in Arabic and Islamic Themes:

Orientalists have shown significant interest in Arabic and Islamic Studies, contributing immensely to the study, preservation, and analysis of Islamic and Arabic texts. This interest began as early as the 8th century but gained momentum in the 18th and 19th centuries, as scholars sought to understand Islamic culture, literature, and sciences. They wrote thousands of books on oriental subjects. In a period of only one hundred and fifty years (1800-1950), they wrote around sixty thousand books on the oriental subjects,[6] out of which a considerable number are dedicated to the Islamic theme and Arabic language and literature. Orientalists generally mastered the Arabic language and grasped it well. This was what enabled them to compose articles in Arabic and write books in the same medium from their own point of view. The initial pioneers were intrigued by Arabic language and literature but they didn't necessarily limit themselves to literature alone. Take William Bedwell (1561-1632), hailed as the 'father of Arabic studies' in England by Lewis, for example.

His interests ranged widely, encompassing etymology, mathematics, chronology, and more. One of the earliest figures was Edward Pococke (1604–1691), who translated key Arabic texts and taught Arabic at Oxford University. His contemporary, Ludovico Marracci (1612–1700), produced a well-regarded Latin translation of the Quran. His work was one of the first scholarly attempts to render the Quran into a European language with precision. Later, William Jones (1746–1794) founded the Asiatic Society and translated classical Arabic poetry, bringing the nuances of Arab culture to Western audience.

The early Orientalists' investigations into Arabic and Islamic subjects tended to be selective rather than thorough. Later in-depth examination of Arabic and Islamic literature emerged and it was led by scholars such as D. S. Margoliouth (1858-1940) and R. A. Nicholson (1868-1945). During the Middle Ages, Orientalists showed their interest into Arabic and Islamic themes and many Arabic reference books such as *"The Book of Optics"*, *"The Canon of Medicine"*, *"The Incoherence of Philosophers"*, and *"the Elements of Astronomy"* were translated, however it was the late eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century when they showed immense interest in Arabic subjects and Islamic themes. They began collecting manuscripts, writing and classifying literary books, and with direct contact through Napoleon's campaign against Egypt in 1798, France's occupation of Algeria in 1832, and Tunisia in 1881, the tributaries of manuscripts and studies on literary aspects increased. A big number of Orientalists enthusiastically worked in Arab universities, especially in Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco, and Egypt and they opened French centers and institutes through which they were able to get a closer look at Arabic language, its rich literature and branches of Islamic sciences. This contact opened vistas of research before them and they wrote many books on poetry, prose, linguistics, rhetoric, Quran and Hadith studies, Islamic Jurisprudence, philosophy, history, Sufism and Mysticism etc. Through meticulous study and analysis, they illuminated the beauty and complexity of Arabic language and literature, fostering cross-cultural appreciation and scholarly exchange in varied subjects of their interest. Their fascination stemmed from several motivations: intellectual curiosity, religious study, colonial ambitions, and sometimes even a genuine appreciation of the rich intellectual heritage found in Islamic civilization. Orientalist studies were institutionalized in

European universities, with chairs established for Arabic and Islamic studies. Centers like the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) in London and similar institutions across Europe and the U.S. became influential in producing research and training scholars in Arabic and Islamic studies. Orientalists contributed to laying a scientific foundation for the study of Arabic and Islamic sciences in the West. While some of their interpretations were later critiqued by Muslim scholars as being biased or influenced by colonial and evangelical agendas, their works nevertheless significantly shaped the academic field of Arabic and Islamic studies in the West.

2. Orientalists' Significant Literary Contributions:

The study of Arabic and Islamic sciences has been a focal point for Orientalists for centuries. Their scholarly endeavors extended beyond mere translation, as they delved into the nuances of Arabic poetry, prose, and linguistic structures, Qur'ānic studies, Islamic history, and jurisprudence. Through meticulous analysis and interpretation, Orientalists shed light on the intricate beauty of Arabic literary works, enriching global appreciation of this rich literary tradition. Furthermore, Orientalists played a crucial role in promoting cross-cultural dialogue and by bridging linguistic and cultural barriers through their translations. Overall, their literary contributions have been instrumental in fostering a deeper understanding and appreciation of Arabic and Islamic literature on a global scale.

Among the illustrious figures who shine in the tapestry of Orientalist scholarship are Thomas Erpenius (1584-1624), Albert Schultense (1686-1750), Christian Friedrich De Schunurrer (1742-1822), Antoine Isaac Silvestre de Sacy (1758-1838), Theodor Nöldeke (1836-1930), Ignaz Goldziher (1850-1921), Karl Brockelmann (1868-1956), R.A. Nicholson (1868-1945), Evariste Levi-Provençal (1894-1956), Regis Blachere (1900-1973), Arthur John Arberry (1905-1969), Armand Abel (1903-1973), Philip Khuri Hitti (1886-1978), and H.A.R. Gibb (1895-1971). Their scholarly endeavors have left an indelible mark upon the canvas of Arabic and Islamic scholarship, enriching it with depth, insight, and profound appreciation. Let us now focus on the contribution of some of them briefly in the following:

Baron Silvestre De Sacy (1758–1838) was a pioneering French

orientalist and linguist whose extensive work laid the foundation for modern Arabic and Islamic studies in Europe. He is best known for his scholarly approach to classical Arabic language and literature, as well as his studies in Islamic law and culture. The erudite linguist immersed himself in the lyrical tapestry of Arabic poetry, meticulously studying works such as *"the Mu'allaqah of Labīd"* and curating a treasury of Arabic verse, including the enchanting compositions of *Ibn al-Fāriḍ*. De Sacy's contributions included publishing critical editions and translations of key Arabic texts, such as *Hariri's Maqamat* and selections from *Kalila wa Dimna*, which introduced European audience to the richness of Arabic literary traditions.[7] He also made a study of *"Alfiyatu Ibn Malik"*. Furthermore, he penned down the following landmark Arabic Textbooks: 1-*Grammaire Arabe* (2 vols., 1st ed. 1810), 2-*Chrestomathie Arabe* (3 vols., 1806), 3-*Anthologie Grammaticale* (1829).[8] His works served as an essential reference for scholars for decades. His methodical and comprehensive approach to Semitic languages influenced subsequent generations of orientalists and linguists. By establishing the foundation for academic orientalism and fostering a nuanced understanding of Islamic and Arabic heritage, De Sacy's legacy significantly shaped the development of Middle Eastern studies in Europe.

Theodor Noldeke (1836–1930), a noted German Orientalist worked whole life as an expert of Semitic languages and Islamic history and civilization. His works included several grammar books and history. He interestingly studied pre-Islamic poetry and Arabic Grammar and made some extraordinary works which are of great use for those interested in Oriental studies. He published a book entitled as *"Anthologies of Arabic Poetry"*. Similarly, "A further important field of Nöldeke's research was Iranian history and literature. In 1879, he published a translation from the Arabic Chronicle of *al-Ṭabarī*, entitled *"Geschichte der Perser und Araber zur Zeit der Sasaniden"* ("History of the Persians and Arabs in the time of the Sasanians"). His relevant contributions to the Encyclopaedia Britannica were reworked in German and published in 1887 as *Aufsätze zur persischen Geschichte* (Essays on Persian history). Additional fields of Nöldeke's research were comparative Semitic linguistics and Old Testament."[9] One of his works is *"Diwaanu Urwah Bin al_Ward"*. He presented its annotated German translation. His works includes *"Dirasaat Fi al-Lugha al-Fusha"* (Studies in Standard Arabic). He

made a study of *'Muallaqaat al-Khams'* and wrote notes on *"Kaleelah wa Dimnah"*. But of all the most important work which got much fame and popularity among the circles of the learned scholars of the west is *"Geschichte des Qorans"* ("The History of the Qur'an"). It first appeared in 1860 and then came the revised version of his work in which he tried to make the order of the Quranic chapters and invented his own arrangements with his philological approach.[10] In fact, he was among the most significant scholars of Near Eastern Studies of his day. His works, particularly *The History of the Qur'an*, advanced Western understanding of the Qur'an's composition and chronology. However, his Eurocentric and philological approach lacked sensitivity to Islamic perspectives, sometimes projecting external biases onto the text. While his research laid a scholarly groundwork, it is viewed as overlooking the Qur'an's theological and cultural significance within the Muslim tradition.

Carl Brocklemann (1868-1956) is also one of the well-known German orientalists. He was a disciple of Noldeke and completed his Ph.D. under his supervision. He was a pivotal figure in the field of Arabic and Islamic studies, whose contributions have profoundly shaped the academic landscape. His work primarily centered on the history of Arabic literature and the development of Islamic civilization, and he is best known for his seminal text, *"Geschichte der Arabischen Literatur"* (History of Arabic Literature), first published in 1913. It is considered one of the fundamental reference books in the field of Arabic literature, offering a comprehensive overview of Arabic literary tradition from the pre-Islamic period through the modern era. This work not only cataloged a vast array of literary figures and movements but also contextualized them within the broader scope of Islamic history and culture. His analysis of the evolution of literary forms, such as poetry and prose, provided insights into the socio-political and cultural dynamics of the Arab world. It is undeniable fact that Brockelmann produced a wealth of fundamental publications that determined a new direction in oriental studies. His contribution to the field of Arabic literature and history is seen as the milestone for the generations to come.[11]

Furthermore, Brockelmann's contributions extended beyond literature. He was deeply engaged in the study of Islamic theology,

philosophy, and science, recognizing the interconnectedness of these fields within the Islamic tradition. His emphasis on the historical development of Islamic thought and its influence on various domains of knowledge laid the groundwork for future interdisciplinary studies in the West. Brockelmann also played a significant role in the institutionalization of Arabic studies in Europe, advocating for the importance of the Arabic language and its literature in the academic curriculum. His efforts helped to establish Arabic as a vital field of study, influencing generations of scholars and students.

Ignaz Goldziher (1850–1921) was a Hungarian scholar and a foundational figure in the study of Arabic and Islamic studies in Europe. He is known for his profound knowledge of Islamic theology, jurisprudence, and history. Goldziher was among the first Western scholars to apply modern critical and philological methods to Islamic texts, particularly to *Hadith* literature. His pioneering work, *Muhammedanische Studien* ("Muslim Studies"), examined Islamic traditions and literature with an emphasis on historical development, social context, and textual analysis, highlighting the human elements in religious texts. His studies influenced generations of western scholars, and his emphasis on understanding Islam through its historical and cultural contexts remains a cornerstone in his works. His works on Hadith studies is recognized for its depth and critical methodology in the West, but in fact he is projecting Western skepticism onto Islamic sources. His approach undermined traditional authenticity and overlooked the spiritual and contextual aspects of Hadiths. While his contributions informed Orientalist scholarship, they are seen as neglecting the inherent religious and cultural dimensions of Islamic teachings.

His some other books include *"Mythology Among the Hebrews and Its Historical Development"*, *"Muhammad and Islam"*, *"Schools of Koranic Commentators"*, *"Introduction to Islamic Theology and Law"*, *"The Zahiris: Their Doctrine and Their History"*, *"Hebrews Mythology"*. He also cast his scholarly gaze upon the literary treasures of Arabic language and carried out meticulous works such as *"A Short History of Classical Arabic Literature"* which continue to illuminate the path for scholars and enthusiasts alike. Besides his books and articles, his personal records

got published in German as *"Tagebuch"*, which includes his views and feelings about the Islamic faith.[12]

Reynold Alleyne Nicholson (1868-1945), was an eminent English scholar and a prominent figure in Arabic and Islamic studies, renowned for his extensive contributions to the understanding of Islamic literature and Sufism. His work in the early 20th century focused on translating and interpreting key Arabic texts, making them accessible to a broader audience. One of Nicholson's significant achievements was his translation of the *"Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam"* which introduced Persian poetry to English readers. His translations often combined linguistic precision with literary sensitivity, capturing the essence of the original works.

Similarly, Nicholson published important studies on Sufi literature, notably his magnum opus was on *Mawlānā Jalāluddīn Rūmi's "Mathnavi"* which highlighted the spiritual dimensions of Sufism and its impact on Islamic thought.[13] Nicholson's scholarship also encompassed the broader historical and cultural contexts of Arabic literature, contributing to the understanding of Islamic philosophy and theology. His writings emphasized the interconnectedness of literary and spiritual traditions within Islam, enriching the academic discourse around these subjects. Among his other translated works are *"Kashf Al-Mahjoob"* by Ali Hujwiri and *"Asrar-i-Khudi"* by Muhammad Iqbal.[14] Moreover, Nicholson's role in teaching and mentoring future scholars helped establish Arabic and Islamic studies as a recognized academic discipline in the West. His legacy continues to influence contemporary scholarship, particularly in the fields of Islamic mysticism and classical Arabic literature.

Regis Blachère (1900-1973), a distinguished scholar of Arabic culture and literature, made lasting contributions to the field through his in-depth exploration of Arabic poetry and literature. His work brought new light to the poetic expressions of legendary figures, including *al-Mutanabbī*, offering nuanced commentaries that underscored his profound understanding of Arabic poetics. Blachère's scholarship extended to prominent poets of the Arabic Renaissance, such as *Ibrahim al-Yaziji*, *Ahmad Shawqi*, and *Hafez Ibrahim*, capturing the spirit of their contributions to modern Arabic literature.

Among his notable works is "*Tārīkh al-Adab al-ʿArabī*" ("History of Arabic Literature"), a foundational text that Dr. Ibrahim al-Kilani translated into Arabic. His *"Mukhtārāt min al-ʿArabiyyah al-Fuṣḥā"* provides a carefully curated selection of classical Arabic, showcasing the linguistic richness of the language. Blachère also delved into Arabic lexicography, with works such as *"Dirāsāt fī Adab al-Amthāl"* ("Studies in the Literature of Proverbs") and the critically acclaimed *"Al-Laḥẓāt al-Fāṣilah fī al-Adab al-ʿArabī: Taṣawwur Jadīd"* ("Defining Moments in Arabic Literature: A New Perspective"), which reflects his innovative approach to the study of Arabic literature. Through these contributions, Blachère not only advanced the study of Arabic literature and lexicography but also shaped Western understanding of Arab intellectual heritage.[15]

Arthur John Arberry (1905-1969), a towering figure in British Orientalism, dedicated his life to unraveling the intricate beauty of Arabic and Persian literature, producing translations and scholarly works that remain invaluable to academia. With a remarkable portfolio of around 90 books—spanning translations, critical studies, and editorial contributions—Arberry significantly advanced the field of Oriental studies. His scholarly journey was particularly distinguished by his dedication to Sufi studies, where he became instrumental in introducing Western audiences to the mystical works of Rumi, whose poetry he translated with deep sensitivity and insight.

Arberry's renowned works include Sufism: An Account of the Mystics of Islam, the seven odes, aspects of Islamic civilization, Revelation and Reason in Islam, Classical Persian Literature, Oriental Essays, and Specimens of Arabic and Persian Paleography. Yet, his magnum opus is his translation of the Holy Quran titled as *"Kuran Interpreted"*. It is celebrated for its linguistic grace and fidelity to the original Arabic. Arberry's contributions have not only illuminated Arabic and Persian literature but have also deepened the West's understanding of Islamic spirituality, poetry, and philosophy, making his legacy a cornerstone of Oriental scholarship.[16]

Philip Khuri Hitti (1886-1978), a foundational figure in Arabic and Middle Eastern studies, played a pivotal role in establishing Arabic studies in the United States, significantly impacting Western perceptions of the Arab and Islamic worlds. His extensive body of

work has shaped generations of scholars and students. In his renowned book, *"History of the Arabs"* (London: Macmillan, 1937), Hitti offers a detailed account of Arab civilization, famously describing it as "a world of contrasts and extremes, of brilliant achievements and periods of dark stagnation"[17]. This work is highly regarded for its comprehensive narrative on Arab history, culture, and influence. In *"The Arabs: A Short History"* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1943), Hitti condenses the Arab people's history, highlighting the Abbasid era as a period of remarkable intellectual activity, which he argues brought unprecedented advancements in philosophy, science, and literature.[18] *"The Syrians in America"* (New York: George H. Doran, 1924) explores the experiences of Arab immigrants, with Hitti noting the "adaptation of the Syrian immigrants to the American environment and their contributions to American society."[19].

In "The Origins of the Druze People and Religion" (New York: Columbia University Press, 1928), Hitti delves into the Druze community, describing its beliefs as "a unique blend of mysticism and Islamic philosophy, deeply rooted in the social fabric of the Middle East."[20] This work remains significant in religious studies. His book "Islam: A Way of Life" (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970) serves as an introduction to Islamic beliefs and values for a Western audience, where Hitti writes, "Islam is a comprehensive way of life rather than a mere faith, encompassing social, moral, and spiritual dimensions."[21] In these texts, Hitti provided a nuanced portrayal of Arab and Islamic civilizations, making his scholarship invaluable to Middle Eastern studies and fostering a greater appreciation for the cultural and intellectual contributions of the Arab world.[22]

Sir Hamilton Alexander Rosskeen Gibb (1895-1971) is celebrated for his extensive contributions to Arabic and Islamic studies, yet his work has sparked critical analysis within Muslim circles. Gibb's *"Arabic Literature – An Introduction"* (1926) provided an early systematic study of Arabic literary traditions. However, his works criticized for for reflecting a Eurocentric framework that lacks deep resonance with the spirit of Arabic and Islamic cultural expression. In *"Modern Trends in Islam"* (1947), Gibb examined the socio-political dynamics within Islamic societies, interpreting reformist movements through an Orientalist lens. Muslim critics argue that his analysis sometimes oversimplifies complex

theological nuances, prioritizing Western perspectives over traditional Islamic viewpoints.

Similarly, *"Mohammedanism: An Historical Survey"* (1949), later titled *"Islam: An Historical Survey"*, offers a broad overview of Islamic history. Though well-regarded for its clarity, this work has been critiqued by Muslim scholars for using outdated terminology like "Mohammedanism" and for interpreting Islamic history primarily through Western theoretical constructs. *"Studies on the Civilization of Islam"*, one of Gibb's major late works, reflects his attempt to understand Islam as a living civilization. Muslim academics recognize his efforts but often feel his conclusions lack the depth and nuance achieved by scholars immersed within the Islamic tradition.[23]

3. Orientalists' Role in Collection and Preservation of Manuscripts and Translation of Literary and Non-Literary Works:

In the realm of Arabic scholarship, Orientalists played a crucial role in collecting and preserving ancient Arabic manuscripts scattered across the Arab world's libraries. One would wonder to know that two hundred and fifty thousand volumes of manuscripts were compiled until the beginning of the nineteenth century and this number is still increasing today. [24] Additionally, their efforts in documenting and preserving Arabic Islamic texts ensured that these treasures of culture and knowledge were accessible to future generations of scholars and enthusiasts alike. Notable figures like Wustenfeld, Johann Jakob Reiske, Julius Wellhausen, Josef Schacht, and Hellmut Ritter spearheaded this effort, publishing significant works like Abdullah bin Hisham's *"Siratu Ibn Hishām"* and Imam Siyuṭī's *"al-Itqān"*.[25] Institutions in Europe, such as the British Museum, the *Bibliothèque Nationale* in Paris, and the Vatican Library, amassed extensive collections, which served as centers for Islamic studies.

Moreover, Orientalist schools, notably *"The School Of Living Oriental Languages"* led by De Sacy, facilitated the translation of Arab culture into Europe. Pioneering translators like Petrus Venerabilis and Leon Bercher made seminal contributions, translating works such as the holy *Quran* and *Al-Risalah* into Latin and French respectively. Petrus' translation of the Quran is the first Latin translation which he made in 1142 and it remained as a reliable source for Europeans until the

end of the seventeenth century.[26] Similarly, George Sale's (1697–1736) translation of the Qur'an in 1734,[27] for instance, opened Islamic religious and philosophical thought to the West, albeit sometimes interpreted through a Western lens. The Orientalists focused on foundational Islamic texts, particularly the Qur'an and hadith collections, as well as works on Islamic jurisprudence, philosophy, and mysticism.

During the Crusades, a translation movement bridged East and West, fostering exchanges in science and culture. Orientalist scholars translated key Arabic works. Gerard of Cremona translated *Almagest* and Avicenna's *Canon of Medicine*. Adelard of Bath introduced *Euclid* and *al-Khwarizmi's mathematics*. Michael Scot translated Aristotle's *De Caelo* and Metaphysics via Averroes, shaping scholastic thought. Robert of Ketton translated the Qur'an. Additionally, Constantine the African translated Arabic medical texts into Latin, and William of Moerbeke translated Averroes and Aristotle's complete works. These scholars' translations fueled Europe's intellectual revival, bridging knowledge between East and West.[28] Later many Orientalists translated pivotal Islamic texts like *"Tarīkh al-Ṭabrī"* and Imām Ghazali's *"Iḥyāa Uloomi al-Deen"*, delving into Islamic jurisprudence and philosophy. Their scholarly inquiries extended to Islamic conquests, architecture, and various branches of Arabic and Islamic studies, enriching human knowledge with profound insights and meticulous scholarship. During the 18th and 19th centuries one of their primary contributions was the translation of key texts from languages such as Arabic, Persian, and Sanskrit into European languages which ultimately helped make complex texts accessible to Western audiences. These translations allowed for broader cultural understanding and academic study of Eastern philosophies, literature, and sciences.[29].

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the contributions of Orientalists to Arabic and Islamic studies have been significant yet complex, encapsulating a spectrum of scholarly endeavors that enriched Western understanding of Eastern cultures. The profound interest exhibited by these scholars in Arabic and Islamic themes fostered an exchange of ideas that, while often rooted in colonial contexts, facilitated the dissemination of knowledge

across cultural divides. The notable literary contributions of figures such as Ignaz Goldziher, Theodor Nöldeke and H.A.R. Gibb reflect a commitment to understanding the richness of Islamic thought, although the motivations behind their work warrant critical examination.

Moreover, their efforts in the collection, preservation, and translation of manuscripts were pivotal in safeguarding invaluable texts that might have otherwise been lost to history. However, it is essential to approach this legacy with a discerning eye, recognizing that Orientalist scholarship often carried inherent biases shaped by Eurocentric views. As contemporary scholars engage with these contributions, a balanced perspective that respects the integrity of Islamic civilization and addresses the limitations of past narratives is crucial. Ultimately, by acknowledging both the benefits and shortcomings of Orientalist scholarship, we can pave the way for a more nuanced understanding of the intricate relationship between Eastern and Western intellectual traditions.

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DR. APARNA DIXIT

Threads of Survival: The Economic and Social Realities of Muslim Women Artisans in Chikankari

ABSTRACT

This study explores the socio-economic realities and experiences of Muslim women artisans engaged in *Chikankari,* a traditional embroidery craft from Lucknow, India. Employing a feminist perspective grounded in intersectionality, the research investigates how interconnected identities—such as gender, religion, and economic status—shape the artisans' livelihoods and their navigation through the challenges of the unorganized labor sector. Despite the economic potential of *Chikankari,* artisans face precarious working conditions characterized by low wages, job insecurity, and limited access to social services, along with cultural constraints that restrict their autonomy. Through qualitative methods, including case studies and direct observations in workshops and markets, the study reveals that the craft serves as both a source of income and a site of exploitation, where the creative ownership of artisans often contrasts sharply with the economic realities they face. The findings highlight the need for targeted policy interventions to promote empowerment, improve labor conditions, and enhance the artisans' bargaining power through community support networks. Ultimately, this research underscores the importance of recognizing and valuing the contributions of women artisans as essential to a more equitable economic landscape, calling for collaborative efforts to establish fairer labor practices within the *Chikankari* sector and beyond.

Keywords *Chikankari, Muslim Women, Economic empowerment, Intersectionality, Informal labor*

INTRODUCTION

The unorganized sector in India has a huge contribution to employment for women, particularly women from poor communities, including Muslim women. This includes a wide range of informal work, typically without security, paid leave, or a formal contract. *Chikankari*, an age-old form of embroidery originating from Lucknow, plays a key role in the livelihoods of many artisans, particularly Muslim women. *Chikankari* is one of the complex art forms, having delicate needlework and a rich history but also is the signifier of socio-economic status of people associated with it. Craft practitioners engaging with this artisanal heritage often exist in a world characterized by economic insecurity, social exclusion, and deeply rooted ascriptive gender hierarchies that plague the unorganized economy (Sharma, 2020; Kaur & Brar, 2017).

The feminist understanding framed in an intersectional paradigm is used in this study to highlight the different experiences of Muslim women artisans practicing *Chikankari*. Through an analysis of how overlapping identities like gender, religion, and socio-economic status mold their experiences, this study clarifies how their craft may also serve as source of empowerment or perpetuation of their marginalization (see Crenshaw, 1989; Kabeer, 2019). Additionally, *Chikankari* has the potential to economically empower artisans, on the other hand the artisans seem to experience stalking working conditions, which are defined by low pay, insecurity of work, and the lack of access to social services; which makes it difficult for them to claim economic autonomy or independence through their work (Wilkinson-Webber 1999).

Feminist theories have predominantly focused on women's experiences in formal labor markets but a large amount of women in countries such as India work in their informal or unorganized sector (Pande, 2024). The current study seeks to open up feminist discourse regarding informal labour. This work aims to illuminate the breadth of obstacles that women artisans face within this sector. The need for a more thorough understanding of the socio-economic challenges faced by Muslim women working in the *Chikankari* industry serves not only to inform relevant policy but also to shed light on the necessity of targeted interventions to uplift their socio-economic conditions and

advocate for their rights in the workplace (Agarwal, 2010; Moghadam, 2005). Addressing the systemic barriers they face is not only critical to their livelihoods, but also to advancing gender equity throughout the economy. More than that their autonomy as a creator and their experiences of creation needs to be understood as their perceptions about their reality and self.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This study examines Muslim women who work in the unorganized sector through a socialist feminist perspective which focuses on their socio-economic problems in the *Chikankari* trade (Fraser, 2016). The specified framework helps us comprehend how different overlapping identities like gender, religion, region and socio-economic status affect women's experiences when working in unorganized sectors. The research uses intersectionality to analyze how gender together with other aspects combine to produce distinct experiences of Muslim women practicing *Chikankari* craft (Crenshaw, 1989).

1. Socialist Feminist Theory and the Unorganized Sector

The unorganized sector often lacks formal protections, leading to precarious working conditions characterized by low pay, job insecurity, and minimal access to social services (Mohapatra, 2012). For instance, the National Commission for Enterprises in the Unorganized Sector (NCEUS) report highlighted that around 94% of India's workforce is engaged in the informal economy, where women encounter unique challenges that require gender-sensitive policy interventions (NCEUS, 2008). However, when it comes to women in unorganized sector things become more precarious. Socialist Feminist theory provides a critical understanding of the structures and systems that perpetuate gender inequalities, particularly in labor markets (Pande, 2022). They have highlighted the ways in which the commercialization of family life contributes to women's subordination. Unpaid work performed by women in the house is private, unnoticed, and devalued (Fraser, 2016). In this condition the homebased women workers face double burden and indulge themselves in unpaid household work and underpaid *chikankari* (Dalla Costa, 1973 and Margaret Benston (1969). Moreover,

feminist economists argue that without addressing these informal labor conditions, efforts to achieve gender equality in the workforce remain incomplete (Benería, 2008).

A. The Role of Gender in Economic Participation

Gender plays a fundamental role in shaping economic participation. In many cultures, including among Muslim communities in India, societal norms dictate that women's primary responsibilities lie in the domestic sphere. This limitation often restricts their access to formal employment opportunities. Many women seek work in the informal sector, such as *Chikankari* — not because of choice but of need. Some feminist scholars argue that employment in the informal sector can actually increase exploitation because there are no regulatory mechanisms and labor rights. They claim that informal work can augment exploitation because it is neither regulated nor protected by labour rights (Kabeer, 2019).

B. Dependence vs Autonomy

Chikankari artisans in this trade experience both the empowerment and, on the flip side, exploitation through work. The craft is an economic resource, and help to earn a self-regulatory income, but, especially with resistance from male relatives and brokers, many women depend on the men to secure their financial independence. Their dependence on the support of men weakens their capacity to argue for better wage, improved workplace conditions, autonomy over their work and perpetuates power relations (Moghadam, 2005)

2. Intersectionality: A Holistic Understanding

Intersectionality, which is probably best known through the work of Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989), began as a framework with which to investigate how intersected identity categories, or social categories, shape an individual's experience of oppression and privilege. The intersection of their gender identity and their religious beliefs with their socioeconomic status creates unique challenges and opportunities for Muslim women workers in *Chikankari*.

Another important factor that influences the experiences of Muslim women in *Chikankari* is their socio-economic status. A lot

of artisans come from poor backgrounds and are unable to get an education, training and resources required to improve their skills and earn more. The lack of education further aggravates the challenges they encounter in navigating the market, given that poor people have limited bargaining power, which perpetuates cycles of poverty (Singh and Shah, 2022). For example, the study shows *Chikankari* artisans are trapped in low paying jobs because they only have a limited set of skills, compounded by lack of training and educational support (Sharma, 2015).

In Muslim communities, traditional cultural practices known as *Pardadarī* have an impact on what are considered appropriate kind of female suitable work as well as the level of involvement of women in *Chikankari* crafts (Kar, 2024). Moreover, because of certain cultural norms on honor and gender segregation, a work environment may be created that is not suitable for the women's contribution, leaving them to compromise while doing *Chikankari,* which, although capable of bringing a great amount of income, is also held to the dominant restrictive social norms and feminized the labor of artisans. (Jafri, 2011).

3. Challenges in the *Chikankari* Trade

The intersectional feminist framework helps reveal the diverse economic problems that Muslim women encounter in the *Chikankari* sector.

A. Economic Vulnerability

The informal working conditions of women artisans lead to economic risks that create their financial instability. Women artisans experience major economic difficulties because of their inconsistent earnings and weak financial security and their need to rely on market conditions. The poor financial literacy of Muslim women hinders their ability to make well-informed financial decisions (Chen, 2012).

B. Barriers to Skill Development

Vocational training opportunities along with skill development programs remain restricted for Muslim women who practice *Chikankari.* The ability of women to learn advanced techniques and gain business knowledge for market success becomes limited because of cultural barriers that restrict their education and mobility (McGivney,

1993). When opportunities remain scarce it hinders both the economic strength and self-improvement possibilities of Muslim women.

C. Lack of Representation

Muslim women's absence in decision making process especially in unorganized sector creates further challenges for them in terms of labor rights and policies in favor of workers. The lack of proper representation hinders these women from achieving justice regarding their issues and rights and promotes both economic exclusion and social alienation (Agarwal, 2010 and Silvia Federici (1975).

An analysis of the *Chikankari* trade which employs feminist intersectional theory provides critical insights into the day-to-day realities of Muslim women working in this sector (Crenshaw, 1989). This framework aids in directing potential empowerment programs to these women as it analyses their unique vulnerabilities and capabilities derived from both gender and religious and socio-economic status. As it has been argued that systemic barrier removal is pertinent to create economic opportunities and insure social equality of the *Chikankari* Muslim women artisans (Jafri, 2011).

LITERATURE REVIEW

The works on women working in the informal economy highlight both empowering dynamics and vulnerabilities. What can be presumed from this duality is especially noticeable in the traditional crafts for example *Chikankari,* that does not just provide means of economic inclusion but also shows the complications women experience in a patriarchal socio-economic context.

1. Empowerment and Exploitation in Informal Work

As per Ministry of Labour and Employment's latest report (2023), the female labor force participation in formal sector in India is 32.68 %, which is considerably low, However, 94% total women workers are engaged in informal economy (Goel et al, 2011). The data shows due to lack of proper education, other trainings and socio-cultural restriction that they are not welcomed in formal economy and considered as soft target in informal, especially homemade jobs. Kabeer (2019) argues that

this informal economy is a trap for them, which extends some financial benefits and insures them to maintain the structural restrictions of their society. In response, the market creates exploitative environment for them (Delphy, 1984). Even though, women who work informally experience personal autonomy because they provide financial support to their family and earn acknowledgment from their community members.

Kabeer acknowledges that women achieve empowerment through informal work but that achievement comes with substantial dangers of exploitation. Employed women working in informal sectors experience unsteady work arrangements combined with minimal pay and insufficient job protection. Labor protections are nonexistent for informal workers so employers routinely mistreat them by discarding them without notice while denying proper compensation. The uncertain working conditions defeat the supposed benefits women gain from informal employment (Kabeer, 2019; Chant & Jones, 2005)

2. Historical Context of *Chikankari*

According to Pande (1968) the history of *Chikankari* craft extends through numerous centuries as demonstrated by his historical research. *Chikankari,* which originated from the word '*Chakin*', which means 'to make delicate designs on fabric' (Lucknow Magazine 1988) emerged during the Mughal period as a distinguished royal art. Until 1860, only the ladies of the Mughal and Nawab families were the masters of *chikan* embroidery. The embroiderers' commercial products were topi-palla until 1860, and they created unrivalled masterpieces for their patrons. At that time, it was practiced by skilled male artisans and they were getting respectful remuneration for their work. However, chikan embroidery's development and production process changed when the court declined in the early nineteenth century, leading to a decrease in the patronage of the craft. As a result, the craft transferred to female house workers rather than patronized male embroiderers. The decline of imperial support combined with market transition (well-shaped by industrialization, globalization and free trade) made women dominate the *Chikankari* artisan community (Wilkinson-Webber, 1999). Many women from Lucknow along with neighboring districts rely on *Chikankari* as their primary income source even today.

Although *Chikankari's* rich history exists, the shift toward becoming a feminine women-run craft presented multiple obstacles. The business trend of *Chikankari* has frequently resulted in the degradation of classic manufacturing practices alongside product quality because of market pressures (Arya and Sadhana, 2002). The evolution shows major social-economic patterns that affect traditional crafts as they adapt to market demands and the changing female workforce participation in labor markets.

Moreover, it has been noted that the commodification of *Chikankari* has led to a decline in craftspersonship, as mass production often favors quantity over quality, diminishing the value of skilled artisan work (Ghosh, 2021). Women's engagement in the craft sector has provided them with opportunities for economic empowerment, yet also encountered challenges linked to labor exploitation as often found in informal work contexts (Kabeer, 2019, 2021). Navigating financial independence and securing cultural heritage in the form of Chikan stitches had been a critical question to these artisans with the evolution of *Chikankari* especially after industrialization.

3. Challenges Faced by Women in the *Chikankari* Sector

As Wilkinson-Webber (1999) states, many of the women working for *Chikankari* do not receive wages equivalent to the effort and skill required of them. Under this system, the imbalance of power between artisans and intermediaries exacerbates in unregulated informal work contexts due to predominance of working relationships governed by what could be termed as political economy of the craft (Diwaker and Ahamad, 2014), and accordingly, intermediaries continue to have the dominant share of power to negotiate and unfortunately they consider women's work as 'Leisure time work'. When the crucial social security benefits are deficient and inconsistent, women engaged in *Chikankari* suffer financial shocks. Women face uncertain conditions due to the lack of basic safety measures such as health insurance and maternity leave and retirement benefits that leave them exposed during illnesses or emergencies (Gulati, 2005 and Ghosh, 2021).

Most *Chikankari* artisans lack the necessary market information together with resources needed for improving their craft and achieving enhanced profit potential. These women lack access to unified markets

together with training and modern design exposure which restricts them to a cycle of poverty and prevents them from improving their socioeconomic status (Kinot, 2017).

4. Socio-Cultural Dynamics Impacting Engagement

Muslim women face intricate intersections of social, cultural, and religious factors that significantly influence their participation in the workforce and their economic autonomy. Although studies indicate that many Muslim women achieve higher educational attainment in certain contexts, they often contend with disproportionately high unemployment rates and limited economic opportunities (Mahbuba, 2024). Multilayered barriers that limit their mobility and the ability to work in male-dominated spaces in a society that endures traditional cultural values and religious dogma.

Muslim women working in informal sectors such as *Chikankari*, i.e. traditional embroidery, encounter a double standard in which their economic contribution is acknowledged but remains limited to socially defined and considered in acceptable limits. Wilkinson-Webber (1999) found that women operated under social conventions experience little independence and few opportunities to negotiate their value. Despite the opportunities available to these women through professional sphere of the *Chikankari* sector, they deal with low wages, exploitative working conditions and extensive social restrictions. Analyzing these related struggles is essential for creating appropriate policies and support structures to better meet the needs of informal sector women workers.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts qualitative methodology to study the experiences of Muslim women artisans practicing *Chikankari* embroidery. To understand better their contexts, the researcher selected twenty case studies by purposive sampling which provided representation from multiple intersectionalities (Campbell et al, 2020). This approach enables a nuanced exploration of the distinct challenges and opportunities these craftspeople confront. Field notes were recorded from the workshops and markets to understand the working conditions and production processes of this craft (Baker, 2006). Reading these environments, the

researcher sought to understand the nuanced details of the craft, from the socio-economic interaction to the daily ritual of the artisans and their products within the marketplace.

It is crucial to note that the participants in this study mainly belonged to the old city of Lucknow where *Chikankari* holds historical and cultural importance. For these Muslim women artisans, *Chikankari* embroidery is often their only income source, making it crucial to their livelihoods and economic independence. By rooting their stories in their real lives and realities, the research tries to understand the intersectional experiences of these women artisans. Therefore this micro study aims to highlight the contributions of these Muslim women artisans towards the *Chikankari* craft and its broader perspective in regard to their social, economic and cultural status in their neighborhood.

FINDINGS

1. Empowerment as a distorted Connotation: The Notion of 'Kaam Banana'

Many Muslim women who practiced *Chikankari* embroidery said that it was a major source of income for their families and a crucial part of their financial well-being. The craft functions as an important financial buffer for many artisans. The economic benefits of this work, however, varies and more dependent on the skills, bargaining power and economic fluctuations of the market. Some women achieved a fair degree of economic autonomy through their craft, although many were underpaid and scarcely employed. Moreover, the problem of intermediaries sometimes leads to a decrease in the level of income and therefore hamper the opportunities for economic empowerment of these women (Kinot, 2017).

A noteworthy aspect of the artisans' discussions was their consistent use of the term "Kaam Banana" instead of "Kaam Karna" when referring to their embroidery. This linguistic distinction is revealing; "Kaam Karna" translates to "doing work," while "Kaam Banana" conveys the idea of "making work." The latter implies a sense of creativity and ownership, emphasizing the artisans' engagement in a meaningful and

artistic process. This choice of words highlights their understanding of embroidery as not merely a task but a craft that involves creativity and skill akin to artistic expression (Ahmad and Anees, 2016).

Despite this recognition of the artistry inherent in their work, many artisans do not perceive themselves as artists within the commercial landscape. This perceived disconnection is particularly evident when considering the remuneration they receive; the financial returns for their craft often do not reflect the skill and effort involved in creating their pieces, as noted by Ahmad and Anees (2016). The disparity between their creative ownership and the economic realities of their work underscores a broader issue within the artisanal sector, where the labor of women is frequently undervalued and undercompensated. The interplay between creativity and economic necessity in the *Chikankari* sector points to the need for greater acknowledgment and support for women artisans.

Acknowledged the artistry within their craft, many see themselves as not part of the art landscape commercially. This disconnect is especially clear to see when discussing the money they charge for their work; the pay for their craft does not often correlate with the skill and the hard work it takes to produce the end pieces (Ahmad & Anees, 2016). This tension reflects a common story within the artisanal sector, which often fails to recognize women's labor as inherently valuable, and hence often unpaid. Hence, acknowledging their creative efforts and insuring better payments for their work can lead to a better place for these Muslim women artisans.

2. Working Conditions: Feminization of Craft

The *Chikankari* sector faces a wide diversity in work conditions for women employed across different segments of it. Many artisans work from their own homes, so they have the flexibility to look after their families during the day while working on embroidery. This can be comparatively a better solution and allow the possibility to combine work and family care as per them. But for many women, especially women in common workshops, the reality is quite the opposite. Here, they are often subjected to long hours — usually much more than eight hours — even though earn little in return for their work. So this

organization by the market within the unorganized sector makes their lives even difficult and develops a disinterest for making *chikankari* (Dixit, 2022).

This sector is rife with health and safety challenges, artisans often work in poor working conditions that ignore essential ergonomics and environmental health. Unpleasant working conditions often result in various physical ailments, adding to the difficulties encountered by such artisans in their day-to-day lives (Gulati, 1999).

The *Chikankari* sector has no fixed wage standards, unlike organized industries, and payment practices are therefore very diverse. Value is subjective, and every artisan has her own understanding of her work's value based on individual bargaining power, socio-economic conditions, etc. According to Kaur and Brar (2017), this results in huge price differences for similar scope of work. A greater tendency towards inequity in the absence of standardized compensation structure in the sector.

In addition, it is a feminized craft, and, like all such crafts, is socially devalued, viewed as secondary work that women engage in out of interest rather than as a legitimate economic activity. Mies (1981) emphasizes that the division of labor into a gendered craft work marginalizes women in a way that also deepens the economic vulnerability of women. Despite all these perceptions, artisans along with the market stakeholders realize that they need *Chikankari* to live on, and it is a primary income source of many families.

3. Social Dynamics and Empowerment: Household Work Versus *Chikankari*

Besides being a source of income, *Chikankari* embroidery has helped many women developing significant social ties and a sense of community. Many participants have spoken to the importance of community in this network of artisans, where women often form engrained support systems to improve their community wellbeing, and their economic capacity. These networks provide opportunities for knowledge sharing, skill enhancement, and emotional support, reinforcing the community-oriented relationships that define their work environment (Kuldova, 2009).

However, culturally imposed limitations remain, impeding women

from negotiating better working conditions or seeking higher-paying opportunities. These limitations stem from deep-rooted gender norms which frame women's proper roles in the domestic sphere and in the market (Wilkinson-Webber, 1999). As a result, the power relations that exist between them and their intermediaries or employers tend to lack the ability to bargain against the more dominant party and continue a vicious circle of economic marginalization.

However, many artisans prioritize their *Chikankari* work over household chores due to the financial compensation associated with it, although there are cultural restrictions deeply rooted in the culture. This emphasis recognizes that their economic contributions through embroidery is considerable, but this perceived significance is subjective and different family wise. Although some women do receive recognition and appreciation for their input, others indicate that their role is minimized or unappreciated. This led to the necessity of enhancing social recognition of the work women do in the craft sector (Akhtar and Khan 2014).

Critically, women's work in *Chikankari* is often assessed in relation to her capability of juggling home duties (child-care, if any) along with embroidery. This double bind reinforces traditional gender roles and imperatives, where the acknowledgement of their labor comes on the condition that they excel in both spheres. As a result, the identities of women artisans are gendered, and their work is valued in terms of productivity instead of the time and effort they put into it (Jain, 1982).

4. Market Dynamics, *Chikankari*, and Strategic Bargaining

Within the realm of *Chikankari* embroidery, artisans have developed a nuanced understanding of different categories of work, which they classify as Chalu (low-skilled), Achha (skilled), and Fancy (high-skilled). This classification is influenced by the pricing offered for their pieces, which in turn shapes both their craft and their approach to embroidery (Kaur & Brar, 2017).

Artisans have conveyed that when they feel they are undercompensated for a piece, they will intentionally embroider in a way that reflects the amount they feel they are being compensated. For example, they may use larger stitches, incorporate fewer but bolder motifs, or employ simpler

designs in response to low wages. Such continued behavior reflects a calculated decision-making process where artisans try to showcase their value under unfavorable economic conditions. The underlying sentiment—that "log paisa marne ki sochte hai" (people think only about money making), points to a deep-seated malaise that artisans have with the economic structure in which they are situated (Dixit, 2022). Their decision to modify the intricacies of their work translates into what they refer to as Chalu work, reflecting a performance that is intentionally simplified or cheapened in response to inadequate compensation.

The pricing framework for *Chikankari* plays a crucial role in determining the skill level associated with a piece, as artisans categorize their work based on the compensation they receive. Typically, they receive better rates for Fancy work, which involves more intricate techniques and designs. In contrast, rural artisans often find themselves trapped in a cycle of poor remuneration, limiting their capacity to produce higher-value pieces and consequently compelling them to adopt strategies that diminish the perceived quality of their work (Mishra, 2016). The disparity between urban centers—where higher-quality work is more plentiful and better compensated—and rural areas illustrates a significant economic divide within the artisan community that adversely affects their strategic bargaining power.

This economic vulnerability not only limits the potential for artisans to uplift their livelihoods, but reflects a systemic problem of exploitation within the artisanal sector at large (Sharma, 2012). Low wages and hence declining work quality are products of the lack of options available to artisans in rural contexts. As a result, many artisans feel trapped in a cycle of desperation, unable to negotiate better prices or seek employment opportunities that would allow for fair compensation reflective of their skills and labor.

5. The Connotation of "Leisure Time" Work

The perception of *Chikankari*, a traditional form of embroidery, as a leisure-time activity represents a significant misunderstanding of the nature of this artisanal work. Contrary to the belief that *Chikankari* can be easily balanced with household duties, practitioners of this craft experience it as a demanding labor that requires focused time, skill,

and expertise (Wilkinson-Weber, 1999. This misconception is often perpetuated by intermediaries and agents who assign low-skilled tasks to artisans, framing their work as manageable alongside domestic responsibilities. Such assumptions trivialize the complexities and time commitments inherent in *Chikankari* production.

Recently, there has been a notable shift in the operational environment of *Chikankari* artisans, with many now working in organized workshops (Dixit, 2022). These workshops require artisans to devote 7 to 8 hours daily to their craft, which transforms the nature of their labor from casual, part-time embroidery to a full-time occupation. This change highlights the commitment and discipline that artisans exercise rather than the leisurely connotation often associated with their work.

In workshop settings, artisans are compensated based on a piece-rate system, wherein their earnings are determined by the volume and quality of finished work rather than the time invested. This compensation model further illustrates the oversight of "Time" in the valuation of artisanal labor. While piecework may incentivize higher productivity, it fails to account for the time spent on each piece, the skill involved, and the artistic value of the embroidery. This practice not only undermines the artisans' expertise but also reinforces the notion that their work lacks the same labor rights and recognition afforded to other forms of employment (Basole and Basu, 2011).. Consequently, this undermines the artisans' livelihoods and sustains a framework in which their labor is perceived as secondary or supplementary rather than as a legitimate vocation deserving of respect and equitable remuneration.

6. An Interplay of Majboori, Mehnat, and *Chikankari*

Chikankari artisans are mostly Muslim women from poor economic backgrounds who negotiate in a complicated setting of social and economic realities. Their craft, while revered in the markets, yields them almost negligible economic reward. These women often narrate their working conditions in terms of "*majboori*" and "*mehnat*": a deep-seated sense of powerlessness mixed with continuous hard work rooted in their limited education and economic options. The delicate embroidery they produce, although priced in the thousands at retail outlets, earns its makers little. Many artisans can't afford to own the very pieces they create and sell their work for livelihood. This reality highlights a

glaring gap between the market price of *Chikankari* and the payment its creators earn. The social perception of their work compounds their challenges, as they often encounter patronizing sympathy rather than professional recognition. Their expertise, developed through years of dedicated practice, remains undervalued in a market system that benefits intermediaries more than the primary creators (Ahmad and Aness, 2016).

7. Government-Funded Training Workshops and *Chikankari*

The study reveals that in the craft training workshops despite provisions for daily stipends and toolkits, mediators frequently manipulate the system, extracting half of the payments from participating artisans after workshops conclude. This pattern mirrors historical challenges documented in traditional craft preservation, where direct support mechanisms were necessary for authentic artisan empowerment (Reyaz Ahmad Bhat, 2023). Thus, these programs, while promoted as empowering, largely reinforce existing power structures, creating a cycle that undermines the original intent of artisan support systems.

The effectiveness of government-funded training workshops for *Chikankari* artisans has proven to be minimal. Many trainers lack expertise in *Chikankari,* and the programs often serve administrative purposes rather than empowering artists. Despite the welfare provisions for the artisans for daily stipends and toolkits, intermediaries frequently manipulate the system, extracting half of the payments from participating artisans after workshops conclude. Thus, these programs, while promoted as empowering, largely reinforce existing power structures. However, Documentation from multiple craft education initiatives demonstrates that successful artisan training requires dedicated investment in proper infrastructure and direct support mechanisms (Reyaz Ahmad Bhat, 2023).

8. Missing Authority and Displaced Identity

In traditional embroidery centers, artisans often work on the same piece, adhering closely to a defined sample. While they have the freedom to experiment with specific stitches, they are required to follow the overarching instructions provided by their instructor or mediator. As a result, although they can recognize their contributions to the completed

pieces—especially when observing the details in dress materials—they do not possess ownership over the final design. This practice exemplifies sample-based embroidery, where adherence to a template is prioritized over personal instinct and experimentation (Yadav, 2023).

Meena Yadav, a mediator and designer, reflects on the impact of this structured approach in workshops, noting that artisans thrive when they are given the freedom to interpret designs independently. She states, "When we don't provide a sample, the artisans create unique interpretations that reveal their individual perceptions, attitudes, and emotional states." For instance, if asked to embroider a peacock without a sample, different artisans would produce distinct variations that reflect their personal experiences. Yadav elaborates on this point: "A satisfied artisan might portray the peacock's feathers as broad and vibrant, while an artisan grappling with hardship may craft a more subdued version, with narrower feathers and smaller eyes. These choices are deeply intertwined with their emotional well-being and life experiences" (Yadav, 2023).

This speaks to the broader implications of creative expression within structured environments. The tension between following a sample and the freedom to express one's artistic self underscores the complex relationship between artistic autonomy and communal standards in craft practices (Stephen, 2023). Thus, while defined instructions can stifle innovation, it is through moments of creative liberty that the true essence of an artisan's identity can emerge and be articulated in their work.

9. Men, Masculinities, and *Chikankari*

Chikankari, the traditional embroidery technique, predominantly involves women artisans at the embroidery stage. Though less common, male artisans exist within this landscape, and their involvement adds a unique dimension to the economic dynamics of this craft. During a recent interview with a male *chikankari* artisan, it was revealed that these men tend to adopt a more business-oriented approach. They often seek strategic means to secure better remuneration for their labor, despite not typically being responsible for design work themselves (Kuldova, 2009).

Interestingly, male artisans often hire female *chikankari* artisans

under the guise of sympathy and assistance, a socio-economic strategy that raises perceptual concerns regarding exploitation—where women's labor results in surplus earnings for the male artisans (Wilkinson-Weber, 1997). This process reflects a nuanced hierarchical structure within the *chikankari* community, as men develop a form of agency by appointing "smart" women artisans. These women are tasked with managing other artisans and assisting in strategic activities, all while receiving compensation that, while lower than that of their male counterparts, is typically above what traditional female artisans earn (Jafri, 2011).

Although male *chikankari* artisans are relatively scarce, they maintain direct connections with designers, which places them at a unique intersection within this craft industry. However, these artisans often face exploitation from designers who leverage their position and market understanding to offer unfavorable terms (Yadav, 2023). Consequently, while male artisans aspire to establish themselves as successful *chikankari* entrepreneurs, they find themselves navigating a hierarchical and often unstructured industry that perpetuates the lower status of artisans throughout the supply chain. This complex interplay of gender, economics, and exploitation underscores the challenges inherent in the *chikankari* sector, compelling a re-examination of how artisans—particularly women—experience agency and oppression within their craft (Wilkinson-Weber, 1997).

10. Artisan Narratives and Reflections

The narrative gathered captures the rich tapestry of personal experiences and challenges faced by artisans involved in *Chikankari*, a traditional form of embroidery that holds deep cultural significance in India. Through the voices of various artisans, researcher gain insight into their lives, struggles, and resilience, particularly in the con text of economic changes and social dynamics.

A fine *Chikankari* artisan Shahjahana, herself carries the ethos of her craft as she reflects on her seven decades of experience in the field. She is proud of being able to craft without *addas* (frames) and her work is marked by laborious manual skill and dedication. Shahjahana bemoans the state of today's generation, claiming that the value of craftpersonship has been lost in the materialism of the modern world. She's frustrated about how the economic systems are set up to exploit

the workers, who often make much less than what their work is worth, and the gaping distance between the impoverished economy workers and wealth as formed from artisan labour. Processing the sense of unfairness in her story reveals a heavy emotional load carried by people who dedicate their lives to this laborious work and see others invested in it benefiting disproportionately.

Demonetization was announced on November 8, 2016, Rukhsana, 58, an artisan, shares a real life experience about the same. The dramatic currency change came as a shock to artisans who depend on cash transactions for their livelihood. She, recalls how they had to break their piggy banks to collect her old notes and exchange them with the bank, marking the chaos of that phase. She states that, "My husband accused me for stealing his money when I asked him to change 'my' old currency". Her story challenges the idea that demonetization simply added a layer of friction to usual business practices and highlights how it pushed artisans further into the margins, where they were left vulnerable and forced to resort to informal alternatives to access currency exchange services. The social implications were dire for many — especially women who were often subjected to domestic violence and financial stealing because of lost-incomes.

In her 36 years of life Farida never received any appreciation, With tears in her eyes, she expresses her disappointment with her circumstances, lamenting the lack of education and the limited respect afforded to artisans both within their families and society at large. Her words resonate with despair and resignation as she indicates that her life has become a cycle of drudgery without opportunities for advancement. This reflects a broader issue within artisan communities where traditional skills are undervalued, leading to a sense of stagnation.

Artisans have their own challenges and 50-year-old social worker and mediator Meena Yadav provides a wider view on these. She observes that the conditions for artisans are dire, not only in her locality but also in other regions. Meena also stresses that many of the artisans themselves do not appreciate skills and craftwomanship, as the artisans would much prefer to earn money than be supported for their skills. Her vision of empowering the artisans through training and better market access shows her dedication towards social upliftment and empowerment along with her ambitious business plans in the industry.

The 52-year-old artisan and mediator Iqbaal talks about his anecdotal experiences while working with celebrated designer Tarun Tahiliani. As per him, he himself is settled financially, but willing to lift other artisan families. He goes on to say that the importance of computer knowledge underscores the need for artisans to adapt to modern market demands and leverage technology in their work. The conventional yet, culturally rich story of Iqbaal brings a sense of conflict between tradition and modernity as the struggle is real when he acknowledges the need for traditional artists to be empowered through new skills. However, his comparatively better financial status in the industry shows the gendered socio-economic reality of *chikankari*.

These personal accounts, taken together, paint a composite picture of the struggles of *Chikankari* artisans, economic disruption, social marginality, the fight for recognition and respect. Their stories highlight not only the resilience of these creative Muslim women crafters but also the need for support systems that can help these artisans excel in their skills and achieve a respectful socio-economic life. This contributes to their empowerment and allow them to fully embrace the traditional art of *chikankari*.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Skill Development Initiatives: Programs that help improve the skills and market knowledge levels of artisans can boost their income potential and employability.
- Access to Financial Services: Microcredit and financial literacy programs can enable women to invest in their crafts and limit their dependency on intermediaries.
- Support from Policies: The government policies should focus on the formalization of the sector that ensures fair wages, social security and better working condition to artisans.
- Encouraging the formation of cooperatives can enhance bargaining power and provide a platform for collective support among women artisans.

CONCLUSION

The *Chikankari* embroidery sector serves as a vital microcosm illustrating the broader socio-economic challenges faced by Muslim women artisans in India. Despite the profound cultural significance and economic potential of this traditional craft, these women navigate a complex landscape of gender discrimination, economic vulnerability, and cultural constraints. Through the lens of intersectional feminist theory, the narratives and findings presented in this study highlight the dual reality of empowerment and exploitation that characterize the experiences of *Chikankari* artisans.

While engagement in *Chikankari* provides a source of income and fosters community bonds, it is often marred by precarious working conditions, unequal bargaining power, and systemic barriers to skill development. The linguistic distinction between "Kaam Karna" and "Kaam Banana" symbolizes the struggle between recognition of creative ownership and the financial realities that undermine these women's contributions to their craft. The interplay of socio-economic status, gender, and cultural norms compounds their vulnerability, emphasizing the pressing need for targeted interventions that promote empowerment while addressing existing inequalities.

The findings of this study underscore the importance of acknowledging and valuing the labor and skills of women artisans in the *Chikankari* sector. Comprehensive policy measures that advocate for fair wages, formal labor protections, and access to education and training are essential to fostering sustainable economic independence. Furthermore, community support networks and cooperative models can significantly enhance the bargaining power of these women, enabling them to respond collectively to market dynamics and intermediary exploitation.

In conclusion, advancing the rights and economic prospects of Muslim women in the *Chikankari* craft not only enhances their individual livelihoods but also contributes to broader societal goals of gender equity and social justice. By addressing the multifaceted challenges these artisans face, we can leverage their cultural heritage and craftsmanship as powerful tools for sustainable development, contributing to a more inclusive and equitable economic landscape. It

is imperative for policymakers, civil society, and industry stakeholders to work collaboratively in fostering an environment that recognizes and nurtures the invaluable contributions of women artisans, ultimately promoting their empowerment and ensuring their rightful place in the fabric of India's cultural and economic landscape.

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DR JAVED AKHATAR

Mullā' Niẓāmuddīn Sihālivī Ansari (1677–1748): The Designer of the '*Dars-i-Niẓāmī*' (Curriculum)

(The English translation of '*Mullā' Niẓāmuddīn: Baani Dars-i-Niẓāmīyah*' by Maulana Shibli No'māni, published in Ma'arif, Feb 1900, Aligarh and Maqālāt-e-Shibli, Vol. 3[1])

INTRODUCTION

The curriculum for learning Arabic and 'Ulūm-e- Islāmīa (Islamic sciences) currently prevalent throughout India is famously known as "*Niẓāmīyah*." However, it is quite surprising that most people are unaware of when this curriculum was founded and who designed it. In a recent publication, it has been attributed to Niẓām al-Mulk al-Tusi, the vizier of the Seljuk Empire.[2] The older generation of scholars knows only that its founder was Mullā' Niẓāmuddin of Lucknow, but beyond this, even they lack further knowledge.

Mullā' Niẓāmuddīn was a person of such stature, and especially with the fame he gained by establishing this curriculum, that I had long desired to learn about his detailed life story. However, since the practice of writing biographies was very uncommon in our country, there was little hope that this wish would be fulfilled. Mīr Ghulām 'Alī Azād Bilgrāmī[3] (1704-1786) has briefly mentioned him in '*Subḥat-al-Marjān fi Āathār-e-Hindustān*,' but it is entirely insufficient. After much searching, I came across a treatise written by Maulana Walīullah Farańgī Maḥallī[4] (1738-1801) (Commentary on Mullā' Ṣadra), which is specifically about the late Mullā' Niẓāmuddin. However, it contains very little of his actual life events; instead, it mostly consists of a large collection of his miracles and extraordinary acts, which are not very relevant to today's context.

However, in accordance with the saying: مَا لَا يُدْرَكُ كُلُّهُ لَا يُتْرَكُ كُلُّه

(What cannot be fully attained should not be completely abandoned[5]), I present a brief outline of his biography to the readers.

BACKGROUND AND FAMILY LEGACY

Among the populous settlements around Lucknow, one of the famous towns is Siḥāla, which is twenty-eight miles from Lucknow. In this town, two prominent Muslim families resided: the Anṣārīs, who were descendants of Ḥazrat Abū Ayyūb Anṣārī (d. 674)[6], and the 'Uthmānis, who were descendants of Ḥazrat 'Uthmān[7] (d. 656). Mullā' Niẓāmuddīn belonged to this town and was from the Anṣārī family. His father, Mullā' Quṭbuddīn Shahīd, was a highly esteemed scholar, and his circle of teaching was revered throughout the eastern countries. A long-standing enmity existed between the 'Uthmānis and Anṣārīs, which culminated in the 'Uthmānis attacking Mullā' Quṭbuddīn's home one day, killing him, and setting the house on fire. This incident occurred in 1103 AH. Since he was innocently murdered, the community honoured him with the title of '*shahīd*' (martyr) and thus, wherever his name appears in scholarly books, it is mentioned with this honorific title.

Mullā' Quṭbuddīn had four sons. The eldest son was associated with the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb's court in Delhi at that time. Sheikh Muḥammad S'aeed, Sheikh Muḥammad Asad and Mullā' Niẓāmuddīn were at home. After the martyrdom of Mullā' Quṭbuddīn, due to their helplessness, they left Siḥāla and moved to Lucknow, but they had no place to stay there. During the Timurid Empire, the department dealt with all the correspondence was established with great breadth, and every minor incident in the country would reach the royal court. The chronicler of Lucknow immediately informed the court about this event and a decree was issued from there that Mullā' Quṭbuddīn's sons be granted a piece of land with related building in the Farangī Maḥal[8] area.[9] I will later quote some excerpts from this decree.

THE REASON FOR SETTLING IN LUCKNOW

Mullā' Niẓāmuddīn, about whom we are writing, was fifteen years old at that time, so his name is not mentioned in the royal order; instead, it includes the names of his two elder brothers. This order is still preserved

within the family and I once had the opportunity to see it in Lucknow. Therefore, we are including the essential words of this decree here. The seal of Aurangzeb is on the header.

STUDENT LIFE

When Mullā' Quṭbuddīn's family settled in Lucknow Mullā' Niẓāmuddīn was fifteen years old and was studying '*Sharḥ-i-Jāmī*.'[10] Although the circumstances had not yet become entirely stable, Mullā' Niẓāmuddīn did not wait for peace of mind and continued his studies. Ghulām 'Alī Āzād writes in '*Subḥat-al-Marjān*' that:

"Mullā' Niẓāmuddīn travelled to Europe and studied in various cities. Finally, he returned to Lucknow and completed the remaining books with Sheikh Ghulām Naqshbandi Lucknawi, from whom he also received a certificate of *faḍīlat*[11]."

However, Maulvī Walīullah, who wrote a separate treatise on his biography, stated that:

"He studied the initial books in Dewa[12] and other towns, but completed the advanced books in Banaras[13] under Ḥāfiẓ Amānullāh Banārsī[14]."

The tradition that is popular in Farangī Maḥal today also supports this account.

Immediately after completing his studies, Mullā' Niẓāmuddīn assumed his revered father's teaching position and in a short time, his abode became a centre of learning for the entire eastern India.

TAṢAWWUF (MYSTICISM)

After completing his studies in *'Ulūm-e-Ẓāhir* (exoteric sciences), Mullā' Niẓāmuddīn turned his attention to *'Ulūm-e-Bāṭin* (esoteric sciences). At that time, the fame of Qādiri Shaykh Shāh 'Abdul Razzāq Bānsvī's[15] spiritual blessings was widespread throughout India. Mullā' Niẓāmuddīn went to his hospice and took the oath of spiritual allegiance at his hands. Shāh 'Abdul Razzāq was not familiar with *'Ulūm-e-Rasmīyah* (formal sciences), which surprised everyone, to the extent that the scholars of Farangī Maḥal openly complained to Mullā'

Niẓāmuddīn. Among Mullā' Niẓāmuddīn's students was Mullā' Kamāl, who was highly proficient in *'Ulūm-e-Aqlīyah* (rational sciences). Being extremely intelligent and sharp-witted, he did not regard anyone highly. Mullā' Kamāl openly and disrespectfully asked Mullā' Niẓāmuddīn 'Why he had taken the oath of allegiance with an ignorant person?' Not content with this, he also went to Shāh 'Abdul Razzāq with the intention of asking him a few difficult philosophical questions to humiliate him. It is said that Shāh 'Abdul Razzāq himself raised those questions and satisfied Mullā' Kamāl. Consequently, Mullā' Kamāl and many other 'ulamā' immediately fell at Shāh 'Abdul Razzāq's feet and took the oath of allegiance.

Shāh 'Abdul Razzāq passed away in 1136 AH. After his death, Mullā' Niẓāmuddīn received spiritual blessings from his disciple, Syed Ismā'īl Bilgrāmī.

ILLNESS AND DEATH

Mullā' Niẓāmuddīn had suffered from an ulcer from the beginning but never paid attention to treatment. In his later years, when he reached the age of 75, he became extremely weak and bedridden, and started staying in the *zanān khāna* (the women's quarters or special room for women in the house). However, due to the large number of people who came to inquire about his health, and the frequent need for *purdah* (veil), which caused inconvenience to the household, Mullā' Aḥmad 'Abdul Ḥaq suggested that it would be better if he stayed in *dīwān khāna* (the drawing room or the public sitting area). Mullā' Niẓāmuddīn did not respond. The next day, when Shāh 'Abdul Ghani came to visit, Mullā' Niẓāmuddīn recited the verse:

«ہر روز بینم تنگ تر سوراخ ایں غربالہا»

(*Every day I see the hole in this sieve becoming narrower and narrower.*[16])

Having recited the verse, he said, 'Do as 'Abdul Ḥaq advised.' So, he moved to the drawing room, where he ultimately took his last breath.

Mullā' Niẓāmuddīn had two wives. He likely married the second wife because the first one could not bear children. When his illness worsened, his first wife came to serve him and said, "Please forgive me

for any wrong I may have done." He replied, "You have done nothing wrong. However, I committed a sin by marrying another woman while you were still with me. Please forgive me for this wrongdoing."

Shortly after, the second wife came and asked, "You are leaving us. Who will look after the children?" Mullā' Niẓāmuddīn felt deep sorrow and said to those present, "Lift me up and help me sit." Then he said:

"Niẓāmuddīn is leaving, but God will always remain."

He passed away on Wednesday, the last ninth date of Jumada al-Awwal in the year 1161 AH, in the afternoon. The date of death (in Persian verse) is:

"ملک بود و بیک حرکت ملک گشت"

(*It was a kingdom, and with one movement, it became dust.*[17])

In the Arabic phrase, it is:

"مَالَ العَاشِقُ إِلَى المَعْشُوقِ"

(*The lover inclined towards the beloved.*)

MANNERS AND HABITS

Mullā' Niẓāmuddīn was inherently a rich soul and deeply reliant on God from the very beginning. His scholarly reputation had reached such a level during his lifetime that he could have obtained any kind of prestige or position with just a little desire, but he did not pay attention to this. He endured days of hunger with remarkable patience, showing no concern for material wealth or status. He never associated with the rich and powerful; rather, when such people came to visit him, he would show displeasure. Sheikh Ghulām Makhdūm recalls an instance that: once when I was in Mullā' Niẓāmuddīn's presence, lying on the bed due to illness, a distinguished person from the nobility came to visit. I wanted to get up from the bed out of respect for him, but Mullā' Niẓāmuddīn said, 'Why do you become unsettled when you see the well-dressed? Stay relaxed and lie down comfortably.'

A nobleman from the royal court, who held the rank of '*haft-hazārī*' (a title for someone in charge of 7,000 soldiers), often visited Mullā' Ni

zāmuddīn. One Friday, just at the time of the prayer, he sent a message requesting Mullā' Niẓāmuddīn to wait for a while so that he could arrive and have the honour of following him in prayer. Mullā' Niẓāmuddīn waited for a brief moment, then said, 'The prayer is for God, not for the people of this world,' and with that, he stood up to perform the prayer.

HUMILITY AND MODESTY

But this indifference and arrogance were reserved for the elite and power-seekers; otherwise, there was humility and modesty in his temperament. One day, an Iranian named Abū-al-Ma'ālī, having heard about Mullā' Niẓāmuddīn's fame, came to meet him. Mullā' Niẓāmuddīn was sitting on a mat in the madrasa, giving a lecture. The Iranian had seen the grandeur and splendour of Iranian scholars, so he didn't think much of Mullā' Niẓāmuddīn. He asked the people, 'Where is Mullā' Niẓāmuddīn?' Mullā' Niẓāmuddīn replied, 'I don't know about any Maulana, but my name is Niẓāmuddīn.' The Iranian then presented a few jurisprudential questions and asked how they would be answered according to '*Ahl-e-Ḥaq*' (the people of the truth or Shī'ah sect). Mullā' Niẓāmuddīn, understanding his intent, answered according to Shī'ah traditions. The Iranian was very impressed and asked for the answers to be given according to '*Ahl-e-Dhalālat*' (the religion of those astray or Sunnīs). Mullā' Niẓāmuddīn then narrated the Sunnī traditions. The Iranian was amazed and said that Mullā' Niẓāmuddīn was even greater than what he had heard.

It is often complained about *'ulamā'* that in their academic debates, their primary aim is always to display pride and superiority and for this reason, they never remain silent in front of an opponent. However, Mullā' Niẓāmuddīn was entirely free from this flaw. Once, a person came to debate with him. Mullā' Niẓāmuddīn explained the issue in detail. The person raised an objection, and Mullā' Niẓāmuddīn remained silent. That person began to boast that he had silenced Mullā' Niẓāmuddīn. Mullā' Niẓāmuddīn's students were displeased by this and one of them went and silenced that person with a forceful argument. When Mullā' Niẓāmuddīn heard about this, he became so upset that he removed the student from his circle of learning and said, "I do not wish for anyone's reputation or honour to be diminished because of me."

LITERARY WORKS AND LEGACY

Mullā' Niẓāmuddīn authored numerous works, such as '*Sharḥ Muslim al-Thubūt*,' '*Sharḥ Manār Musamma bihi Ṣubh Ṣādiq*,' '*Hāshīya Ṣadrā*,' '*Hāshīya Shams Bāzgha*' and '*Hāshīya bar Hāshīya Qadīmah*.' All these books are of high calibre and contain very profound research. However, Mullā' Niẓāmuddīn's fame is not due to these writings but rather because of his unique teaching method.

During Mullā' Niẓāmuddīn's time, there were many great 'ulamā' throughout India, each with their own study circles, such as Mullā' Muḥibbullāh Bihārī[18], the author of '*Sullam al 'Ulūm*' and '*Musallam-us-Thubūt*,' who passed away in 1119 AH, Mullā' Jeevan[19], the author of Nūr-al-Anwār, who passed away in 1113 AH, Sayyid 'Abdul Jalīl Bilgrāmī, the teacher of Ghulām 'Alī Azād, who passed away in 1126 AH, Mīr Ghulām 'Alī Azād Bilgrāmī[20] and Shāh Walīullah Dehlavī, who passed away in 1174 AH. However, the 'ulamā' produced from Mullā' Niẓāmuddīn's circle of teaching were of such a high rank that they could claim to be on par with these esteemed figures.

Mullā' Niẓāmuddīn's son, Maulana 'Abdul 'Alī, was given the title '*Baḥr-al-'Ulūm*' (Ocean of Knowledge) by the entire country, a title that remains famous to this day. In fact, no one with such comprehensive knowledge has emerged from the soil of India from the beginning of Islam to that day. Another of Mullā' Niẓāmuddīn's students, Mullā' Kamāl, was of such stature that Maulvī Ḥamd Allāh, whose '*Sharḥ Sullam*' is still part of the curriculum today, was nurtured under his guidance. Mullā' Ḥasan also had the honour of being a disciple of Mullā' Niẓāmuddīn.

The teachings of Mullā' Niẓāmuddīn became so widely accepted that his students could be found everywhere in India and Faraṅgī Maḥal in Lucknow became a centre of knowledge and learning. For the past two hundred years, the institution has continued its scholarly tradition, producing hundreds of distinguished 'ulamā' who have passed away. Among them were Mullā' Mubīn, Maulānā Ẓahoorūllah, Maulānā Walīullah, Mufti Muḥammad Yūsuf, Maulānā 'Abdul Ḥaleem and Maulānā 'Abdul Hay, who were present in our time. Their works are spread throughout the country. Wherever the Arabic sciences are still taught, it is the influence of this family. In any corner of India,

when someone embarks on the path of learning, their direction turns toward Faraṅgī Maḥal. When I visited the shrine of Mullā' Niẓāmuddīn in 1896 AD and saw his centre of learning, which was a modest little room, I was astonished. Allahu Akbar, this is the Cambridge of our India. It is from this very soil that scholars like 'Abdul 'Alī and Mullā' Kamāl emerged. Sadly, this Kaaba is now becoming desolate and of the past luminaries, only the venerable Maulānā N'aīm remains. He is the great-grandson of 'Abdul 'Alī and has been honoured with the title of "*Shams-ul-'Ulamā*"" by our government.

SOME ASPECTS OF 'DARS-I-NIẒĀMĪ' CURRICULUM

The most notable aspect of Mullā' Niẓāmuddīn's legacy is the curriculum he designed, which became famous under the name "*Niẓāmīyah*." The distinctive features of this curriculum are as follows:

1. The curriculum includes several books by Indian *'ulamā'*, such as 'Nūr-al-Anwār,' '*Sullam al 'Ulūm*,' '*Musallam-us-Thubūt*,' '*Rashīdīyyah*,' and '*Shams Bāzgha*'. Prior to this, not a single Indian work was part of the syllabus.
2. The most difficult books in each discipline have been chosen for study.
3. The curriculum has more books on logic and philosophy compared to other sciences.
4. Only one book on Hadith is included, which is '*Mishkāt-al-Maṣābiḥ*'[21] (Niche of Lanterns).
5. The portion dedicated to literature is minimal.

The foremost characteristic that Mullā' Niẓāmuddīn focused on while designing this curriculum was to enhance the students' ability to study to such an extent that, after finishing the curriculum, they would be able to understand any book on any subject they choose. It is indisputable that if the books of the *Dars-i-Niẓāmī'* curriculum are studied and understood properly, there would be no Arabic book that remains beyond comprehension. This was not achievable with the previous curriculum.

Even in terms of choice, this curriculum is preferred over the old one. A student of average intelligence can complete all the course books

by the age of sixteen or seventeen. Consequently, students from Farangī Maḥal often completed their studies by that age.

This curriculum also has the distinct feature that, since it includes very few books on *fiqh* (jurisprudential science), and those that are included employ logical reasoning, it did not foster the kind of asceticism, literalism and undue religious bigotry that is characteristic of superficial *fuqha* (jurists). As a result, the prominent *'ulamā'* who emerged from Farangī Maḥal never wrote any books on religious polemics. The Shī'ah-Sunnī conflict could have most likely emerged in Lucknow, but the call for it was raised from Delhi, and although the entire country was engulfed in that turmoil and the phrases from the '*Tuḥfa Ithnā' 'Asharīyyah*'[22] became a battle cry for religious warriors, the *'ulamā'* of Farangī Maḥal remained aloof from this commotion until the end.

This curriculum also provides significant evidence of Mullā' Niẓāmuddīn's sense of justice and open-mindedness. It is rare among *'ulamā'* to acknowledge the virtues and excellence of their contemporaries, but Mullā' Niẓāmuddīn respected his contemporary *'ulamā'* so much that he included their books in the curriculum. *Nūr-ul-Anwār*, '*Sullam al 'Ulūm*,' '*Musallam-us-Thubūt*,' and many others are works of his contemporaries and are part of the *Dars-i-Niẓāmī'* curriculum. Mullā' Niẓāmuddīn's humility is perhaps best demonstrated by the fact that he did not include any of his own writings in the curriculum, despite the fact that none of his contemporaries could rival his scholarship.

It is also necessary to mention at this point that the current curriculum known as *Dars-i-Niẓāmī'* is not actually the *Dars-i-Niẓāmī'*. It includes many books that were not even present during the time of Mullā' Niẓāmuddīn, such as Mullā' Ḥasan, Ḥamd Allāh, Hāshīya Ghulām Yaḥya, and Qāḍī Mubārak. Although, in my opinion, there is a need for considerable revision and addition to the *Dars-i-Niẓāmī'* curriculum in light of contemporary needs, we will not delve into this discussion in this article and will confine myself to this text.

CONCLUSION

Mullā' Niẓāmuddīn epitomized humility and dedication to God,

avoiding material wealth and social status despite his scholarly acclaim. His refusal to cater to nobility and his commitment to equitable teachings highlight his profound modesty. He focused on elevating his students, who achieved significant scholarly prominence, spreading his influence across India. His teaching circle produced some of the most distinguished scholars, maintaining a lasting impact on Arabic sciences. Despite the decline of his institution's physical presence, its legacy continues through the achievements of his students.

The Dars-i-Niẓāmī curriculum, designed by Mullā' Niẓāmuddīn, emphasizes rigorous texts, particularly in logic and philosophy, with a focus on enhancing students' comprehension skills. While it incorporates works by contemporary Indian 'ulamā', it includes minimal literature and a single Ḥadīth book, '*Mishkāt-al-Maṣābīḥ*'. The curriculum avoids fostering religious bigotry by limiting *fiqh* content. Mullā' Niẓāmuddīn's humility is further reflected in his omission of his own works from the curriculum. While the curriculum has evolved over time, further revisions are needed to meet contemporary demands.

Mullā' Niẓāmuddīn's contributions to Islamic education in India cannot be overstated. His creation of the Dars-i-Niẓāmī curriculum laid the foundation for a comprehensive and rigorous approach to Islamic studies that has endured for centuries. His life, marked by humility, piety, and a commitment to knowledge, serves as an enduring example for scholars and students alike.

NOTES

1. I have made an effort to translate and further develop this Urdu article by Allama Shibli Nomani. Additionally, I have included my own conclusion.
2. He served under two of the most notable Seljuk sultans, Alp Arslan and his son Malik Shah I. Niẓām al-Mulk is best known for his contributions to the administration and organization of the Seljuk state, as well as for his influence on Islamic governance. One of Niẓām al-Mulk's most significant contributions is the **Siyāsatnāma** (The Book of Government), a treatise on governance and statecraft. This work provides insights into the political theory and administrative practices of the time, emphasizing justice, effective administration, and the importance of education and moral integrity in rulers. He is also credited with founding a network of madrasas (Islamic schools) known as the Niẓāmīyah. These institutions became

centres of Islamic learning and played a crucial role in the intellectual life of the Muslim world. For more detail see: 1) **C.E. Bosworth's** works, particularly in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, which provides detailed entries on prominent Islamic figures, including Niẓām al-Mulk. 2) **Bernard Lewis's** *The Assassins: A Radical Sect in Islam* offers insight into the political climate of the Seljuk Empire and Niẓām al-Mulk's role. 3) **Siyāsatnāma** itself, which has been studied and translated by numerous scholars, including **Hubert Darke's** translation titled *The Book of Government or Rules for Kings*. 4) **A.C.S. Peacock's** book *The Great Seljuk Empire* offers a comprehensive overview of the Seljuk period, including Niẓām al-Mulk's impact on governance and education.

3. He was a prominent scholar, poet, historian, and Sufi of the 18th century in India. He is often referred to as "Azād" Bilgrāmī, taking his pen name from his birthplace, Bilgram, in present-day Uttar Pradesh, India. He was one of the leading figures of the Persian and Arabic literary traditions in India and was deeply engaged in Islamic scholarship. Some of his notable works are:
   - *Sawar-ul-Jamāl*: A well-known biographical dictionary of poets.
   - *Subḥat-al-Marjān*: A work focusing on the Arabic language and its poets.
   - *Ghizlān-ur-Raḍā*: A work dedicated to the life of Prophet Muhammad and his companions.

   Here are some sources where you can find more detailed information about Mīr Ghulām 'Alī Azād Bilgrāmī: 1) "***Islamic Culture***" Journal: This journal often covers historical figures from Islamic India, including scholars like Azād Bilgrāmī. You may find articles or book reviews related to his works. Available at: Many university libraries or through databases like JSTOR. 2) "*History of Persian Literature in India (From the Beginning up to 1750 A.D.)*" by Muhammad Abdul Ghani: This book provides a comprehensive overview of Persian literature in India, including detailed sections on prominent figures like Azād Bilgrāmī. Publisher: Sahitya Academy. 3) "Islamic Society and Culture in Mughal India" by Irfan Habib: This book provides a broader context of the society and culture in which Azād Bilgrāmī lived and worked, offering insights into his intellectual environment. Publisher: Oxford University Press.
4. He was a prominent Islamic scholar from the Farangī Maḥallī family of scholars based in Lucknow, India. This family is well-known for its significant contributions to Islamic scholarship in South Asia. Here are some sources you can consult to learn more about Maulana Waliullah Farangī Maḥallī and the Farangī Maḥallī tradition: 1)

"Muslim Scholars of India" by Mohammad Akbar Ali Khan. This book provides an overview of significant Muslim scholars in India, including those from the Farangī Maḥallī family. It offers insights into their contributions to Islamic scholarship and education. 2) "Islamic Revival in British India: Deoband, 1860–1900" by Barbara D. Metcalf While this book primarily focuses on the Deoband movement, it discusses the broader context of Islamic scholarship in India, including the role of the Farangī Maḥallī scholars. 3) "The Ulama in Contemporary Islam: Custodians of Change" by Muhammad Qasim Zaman. This book examines the role of the Ulama (Islamic scholars) in modern Islamic societies and includes discussions on the Farangī Maḥallī family and their contributions to Islamic thought in South Asia. 4) "Lucknow: The Last Phase of an Oriental Culture" by Abdul Halim Sharar
Sharar's book offers a historical and cultural account of Lucknow, with references to the prominent scholars and intellectuals of the city, including the Farangī Maḥallī family.

5. This phrase implies that even if we cannot achieve something in its entirety, we should not abandon it altogether. A brief biography is being presented in this context.
6. Ḥazrat Abū Ayyūb Anṣārī, also known as Khalid ibn Zayd ibn Kulayb, was a prominent companion of the Prophet Muḥammad and is celebrated for his unwavering faith, hospitality, and dedication to Islam. He belonged to the Banu Najjar tribe of the Khazraj clan in Medina (then known as Yathrib). When the Prophet Muḥammad migrated from Mecca to Medina during the Hijra, it was Ḥazrat Abū Ayyūb Anṣārī who had the honour of hosting him. The Prophet stayed in his home for about seven months until the construction of the Prophet's Mosque (Masjid an-Nabawi) and his adjacent rooms was completed. His grave is located in Istanbul, near the Eyüp Sultan Mosque, a significant site for Muslim pilgrims and visitors.
7. He was the third Caliph of Islam, succeeding Ḥazrat Abū Bakr and Ḥazrat 'Umar. Ḥazrat 'Uthmān's caliphate was marked by growing discontent among certain groups within the Muslim community. Accusations of nepotism and favouritism, along with economic disparities, led to unrest. This culminated in a rebellion against his rule.
8. **Farangī Maḥal:** The family name "Farangī Maḥal" comes from the estate given to Maulana Waliullah's ancestor, Mulla Qutbuddin, by the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb. The estate was named "Farangī Maḥal" because it had previously belonged to a European (referred to as "Farangī" in Persian).

Scholarly Tradition: The Farangī Maḥallī family became known for its deep commitment to Islamic education and scholarship. They were instrumental in establishing the *Dars-i-Niẓāmī'* curriculum, which became the standard for Islamic education in South Asia.

9. The date of the report is 14th Sha'ban, 37th year of the reign (corresponding to 1105 AH), and the date of the decree is 11th Shawwal, 38th year of the reign.
10. ***Sharḥ-i-Jāmī*** is an influential Persian commentary on the classical Arabic grammar text known as *Al-Kāfiya fī al-Naḥw* by 'Uthmān ibn 'Umar ibn al-Ḥājib (1175-1249). The commentary was written by the renowned 15th-century Persian scholar and mystic 'Abd al-Raḥmān Jāmī, who is commonly referred to simply as Jāmī. *Sharḥ-i-Jāmī* is a detailed exegesis on Ibn al-Ḥājib's Al-Kāfiya, which is itself a foundational text in Arabic grammar. The commentary elaborates on the complex grammatical rules and linguistic intricacies found in *Al-Kāfiya*, providing clarity and further explanation for students and scholars of Arabic grammar. Sharḥ-i-Jāmī became a critical text in the study of Arabic grammar, especially in non-Arab regions such as Persia, Central Asia, and the Indian subcontinent. The commentary reflects Jāmī's deep understanding of both the Arabic language and the broader Islamic intellectual tradition. For detail see: 1) The *Encyclopaedia of Islam* is one of the most comprehensive and authoritative sources on Islamic history, culture, and scholarship. It includes detailed entries on figures like Jāmī and works like *Sharḥ-i-Jāmī*. 2) Carl Brockelmann's *Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur* is a seminal work on Arabic literature, covering both primary texts and secondary commentaries, including those by Jāmī. 3) Specific biographies of Jāmī, such as *The Life and Works of Jāmī* by E.G. Browne, offer detailed information on his contributions, including his commentaries on Arabic grammar. 4) *Madrasas in South Asia: Teaching Arabic Grammar in India and Pakistan* by Francis Robinson. This work discusses the teaching of Arabic grammar in South Asia, including the use of texts like *Sharḥ-i-Jāmī* in madrasas.
11. Today, equivalent to graduate level work.
12. Dewa or famously known as Dewa Sharif, located in Barabanki district near Lucknow, is a renowned Sufi shrine dedicated to Haji Waris Ali Shah, a revered Sufi saint of the 19th century.
13. Banaras, also known as Varanasi or Kashi, is one of the oldest living cities in the world, located on the banks of the Ganges River in Uttar Pradesh, India. It is a major cultural and religious hub, particularly for Hindus, who consider it one of the holiest cities.

14. Ḥāfiẓ Amānullāh bin Nūrullāh bin Ḥusain Banārsī was an expert in both transmitted (*Manqūl*) and rational (*Ma'qūl*) sciences and was well-versed in both branches of Islamic jurisprudence (*Furū'* and *Uṣūl*). He was a Ḥāfiẓ of the Qur'ān and was appointed by Emperor Aurangzeb as the head of religious affairs (*Ṣadr*) in Lucknow. During this time, Mullā' Mu. hibbullāh was also serving as a Qāḍī there, leading to frequent debates and discussions between the two. Ḥāfiẓ Amānullāh authored a book on the principles of Islamic jurisprudence titled *Mufassir Nāma* and wrote its commentary named *Muḥkam al-Uṣūl*. In addition to these works, his commentaries on *Tafsīr al-Bayḍāwī*, *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*, *Ḥāshiya Rashīdiyya*, and others are considered valuable contributions. He passed away in the year 1133 AH. (See: https://www.scholars.pk/ur/scholar/hafiz-amanullah-banarsi.)
15. A famous Sufi saint, and disciple of Shāh Dost Moḥammad. His tomb is at Bansa, a small town in Barabanki near Lucknow. *Sarkar-e-Bansa* is the title given to 'Abdul Razzāq Bānsvī. Mullā' Niẓāmuddīn wrote his biography entitled *Manāqib-i Razzaqīyā*. This work also reflects, to some extent, the contemporary social and political life. See: Kamal Akhtar, *Socio-Political Life in India During 16th -17th Centuries as Reflected in the Sufi Literature*, Department of History, Aligarh Muslim University, 2008, p. 8. For more detail see: 1) Mullā' Niẓāmuddīn Sihālivī, *Munāqib-e-Razaqiyya*, Abid Ali Jaan Shahi Press, Lucknow. 2) https://muslimsofindia.com/2024/03/28/sarkar-e-bansa/.
16. The verse is likely a metaphor expressing how his condition was gradually worsening.
17. This line captures the essence that how quickly something grand can fade away.
18. Muḥibbullāh Bihārī (d. 1707 AD) was a renowned scholar, jurist, and Qāzi of the Mughal Empire in India. His intellectual contributions and scholarly achievements earned him unparalleled recognition in Indian history. Chroniclers have consistently praised his intelligence, wisdom, and vast knowledge. Maulvi Raḥmān 'Alī honoured him with the words: "*Bahre bod az bihar-e-ulum wa badre bod been al-Nujum*" (He was an ocean of knowledge and a shining star among scholars). In addition to his expertise in logic and philosophy, Muḥibbullāh was also an accomplished writer.
19. Shaikh Ahmad, son of Abu Saeed from Amethi (Lucknow), commonly known as Mulla Jeevan Amethvi, was one of the most prominent scholars of Islamic learning during the late Mughal era. Renowned for his deep knowledge and scholarship, his influential work *Noor ul-Anwar*

remains a cornerstone in the study of *Uṣūl ul-Fiqh* (principles of Islamic jurisprudence) and is still widely used as a textbook in various Islamic seminaries across the globe. Another notable contribution is his *Tafsiraat Ahmadiyya*, which stands as a significant commentary on the Qur'an. Mulla Jeevan was a mentor to Emperor Aurangzeb, yet his reputation was not solely tied to his connection with the royal court. Instead, he was highly revered for his intellectual brilliance, deep piety, and humble lifestyle. His legacy continues to inspire students of Islamic jurisprudence and exegesis today. Additionally, his influence on the curriculum of Islamic studies during his time extended far beyond India, shaping legal thought across the Islamic world.

20. Mīr Ghulām ʻAlī Azād Bilgrāmī (1704–1786) was a renowned scholar, poet, and historian from the Indian subcontinent during the Mughal period. He is often regarded as one of the most significant figures in Persian and Arabic literature in India. His contributions to various intellectual fields, particularly in history, theology, and poetry, earned him the title of "Azād," meaning "free." Azād Bilgrami was also recognized as a major figure in Islamic historiography. He chronicled the cultural, intellectual, and religious history of the Indian subcontinent. His most famous works include: *Subḥat-ul-Marjān-* A treatise on the excellence of Arabic in India, where he documents the spread of the Arabic language and its literature across the subcontinent. It also explores the impact of Indian scholars on the development of Arabic literature. *Sair-ul-Kulūb-* A work that delves into Islamic theology and philosophy.
21. *Mishkāt al-Maṣābīḥ* by Khaṭīb al-Tibrīzī (d. 1248) is an enhanced and updated edition of al-Baghawī's '*Maṣābīḥ as-Sunnah*.' Khaṭīb al-Tibrīzī made this version of the original text easier to understand for those without advanced expertise in Ḥadīth studies.
22. Shāh ʻAbd al-ʻAzīz's renowned polemical work addresses the doctrines of Twelver Shīʻas. This text is essential reading for those interested in the Shīʻah-Sunnī doctrinal debate, offering a critique from a traditional Sunnī perspective. It was written in response to the rising influence of Twelver Shīʻah Islam in the region, examining key beliefs and practices of the sect, particularly concerning the Imamate, infallibility, and other theological divergences between Sunnīs and Shīʻas. The work became a significant contribution to Shīʻah-Sunnī polemics and is frequently referenced in discussions on their relations. While influential, it has been criticized by Shīʻah scholars for its polemical nature and portrayal of Shīʻah beliefs. The book reflects the sectarian tensions of the time and the complex dynamics between various Islamic sects in the region.

Articles Reviewed

Article	*Reviewed by*
Methodological and Linguistic Appraisal of the English Translation of the Quran	Prof. Mohammad Ishaque
The Politics of Piety: Shah Waliullah's Hajj, 'Revivalism' and the Political World of Eighteenth Century Delhi	Professor Mohammad Ayub Nadwi
Madrasa Curriculum vis-à-vis Modern Education System in India	Dr. Md. Obaidullah Urf Mohiuddin
The Orientalists' Role in Enriching Arabic and Islamic Learning	Professor Rafiullah Azmi
The Economic and Social Realities of Muslim Women Artisans in Chikankari	Professor Nishat Manzar
Mulla Nizamuddin Sahalvi (1677 – 1748): The Designer of the dars-i-Nizami (Curriculum)	Professor Abuzar Khairi

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