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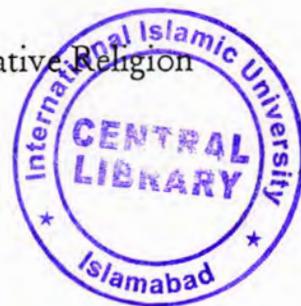
Sayyid Manāzir Aḥsan Gilānī's Contribution to the Study of Religion: A Critical- Analytical Study

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TRANSLITERATION TABLE

Diphthongs

<input type="checkbox"/> (ARABIC) (PERSIAN/URDU) (TURKISH)	ar fa tr
<input type="checkbox"/> (ARABIC) (PERSIAN/URDU) (TURKISH)	ay ai ey

Doubled

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Letter *שׁ* is transliterated as elevated comma (ׁ) and is not expressed when at the beginning.

Letter **č** is transliterated as elevated inverted comma (‘).

ج as Arabic letter is transcribed as *d*, and as Persian/Turkish/Urdū letter as *z*.

³ as Arabic letter is transliterated as *al-*, and as Persian/Turkish/Urdū letter is transliterated as *al-*.

* is transliterated as *ah* in pause form and as *or* in construct form.

Article 3 is transliterated as *ak* (אָקָה in construct form) whether followed by a noun or a soft letter.

3 as a Persian/Uzbu conjunction is transliterated as \rightarrow .
 3) \rightarrow as a \rightarrow in Pāli and Buddhist grammar and logical forms is transliterated as \rightarrow .

The transliteration table used in this thesis has been taken from scholarly journal of Islamic Studies published by Islamic Research Institute, International Islamic University, Islamabad.

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In the name of Allah the most beneficent the most merciful!

We seek refuge in Allah (سیدنا و نبی) from the evil of our souls and from the wickedness of our deeds. Whoever Allah (سیدنا و نبی) guides cannot be led astray and whoever is led astray shall find none other to guide him. May the blessings of Allah be upon the Righteous Prophet Muhammad (صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم), his Family, Companions and the followers of the guided path.

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

ذِبْدَةٌ مُخْتَصَرَةٌ عَنِ الْمَوْضِيْعِ

فِي سُعَيْهِ النَّظَرِ وَالْمَطَالِعِ وَالرَّسُوخِ فِي الْعِلْمِ وَالنَّوْعِ ، يَصْبَعُ أَنْ يُوجَدْ تَمْوِيْنَهُ فِي الْعَالَمِ الإِسْلَامِيِّ
الْمُعَاصِرِ وَالْغَيْبِ حَدَّ اللَّهُ . يَسْتَدِّيْعُ هَذَا الرَّجُلُ أَنْ يَعْدُ فِي كِبَارِ الْمُسْتَدِّعِينَ الْمُعَاصِرِينَ . الْمَوَادُ الَّتِي فَامْهَى
بِجَمِيعِهِ يُمْكِنُ أَنْ يَجْعَلَ كَثِيرًا مِنَ النَّاسِ مُصَدِّقًا بِاهْرَاءِ وَبِالْحَدَّى مَاهِرًا لَعْبَ وَحْدَتِ دُورِ الْمُنْظَمَاتِ وَالْمُؤْسَسَاتِ
الْإِجْمَاعِيَّةِ فِي أَرْوَاهِ الْخَدْمَةِ الْعَلَمِيَّةِ الْرَّجُلُ مَذْلُهُ وَلَدَ فِي السُّنُوْنَ وَرَبِّيْمَا لَا يَوْلُدُ فِي الْمُسْتَغْفِرِ .

هَذِهِ الْعِبَارَةُ لِأَبِي الْحَسْنِ عَلِيِّ النَّذُوْيِّ تَضَمِّنُ الْمَكَانَةَ الْعَلَمِيَّةَ لِلشَّخْصِيَّةِ الَّتِي يَدُورُ حَوْلَهَا هَذَا الْبَحْثُ وَ

هِيَ شَخْصِيَّةُ سَيِّدِ مَنَاظِرِ أَحْسَنِ جِيلَانِي (1375-1892). فَسَعَيْتُ سَعْيًا إِلَى إِبْرَازِ

الدُّورِ الَّذِي لَعْبَهُ جِيلَانِي فِي مَجَالِ دراسَةِ الْأَدِيَانِ تَحْتَ مَوْضِيْعِ

إِسْهَامِ سَيِّدِ مَنَاظِرِ أَحْسَنِ جِيلَانِي فِي مَجَالِ دراسَةِ الْأَدِيَانِ : بَحْثٌ تَحْلِيلِيٌّ وَنَفْدِيٌّ .

الْمَذَهَّبُ الَّذِي نَهَجَهُ فِي بَحْثِيِّ هَذَا مَنْهَجًا مَرْدُوْجًا أَيْ مَذَهَّبٌ نَفْدِيٌّ وَتَحْلِيلِيٌّ . نَاقَشَتْ أَفْكَارُ جِيلَانِي
إِيجَازًا أَوْ تَفْصِيلًا بِأَسْلُوبٍ بِيَانِيٍّ وَحَكَائِيٍّ حَسْبَ الْاِقْتِضَاءِ وَالْأَهْسَيْةِ . بَعْضُ الْأَحْيَانِ قَارَنَتْ أَفْكَارَ وَ
آرَاءَ جِيلَانِي بِالْعِلَمَاءِ الْأَخْرَيِّينَ ، الْمُسْلِمِينَ مِنْهُمْ وَالْغَرَبِيِّينَ .

صَنَفَ جِيلَانِي عَدَةَ تَصْدِيَّنِيفَاتٍ حَوْلَ الْمَوَاضِيعِ الْمُمْتَوِّعَةِ وَلَكِنَّهُ نَاقَشَ أَشْيَاءَ مُخْتَلِفَةَ تَحْتَ الْعَذَّاَوِينَ
الْمُخْتَلِفَةِ حَسْبَ أَسْلُوبِهِ الْمُمَدَّنَارِ فِي الْكِتَابَةِ . إِكْثَرُ الْأَحْيَانِ بَدَأَ بِكِتَابَةِ الْمَفَالِلَةِ الصَّغِيرَةِ الَّتِي أَخْذَتْ
صُورَةَ الْكِتَابِ الصَّدِحِيَّةِ بَعْدَ التَّدوِينِ وَالْطَّبَاعَةِ . فَاسْتَخَدَمَ كِتَبَهُ كَمَصَادِرٍ أَصْلِيَّةٍ لِرِسَالَتِي حَسْبَ مَا
أَحْتَاجَ مِنْهَا . وَهَذَا كَفَلَةٌ قَلِيلَةٌ مِنَ الْعِلَمَاءِ مِنْ كِتَبِهِ حَوْلَ أَفْكَارِ جِيلَانِي غَنِيًّا دراسَةَ الْأَدِيَانِ . وَمِنْ وَجْدِ
أَحَدَتِهِ كَمَصَدِرٍ ثَانِيَّوِيٍّ .

انْفَسَمَ هَذَا الْبَحْثُ إِلَى أَرْبَعَةِ أَبْوَابٍ . فَاهْتَمَ الْبَابُ الْأَوَّلُ بِتَرْجِمَةِ جِيلَانِي إِهْتَمَامًا كَافِيًّا مِنْ أَجْلِ تَعْرِفَهُ
أُولَى مَرَّةٍ فِي الْحَلْفَاتِ الإِنْجِلِيزِيَّةِ وَثَانِيَةً هَذِهِ التَّرْجِمَةِ بِعِطْيِيِّ الْفَارَقِيِّ خَلْفِيَّةَ لِمَا حَوْلَهُ وَلِلظَّرْفِ الَّتِي
كَتَبَ فِيهَا مَا كَتَبَ بِيَوْنِيِّ الْبَابِ الْثَّانِي فَكِرَةُ الدِّينِ عَنْدَ جِيلَانِي مُبَيِّنًا تَعْرِيفَهُ وَحَاجَتِهِ وَهَدْفَهُ وَرُؤْيَيَّهُ
الْوُجُودُ فِي رَأْيِ جِيلَانِي . أَمَّا الْبَابُ الْثَّالِثُ يَنْتَكِلُ فِي مَوْضِيْعِ الْأَدِيَانِ الْعَالَمِيَّةِ الْعَظِيْمِ عَنْدَ جِيلَانِي
مُسْتَخْدِمًا الْمَنَاهِجَ الْمُخْتَلِفَةَ حَسْبَ الْمَوْضِيْعِ وَالضَّرُورَةِ ، مُثَلًا الْمَنَاهِجَ الْمُفَارِنَ وَالْمَنَاهِجَ الْتَّارِيْخِيَّ
وَالْمَنَاهِجَ التَّحْلِيلِيَّ وَالْمَنَاهِجَ الْكَلَامِيَّ . وَالْبَابُ الْأَرْبَعُ الْأَخِيرُ دَارَ حَوْلَ الْفَضْيَّةِ : مَوْقِفُ الْإِسْلَامِ مِنْ
الْأَدِيَانِ الْأُخْرَى . فَقَدْ أَجَابَ جِيلَانِي فِيهِ سُؤَالًا بِكِيفِيَّةِ وَاجْهَةِ إِسْلَامِ بَظَاهِرَةِ الْأَدِيَانِ الْعَدِيْدَةِ مُوجَدَةٌ
عَلَى ظَهَرِ الْأَرْضِ ؟ هَذِهِ السُّؤَالُ اتَّخَذَ صُورَةً خَطِيرَةً فِي الْوَقْتِ الْحَاضِرِ وَأَصْبَحَ مَوْضِيْعًا مِهْمَا عَنْدَ
عِلَمَاءِ دراسَةِ الْأَدِيَانِ — الْمُسْلِمُونَ مِنْهُمْ وَالْغَرَبِيُّونَ .

فأسئل الله عز وجل أن يوفقني في هذه المحاولة البسيطة و يجعلها خالصة لوجهه الكريم ويزيل لي
الغموض والأوهام والإبهامات في هذا الأمر و يجعل بحثي هذا نافعاً لي ولكل من يقرئها. آمين

Prologue

The Indian subcontinent has been a major centre of knowledge and wisdom. The services offered by it for intellectual and spiritual growth of mankind are undoubtedly beyond any question. In both religious and secular fields India is proud of her sons' excellence whether they adhere to Islam or not. The history of the Indian subcontinent witnesses all this. There were times when Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists all shared a rich cultural religious heritage and lived very peacefully in a pluralistic Indian society. Among lots of them one such glorious name is that we are just going to explore – Mawlānā Manāzir Ahsan Gilānī about whom Mawlānā Abū al-Hassan Alī al-Nadīr rightly says:

One can hardly find an instance like him in Muslim countries due to his broader vision, wide reading, high access to knowledge and ingenuity of mind. This individual has done something great all alone which can produce many writers and research scholars. (wal ghaib 'indallah). He is worthy to be considered among the great writers of the present era for his writings and compilations. The subject matter that he has collected in his books can be done by whole institutions of Europe or organized associations. Such a person was born after ages and perhaps a person like him may not be born in ages.¹

The above quotation is in fact an admiration and acknowledgement of Sayyid Manāzir Ahsan Gilānī's (1310-1375/ 1892-1956) scholarly services from the mouth of one of his contemporaries. Genealogically he was Sayyid and geographically he belonged to Bihār. He excelled both in rational and revealed sciences. He is the flag bearer of two renowned schools of his time i.e Khayrābādī and Dīobandī.² He was such a versatile personality that sometimes we find him dealing with Islamic sciences traditionally and at other times working on other religions objectively. Among all his works on Islam and other religions I will introduce him as a scholar of religion highlighting his role in the study of religion in general as well as his work on major religions of the world.

¹ Muhammad Zafir al-Dīn Mīstāhī, *Hayāt-i Mawlānā Gilānī* (Karachi: Majlis Nashr-e-i Islam, 1994), p.207

² I have discussed this feature of Gilānī with detail in first chapter while mentioning his role in academia.

I have chosen Manāzir Aḥsan Gilānī's contribution to the study of Religion as the topic of my research primarily due to two reasons.

Geographical significance: Gilānī belongs to the Indian subcontinent which, we all know, was the collective homeland for Muslims and Hindus before Partition. He was living in that situation. He also had the experience of looking at the worst conditions of Indian Muslims after the war of independence in 1857. His works played a significant role in the religious awakening of Indian Muslims. Also, being a Pakistani I can't overlook the significance of India. So, geographical affiliation and India's contiguity to Pakistan made this topic worth studying for me.

Intellectual significance: Gilānī possesses a multidimensional personality and so are his works. He is well reputed in intellectual circles for being a historian, a mutakallim, a Sufi, an impressive debater and a reputed Muslim scholar. As a Muslim educationist, Islamic Research Institute of International Islamic University, Islamabad has worked on him, focusing on his educational policy.³ He has also been studied by western scholars for offering a model of religious education in modern India.⁴ But few know him as a religionist. So this thesis aims to introduce him as a scholar of Religion and highlight his contribution to the study of Religion, an overlooked aspect of his work.

The methodology that I am going to follow in order to study Mawlānā Manāzir Aḥsan Gilānī's contribution to the study of religion is twofold i.e.; critical and analytical. I will discuss his ideas in a summarized or elaborated form in descriptive, narrative and in comparison with other scholars according as or when needed, either by quoting exact translations of his words or giving the gist of his thought. Throughout my research on the works of Sayyid Manāzir Aḥsan Gilānī I have used just Gilānī, his last name instead of using

³ Madiha Younus, "outlines of a unified educational System for Muslim" in *Islamic Studies*, Vol. 47, No. 3 (Autumn 2008), pp. 367-378

⁴ Barbara Metcalf, 'The Madrasah at Deoband: A Model for Religious Education in Modern India' in *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 12, No. 1 (1978), pp.111-134

the full name. For the translation of Qur'ānic verses I relied on The Noble Qur'ān (Madīna Munawwarah: King Fahd Complex, 1417 A.H), English translation of the meanings and commentary by Dr. Muhammad Taqīuddīn al-Halālī and Dr. Muhammad Muhsin Khan.

Gīlānī's works have not been given due importance for many years and there is very little work done on him. So the primary source which I have reviewed is his own literary works which is available in the form of books, articles, speeches and letters. Among them, *Al-Dīn al-Qayyim*, *Musalmānūn Kī Firqa Bandiyon kā Afsāna*, *al-Nabī al-Khātam*, *Maqālāt -i Gīlānī* represent his understanding of religion. From 1956 (the year of Gīlānī's death) till present times, scholars have written about Gīlānī's life history but no one among them has tried to analyze and comment on his works particularly on world religions. When Muḥammad Ikram Chaghtai who in 2002 compiled the biographical writings of different scholars in his *Mawlānā Manāzir Ahsan Gīlānī: 'Ālim -i bē badal*. He also commented on Gīlānī's view about Ṣabi'ah. Apart from this book, no noteworthy effort has been made, neither by his contemporaries nor by the present day scholars to analyse Gīlānī's contribution to the study of religion. Therefore the need was felt to make his works on religion the topic of academic research and the dissertation at hand aims to do so.

I have divided my thesis into four chapters. The first chapter encompasses Gīlānī's life history in some detail because he is being introduced for the first time to the English readers. Secondly, his biography will help people understand his mind set and the circumstances in which he produced his work. The second chapter introduces Gīlānī's approach to the study of religion by elaborating his world view and general concepts pertaining to religion. The third chapter deals with his work on world religions. It also aims at studying Gīlānī's contribution to *'Ilm al-Kalām*. There is a good reason for including this portion while discussing him as a Religionist. In modern Western approaches to the study of religion, Theology ('Ilm al-Kalām in Islamic terms) is not the part of comparative study of religion, Since it discusses the issues that focus on 'God', an unseen entity, while the modern study of religion stems from science that doesn't take any unobserved and unexperienced phenomena

into account. But, for a Muslim studying religion, there are four primary sources⁵, apart from Qur'ān and Sunnah of the Prophet Muḥammad (saw). Among them the works of Mutakallimīn are an important source. So we Muslims can never ever ignore this huge heritage regarding the religions of the world.

I pray to Allah (swt) to accept this humble effort of mine make it beneficial for the readers and guide me further to the path of knowledge, āmīn.

⁵ The other three sources are as follow:

1. Writings of converts to Islam that were previously Non Muslims.
2. Muslim Encyclopedias on world History.
3. Muslim scholars who explicitly made religion their subject of writing. See Dr. Dhīn Muḥammad, 'Manāhij 'Ulamā' al-Muslimīn fi Dirāsat al-Adyān' in *Hawliyat al-Jāmi'ah al-Islāmiyah*, Issue no: 3 (1995) pp. 82-86

Chapter 1: Introduction to Sayyid Manāzir Aḥsan Ḡilānī

- Family Background and Early Life
- Academic Career
- Professional Career
- Death
- Family Life

1.1 Family background and early life.

Sayyid Manāzir Aḥsan Gilānī is his full name. Let we first explore this name. Sayyid stands for his genealogical affiliation with the Sādāt.⁶ Manāzir Aḥsan is his historical name with the addition of Gilānī,⁷ the name of the town where he was born. Scholars differ in their opinion about his affiliation with Gilānī, if it was geographical or spiritual.⁸ Manāzir Aḥsan Gilānī was born in 1st of October 1892 AD, 9 Rabī' al- Awwal 1310 A.H at Asthānwān: his maternal village in Gilānī situated in district Mongīr⁹ in Behār¹⁰ India.

His lineage according to the available sources is as follow:

Manāzir Aḥsan, son of Ḥāfiẓ Abū al-Khair,¹¹ son of Muḥammad Aḥsan,¹² son of Mīr Shujā'at 'Ali, son of Mīr Shafa'at 'Ali.

⁶ His forefathers belonged to Zaydi sādāt of Manē, a place situated in shukhupōrā in district Mongīr. Twelve branches of sādāt have been dwelling here since two centuries. They are called Bārā Gānwān, progeny of Sayyid Ahmed Jājnēri. He moved from Baghdād to Irān and from Irān to India in Dehli where he was granted land for monastery and his own living by Indian govt. Jājnēri preached Islam throughout his life.

⁷ This place was named after Sheikh 'Abd al-Qādir Gilānī as Muḥīyy al-dīn pōr Gilānī by Sayyid Minhāj al-Dīn, among Mawlānā Gilānī's ancestors. Before thousands of years back Gilānī was the dwelling place for Buddhists. The presence of a pond on east side witnesses that but now it has been transformed into electric power house, fish pond and grave yard. Signs of Muslim community started to be found since 1256 A.D. For further details see Muḥammad Ikrām Chaghtāī, *Mawlānā Manāzir Aḥsan Gilānī: 'alīm bē badal*, (Lahore: Sang-i mil publications, 2009), pp.92. Until now Gilānī is a small town, comprised of 600-700 habitants. There is no post office here, the only reason for its fame is international personality of Mawlānā Gilānī

⁸ Some say that Mawlānā Gilānī used the name Gilānī with respect to the town where he was born while second group of scholars link this affiliation with Sheikh 'Abd al-Qādir Gilānī (rahmat Allah 'alaih). In my view both are saying the same, if we combine the two opinions in a way that this town was named after 'Abd al-Qādir Gilānī by Sayyid Minhāj al-Dīn, later on it became the birth place of Mawlānā Gilānī then at the end the difference diminishes and this affiliation automatically reaches to the venerated personality of 'Abd al-Qādir Gilānī.

⁹ Three views are found among biographers with respect to the district, namely Nālandā, Patna and Mongīr. Among them the most authentic is Mongīr. For details, see *føyūzāt-i Gilānī* (Punjab university Lahore: Sheikh Zaed Islamic centre,2008), pp.23,24

¹⁰ The primitive but real name of Behār was Dehāra which means monastery or Dar al-'Ulūm. Buddhists schools and monasteries were abundantly found here, Buddha's tree was also here in Gyā. It is said that Dehāra became Behār after literal transformation. See Manāzir Aḥsan Gilānī, *Maqālāt-i Gilānī*: (Punjab university Lahore: Sheikh Zayed Islamic centre, 2004) , p.681

¹¹ Ḥāfiẓ Abū al-khaer had three sons and three daughters, namely Manāzir Aḥsan, Makārim Aḥsan, Mażhar Aḥsan, Bibī umm-i Hāni, Bibī Ṣafiyah and Bibī Hājrah.

¹² Muḥammad Aḥsan had three sons, namely Sayyid Abū Ẓafar, Sayyid Abū Naṣr and Sayyid Abū al- Khair, who was Gilānī's father.

Gilānī's family was well reputed for its intellectual and physical wealth. His grand father Mawlānā Muḥammad Aḥsan (1797-1893)¹³ was a renowned intellectual and religious scholar of his time; he founded the Gilānī School which proved to be the centre of education in the Indian subcontinent.¹⁴ Professionally they were landlords.

Gilānī was eldest among his two brothers. His father Ḥafiz Abū al-Khair was not much interested in the field of education. He learnt Qur'ān by heart, got basic Islamic education and spent his remaining life in agriculture and farming. He died in 1929.

1.2 Academic Career

Although thirst for knowledge was the hall mark of Gilānī's whole life, yet his formal education is divided into three different periods which will be discussed in the following lines. The first period of Gilānī's education started at Gilānī. He opened his eyes in a family well known for knowledge and learning. That is why his informal education started in his mother's lap. His grandfather was an eminent intellectual of his time. Gilānī's uncle Sayyid Abū Naṣr¹⁵ was well aware of the innate qualities of his nephew, since he didn't have his own children. It was his ardent desire to continue the chain of knowledge initiated by his father. So he took the responsibility of Gilānī's education from his early childhood. He taught him Arabic, Persian, Logic, philosophy and Ḥadīth under his own supervision at Gilānī, despite the fact that English education was increasing rapidly at that time in all parts of India because all Indians were living under the colonial power of British Empire.

¹³ He opened his eyes in sound financial environment, got married and was completely illiterate. His conversion to the field of knowledge was rooted in. He left his family, spent fourteen years in religious schools of northern India and returned back after becoming master of religious sciences of that time, for his teachers and educational services *Maqālāt -i Gilānī*, p.6.

¹⁴ Bihārī Scholars who got training in Gilānī school are Mawlānā Rafī' al-Dīn, Mawlānā 'Abd al-Salām Bhagalpōri, Mawlānā Ḥakim Dā'īm Ali Tonkī, Mawlānā Ismā'īl Ramdān Pūrī, Mawlānā 'Abd al-Ghafūr Ramdān pūrī to name a few. For details see *Mawlānā Manāzir Ahsan Gilānī: 'ālim-i bē Badal*, p.94; *Maqālāt -i Gilānī*, p.2.

¹⁵ He was interested in seeking knowledge, got education in Lucknao and Rāmpōr. He was also famous among people for his poetry and linguistic studies.

At the age of thirteen Gilānī was sent to Madrasah Khaliliyah at Tonk,¹⁶ founded by Sayyid Barakāt Aḥmed Tonkī¹⁷ which was at the top for intellectual sciences. With this the second period of his education started. He remained there for seven years (1906-1913) studying whole heartedly and excelling in intellectual sciences. He was intelligent and hard working at the same time. Numerous events of his intelligency have been recorder by his biographers. We just briefly describe two of them to clarify our point. Mawlānā ‘Abd al-Rashīd Rānī Sāgrī¹⁸ narrated that once their mutual teacher Mawlānā Barakāt Aḥmed Tonkī assigned all his disciples to simplify different terminologies of logic. Every student came up with his effort but Gilānī adopted a unique style of presentation. He wrote a whole drama in which each term introduced itself and defined its status as a subjugate to the court of knowledge. Reading this presentation, his teacher gave a smile and afterwards the whole class enjoyed the drama. The second event clarifies how hardworking and interested Gilānī was in acquiring intellectual sciences at Madrasah Khaliliyah. He prepared the whole draft of *īsā Ghojī*¹⁹ in his own handwriting. The teacher's daily lecture was used to be added in margins of that book. He did this with many other rare books and manuscripts of intellectual sciences. He declared this effort the hallmark of his student life.²⁰ Mawlānā Barakāt Aḥmed Tonkī monitored him all the time and banned his all other activities like reading newspapers, magazines and novels.²¹ His second teacher at Tonk was Mawlānā Muḥammad Ashraf who taught him Arabic literature, mathematics, and physics.

¹⁶ It is situated in the state of Rājpōtānā, not much developed the time of Gilānī. Muḥammad Zafīr al-Dīn Miftāḥī, *Hayāt -i Mawlānā Gilānī* (Karachi: Majlis nashr-e-īslam, 1994), p.42

¹⁷ His father Ḥakīm Dā’im Alī was the student of Gilānī's grandfather Mawlānā Muḥammad Aḥsan. He started his own school at Tonk where more focus was on Philosophy and Logic. After his father's death Barakāt Aḥmed became in charge of that school who himself was the student of Mawlānā Fazl -i Ḥaqq Khairābādī. Mawlānā Maṇāzīr Aḥsan Gilānī: ‘ālim -i bē badal p.96; *Hayāt -i Mawlānā Gilānī*, p.40

¹⁸ Gilānī's contemporary and class mate in Madrasah Khaliliyyah.

¹⁹ An introductory book of logic.

²⁰ For detailed account of these events look at *Hayāt -i Mawlānā Gilānī*, pp.44, 45

²¹ Since reading that kind of stuff was merely the wastage of time and energies of student and makes them lazy, day dreamers, divert their attention from studies and make their minds superficial, according to Mawlānā Tonkī. Even he didn't allow Gilānī to study medicine just to make him a renowned intellectual which was the need of that hour.

From 1913 the third and last period of his formal education started when he came back from Tonk and sought permission from his uncle to go to Deoband for acquiring Hadīth sciences and was allowed to do so after lengthy discussions.²² In fact his uncle wanted his intelligent nephew to excel in intellectual sciences like his grand father. Gilānī himself mentioned in his autobiography that although revealed sciences were the heritage of his forefathers yet they were prominently colored with intellectual ones.²³ That is why his formal education started with them. The second reason for Gilānī's seeking permission was the ongoing strife between the authorities of Madrasah Khaliliyyah and Dār al-‘Ulūm Deoband, otherwise the quality and standard of education at Dār al-‘Ulūm was above any question. Both schools were not at good terms, possibly because their subject of teaching was totally opposite to each other, and the conflict between human mind and revelation, or in other words between philosophy and religion is well known since ever.

The shift from Madrasah Khaliliyyah to Dār al-‘Ulūm Deoband was a huge shift. It was not merely a shift from one educational institution to another; rather, it was the shift of the whole mindset, from reason to revelation, from mind to soul. In fact this is the difference between these two institutions. The former was established to nurture the mind while the latter sought to provide food to the soul. From 1913 his academic life took a new turn and this one year stay at Dar al-‘Ulūm proved to be the golden period of his whole life. Gilānī himself narrated an interesting event of his early period at this new place. Dr. Muhammad Hamidullah²⁴ has quoted it.²⁵ The incident clearly shows that Gilānī took time to set his mind in the new environment of Dār al-‘Ulūm. He says that at the beginning he was more

²³ *Hayāt -i Mawlānā Gilānī* , p.44

²⁴ Dr. Muhammad Hamidullah (1908- 2002) was a contemporary and colleague of Gilānī at Osmania University, Haiderābad Deccan. His fields of interest are Islamic jurisprudence, Islamic law, Qur'ānic and Hadīth sciences. In 1985, he was awarded the *Hilāl -i Imtiāz*, the highest civil award of Pakistan that includes a substantial monetary amount. He donated the award money to Islamic Research Institute; Islamabad. He wrote more than 250 books and numerous articles in various fields.

²⁵ Manāzir Ahsan Gilānī, *Imām Abū Hanīfa Kī Sayāsī Zindagi*, 3rd edition (Karachi: Nafees Academy, 1960), pp.16, 17.

inclined towards intellectual sciences as compared to the revealed ones. He used to sit in back rows with his proud mind. His teacher noticed this unusual behavior and asked him the reason. Then he told that he had been studying intellectual sciences for the past seven years and was unable to purify his heart from different doubts which hindered his concentration during Ḥadīth lectures. His teacher Mawlānā Mehmed al-Hassan consoled him saying that Satan will not annoy him again. It really happened and Gilānī started acquiring Ḥadīth sciences with full zest and fervor.

Gilānī's one year stay at Dār al-‘Ulūm was in fact the milestone for his remaining life. He got the opportunity to get the benefit of renowned scholars and teachers of the whole Indian subcontinent which he availed to his best. Mawlānā Azhar Shāh Qaiser²⁶ exemplified the role of teachers in actualizing Gilānī's potentialities. When a chemist invents a new chemical formula, it is the result of the exact ratio of elements and their suitable combination, or else there are always equal chances of reaction. All the three ingredients combined in Gilānī's case and gave birth to a personality like him with all the qualities of his head and heart.

Gilānī came to Dār al-‘Ulūm for acquiring Ḥadīth sciences, which he completed very successfully. He studied all the six books of Ḥadīth from their masters. Shaikh al-Ḥadīth Mawlānā Mehmed al-Hasan taught him Ṣahīḥ Bukhārī and Sunan al-Tirmidhī, Mawlānā Anwar Shāh Kashmīrī was his teacher of Ṣahīḥ Muslim, Sunan Abī Dāwūd from Mawlānā Shabbir Ahmed ‘Uthmānī and Mawlānā Aṣghar Husseini, Sunan al-Nisā’ī from Mawlānā Sayyid Husseini Ahmed Madanī, Sunan Ibn-i Māja from Mawlānā Ghulām Rasūl, Muwaṭṭā of Imam Malik and Muwaṭṭā Imām Muḥammad from Mawlānā ‘Azīz al-Rahman ‘Uthmānī.²⁷ In one of his letters to Azhar Shāh Qaiser from Hyderabad, Gilānī cherished the golden period in Dār al-‘Ulūm in the good company of all these teachers and specially Anwar Shāh Kashmīrī Ṣahīb. He fully recognized that Mawlānā Anwar Shāh Kashmīrī taught him how to make use of theoretical knowledge in practical life and that in the early period of his

²⁶ Manāzir Aḥsan Gilānī, *Hazār Sāl Pahlē* (Karachi: Baṭ al-‘Ilm, 2004), p.24

²⁷ Ibid, p.23. Also see *Maqālāt-i Gilānī*, p.4

editorship he used to give his articles to Mawlāna Ṣahib for proof reading which benefited him a great deal.

1.3: Professional Career

Right after his graduation from Dar al-‘Ulūm Deoband, Gilānī was offered the editorship of Al-Qāsim and Al-Rashīd (periodicals) by Ḥabīb al-Rahmān ‘Uthmānī²⁸; so he took the responsibility of both the periodicals which lasted for a year. By that time his professional career was intermingled with academic one and this was the case throughout his life. His monthly salary here was rupees 30 but he was not satisfied with that so shifted to Mongir. One whole year passed and he was still jobless. He was again offered the editorship at Dār al-‘Ulūm²⁹ with Rs 50 per month which he accepted but again it didn't last more than a few months.³⁰

The most glorious and rich period of Gilānī's professional and academic life starts from 1920 when he joined the new born Osmānia University as a lecturer of Islamic studies. His services at the university lasted for about thirty years (1920 -1949). This long affiliation gave him a good opportunity to serve Islam and prove its excellence in the academia.

The establishment of Osmānia University was a dream whose actualization was a hard nut to crack. It was impeded internally and externally, from the Muslim side for fear of the spread of western culture more rapidly in Indian subcontinent and from British colonial powers that wanted the same in full English environment with the products of atheist, irreligious or at least doubtful Muslim minds, but feared that Muslims would never allow them to make their dream come true. So till 1919 this task remained unaccomplished. A man was strongly needed who dared to form a mixture of both eastern and western culture. That man was Ḥabīb al-

²⁸ He was the controller of Examination at Dār al-‘Ulūm during that period.

²⁹ Editorship of al-Qāsim and al-Rashīd was a big challenge for a new writer and editor since all the fresh articles of Deobandi scholars Ashraf Ali Thanwi, Ḥabīb al-Rahmān ‘Uthmānī, Anwar Shāh Kashmīrī, Shabbir Ahmed ‘Uthmānī used to be published in both of them. But Gilānī proved him to be the most eligible person for this post. See *Hazār Sāl pahle*, p.24

³⁰ Mawlāna Manāzir Ahsan Gilānī: ‘ālim-i-bē badal, p.97

Rahmān Khān Shērwānī³¹ who took the chair as the minister of religious affairs of Haiderābād after the death of its former president.

It is already mentioned that Gilānī was dissatisfied with his job at Dār al-‘Ulūm Deoband and was constantly seeking a better opportunity. In 1919 when he was at Haiderābād, he happened to have several meetings with Hamīd al-Dīn Farāhī³² who after knowing his extraordinary qualities offered him job in Osmānia University with a handsome salary package. Gilānī accepted this offer after consultation with Habīb al-Rahmān Shērwānī and his colleagues and teachers at Deoband.

The University came into being in 1920 and Gilānī was appointed there as a lecturer of Hadīth sciences. Soon he was asked to teach Islamic studies which was compulsory for the students of all faculties, regardless of the fact that their specialization in science or arts. The journey of success made him reader,³³ then professor and finally Dean of Islamic studies. He retired in 1949 before one year of his actual date of retirement due to medical unfitness. Since 1947 he had a series of heart attacks that made him unable to fulfill his duties. Rs 500 were fixed as his monthly pension. So he went back to Gilānī on 15th of April 1949 where he spent his remaining life.

Gilānī's thirty years' stay at Osmānia University was the most fertile and rich span of his academic and, of course, professional life. The University environment provided him with such opportunities which could neither be provided nor entertained by a purely religious institute like Dār al-‘Ulūm Deoband. His whole personality was transformed into a new one.

³¹ He was appointed as the first vice chancellor of Osmānia University and played remarkable role regarding medium of instruction as Urdu and not English, making Islamic studies compulsory for the students of all faculties apart from independent faculty under the name Islamic studies, fixing the salary of Islamic studies' teachers equivalent to that of other faculties. He very successfully accomplished all these tasks. For further details see *Maqālāt-i Gilānī* pp. 616- 619.

³² Hamīd al-Dīn Farāhī (1863-1930) was a celebrated Islamic scholar of Indian subcontinent known for his groundbreaking work on the concept of *Nazm*, or Coherence, in the Qur'ān. He was instrumental in producing scholarly work which proved that the verses of the Qur'ān are interconnected in such a way that each sūrah, or chapter, of the Qur'ān forms a coherent structure, having its own central theme, which he called *umood* (the theme which stands out). He also started writing his own exegesis, or *tafsīr*, of the Qur'ān which was left incomplete due to his death in 1930. The *Muqaddimah*, or the Introduction, to this *tafsīr* is an extremely important work on the theory of *Nazm al-Qur'ān*.

³³ Name of the post after lecturer ship

The only similarity between his past and present was his religiosity and strong commitment to Islam in the words of Dr. Hamidullah.³⁴

Gilani's job was tough at the university. He paved his own way through rocky mountains.

Academically Gilani's achievements in Osmāneah University are as follow:

He very successfully adjusted himself in the western atmosphere of the university which witnesses his mental vastness and adaptability according to changing circumstances.

He had to satisfy the doubts and questions of modern minds regarding different aspects of Islam, a job done very well by him. Owing to this quality of Gilani Dr. Hamidullah entitled him as the *second Imām Ghazālī* and *the founder of Modern 'Ilm al-Kalām*.

He was on good terms with his colleagues in different faculties who were about 200 in number. They used to ask him different questions and sought from him reference material about history, philosophy, law, economics, etc. All this enhanced his knowledge a great deal.

During Gilani's Deanship of Islamic Studies research work was made compulsory for Masters Degree let alone M. Phil and Ph. D. He not only used to suggest topics for his students of *Tafsīr, hadīth, Fiqh* and *'Ilm al-Kalām* but also provided reference material to them.

Apart from all the above mentioned tasks, his participation in university periodicals, local magazines of Haiderābad, and research journals of British India were the sources of constant growth of his knowledge and wisdom.

1.4: Death

Gilani received several handsome offers from different institutions³⁵ after his retirement from Osmāneah University in 1949, but he preferred going back to Gilani. His biographers gave different explanations for this preference. His bad health, rapid decrease of Islamic values in university with every coming day and his love for Makārim Ahsan Gilani³⁶ and mango trees

³⁴ *Hażrat Imām Abū Ḥanīfā kī Sayāsī Zindagi*, p.20

³⁵ Punjab University offered him salary package of 1500, Karachi University also invited him to offer his services there, *Look Fuyūzāt-i Gilānī*, p.52. Sayyid Sulaimān Nadvī and 'Abd al-Majid Dryābādi tried to convince him to join Ali gaṛī Muslim university; *Hayāt-i Mawlānā Gilānī*, p.184

³⁶ Gilani's younger brother

are major ones. Among them the most authentic is Gilānī's own account as mentioned by Sayyid Ṣabāḥ al-Dīn 'Abd al-Rahmān³⁷ that Sayyid Sulemān Nadī asked him to stay at Gilānī after retirement³⁸ Anyhow from then onwards his cave period starts where he was busy with his prolific pen in writing the gist of his whole life

Gilānī's bad health could never allow him for such a heavy task which he performed for his readers. Doctors strictly prohibited him any sort of mental stress. But his passion was his books which he could never leave till his last breath. He completed the third volume of Savāneh Qāsmī at the night of 5th of June 1956. His soul passed away while he was sleeping after Fajr prayer and was found dead in the morning. His death incident is worth narrating. Quite often he used to narrate Ḥadīth of Prophet Muḥammad (PBUH) that no old man will enter paradise³⁹ and this really happened with him. He was sixty four at the time of his death but his white hair had turned into black and there was no wrinkle on his face. Eye witness exclaimed if it was the dead body of a young man of twenty five years.⁴⁰ Mawlānā Faṣīḥ Aḥmed conducted his funeral prayer according to Gilānī's wish.⁴¹ Several Hindūs of neighboring villages also attended his funeral prayer.⁴² His death was not the death of an ordinary person; rather it was the death of a great Muslim scholar, researcher, biographer, historian, poet, Mutakallim, sūfī and above all a great person. The magazines in which he used to write articles, published series of funeral notes from his friends and colleagues which lasted for many months.⁴³

1.5: Family Life

³⁷ A contemporary and biographer of Gilānī, he happened to meet him several times, both lived in the neighboring villages. An academic person, writer of several books, also offered his services as head of *Dār al-Muṣānifin* at Shibli academy in Azamgarh India.

³⁸ For details see *Foyūzāt-i Gilānī*, pp.62, 63.

³⁹ Means old people will become young while entering paradise

أُخْرَجَ الْإِلَمُ اللَّهُمَّ فِي كُلِّ (الشَّمَلِ الْمُعَدِّيِّ)، يَلْبِي الْجَنَّةَ لَا يَنْخَلِي عَوْنَوْنَ، 1/272، رَوْفُ الْحَدِيثِ: 238، مِنْ الْمَكْفَةِ الْمُنَاهَدِةِ

⁴⁰ Almost all biographers quoted his death incident with special interest. For example see Makārim Aḥsan Gilānī, "Karāmat-i Gilānī" in *Ṣidq jadīd*, ed., 'Abd al-Majid Dryābādī (India: Lucknow), Dec., 21 1956, p.6

⁴¹ It was Gilānī's strong desire that Mawlānā Faṣīḥ would lead his funeral prayer. Mawlānā Faṣīḥ was out of Gilānī the day Gilānī died. He himself narrated that suddenly his heart started desiring strongly to meet Gilānī. So he went there and thus Gilānī's heartious wish was fulfilled.

⁴² See *Fuyūzāt-i Gilānī*, p.67.

⁴³ For detailed account of Gilānī's death notes look at *Ṣidq jadīd* Lucknow 1956

Gilānī got married in 1914 when he was 22. His wife Aminah was the daughter of Sayyid Muhammad Nazir. Both families belonged to Gilānī. He was blessed with many children but all died in their early childhood except two. His son Sayyid Mohiyy al-Dīn settled in Behār after doing M.A. In 1947 he shifted to East Pakistan with the disagreement of his father. After some time, he was transferred to West Pakistan where in 1970 he breathed his last due to heart attack. Gilānī's daughter got married with Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, his first cousin and son of her uncle Sayyid Makārim Aḥsan. Family details of Gilānī's both children are not known.

1.5: Gilānī in Academia

Mawlānā Gilānī has left treasures of knowledge in the form of books, articles, speeches and other literary material which is precious both with respect to quality and quantity. He excelled both in intellectual and revealed sciences. His services in the field of knowledge are acknowledged by all his contemporaries. We shall quote a few in order to judge how valuable his works are.

Mawlānā Ashraf Alī Thānwī after reading his first book *Hażrat Abū dhr Ghifārī* exclaimed: The writer of this book would be a great researcher of his time. This vision actually turned into reality when Mawlānā 'Abd al-Majid Dryābādī wrote an article on Gilānī naming him *Muhaqqiq Gilānī*.⁴⁴

Sayyid Sulemān Nadvī very beautifully highlights Gilānī's academic stature when he says:

Our P.H.D's write single thesis in their lives and put them near and dear throughout their lives. While 'Allāma Gilānī, without exaggeration has written hundreds of essays and articles that witness his extraordinary God gifted qualities of head and heart for knowledge.⁴⁵

⁴⁴This article was published in *Šidq jadīd*, ed. 'Abd al-Majid Dryābādī (India: Lucknau), 15 June, 1956 also look *Mawlāna Manāzir Aḥsan Gilānī*: 'ālim -i bē badal, p.78.

⁴⁵ Mawlānā Nasīm Aḥmed Farīdī Amrohī "alf thānī (ya hazāra dom) kā tajdidi kārnāma" in *Al-Furqān*, ed. Muḥammad Manzōr Na'mānī, (India: Lucknau, July 1957), p.48

He had been affiliated with different associations and educational institutions of his time. During his student life at Dār al-‘Ulūm Deoband he remained Editor of *Al- Qāsim* and *Al-Rashid* for one year. He had membership of Dār al-‘Ulūm Deoband (from 1929 to 1948), and Nadvat al-Muṣannifin, Dehlī. He was among the consultants of Dār al-Muṣannifin, Azamgarh. For one year he offered his services as an honorary Editor of *Al-Furqān*, Lucknao.⁴⁶ He also participated in meeting for Islamic law in Pākistān after partition.⁴⁷ It is necessary here to comprehend Gilānī’s mind set before understanding his works because the quality of flowers and fruits depend on the quality of roots. Gilānī’s mind was a mixture of two trends and sources of knowledge, namely reasoning and spirituality as we have mentioned while working on his academic life that he was the descendant of Khairābādī and Deobandī schools of thought. The former was well reputed for rational sciences, while the later was famous for revealed sciences, especially Ḥadīth. Apart from this he remained a student of Ḥamīd al-Dīn Farāhī (1863-1930) for Qur’ānic studies. He was also a great admirer of Ibn ‘Arabī, a renowned Muslim philosopher and Ṣūfī. He was also inspired from Iqbāl’s thought and message. He drew upon Iqbāl’s poetry to comprehend the meaning of various Qur’ānic verses.⁴⁸ All these institutes and persons influenced him to the extent that his mind purely became ‘Nadvat al-‘Ulamā’i’ style.⁴⁹ So his personality as well his services bridged the gap between conservative and modernist Muslim scholars. He was strictly against stagnant scholarship which is unaware of the demands of changing times. In his view such a scholar is like a tree whose growth has been stopped due to absence of energy. He often used to express his viewpoint saying: pity on the Molvī who didn’t get the point.⁵⁰

⁴⁶ Gilānī wrote about one thousand pages for *al-Furqān*. Apart from that, he used to send articles of his brilliant students at Osmania University for publication. For detailed account of Gilānī’s published articles in *Al-Furqān*. Muḥammad Manzōr Na’mānī, “Mawlānā Gilānī or Al-Furqān” in *Al-Furqān*, ed. Muḥammad Manzōr No’mānī, (India: Lucknao, July 1957), pp.39-44

⁴⁷ *Maqālāt -i Gilānī*, p.12.

⁴⁸ Muṣaffar Gilānī, “Mawlānā Manāzir Aḥsan Gilānī”, *Ṣidq Jadīd*, ed ‘Abd al-Mājid Dryābādī, (India: Lucknao, Oct 4 1968), p.6

⁴⁹ Foyūz al-Rahmān, *Mashāhīr i ‘Ulamā’-ē Deoband*, vol I (Lahore: Al-maktabah al-‘Azīziyah, 1976), p.600

⁵⁰ Sayyid Manāzir Aḥsan Gilānī, *Maqālāt -i Ihsānī*. (Karachi: Idāra Majlis -i ‘Ilmī, 1959), p.6

It is said that every person on this earth is born with some unique characteristics which others do not have. Suitable environment and sound training improve them. Gilānī's case was not different. It seems that he was born writer. Since his early childhood, germs of creative writing were present in him. But formally he started writing during his student life in Dār al-'Ulūm Deoband, acting upon the advice of his teacher Mawlānā Mehmed al-Hasan. His first article *Khair al-umam kā tughrā e imteāz* was published in al-Qāsim whereas his last voluminous work was *Sawāneh Qāsmī*. So he took start with Qāsim and ended with Qāsim... a beautiful co incidence that marks the significance of Mawlānā Qāsim Nānotvī's personality for Gilānī. *Hażrat Abū dhar Ghifārī* was his first published book which is also a memorial of his student life. It is out of this appreciation and advice of his teacher that his pen did not stop till his last breath. Numerous books, hundreds of articles, preface of many books translations and letters are the outcome of his fluent pen.

His famous published books up to this time are: *Hażrat Abū dhr Ghifārī (raz)*, *aēk Hindustānī Ṣahābī*, *Islāmī Ma'āshiyāt*, *Hindustān mēn Musalmānon Kā Niżām -i Ta'lim -o Tarbiyat* (vol i, ii), *Tadvīn -i Qur'ān*, *Tadvīn -i Ḥadīth*, *Tadvīn -i Fiqh*, *Maqālāt -i Ihsānī*, *Al-Dīn al-Qayyim*, *Al-Nabī al-Khātim*, *Hazār Sāl Pahle*, *Musalmānon Ki Firqa Bandiyon Kā Afsāna*, *Tadhkarah Ṣhāh Waṭīullāh al-Dehlawī*, *Kā'inat -i Rūhānī*, *Hażrat Imām Abū Hanifa Ki Siyāsi Zindagi*, *Tadbkir bi Sūrat al-Kahaf*, *Sawāneh Qāsmī* (3 vols), *Maqālāt -i Gilānī* and *Fuyūzat -i Gilānī*⁵¹. Many scholars have categorized these books with respect to discipline like history, *Sīrah*, biography and so on.⁵² Apart from these published works several of his writings remained unpublished. Mużaffar Gilānī has mentioned Gilānī's personal diary which has several unpublished articles in Urdu, Persian, and Arabic.⁵³ A record of

⁵¹ *Maqālāt -i Ihsānī*, p.8.

⁵² For detailed account see *Maqālāt -i Gilānī*, pp.10, 11.

⁵³ For detailed account of Gilānī's unpublished works see Mawlānā Mañazir Aḥsan Gilānī: 'ālim -i bē badal, p. 109.

unpublished articles and books was also maintained by Shākir Alī, Gilānī's student and contemporary.⁵⁴

Mawlānā Azhar Shāh Qaisar while talking about Gilānī's unpublished material said that the quantity of his unpublished writings is much greater than that of his published writings.⁵⁵ Why are these articles and books still left unpublished? His biographers answered this question saying that he never took any money on the publishing of his work. Writing was his passion, not business. He always wrote with the pure intention for the sake of Allah and his religion.

Since writing is closely linked with reading so first we mention Gilānī's reading style.

While reading he used to take help of his pen to note down every new and interesting point he found. Then he distributed the recorded information according to its subject. When he got sufficient material on any topic, he assembled it to prepare an essay or article.⁵⁶

As far as his literary style is concerned, two opinions are found among researchers. According to the first opinion his writings do not meet the requirements of modern times. There is no link between sentences and paragraphs. Revising and proof reading was also used to be done by his students and colleagues. According to the second opinion, he has a unique literary style that every Tom, Dick and Harry cannot comprehend. It becomes harder to understand when it comes in the hand of a beginner.⁵⁷

Our research says that both opinions are partially right. In fact Ṣūfī aspect of his personality is clearly reflected throughout in his works. He used to write so quickly that he forgot the formal standards and parameters of writing. So the biggest feature of his writings is abruptness and bluntness. He was of the view that a piece of writing should reach the readers in its original and pure form. Proofreading improves the contents but corrupts the intent. Focus should be on quality and material, but at the same time he wasn't against the shape and

⁵⁴ Name of the books were published in a letter by Shākir Alī, "Ifādāt-i Gilānī", *Ṣidq Jadid*, ed. 'Abd al-Mājīd Dryābādi (India, Lucknow Nov 23 1956), p.6

⁵⁵ *Hazār sāl Pahle*, p.27

⁵⁶ *Ibid*, p.45

⁵⁷ *Mashāhīr 'Ulamā' ē Deoband*: vol I, p.600

form of writing.

Perhaps the words of Dr. Hamidullah bridge the gap between two opinions , saying that these writings should not be judged with respect to manner of writing rather from the point of view that they have combined an invaluable treasure of learning and facts⁵⁸ and even if speech is discontinued one does not feel like giving up reading due to the spontaneity , power of reasoning and the impassioned style. In Mawlānā's writings there is inspiration all over and there are no signs of unnatural effort. He had command on profuseness of speech and (*ijāz*). Neither his (*ijāz*) nor profuseness of speech was void of pleasure.⁵⁹

Because of all these features Sayyid Sulaimān Nadvi⁶⁰ titled him as 'Sultān al-Qalam' i.e: the master of pen and he rightly deserved this title.

Letters are normally related to one's private life. They are personal to the extent that in the Islamic tradition reading someone's letter without his permission is prohibited. But when it comes to the letters of scholars they are published for the benefit of the general public. Exclusive articles are written to discuss the contents of their letters. Just as Mawlānā Ishfāq Ahmed⁶¹ wrote an article 'Allāmah Manāzir Ahsan Gilānī: Apnē Maktubat Kī Roshni Mēn'.⁶² Serious efforts were made by his contemporaries to publish all of Gilānī's letters in book form for the benefit of all. Molvī Shāh Minnatullāh Rahmānī⁶³ launched a movement to secure all of Gilānī's letters from his relatives, friends, colleagues and students in order to

⁵⁸ *Hayāt -i Mawlānā Gilānī*, p.213

⁵⁹ The best example of *ijāz* (short writing) is Gilānī's book *al-Nabī al-Khātam*, while for profuseness look at *Savāneh Qāsmī*, a voluminous work covering many hundred pages.

⁶⁰ Sayyid Sulemān Nadvi (1884 -1953) shared geneological and geographical background with Gilānī. He was the native of Behār and belonged to *Sādāt* clan of Arabs. He initiated Dār al-Muṣannifin in A'zam Garh and published there monthly magazine *Ma'ārif*. Gilānī wrote several valuable articles for this magazine and had the membership of this institute. Sayyid Sulemān Nadvi was a writer, poet, historian, and above all a great Muslim scholar and devoted preacher. His famous books are *Khutbat -i Madrās*, *Sīrat -i 'Ayesha*, *Hayāt -i Shiblī*, last four volumes of *Sīrat al-Nabī (saw)*, *Arz al-Qur'ān*. For detail account of relationship between Gilānī and Sulaimān Nadvi see *Fuyūzat i Gilānī*, pp.25,26

⁶¹ A pen friend and student of Gilānī

⁶² *Al-Fur'qān* , ed. Manzor Ahmed Na'mānī (India: Lucknow, Jan, 1957) , p.43

⁶³ A friend and colleague of Gilānī

compile and publish them.⁶⁴ Several of his letters were published from time to time in different issues of weekly magazine *Sidq*.⁶⁵ It clearly shows that Gilānī's letters played an important part to glorify and exalting his academic status.

The poetic aspect of Gilānī's personality cannot be overlooked here though he was not famous as a poet. His poetry was confined to his friends and colleagues. He had command on Urdu, Persian, Hindī, Arabic and Magdī⁶⁶ poetry. He wrote several poems, lamentations and praises of Prophet Muḥammad (saw). In the beginning his pen name was *žiā'*. Later on in some poems he used *Ahsan*. *Dhar' mī* is also found in Hindī and Magdī⁶⁷. But normally he wasn't interested in using pen name in his poetry⁶⁸. His first published piece of poetry is *Shikwa ē Khwāja* when he was student in Madrasah Khalīliyah.⁶⁹

Gilānī's speeches also glorify his academic status since they have become part of his writings. He himself shifted his verbal speeches in written form and now they are equally important like his essays and articles.⁷⁰ His speech was full of inspiration. It seems that he had full control over his audience's feelings. They laugh and cry according to his narration. Subject of speech was mostly according to occasion and situation. Nawāb Bahādur Yār Jang learned the art of speech from Gilānī. His words are: I learned speaking from Mawlānā Manāzir Ahsan Gilānī. I used to run after him in my car when he used to give speeches in Milādī communions in Hyderabad.⁷¹

⁶⁴ Manāzir Ahsan Gilānī, "Maktubāt -i Gilānī", *Sidq jadīd*, ed. 'Abd al-Mājid Dryābādī (India: Lucknow, July 13, 1956), p.5.

⁶⁵ Manāzir Ahsan Gilānī, "Maktubāt -i Gilānī", *Sidq jadīd*, ed. 'Abd al-Mājid Dryābādī (India: Lucknow 7th Dec 1956, 21 Dec 1956, 15th feb 1957, 22nd feb 1957).

⁶⁶ An ascent of Behāri language, usually spoken in villages of Bihar

⁶⁷ Mawlānā Manāzir Ahsan Gilānī: 'alim -i bē badal', p.352

⁶⁸ *Hayāt -i Mawlānā Gilānī*, p.240

⁶⁹ Ibid, p.236

⁷⁰ *Fuyūzāt -i Gilānī*, pp.19, this poem was fully published in *Sidq Jadīd* (17th April 1957), p.8

⁷¹ See *Hazār Sāl Pahle* (Karachi: Bait al-'ilm, 2002), p.27

Chapter 2: Gīlānī's Approach to the Study of Religion

Part I

- Manāzir Aḥsan Gīlānī's Conception of Man and Universe

Part II

- State of Religious Studies During Gīlānī's Time

- Definition of Religion

- Need and Purpose of Religion

- Methodological Principles and Sources for Studying Religion

Chapter 2: Gīlānī's Approach to the Study of Religion

I have divided this chapter into two parts. The first part encompasses Gīlānī's understanding of man and the world around him by answering questions of worldview, whereas the second part deals with his approach to religion by mentioning definition, need, purpose, and methodological principles for studying religion.

Part I

2.1: Manāzir Aḥsan Gilānī's Conception of Man and Universe

In contemporary times the questions related to identity of man, his relation to the cosmos and his ultimate destination has become a part of cosmological sciences. The term 'Worldview' also proposes answers to the above questions. Gilānī, though a contemporary scholar, yet adopted the classical style of writing i.e. discussing many things under one heading. So, before discussing Gilānī's approach to the study of religion we have to look for how he conceives man and the whole world around him as such under the heading 'worldview'. This study would serve as a background for his understanding of religion. It would also help a great deal in understanding his definition and purpose of religion.

Broadly speaking, the expression worldview conveys the sense of an outline and framework of one's life. It is a pair of glasses through which a person views his own self and the whole world around him. It gives meaning and identity to a person's existence. Different world views have different points of consideration and details but four questions serve as the basis and requisite for any view to be a worldview.

1. What is the identity of man?
2. From where did he come?
3. What is his relation to the cosmos?
4. What is the purpose of his life?

From the Islamic perspective, the term worldview is understood in a unique and completely different way. It is the vision of reality and truth that appears before our mind's eye revealing what existence is all about; for it is the world of existence in its totality that Islam is

projecting.⁷² The Arabic translation of worldview as *nazrat al-Islam li al-kawn* does not depict the true Islamic understanding of the world; rather it reflects the influence of modern western scientific conception of things on Muslim minds. So the correct translation of world view in Arabic must be *ru'yat al-Islam li al-wujūd* as Al-Attās says. It is because of the subtle but clear difference between *nazrah*⁷³ and *ru'yah*⁷⁴ on one side, and on the other side between *al-Kawn*⁷⁵ and *al-Wujūd*.⁷⁶

As far as the first two questions of the worldview are concerned Gilānī has taken them for granted. Explicit answers are not found in this regard; rather they are already understood that man is the vicegerent of God on earth. He has come from God and has to return to Him. His interpretation of Qur'ānic verses regarding the identity and status of man are worth mentioning.... Verily, I am going to place (mankind) generations after generations on this earth... (2:30)

Gilānī has dealt with the last question i.e. purpose of man's life in this universe before his relation to the cosmos. It seems that in his view the purpose of man's creation is deeply linked with relation to the universe. Rather it should be said that man's relation and attitude to everything around him is determined with the purpose of his existence

Before coming to the question of purpose of man's life and his creation, Gilānī asked this question the whole universe. He found that the answer is more than clear; every particle of the universe speaks itself for its purpose. Even the minutest particle is not ready to accept the accusation of vanity. Everything has been created for a purpose, big or small. Every coming day discovers new series of their functions and uses. Their benefit is beyond any discussion. Their working and usefulness is beyond man's presence or absence, or in other words, man's existence does not make any difference to them. They had been working many thousand

⁷² Sayyid Muhammed Naquib al-Attās, *Prolegomena to the Metaphysics of Islam* (Lahore: Suhail Academy, 2001), p.2

⁷³ Philosophical speculation formulated mainly from observation of the data of sensible experience, of what is visible to the eye.

⁷⁴ It is not confined to eye only rather it mainly deals with the inner sense of seeing.

⁷⁵ The world of sensible experience.

⁷⁶ Existence that does not only includes the observed phenomena of the physical world.

years before man's creation and would carry on their functioning if human existence ceases. Nothing is in need of man for its existence and working.⁷⁷ On the other hand Gilānī is astonished at the silence of man in response to the question of purpose when asked from him. While dealing with the question of purpose of man's creation, Gilānī has surveyed other philosophies as well. The answer that man is for God has been interpreted in various ways based on different inclinations and inspirations. So it has given birth to different patterns of thought. In Gilānī's view two extremely opposite types of answers are found which can be summarized as:

Spiritualism: Modern Western philosophy calls it spiritualism. In Christianity, it is named as Spiritualism, and it is called Jogiāt in Hinduism. Among Muslims it is famous as Rūhāniyat. Whatever name we give to this trend of thought it means that if man is for God, then the best way to fulfill his purpose of creation is to detach himself completely from this material world. Every moment of life should be spent in quest of the Lord. In this way man voluntarily deprives himself from his natural right i.e. taking benefit from this universe.⁷⁸

Quite contrary to this trend there is practical Materialism.⁷⁹ 'Man is for God' can only means to serve his creature and to take benefit from this universe. Because The Supreme Being is beyond any need that man worship Him. Mostly the followers of this trend do not deny God as the Originator and Sustainer of this universe. They adhere to a particular Religion but their approach towards life is materialistic. The centre and the focal point of their lives is nothing but creature. Gilānī further states that polytheism or Idol worship is also one type of practical materialism since it also focuses on creatures and ignores The Creator.⁸⁰

Now Gilānī comes to identifying the purpose of man's life as suggested by Islam. Qur'ān provokes him to think for his purpose by pondering over this cosmos. If, nothing in this

⁷⁷ *Al-Din al-Qayyim*, pp.199-2001.

⁷⁸ Ibid, pp.217-218

⁷⁹ Besides Materialism, Gilānī has employed the term practical materialism, The subtle difference that he states is that former is a school of thought in philosophy that bases itself on the theory that matter is the origin of this universe, while the followers of later trend of thought do believe in God as the originator and sustainer of universe but their practical lives are devoid of his remembrance and slight traces of religiosity. Ibid, p.219

⁸⁰ Ibid, pp.218, 219.

universe is useless, then how come his own self?⁸¹ The only answer man gets from everything around him is purposeful life. Qur'ān further guides him by directing his attention that Allah Almighty, the Creator of this whole universe has created man for Himself. According to Gilānī, this is an eternal law and like other laws of nature this is also universal and unchangeable. This answer automatically solves all the problems. When man is for God and God is the Lord and sustainer of every particle of this universe, then the whole creation is for man's benefit and service. Now his position is fixed in the whole picture. It is after this theoretical correction that he gets the position of vicegerency. He is the most precious and valuable creature of all the created things. He deserves safety, honor and prestige. In this way Gilānī has generally answered the question of man's relation to the cosmos. We would further deal with this question in future under "The Religious Other: An Islamic Approach to Other Religions".

⁸¹ In this context Gilānī has quoted the following verses of the Holy Qur'ān:
Did you think that We had created you in play (without any purpose) and that you would not be brought back to us. (23:115)
Does man think that he will be left neglected (without being punished or rewarded for the obligatory duties enjoined by his Lord Allah on him). (75:36)
And We created not the heaven and the earth and all that is between them without purpose... (38:67)

Part II

2.2: State of Religious Studies During Gilānī's Time

Although Mawlānā Gilānī was nurtured in a purely Islamic environment yet it was tough time for Indian Muslims. It was the time of their subjugation by the British. After 1857's War of Independence the Muslims were badly crushed in all walks of life. Their political, economic and social institutes were largely demolished. In a condition like this, how could their religion remain unaffected, as it is a known fact that the spread of Christianity among Muslim circles of India was included in the agenda of British colonizers. English language had become the symbol of modernity and development and was declared compulsory for all citizens. Details are the subject of history. Here our purpose is to give a glimpse in order to have a sketch of social and religious circumstances during Gilānī's period.

Gilānī in his book *Muqaddima Tadwīn -i Fiqh*⁸² gives an account of the status of religious studies during his time by drawing a beautiful comparison between religious and secular sciences. It will help us understand the contemporary situation as well. He mentions that religion, which was once considered the mother of all sciences has today been driven away from the city of knowledge. There are separate faculties rather universities to study the minute particles of the universe but the progeny of Adam has been neglected like thorns in a jungle. All this is due to the fact that man has forgotten himself and his forgetting himself is the punishment of forgetting his Lord.⁸³ Then he ridiculed modern man that how come his memory became so weak that he forgot his own self.⁸⁴

their own selves

⁸² Manāzir Ahsan Gilānī, *Muqaddimah tadwīn -i fiqh* (Lahore: Maktabah Rashidiyah, 1976), p.55

⁸³ Gilānī quoted the following verse: And be not like those who forgot Allah (i.e. became disobedient to him), and He caused them to forget their own selves... (59:19)

⁸⁴ Ibid, p.55-56

In fact Gilānī was much worried about this mental revolution of modern man and was able to foresee its after effects. He possessed a sensitive heart, burning and hewing on the desperate situation of the Muslim Ummah at large and Indian Muslims in particular. Since education and particularly religious education was his own field, so on one side was the backward and illiterate Muslims and on the other side bad educational policies of British Government was a serious threat for his sensitive heart. That is why he proposed many solutions to the educational problems that were being faced by Indian Muslims under British Colonial system. He was of the view that Indian Muslims must have their own independent system of education if they want to free themselves from the chains of British slavery. He presented this idea by the name *Islāmiyah Hostel* in a conference of 'Ulamā' at Lucknao a few days before his death.⁸⁵ He also authored a voluminous book *Barr -i Sagbir men Musalmānon kā Nizām -i Ta'lim -o Tarbiyat*, aiming to eliminate the dualism in educational system after British colonialism and to form a unified system of education. Therefore he says, I have given this idea the name of theory of oneness in the Educational system.⁸⁶

His proposed definition and concept of Religion would show how much he was concerned about man in general and Muslims of the Indian subcontinent in particular.

2.3: Definition of Religion

Gilānī employs the term *madhab* for religion. He defines religion as follow:

"Religion is about 'man' as such". Man addresses and discusses every big and small thing in this universe, but the topic of discussion for religion is man himself. It addresses all those things that help man to reach his goal, and the things that are harmful for him to his way to eternal bliss and success. This is the summary of Religion or religious studies. Knowledge about God, Prophets, revelation, Heaven and Hell, reward and punishment and so on is

⁸⁵ For detailed account of this educational system see Mawlānā 'Abd al-bārī Nadvi, 'Yādgār Hazrat Gilānī' in *Šidq Jadid* (Lucknao: 24 Aug, 31 Aug 1956), pp. 6-8.

⁸⁶ *Hayāt -i Mawlānā Gilānī*, p. 331

necessary for man in order to reach his goal. That is why religion also takes all of them into account.⁸⁷

In the light of the above definition it can easily be understood that Religion focuses on two things. Its primary focus is man while all religious sciences whose knowledge is indispensable for him have a secondary status. Worshipping Allah according to His will and making his obedience is the end purpose of his life. When he does that with its full spirit he will attain eternal bliss.

Gīlānī illustrates this definition by giving a beautiful example from the medical field. Just as medical science addresses human body and all its systems. Now on its way to physical health and fitness various other sciences are helpful such as pharmacy, surgery and so on. But these sciences do not have a primary status. The same is the relation of Religion with all religious sciences.

In one of his articles, Gīlānī gives another definition of Religion. He says:

A struggle to defeat misery or evil and search for happiness or eternal bliss is what religion is all about.⁸⁸

Both the above definitions address the same topic but in different words. The former talks about religion in a direct way, while the latter deals with the same, but in a psychological tone. The former is clearer and easily comprehensible, while the latter is complex and ambiguous. Both address man as their subject of discussion. His eternal happiness is the end purpose of both. The second definition would be more clear and understandable if we look it in the context of the situation of Indian Muslims after the 1857 war of independence. It offers a ray of hope for them when they have lost everything. It is also an indirect invitation to the Muslims to become complete Muslims and to non Muslims to embrace Islam, since it is the only authentic way to defeat miseries and acquire eternal bliss.

⁸⁷ *Muqaddimah tadwīn -i fiqh*, p.54

⁸⁸ *Fuyūzāt -i Gīlānī*, p.397

The link between both definitions is a very good example of unity and coherence in Gilānī's thought. The context is completely different for both definitions but he knew very well the art of addressing the same thing under different headings and in different styles.

2.4: Need and Purpose of Religion

The presence of everything in this world is justified according to its need. There is no concept of extra or useless in this universe, so as with religion. For Religion the subject of discussion is man and man is the vicegerent of God on the face of this earth. He is the Supreme Being because he has been bestowed with the mind, and with intellect. Whatever name we give to it, this characteristic pushes man to think about himself, his family, and society and so on. At the highest level he ponders over the cosmos around him, its beginning and end, its past and future. So starting from his own self and ending with the cosmos he asks the following questions.

What is the origin of this world? What would be its end? Everything in this universe has been designed for man, for whom is man meant for? Is it possible to attain salvation? Can the desire of eternal existence be fulfilled in the real sense of the term? Theoretically and practically everyone wants to be unlimited, can this wish be fulfilled?⁸⁹ To give correct answers of all the above questions, according to Gilānī, is the primary purpose of religion. Before coming to religion he dealt with other systems of knowledge to see what kind of answers they give. In this respect he dealt with natural science and philosophy. We just give here the gist of a lengthy discussion that Gilānī made in order to disqualify both the sources of knowledge.

Natural science is based on the physical senses that can observe and experiment. Its area of research is the physical and corporeal world. To look beyond is out of its scope. In the end he

⁸⁹ Manāzir Aḥsan Gilānī, *al-Dīn al-Qayyim* (Karachi: Maktabah As'adiyyah, 2nd Pub: 2004) ,p.34

came up with a quite positive attitude stating that it does not mean that science clashes with religion. Both have their own area of study; religion begins from where science ends.⁹⁰

As far as philosophy is concerned, its backbone is human mind. It can go beyond physical world but it is also limited in the sense that each philosopher is affected by his own personal mind, family background and social milieu. All these factors made him think in a particular way. As a result, difference of opinion occurs and there is no single authentic answer to satisfy man's innate quest.⁹¹

Gilānī asserted that neither religious questions can be erased from the human mind nor can they be answered by reference to the common epistemological sources i.e. senses and mind. It is also impossible that the Lord Almighty did not guide man the proper answers of these questions when He himself created this quest in man's nature. So He has introduced a new source to attain the answers and called it Religion. It is based on an entirely new and authentic mode of knowledge. In religious terms it is called *Wāḥy* or *Nubuwwah* (revelation)⁹². Gilānī has given a very simple definition of the recipients of revelation stating that there are very few persons among human beings who are endowed with that special power which makes them become eligible to access the Originator of universe without any intermediary. Those who have this new sense or source of knowledge are perfect ones and are called as *Nabī* or *Rasūl* by Religion. The position of a lay man is before them is like a blind person who himself cannot see the sun but depend on some one else who can see it. Hence Prophets know the answers to religious questions and common people believe in them after listening from Prophets.⁹³

⁹⁰ Ibid, pp.35-42

⁹¹ Ibid, pp.42-43

⁹² *Maqālāt -i Gilānī*, p.57

⁹³ Ibid, pp.60-61

2.5: Methodological Principles and Sources for Studying Religion

Universality of Revelation: The first principle is universality of revelation i.e.; God sent his Messengers for the guidance of whole humanity. Just like the message is universal, it has been conveyed universally in all parts of the world .Every nation has its messenger (10: 47), We have sent no Messenger but in the tongue of his people (14:4), and to every one of you [Messengers] we have appointed a right way and an open road. (5:48)

William Chittick in his "*Islam and other Religions --- The Universality and Particularity of Prophecy*" very beautifully shares Gilānī's view while expressing the phenomena of universality of God's Revelation says: Just as God's mercy takes precedence over His wrath and thereby determines the nature of wrath, so also God's guidance takes precedence over His misguidance.⁹⁴ So His mercy is reflected in His guidance to the whole of humanity.

Eternity of Religious Truths: Changing times do not make any difference to religious truths. They were created with the origin of humanity and would remain with it till its end, since they are for its success and progress in both the worlds. Gilānī does not make any differentiation between revealed and nonrevealed religions. The eternity of Religion reflects and symbolizes the eternity of its Originator, the Almighty Allah. He states that all Religions are more or less the same in respect of their basics. For instance, moral laws, system of rights and duties, whether individual or social. He illustrates his point by saying that principally all Religions are similar in their teachings regarding worships like prayers (salāt), fasting, and pilgrimage and so on. Even the Religious personalities are common to all Religions.⁹⁵ The Holy Qur'ān when it says... He (Allah) said (to him), "verily I am going to make you an Imam a leader for mankind (to follow you)" (2:125). The word al-Nās encompasses the whole

⁹⁴ Muhammad Suheyl Umar, ed., *The Religious Other: Towards A Muslim Theology of other Religions in a post-Prophetic age*, (Lahore: Iqbāl Academy ,2008) , p.136

⁹⁵ *Fuyūzāt-i Gilānī*, p.177

mankind. So Ibrāhīm (Pbuh) is master and guideline for all. Therefore it is a known fact that his personality is an object of reverence in every religious tradition.⁹⁶ Modern research scholars are raising the question that Ibrāhīm of Muslims, or Abrāhām of Jews and Christians or Brahma of Hindus: do all these names implying to one single person or a multiple?⁹⁷ This principle will be further clarified in his work when he persists on the similarities between Islam and Hinduism while elaborating his comparative methodology.

Although Gilānī's book *al-Dīn al-Qayyim* solely discusses *Ilm al-Kalām* and its various issues, yet I have taken two instances from it. The first instance is the problem of evil. Why is there evil in this universe is the question to which approximately all major religions of the world have addressed. Each of them tried to answer it in its own way. The significance of this issue compelled Gilānī to deal with it as a Muslim Kalāmī scholar. Before presenting his own view, first he mentioned the positions of Buddhist, Hindu, Zoroastrian and Muslim philosophers on the issue and their comments on them.

Buddha conceived human desires as the root cause of evil or misery in this world. When man's incomplete and partial desires clash with the universal will (of God), it gives birth to evil, misery or *dukkhā*. The proposed solution then is to be free of every big or small desire. Gilānī commented that indeed it is a good piece of poetry but how far is it possible for man to be free of his desires. It is nothing but explicit objection with regard to God why has he put desire in man's nature since his birth? And if He did so then why did he not manage to fulfill it. In this way he rejected the Buddhist proposal for the solution of the problem of Evil.⁹⁸

⁹⁶ For instance in the Old Testament the word *Abram* occurred 60 times and *Abraham* one seventy four times. This makes the total of two hundred and thirty. Similarly in New Testament he has been mentioned seventy two times. Summing up the numbering of Old and New Testament the grand total becomes three hundred and sixty times. The Holy Qur'an also mentions *Ibrāhīm* (Pbuh) sixty nine times. See S.J, Carl Maria Martini, *Abraham : Our Father in faith*, (India: Sahitya Parkash, 1992), p.16-18

⁹⁷ For detailed account see *Fuyūzāt-i Gilānī*, p.178.

⁹⁸ *Al-Dīn al-Qayyim*, p.130

Secondly, in Hinduism theory of *Karma* and *Samsara*⁹⁹ (regeneration of souls) has been offered while answering the above mentioned question. This theory is also discarded by *Gilānī*, stating that in this way the whole universe would become the center of punishment. Then it has to be said that the variation of degrees in different qualities present in different creatures of the universe is nothing but the result of their acts in previous *janam* (life). For instance the natural weaknesses present in stones as compared to plants, and in plants in comparison to animals, and in animals while comparing them with human being and so on.... It means that each and every particle of universe is facing the after effects of what he had committed in its previous life.¹⁰⁰

Thirdly, the Zorastrians offered the theory of two creators¹⁰¹ of the world for the solution of the problem of evil, claiming that both virtue and vice cannot be created by one Being. According to *Gilānī*, they are mistaken like the previous two since they have been deceived by the apparent two dimensions of the same thing. For instance, fire which is used to cook food can also be used to burn the house as well. He further commented that virtue and vice are not innate in the things, it is their employment that makes them good or bad. While solving the problem of Evil they fell into the pit of shirk. Hence the theory of two creators for the same thing is not valid.¹⁰²

Ibn Rushd, a Muslim philosopher claimed that God is incapable of segregating evil from good in one entity. Whenever he creates a thing, it would necessarily possess both good and bad quality. He attacked on God's attribute of omnipotence by depriving Him from the

⁹⁹ *Karma* and *Samsara* is one of the major beliefs of Hindu Eschatology. Barhad āranyaka Upanishad is the first to discuss this belief whose main theme is monoism. According to this theme all individual souls have come from one universal soul i.e. Brahma and in it they have to return. Now after being separated from its origin when a person due to his ignorance fails to perceive unity he gets subject to evil and misery and successive cycle of births and rebirths. This vicious cycle of births and rebirths is known as Karma and samsara. See Mansumian.Farnaz, *Life after Death: A study of the afterlife in world religions*. (Oxford: Oneworld, 1996). p.57

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, p.130

¹⁰¹ The cardinal belief of Pārsī religion is that this world has been created by two gods. The creator of virtue(kher) is Yazdān and the Creator of vice(shar) is Ahruman

¹⁰² Ibid, p.131

eligibility of putting both the qualities in one entity. So his proposal is also rejected by Gilānī.¹⁰³

After presenting the views of Buddhist, Hindū, Pārsī and Ibn Rushd, Gilānī came up with his own view. This clearly shows his two fold approach while dealing with the issues. The negative aspect is the critical analysis and passing of value judgment which serves as a background and preliminary to his own view. The positive aspect is the presentation of his stand point on the above mentioned problem.

In Gilānī's view, Evil is not a problem for a Muslim and there is nothing like 'problem of evil' in Islamic understanding. It only becomes a problem when it is misconceived by people. In this regard the principal mistake is the intermingling and mixing of two terms i.e.; imperfection and Evil. In general understanding imperfect things are conceived as evil without understanding the subtle difference between the two. People are habituated to see the things from the glasses of comparison. They compare plants with animals, animals with human beings and so on; forgetting that every particle of this universe is epiphany and manifestation of God's attributes. It is complete in itself. Variation is the result of different degrees of God's attributes. To reinforce his stand he gave many examples such as if watery characteristic is not present in oxygen is due to the absence of hydrogen molecules, then has it been deprived from its own molecules of oxygen. A holistic approach is therefore necessary in order to see the manifestation of various degrees of God's attributes in different entities of this universe.¹⁰⁴ The second example of Gilānī's contribution to *'Ilm al-Kalām* deals with the divinity of Jesus Christ, which I will discuss later on in the third chapter.

¹⁰³ Ibid, p.131

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, pp.127-129

For sacred scriptures like Bible, Vedas and Maha Bharta Mawlānā Gilānī relied on Urdu translations. As a historian he used both primary and secondary sources according to availability. As it is mentioned in chapter one that he was proficient in five languages i.e.: Urdu, English, Hindī, Arabic and Magdī. He is very objective and free in quoting non Muslim and western sources particularly in case of philosophy and natural sciences

His understanding and interpretation of the term *Islam* is also worth mentioning here. He uniquely comprehends Islam in a sense that Qur'ānic definition of the term Islām gives it a universal character. It is not a new version of religion in the real sense of the word, rather its objective is filtration of other world religions from external or internal impurities that entered them with the passage of time, and give them back to its adherents in their pure and original form.

Chapter 3: Manāzir Ahsan Gilānī and World Religions

- Islam and Hinduism: A Comparative Study
- Qur'ānic Sabeans and the Followers of Buddha: A Historical-Analytical Survey
- Refutation of Jesus Christ's divinity: A Kalāmī Study

Chapter 3: Manāzir Aḥsan Gilānī and World Religions

Apart from his expertise in various Islamic disciplines, Gilānī has also written about major religions of the world. Most of the time we find him dealing with other religions, but in relation to Islam. Sometimes he does so to remove a misconception and some other tries to solve a problem or to answer a question.

The question as to why he was interested in Eastern religions, particularly in Indian religions such as Hinduism and Buddhism more than Judaism and Christianity is worth considering. It may possibly be answered that his geographical affiliation with India compelled him to write on Indian religions.

Since Gilānī was an Indian who spent his whole life in different parts of India, he was much concerned about Muslim-Hindu relations throughout Islam's history. Unlike other Muslims he had a soft corner for the followers of Vedas. His writings reflect his positive attitude towards them. He has authored two lengthy articles on Hinduism and Buddhism and has responded to those religions as a Muslim. We have taken both of them in this paper. To reinforce his standpoint about friendly Muslim- Hindu relations, he referred to the quotes from the early Companions (*Sahāba*), Successors (*Tābi‘in*) and Muslim historians.¹⁰⁵ The most important and worth mentioning quotation that he narrated is from *Tārikh Abū al-Fidā*. He says:

¹⁰⁵ For instance Gilānī referred to *al-Itqān fi 'Ulōm al-Qur'ān* that it is comprised of several Hindi words considering them that they are Qur'ānic. Saḥīḥ Bukhārī also has several narrations and Aḥādīth of Muḥammad (saw) about Indian medicines and its other characteristics. It is also said that Adam (Pbuh) brought *Hajr -i aswad* of *Ka'ba* from the land of India. From the books of Muslim History he quoted 'aqd al- Farīd of Muqīm bin Hammad, *Tārikh al-Ifukamā'* of Jamāl al-Dīn al-Qaftī and *Tārikh Abū al-Fidā*. All the three Historians gave wonderful information about Indian Religion, Muslim Hindu relations and knowledge and wisdom that India has as compare to other parts of the world. See Manāzir Aḥsan Gilānī: *Hazār sāl pablē* (Karachi: Baet al-‘ilm, 2004), pp.53-57

As far as I know no polemical and critical work has been done on Hindu religion from the Muslim side since the time Muslims entered Indian Subcontinent. All this started when India was occupied by the people who believe in divide and rule.¹⁰⁶ After that *Tuhfat al-Hind* was written in which started series of questions and answers.¹⁰⁷

By giving this example Gilānī means that for centuries Muslims lived with Hindus in a peaceful environment. Abū Raihān al-Bairūnī is one such man who peacefully lived in Hindu community, learned Sanskrit language and produced *Kitāb al-Hind* which is regarded as a primary source for researchers on Hindu religion, philosophy, literature, geography, chronology, astronomy, customs, laws astrology and society after 1030 AD.¹⁰⁸ It also means that critical material is the result of the intrigues of outsiders (English men) in order to create grudge and hatred in the hearts of both nations. He concluded that so much literary material is found about the positive features of India that a full length article can be written on this topic.¹⁰⁹ He narrated these instances just to show the open heartedness of Muslims for India and her natives since the beginning.

The story does not end with the positive attitude of Muslims towards Indians. He also narrates examples from history showing love and positive feelings from the Hindu side. For instance, in the Hindu community Muslims were known for their successful treatment of

¹⁰⁶This concept is derived from Greek origin. In politics and sociology, it means to gain and maintain power by breaking up larger concentrations of power into chunks that individually have less power than the one implementing the strategy. It also refers to a strategy that breaks up existing power structures and prevents smaller power groups from linking up. With the passage of time this concept has been transformed into a strategy of sovereigns and administrators of vast Empires including the Roman and British. Partition of Indian Subcontinent is a living example of British policy of divide and rule to which the above quotation has referred.

¹⁰⁷Ibid, pp.56-57

¹⁰⁸(Ed) Edward C. Sachau, *Al-Berūnī's India* (India: Munshīrām Manoharlāl publishers Pvt. p.15

¹⁰⁹Ibid, p.53

snake bite. Hindu rulers believe in the elongation of their individual and ruling periods just for their love and affection of Arab Muslims.¹¹⁰

Hasan Maḥmūd, a contemporary young Muslim scholar, in *Wafā kā Ka'ba* also gave a lot of information about India substantiating from Qur'ān, Ahādīth of Prophet Muḥammad (saw) and the quotes of Muslim scholars. He also proved that the people of India are originally the descendants of Prophet Noah (Pbuh).¹¹¹ He first enquires whether Hindus are descendants of Prophet Naoh or not. Then he himself answers by giving internal and external evidences to prove that it is really the matter of fact that the natives of India are originally the pioneers of human life on earth after the great flood of Naoh. Firstly, he mentions A.J.Dubois (1770-1848)¹¹² who has done an academic research on Hindu religion, culture and civilization. He made a point that Maha Nuvu, a venerated personality among Hindus, with seven Risis remained safe from the great flood which has demolished the whole land. Then afterwards he says that this fact is agreed upon that India was originally cultivated right after the Great flood of Naoh.

Secondly he mentioned Shams Naveed 'Uthmānī, a contemporary Muslim scholar, born in 1931, who has gathered various facts and discussed them in the light of *Qur'ān, Sunnah* of the Holy Prophet (saw) and the records of history in his *Agar Ab bhī Na Jāgē Tō* He ended up with the same result that Hindus are actually the followers of Prophet Naoh (PBUH).

After proving that Hindus are descendants of Prophet Naoh (PBUH) from external sources, Hasan Maḥmud then comes to Vedas. He mentioned several Vedic verses that deals with the sacred figure, if it is Naoh, MAHA NUVU or Manu and his great flood.¹¹³

¹¹⁰ For further details see Ibid, pp.71-74

¹¹¹ For detailed account see Hasan Mehmud. *Wafā kā ka'ba*, (Rawalpindi: Mughal Hospital library and study forum, 2001), Chapter 3 and Chapter 4.

¹¹² A European Scholar and researcher who, according to Hasan Mehmud is recognized as an authority on Hindu religion, culture and rituals. His whole study about Hindus is depicted in his Hindu Manners, Customs and Ceremonies. Like Al-beruni he is a participant observer of Hindu religion and society, learned Sanskrit and became able to have a firsthand knowledge about Vedas.

¹¹³ For detailed account of the proofs see Hasan Mehmud. *Wafā kā ka'ba*, (Rawalpindi: Mughal Hospital library and study forum, 2001), Chapter 3 and Chapter 4.

For Vedic verses about great flood of Naoh see Ibid, pp.110-111

purely monotheistic while the latter is strictly polytheistic. That is why no comparison can be drawn between the two.

The article starts with the narration of this statement; we prefer to quote the exact translation which is as follows:

Prophet Muhammad (saw) taught Muslims about Heaven and Hell (as the reward or punishment for good and bad deeds) as it was previously found in Jewish and Christian beliefs. He did not teach salvation through Karma and Samsara (al-tanāsukh) which are purely Hindu beliefs.¹¹⁷

Gilānī was much concerned about this issue because he was worried about the effects of this statement as it gives the following impression to its readers:

Firstly, the followers of Vedas had nothing to do with Heaven or Hell. The only creed they followed was Karma and Samsara for the attainment of salvation. Secondly, Jews and Christians believe in Heaven and Hell for the reward and punishment of virtues and vices.

Gilānī started his refutation with second result that concerns with Jews and Christians by raising a question. Is it really so that Jews and Christians believe in Heaven and Hell? He answered that as far as Jewish belief of reward and punishment is concerned that they have conviction of Heaven and Hell is far from true. Jewish sacred scripture Torah is completely silent about resurrection. The land of Palestine is promised as a reward of subjugation before Yahwa's commandments in which milk and honey flow. On the other hand Christians do believe in life after death but for them pious people become angels after death while bad ones take the form of demons and devils. It is due to this Qur'anic notion of physical and material pleasures of paradise, Christians do not feel comfortable that how is it possible for angels to enjoy milk, honey and other bounties related to physical bodies of human beings.¹¹⁸

From the critical analysis of the above statements, it is evident that Jews and Christians' sacred scriptures negate the concept of life after death, consequently the doctrines of Heaven and Hell. But this is not really a matter of fact.

¹¹⁷ *Maqālāt-i Gilānī*, p.47

¹¹⁸ *Ibid*, p.48

Torah does not give a clear description on the specifics of life after death. This doctrine was developed afterwards and became the key element in the traditionally observed Judaism. In twelfth century AD Moses Memonides, who is recognized authority on traditional Judaism, included the doctrine of resurrection in Jewish articles of faith. Among two major Jewish sects Pharisees say yes to resurrection while Saducees' deny it. But on the whole the after life is less central to Judaism than ethical behavior in this life.¹¹⁹

On the other hand the doctrine of death and life after death, the reward and punishment in the form of heaven and Hell forms one of the basic doctrines of Christian faith.

The doctrine of Purgatory was first developed during patristic period on the basis of the Biblical promises of salvation and references to their fulfillment.¹²⁰ Purgatory is the place of those souls which have not expiated their faults, nor attained the degree of purity necessary to enjoy the vision of God.¹²¹ It is the stage of punishment and purification. There are two types of punishment during purgation. First, deferment of the ardently desired beatific vision. Second, an expiatory suffering for the rest of sins that separate souls from God.¹²² For only the pure heart will see God (Math: 5.8). Purgatory as defined in the council of Trent in 1563 is as follows:

The Catholic church, by the teaching of the Holy Spirit, in accordance with the sacred scriptures and the ancient tradition of the fathers, has taught in the Holy councils and most recently in its ecumenical council, that there is a purgatory and that the souls detained there are helped by the prayers of the faithful and especially by the acceptable sacrifice of the altar.¹²³

Similar is the case with Jewish and Christian belief regarding the doctrine of Heaven and Hell. The conception of Hell was not new to the Jews. In the Old Testament the word Sheol has been used as the under world, which is either a place or the state for the souls of

¹¹⁹ *Essential Judaism : A complete guide to beliefs, customs and rituals* (New York: George Robinson, 1953) , pp.192-193

¹²⁰ , Joseph A. Komonchak, *A new dictionary of Theology* (Gill and Macmillan), p.823

¹²¹ SchouppP.fr.f, *The Dogma of Hell, illustrated by facts from profane and sacred history* (Illinois: Tan Books and Publishers. Inc, 1989), p.6

¹²² *Ibid*, p.97

¹²³ Marie Murphy, *New images of the Last Things, Karl Rabner on death and life after death* (New York: Paulist press, 1988), p.21.

unfaithful peoples. In Rabbinical theology the idea of resurrection was fully developed and the souls of pious people awaiting reward would be rewarded the garden of Eden as a paradise, while souls of sinners would be consigned to Gehenna (place of firey torment reserved for wicked people after death).¹²⁴

The concept was developed to a great extent when reached in the period of Jesus Christ. The word Hell has been used some fifteen times in the New Testament. Jesus Christ spoke of the notion of hell as the place of eternal punishment, prepared not only for demon and his angels but for all who have rejected the salvation offered by God. It has been created to punish the wicked souls for their rejection of fulfilling their Lord's commandments. Hell is picturized as an eternal place of fire, complete darkness, howling and gnashing its teeth, which is the fate of unfaithful after his resurrection at the Day of Judgment. This entire scriptural basis helped Church a great deal to develop the doctrine of Hell as part and parcel of their belief system in quite early history of Christian tradition.¹²⁵

In one of his articles¹²⁶ we find Gilānī affirming the Christian doctrine of resurrection. But at that point the problem is whether they believe in bodily resurrection or have some other form. He mentions the Christian belief that man takes the angelic form after passing this life and will be resurrected in this form. That is why the Christians generally accuse Islamic paradise of being in the animal form (Haiwānī Jannat).¹²⁷ Gilānī tells the background of this belief in Christian faith by mentioning that one of the Sadducees asked Jesus Christ (pbuh)

¹²⁴ Harold Coward, *Sin and salvation in the world Religions: A short introduction* (Oxford: Oneworld Pubs, 2007), p.26.

¹²⁵ Karl, Rahner.ed., *Encyclopedia of theology, A concise sacramentum Mundi*(London: Burns and Oates, 1975) , pp.602

¹²⁶ Manāzir Aḥsan Gilānī, "Jannat o jahannum" in *Ṣidq* , ed. 'Abd al-Majid Dryābādī(India: Luckhnao, july 1st, 1940), p.5

¹²⁷ Gilānī's purpose of writing this article is twofold. Firstly to clear the misconception that Islam gives the concept of Haiwānī Jannat, an accusation by Christian fathers. Secondly to erase the misconception that was being prevailed by Modern Muslim thinkers and Reformists under British Colonial powers. Scholars like Sir Sayyid Aḥmed Khan who adopted apologetic style in their writings to please their masters. They raised the slogan of 'we believe in what you believe and negate what you don't believe in'. For this purpose they amended the Qur'ānic verses according to their masters' intents. They blindly accepted Christian paradise considering it a scientific discovery and Qur'ānic details of paradise a piece of poetry which is full of exaggeration. He strictly condemned such type of trend in Muslim Scholars. For further details see Ibid, PP.5-8, also see Manāzir Aḥsan Gilānī, *al-Dīn al-Qayyim* (Karachi: Maktabah As'adiyyah, 2nd Pub: 2004) , p.146

that a woman who married seven men consecutively after the death of her first husband, which one of them would she accompany in paradise? He asked this question in a sarcastic tone just to make fun of Christ. Jesus Christ, after knowing his intention replied... "At the resurrection people will neither marry nor be given in marriage: they will be like the angels in Heaven" (Mathew 22:30).¹²⁸ This biblical verse actually became the basis of the Christian creed in the angelic form of man after his death.¹²⁹ Gilānī very beautifully commented on the angelic conversion of man after his death by saying that man's whole life struggles and sacrifices would result in depriving him of manhood and his feelings, since angels are a species completely different from man. The angels do not love or hate, laugh or cry, eat or drink and so on. He further adds that this type of reward may suit a Christian's nature, but for those who really possess the human nature can't bear this punishment at all. He illustrates his point that a person who loses one of his senses is declared abnormal and the expenses of his medical treatment are too high to be afforded. He is astonished at this Christian standpoint on life after death saying do Christians long for this type of reward which snatches from them the right of humanness! .But they happily name it as spiritual heaven.¹³⁰

Gilānī then comes to the second result that he derived from the above statement from the book of a Hindu writer. He said that it is totally a wrong assumption that Vedic people never knew about the creed of Heaven and Hell before Muslims' arrival in the Indian Subcontinent and that the doctrine of transmigration of souls i.e.; Karma and Samsara has been the only prevalent belief among Hindus ever since. He justified his argument by saying that unawareness among Hindus and Muslims is the root cause of this type of assumption. Contemporary Hindu has been cut off from his Vedic tradition, as it is quite clear from the above statement of Bholā Dās. Among Muslims scholars, those who didn't have primary information about the religion of Vedas came up with similar ideas and concepts about

¹²⁸ The Holy Bible, New International version, (U.S.A: Zondervan, 1984), p.699

¹²⁹ This answer is found in different versions of Bible with different wordings. Gilānī conjectured that it is the later addition by biblical exegetes. He also came up with two meanings of the verse concerned. For details see ,*al-Din al-Qayyim* , p.144, also see *Foyūzat-i Gilānī*, p.180

¹³⁰ Ibid, p.6

Hinduism. In this context he gave the example of Shahrastānī and rightly criticized his opinion that the Brahmans of India deny Prophecy altogether.

In fact neither Shahrastānī is the only Muslim scholar nor the first who said this. We have many similar examples showing that this concept was prevalent among intellectual circles of Muslims. Dr. Fathullah Mujtabāī,¹³¹ commenting on al-Mas'udi's and Bāqillānī's views on Brahmins says:

Those who are acquainted with Hindu beliefs can easily realize the absurdity of the above statements, for no Hindu has ever believed that Brahman was not a king nor do the Hindus differ amongst themselves on such grounds as accepting or rejecting the Prophet.¹³²

Dr. M. M. Dhīn Muḥammad¹³³ in his *Comparative Religion in Contemporary Muslim World*, while appreciating the contributions of early Muslim scholars in the field of Comparative Religion also mentioned the weaknesses and loopholes in their writings. He is of the view that although they were pioneers in the field of comparative religions yet as far as their research material is concerned their labor was often modest and at times misleading. They frequently talked about a Hindu sect *Shumanism* which denied revelation and Prophets.¹³⁴ They made this claim without mentioning their source of information, be it primary or secondary. Rather, they blindly followed the prevalent notion about the Brahmins without critically investigating it. He further stated that no such sect is found throughout the history of Hinduism. For others after much search and investigation no such sect is found in Hindu history.

After mentioning all this Gilānī said clearly that if this is the case then how can we depend on such writings in their depiction of other religions and their teachings?¹³⁵

¹³¹ Former cultural counsellor to the imperial embassy of Iran

¹³² See Fathullah Mujtabāī, *Hindu Muslim Cultural Relations* (Published by N.B.B. Dehli, 1978), pp.37-38.

¹³³ former Asst. Professor at IIU. Islamabad Pakistan.

¹³⁴ See for example Sa'd al-Din al-Taftazānī, *Sharh al-'Aqāid* Chapter on Al-Nubuwah

¹³⁵ Dr. M. M. Dhīn Muḥammad, "Comparative Religion in Contemporary Muslim World" in *Hawliyat al-Jāme'ah al-Islāmiyah al-Ālamiyah Islamabad*, (Islamabad: Pakistan), pp.32-36

Ibn Hazm in his well reputed book on comparative Religions *Al-Fasl fi al-Milal Wa al-Abwā' wa al-Nihāl*, puts Brahimah (Brahmans) in the fifth category of his six fold typology of world views, religions, sects and philosophies. This includes those who believe in the existence of realities, the world having been created by one unique God, but who deny Prophecy.¹³⁶

Ghulām Haider 'Āsī¹³⁷ commented on Ibn Hazm's account on Brahmans that his knowledge about the religions of India and Far East is extremely limited, rather sketchy. He fails to provide any clues to his sources except that he refers to some works of Mutakallimīn. He also mentioned the opinion of al-Baghdādī (980-1037) about Brahmans which he reported in *Kitāb Uṣūl al-Dīn*¹³⁸ that they accept the unicity of the Fashioner or Maker and deny the Prophets.¹³⁹

All the above proofs show clearly that Arab Muslim scholars failed to obtain even primary information about the religions of India. Among them the religion of Vedas is one.

On the other hand, Gilānī came up with internal and external proofs to support the other view that Vedas are the revealed word of God. He stated that it is a common Hindu belief known to every one that Vedas are revealed by the Creator, the Lord. Maha Bharta frequently talks about this belief. He gave the example of Mirzā Mazhar Jān -i Jānān (1699-1781) from among Muslim ūfi scholars who in *Maqāmāt -i Mažharī* recorded that Vedas are revealed by God.¹⁴⁰

Muhammad Modassir Ali, my respected teacher in his *The Concept of Revelation and Prophethood in Hinduism: A Critical Islamic View* also quoted many Muslim Sufis who viewed that traces of revelation are clearly found in the religion of Vedas. Mirzā Mazhar Jān -i Jānān

¹³⁶ For detailed account of Ibn Hazm's views on Brahimah see Ibn Hazm's *Al-Fasl fi al-Milal Wa al-Abwā' wa al-Nihāl*, pp.69. Also see Ghulām Haider 'āsī, *Muslim understanding of other Religions: A study of Ibn Hazm's Kitāb Al-Fasl fi al-Milal Wa al-Abwā' wa al-Nihāl*, (Islamabad: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1999) pp.195, 196.

¹³⁷ Ghulām Haider 'āsī is Associate Professor and Chair person of Islamic studies and History of Religions at the American Islamic college, Chicago, USA. He is the author of various research papers, published in reputed journals of international standard.

¹³⁸ Abd al-Qāhir ibn Tāhir al-Baghdādī (d.1037 A.D), an eminent Historian and Scholar of Islamic History.

¹³⁹ pp.198

¹⁴⁰ *Maqāmāt -i Gilānī*, pp.49, 50.

(1699-1781), Khwāja Hassan Nizāmī (1879-1955), Shah ‘abd al-‘Azīz (1745-1823) and Mawlvī ‘Abd al-Rahmān Chishtī (11th century after hijrah) to name a few. The most important among them is the view of Khwāja Hassan Nizāmī, who was a descendant of Hażrat Nizām al-Dīn Auliya’. He recorded in his book ‘*Hindustān kē do Payghāmbar- Rām aur Krishnā Salām Allāhi Aalāihim*’ that Ram and Krishna were two Prophets of India and that Hindūism is a revealed religion and therefore Hindus are Ahl al-Kitāb.¹⁴¹

After giving the above examples Gilānī said that he was sorry to say that no academic research has been done yet on the nature of Hindu Muslim religious teachings from both sides. On behalf of Muslim scholars he wrote this article which serves as a preliminary for interested people in Eastern religious traditions. It is actually the creative part of this article. Monotheism¹⁴² is the first theme to be compared between the two religions. Obviously because the whole body of religion revolves around the person of God. A system which does not talk about God or the Supreme Being can be anything other than religion. It is also the core issue of strife between both religions. To claim that Hinduism or the religion of Vedas is monotheistic is a big thing. But Gilānī has the courage to say this with proofs. At the time of Maha Bharta, to worship one God as the Supreme Being was the common belief among Hindus. It was the chief characteristic of Sanatāna Dharma (eternal law) in ancient Hinduism. In this context *Anan bhagat* is used i.e.; the one who worship the Creator only. More than one name has been ascribed to God: *Nārgān Deota* and *Nārāin*¹⁴³ just to name two of them.

Negative way of describing Lord's attribute is found in Maha Bharta. Gilānī quoted the style of a Risī who expressed his Lord in the following words.

“How can i potray Brahma. Nothing is like him neither in sky nor in earth. He is incorporeal, neither present in seas (water) nor in stars, thunder or in clouds...He is apārīna

¹⁴¹ For detailed views of Muslim Sufis on Hinduism see Muhammad Modassir Ali, The *concept of Revelation and Prophethood in Hinduism: A critical Islamic view*. Unpublished M.Phil thesis, faculty of Usul al-din, department of comparative religions Islamabad: International Islamic university, 1999), p.107

¹⁴² To worship creator instead of created ones.

¹⁴³ Ibid, pp.52,53

(bē mithl -o bē had)".¹⁴⁴ A parallel of this negative way to express God is also found in medieval Christian theology in *Summa Theologica* of Thomas Aquinas regarding the attributes of God. He says: Philosophy does not enable us to know what God is in his essence, but that our minimal knowledge of God only can be attained by the way of negation. In other words, we know what God is by knowing what he *is not*.¹⁴⁵ In Qur'ān... there is nothing like him... (42:11) is one such example of this style. Another bright example is found in Sayyid 'Aṭā Allah Shah Bukhārī's starting of a sermon who admires Allah mentioning his attributes (swt) in a rhythmic style. The exact words in Arabic are as follow:

الحمد لوليه و الصلاه على نبيه... وحد لا شر يلك له... وحيداً واحداً بلا جدد و مدد و وصف في الكمال... لا شر يلك له و لا نظير له...
ولا مثل له ولا مثال له... ولا وزير له ولا مقارن له... ولا مكاظم له... ولا مدانى له... ولا مختار له... ولا جلد بلد ولد جسد رسو جزو
عظام له... 146

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It should be kept in mind that the Supreme Being of Maha Bharta and his attributes have not been mentioned explicitly; rather its description is intermingled with long narratives, since Maha Bhārta is one of the longest and oldest epic in the sacred scriptures of world religions. The second theme of comparison is related to the practical aspect of religion i.e., law of reward and punishment as the result of virtue and vice. Qur'ānic teachings in this regard are clear.¹⁴⁷ Similar list is found in Maha Bharta. The basic concept is that virtue and vice bear

¹⁴⁴Ibid, p.53

¹⁴⁵ Max Charlesworth, *Philosophy and Religion: From Plato to Post modernism* (oxford: one world , 2002),p.1

¹⁴⁶ youtube.com/ 'Atāullah Shāh Bukhārī

147 The Holy Qur'an,

...he gets reward for that (good) which he has earned; and he punished for that(evil) which he has earned[2: 286]
...verily, the good deeds remove the evil deeds...[11:114]

Creatures obtain weal and woe as the fruits of their own acts (stree parva, sec: 1), p.6

...through their acts they obtain Heaven and Hell, or Bliss or Woe. Whether able or unable, they have to bear their burdens which are the results of their own acts. (Stree Parva, Sec:1), pp.6

And those who, when they have committed Fâhishah or wronged themselves with evil, remember Allah and ask forgiveness of their sins—, and none can forgive sins but Allah— and do not persist in what they have done, while they know [3:135,136]

There are several other verses dealing with the same topics.

There is no being however that is eternal.

Some are destroyed while yet in womb, some after coming out of the womb, some on the day after. Some on the expiration of a fort night or of a month, some on the expiration of a year or of two years, some in youth some in middle age and some when old(stree Parva, sec:1, vol:ii). p.6

fruits of reward and punishment in the form of Heaven and Hell. *Narg* and *Sarg* are the words used for hell and heaven in *Maha Bharta*. Man acts good or bad in this world and gets the reward in the world hereafter. Repentance (*tawba*) and its after effects as the elimination of previous sins are also mentioned. The physical features of *Narg* and *Sarg* are described to the extent that it can hardly be judged whether the features conforms to the *Qur'an* or not. *Sarg* is the eternal abode of pious people which is free of miseries and tensions. Its dwellers enjoy eternal bliss and peace. They neither feel hunger or thirst nor do they know of cold and hot. Restrictions of childhood and limitations of old age would be no more. On the other hand *Narg* is the fate of evil doers which is a completely dark place. Bad people face the result of their bad deeds in the form of strict punishment by its guardians.¹⁴⁸

After describing all the above attributes of Heaven and Hell, *Gilānī* says that it is hard to find out a single portion in *Maha Bharta* devoid of the description of this eternal abode of humanity.

The third theme of comparison also relates to the practical aspects of religious life i.e.; morality. Gambling, beggary, interest, palmistry are prohibited in *Maha Bharta*. According to *Gilānī* the main subject and purpose of this long epic is the description of the dangerous effects of gambling. The whole war of *Maha Bharta* and its disasters are nothing but the result of this bad passion of the princes' of Pandoves and Koroves.

Gilānī has also found similarity in the laws of physical purification and cleanliness in both religions. Water is the symbol of purity, and it is necessary to ablute or to take bath before worshipping. The minute details which are found in Islamic law (*fiqh*) are also available in *Maha Bharta*. For instance, purification of filth (*Najāsat*) through sunlight.¹⁴⁹ Likewise

For the translation of the verses of *Maha Bharta* we relied on, *kisārī Mohan, Gangūli*. *The Maha Bharta* (New Delhi: Munshī rām Manharlāl Pubs pvt Ltd, 1970)

Translators of *Maha Bharta* admit the fact that each language has its own style and diction. The original composition of this longest epic in Sanskrit language runs into one hundred thousand stanzas. However it has become the work of twelve volumes when translated into English. The rhythm and depth of the original language got lost in the process of translation

¹⁴⁸ Ibid, p.56

¹⁴⁹ Ibid, p.60

approximately similar teachings are found in the verses of Maha Bharta regarding charity (*Zakāt*) on by the same as laid down in the Qur'ān.¹⁵⁰

The fourth theme of comparison is eschatology.¹⁵¹ During the time of Maha bharta two ways were found as regard what to do with the corpse, either burying in the soil or burning to ashes. During Vedic period it was common practice to bury the dead body beneath the earth which is similar to the Islāmic practice. A point that clarifies the fact is that even at the time of Maha Bharta original Vedic teachings had started to be corrupted.

What happens after death is another important eschatological question that Gilānī deals with. Purgatory or *Barzakh* is transitional period between death and resurrection. It is a veil between this world and the world hereafter.

In most of the parallels drawn between Islām and Hinduism, Gilānī does not elaborate the Islāmic standpoint at length. It is due to the fact that he wants to bring the hidden reality of similarity between the two religions into the notice of Muslim scholars who are already equipped with sound knowledge of Islām. Yet at times when a specific notion is diversified in the writings of Muslim scholars, he expresses his viewpoint by mentioning examples from classical and modern Muslim experts. Islāmic teachings regarding *Barzakh* is also one such notion whose explanation led Muslim theologians to intense debates. Perhaps the obvious

¹⁵⁰ Ibid. p.62

¹⁵¹ Eschatology is formed of two words' eschatas' and' logy'. Both words have Greek origin. Eschatas means last and eschata means the last things, while logy stands for science. Coming to the technical meaning eschatology means "the science of teachings concerning the last thing, or the doctrine about last things. The English term eschatology has been coined in 19th century. Originally it is western referring to the Jewish or Christian hopes about the end of the present world and the ultimate destination of body and soul, after resurrection. See "Eschatology" in *The Encyclopedia of Religion* Marcea Elide, ed.,(New York: Macmillan Publishing company.1987),vol:5, p.49. Also see "Eschatology" in *Encyclopedia of Britannica* (William Benton Publishers, 1943) , p.958

reason behind these lengthy discussions is oblique and blur Qur'anic picture of the state of the deceased after his earthly death regarding the punishment and reward in grave.¹⁵²

That there is *barzakh* is a fact agreed upon among all orthodox Muslim scholars. It is the transitional period of absolute separation between this world and the realm of the dead.¹⁵³

Gilānī responds to the notion as to what happens to the deceased after he departs this world. It is necessary here to mention his viewpoint in some detail. According to Gilānī, the condition and feelings of a deceased person in the grave is quite similar to that of a living person during sleep. For instance, a person suffering from influenza dreams that he is swimming. Similarly a sick person finds himself surrounded with fire. All this is very much related to one's daily life and almost every one of us experiences if for at least once in his life span. Although the link between the body and the soul is not completely terminated, yet to some extant soul feels freedom from the remnants of the body during sleep.¹⁵⁴

Gilānī substantiates his viewpoint by referring to Imām Ghazālī and Shāh Waliullāh. Both agree on the point that an individual's good and bad deeds will be personified for him in the grave.

We would deal with Imām Ghazālī's standpoint in detail because he is an authoritative source of the orthodox views on the life of the spirit after the death of the body and also Gilānī relied on him in this issue.

Imām Ghazālī divided the deceased ones in four categories. The first is that of 'ulama'. They very successfully answer all the questions of Munkir and Nakīr. At this the angels make all

¹⁵² Although Qur'anic teachings are explicit about the events of eschaton, it has very less to say regarding *barzakh*. The word *barzakh* occurs once in Qur'ān. ...and behind them is the *Barzakh*(a barrier) until the day that they will be resurrected (23:100).

Hadith canonical collection has lot to say about life after death but not in sequential order. During early Muslim period it was considered among the things related to the unseen realm specific to the knowledge of Allah (swt). However the complete overview of the narratives from death to the coming of hour in the medieval eschatological manuals of *Mutakallimūn*, like those of *Hujjat al-Islām* Abū Hāmid al-Ghazālī.

Qur'ān also talks about punishment in grave

¹⁵³ James Idleman Smith and yvonne Yazbeck Haddad, *The Islamic understanding of death and resurrection* (New York: Oxford university Press, 2002), p.32.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid*, p.65

necessary arrangements for their enjoyment in grave and their good deeds come to them in most lovely forms to accompany them.

The second category is of those to be questioned is composed of people who did well in their earthly lives but were not sufficiently advanced to share in the secrets of *Malakūt*. To them personification of their good deeds advance the questioning angels in best form of materialistic orientation and inform them of angels. They also bluntly answer all the three questions asked by Munkir and Nakir. Then angels show them their place in the Garden of paradise. The third group is composed of those whose response to the questions is obscure. They would be punished and face their deeds in the form of dogs and pigs who then function as agents of punishment. The last group consists of profligates who do not know the answers at all. They are punished with a series of beatings followed by the personification of their deeds in the shape of an animal particularly loathsome to them.¹⁵⁵

The question as what happened to the dead after passing from the stage of questioning? Al-Imām al-Ghazālī says that the state of awareness is related to one's category mentioned above. 'Ulamā' enjoy without ceasing and are full of bliss as long as they remain on the earth, until the hour comes. The second category falls into state that resembles sleep after the angels open for them the door to the garden and he is unaware of the passing of months and years and ages.¹⁵⁶

Gīlānī stated that Hinduism by the time of Maha Bharta didn't know about Karma and Samsara which has become the prevalent and dominant belief of Hinduism afterwards. Awāgman which commonly spoken as Āwāgon is another name of the doctrine of Karma

¹⁵⁵ Ibid, pp.43-45.

¹⁵⁶ *The Islamic understanding of death and resurrection* , p.49

For more elaboration of the state of a deceased after the questioning of angels see *The Islamic understanding death and resurrection*, pp.49, for instance Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūtī (fifteenth century) in his *Bushra al-Kā'ib bi-liqā' al-Habib* says while discussing the relation of body with its soul in grave says that the spirit is connected to the body in a way not like the connection of the earthly life, but resembling the condition of sleep. He also says that there will be cushions in the grave on which the believer will sleep the sleep of a bride groom. Abū Layth al-Samarqandi's *kitāb al-haqā'iq wa'l-daqā'iq* (seventeenth century) says that after the questioning of the angels say to the successful one sleep like a bride.

and Samsara. The term Awāgman is usually translated in Arabic books of Muslim Theologians (Mutakallimūn) as al-tanāsukh. On the basis of this translation and the definition of al tanāsukh it is believed to be a common Hindu belief. Gilānī suggests that if the doctrine of Karma and Samasara or Awagman is shifted to the transitional period between death and resurrection then the outcome is twofold. First, Hinduism would be purified from several clashes and complexities. Second, European division of religions into Semitic and Aryan would fall like a pack of cards.

After giving all this description Gilānī expressed his astonishment that it is senseless to say that Judaism and Christianity are closer to Islam than Hinduism. He also objected to the division of religions into Semitic and Aryans. In his view it is European propaganda and they have political aims and objectives behind it. It is mere assumption, rather in his words it is fraud and deception.¹⁵⁷ Hinduism in its pure form is closer to Islām than the other two. Mohammad Modassir Ali has done a serious and academic research on Hinduism and has proved in the light of Qur'ān, Sunnah and the sayings of Muslim scholars that it is a revealed religion, he concludes:

One can now easily sit back and say that Hinduism has revealed books as well as those who transmitted these books from God to them. Whether we call them prophets or rishis or avatars doesn't make any difference. But Hindus certainly believe that these books came through them just as we Muslims believe that the holy Quran was passed down to us through ages after it had been revealed to the Holy prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.).¹⁵⁸

Gilānī's understanding of the term Islam is unique in a sense that Qur'ānic definition of Islām gives it a universal character. It is not a new version of religion in the real sense of the word, rather its objective is filtration of other world religions from external or internal impurities that entered them with the passage of time, and give them back to its adherents in their pure and original form. So the relation of Islām to other religions is supplementary.

¹⁵⁷ *Maqālāt -i Gilānī*, pp.62,67

¹⁵⁸ See *The concept of Revelation and Prophethood in Hinduism: A critical Islamic view*. p.109.

It seems that he viewed the categorization of religions into Semitic and Aryan on the basis of similarities in their cardinal beliefs and sources. That is why he wants to show that Hinduism in its original form is closer to Islam than Christianity and Judaism. His methodological principle i.e. universality of revelation is quite clearly shown here. Revealed fragments are found in every religion of the world, be it Semitic or Aryan. Allah (Swt) does not discriminate between his creatures as to guide some of them towards the right path and deprive others. The ultimate source of all religions is revelation. He is of the view that it is not merely the apparent division of Religions into Semitic and Aryan; it ends with the separation of hearts. Adherents of one religious group look at others with hatred and enmity. They are not ready to tolerate others. It is because of this division that epistemologically the books on comparative religions categorize Semitic religions under revealed religions and Aryan into non revealed religions.

After having a thematic study of Islām and Hinduism in the light of Qur'ān and Maha Bharta, Gilānī says that all said and compared up to this point is nothing but serves as a prolegomena to a serious and academic research on comparison between Islām and Hinduism, Yet his present work is enough to erase the misconceptions and propaganda under the name of Semitic and Aryan division of Religions. The proofs that have been given would suffice for men of understanding to arrive at the right conclusion.

Gilānī made a clear distinction between Hinduism of Vedic period and the one that follows it. The religion of Vedas was characterized with all the features of a heavenly inspired message. Even at the time of Maha Bharta it shared a lot with Vedic essence, as it is explicit from the above description. He also narrates the emergence of various religious sects and philosophies in Hindu society .Even at the time of Maha Bharta polytheism was found along with monotheism, so what to say of the later period. He gave the example of Islām that faced with diverse kalāmī sects in post prophetic age under special circumstances. The ancestral religion of India fell prey to the same disease.

As regards the age and history of Maha Bharta, modern critics of Hindu Literature, after examining it internally and externally concluded that it is not the work of a single author or

of one time, but consists of earlier and later portions which belong to different centuries. Between the 4th century BC and 4th century AD the transformation of Maha Bharta took place into its present form. However in later centuries it did not become free of the hands of alterations and amendments.¹⁵⁹ For a long time it had been orally transmitted through generations before compilation.¹⁶⁰ However, in the later centuries it is not free from manipulations. Despite all this, this epic is the treasure house for the people of different interests. But with all this pluralistic approaches within one religion, it is a known fact that should not be manipulated i.e.; one cannot impose his point of view and interpretation of a religious phenomenon on others.¹⁶¹

Gilānī's broad vision and religious apprehension dawns upon the reader when he states that the distortion or corruption of the original text is not unique to Hinduism; rather, it is a natural phenomenon. So why to be especially worried and astonished about it? If in the contemporary Hinduism we do not find glimpses of monotheism or the other ingredients of revelation in the life of a common Hindu, then it is not at all surprising. As time passes connection with the original sources of religion breaks which gives birth to a gap between theoretical teachings of religion and the practical lives of its adherents. Hinduism is not an exception to this universal rule.¹⁶²

Gilānī is quite bold in his statements. For instance, he admits the fact that he neither wants to prove himself an expert scholar of Hinduism, neither his aim is to give an elaborate view of Vedic period and the causes of its corruption throughout the history. Because firstly it is not an easy task, secondly adherents of Vedic Religion deserve more than any other research in this field and their work would be acknowledged and credited in Hindu society. Rather his primary objective is to show through examples that in the mirror of Hinduism rays of Heavenly message have been reflected more clearly than in Judaism and Christianity.¹⁶³ The

¹⁵⁹ R.K.Narayan, *The Maha Bharta* (India: Indian Thought Pubs, 1978) ,p.10

¹⁶⁰ Maurice. Winternitz, *History of Indian Literature*, (New Delhi: Munshi Rām Publishers, 1991), pp.462, 474.

¹⁶¹ *Maqālāt -i Gilānī*, p. 67

¹⁶² *Ibid*, p.69

¹⁶³ *Ibid*, p.68

Holy Qur'an when it questions: Apart from other people this question is also directed towards Indians.

Gilānī considers the fact of the gap between theory and practice in Hinduism. Theoretically glimpses of revelation are clearly found in Vedas but this theory has become incomprehensible by the majority of Hindus. On the other hand it is out of reach to a common Hindu as they themselves admit this fact.¹⁶⁴

Gilānī's scholarly approach provoked him to another implicit and yet a very significant point of consideration. It is regarding the term 'Hindu'. Unlike many researchers on Hinduism he knows that Hindu is a national and ethnic term. It has nothing to do with religion. Hindustān is a country just like Afghānistān, Tajkistān and other countries of the world. So this claim is entirely illogical that Muslims residing in India do not constitute a part of Indian society and their culture is alien to its inhabitants. Indian culture is the culture of Dravidians, the Followers of Buddha, Mahāvīrā, Muḥammad (saw) and so on. Even if religion occurs in the definition of culture then it has now become clear in the light of the above examples that Islām and Vedic Dharam share a lot in common of their creedal and practical aspects.¹⁶⁵

In fact Hinduism is a difficult term to grasp and comprehend. This term is also problematic for many researchers as they do not understand the subtlety that it holds. Mostly researchers employ 'hindu'¹⁶⁶ for the adherents of Vedic religion forgetting that this affiliation is purely on national grounds.

What we call 'Hinduism' is a geographically defined group of distinct but related religions, that originated in the same region, developed under similar socioeconomic and political conditions, incorporated largely by the same traditions, influenced each other continuously, and jointly contributed to the Hindū culture. Therefore it is only by distinguishing the various Hindū religions from 'Hinduism' that compatibility with other historical religions can be ensured.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁴ Ibid, p.72. Gilānī referred to a Hindu Pandit sundar Lāl Gī who in his book *Qur'an or gitā* clearly admits that language of Vedas has become so primitive that it does not convey the true meaning.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid, p.70

¹⁶⁶ The term hindū has a long history to be studied. In modern times by the end of the eighteenth century, the British adopted the term Hindoo or Hindū to identify the people of Hindustān. During nineteenth century it became widely accepted by Indian writers. Orientalists used Hindu for strictly religious connotations

¹⁶⁷ Sushil Mittal & Gene Thursby, ed., *Religions of south Asia: An introduction* (London: Routledge, 2006), p. 16.

For Hinduism the term Dharma (law, teaching, and way of life) is more suitable and almost equivalent in Indian language to the term religion in the west.¹⁶⁸

By writing this essay Gilānī played his role well as an ambassador to bridge the gap between Muslim-Hindu relations which have a long history of war and hatred. His work would serve the best as a prolegomena to further academic research in this discipline by discovering similarities between the teachings of the Qur'ān and other Hindu scriptures other than Maha Bharta.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid, p.268.

3.2: Qur'ānic Sabeans and the Followers of Buddha: A Historical-Analytical Survey

The traces of historical records can easily be found in Gilānī's writings, which show that History was his favorite discipline. The point to be noted in his writings is that he did not narrate the past events merely for the sake of the readers' amusement; rather he employed critical and analytical approach in order to infer universal principles from them. In other words, he was not a simple historian rather he performed the task of a philosopher of history. In his writings regarding religions, numerous examples are present which clearly demonstrates his historical methodology. Among them is his superb article namely: Are Qur'ānic Sabeans followers of Buddha? , as it is explicit from the title of this study.

Like every conscious Muslim the occurrence of the term Sabeans three times in the Holy Qur'ān would surely had pinched Mawlānā Gilānī's mind as to who they are. Why have they been mentioned along with five major religious groups of humanity i.e.: Islam, Judaism, Christianity the in first two verses and in the last verse with Majūs and polytheists. So having these basic questions in mind, his pen would have compelled him to discuss them from historical point of view. The very name of the article depicts the inquiring style of the author. Undoubtedly it not only helps the researcher to proceed with his work successfully, it also increases curiosity and maintains the concentration of the reader. So starting with this important question, Gilānī presents it before the men of knowledge.

It is evident from the above question that in this article Gilānī has dealt with three faiths of the world i.e.: Islam, Buddhism and the religion of Ṣābi'ah in the historical context. At the end of the day Gilānī himself answered the question by saying that the Qur'ānic Sabeans are Buddhists, substantiating his claim with the accounts of renowned historians.

We will try to bring forth the gist of Gilānī's thought, mentioning especially the points that clearly highlight his historical and analytical methodology.

In the early history of Islām when its boundaries started expanding outside the Arabian peninsula, the adherents of many religions became Muslims. According to Gilānī a good

number of those who were originally Buddhists, also embraced Islam along with Aryans, Semitics and Iranians. At present day the Muslims of Central Asia, Bukhārā, Samarcand, Sindh, Sarhad, China and Turkistān are the followers of Buddha.¹⁶⁹

During the time of Buddha, although his teachings were confined to a limited area of India yet after his death his religion was preached outside its birthplace under the supervision of King Ashoka. It is the outcome of Ashoka's struggles that Buddhism is now able to compete Islam and Christianity. With the passage of time Buddhist monks reached Middle Eastern countries surrounded by Arab lands. The people of Arab were well acquainted with these lands and their people, for they were the centers of trade and business transaction for them.¹⁷⁰ After asserting that traces of Buddhism reached the Arab world in one form or another, he comes to the second point i.e.: The word *Šābī* and its employment in Arab society. The literal meaning of *Šābī* is to change one's religion or to deviate from right path was commonly used among pre Islamic Arabs. The Prophet (saw) himself was accused of being *Šābī* when he first claimed prophethood. Nevertheless, the Muslim exegetes, classical and contemporary are diversified in their opinions as determining who really Sabeans are.¹⁷¹ Gilānī presented the summary of Exegetes' opinions about Sabeans as follow:

- The followers of Noah.
- A group among The People of the Book.
- A nation recites *Zabūr* and worships angels.
- Kasdānians (natives of ancient Iraq) to whom Abraham (PBUH) was sent for guidance.
- Monotheists having no *shari'at* of their own.
- A group of people who lived in the surroundings of Iraq (Kūthī) and believed in all Prophets.
- Polytheists having no revealed book.

¹⁶⁹ *Maqālāt -i Gilānī*, p.15

¹⁷⁰ In this regard Gilānī quoted Vincent A. Smith's *Early history of India, Qurōn -i Wuslā men Hindustānī Tebzib and Hinduon kē Das Avatār*

¹⁷¹ See *Maqālāt -i Gilānī*, pp.17, 18.

- A group of people inquired Jews and Christians of their religions. Both replied the same as salvation is only for their group. Having listened to this, the inquirers got fed up and said: we don't believe in either of them.

Their opinions range from the time period of Noah (pbuh) to the age after Jews and Christians. The opinion of Abū al-Zanād¹⁷² that Sabeans were the natives of Iraq (Kūthī) is considered by Gilānī and is historically supported by al-Mas'ūdī's historical record that no doubt a sect Ṣābī lived in Iraq but they are not the addressees of the Holy Qur'ān.

The opinion of al-Mas'ūdī is worth mentioning here since he was the first historian who systematically studied Sabeans as a religious group and Gilānī heavily relied on the information provided by him.

Al-Mas'ūdī has divided Sabeans into two groups: the natives of Iraq and the citizens of Hirān. Iraqi Sabeans lived in the forest and marshmallows of Wāsiṭ and Baṣrah (cities of Iraq) and were completely different from Hirānī Sabeans in their religious lifestyle.¹⁷³ Gilānī deeply analyzed this piece of information in the light of history. He stated that during the Persian occupation, Iraqi Sabeans were pushed to forests and undeveloped areas. They lived the lives of backwardness from religious and secular points of view. They were completely out of contact with their religion and culture. He exclaimed sorrowfully that God knows better, how many generations passed in these tough times. It is after that when Iraq got freedom from Persian occupation, the Iraqi Sabeans got the opportunity to establish themselves. When Baghdad became the capital of the Abbasid Emperors, some of their courtiers were named as Sabeans like Thābit bin Qurrah¹⁷⁴ and his family members. So they flourished and excelled in physical sciences, yet after all these intellectual advancements, knowledge about their religion

¹⁷² هو عبد الله بن زكوان الفرسى، أبو عبد الرحمن، المدنى، المعروف بـأبي الزناد، قهـ فىء من الخامسة، مـكـ سنة ما ئـهـ وـتـانـينـ، انظر تـفـرـيبـ التـهـزـيبـ لـأـلـأـمـلـ أـلـأـمـدـينـ عـلـىـ بـنـ حـيـرـ الـعـسـقـلـانـىـ، 490ـهــ/ـطــ:ـ قـيـمـىـ كـتـبـ خـلـهـ أـرـامـ بـاغـ كـرـاشـىـ، وـلـمـ يـذـكـرـ سـنـةـ لـطـبـعـ

¹⁷³ Ibid, p.19

¹⁷⁴ Gilānī mentioned genealogy of Thābit bin Qurrah but he wasn't sure about its authenticity. His source is *Tabaqāt al-Atībbā'* of Ibn abi Uṣaiba'. The word ṣābī is named after the son of Idris (PBUH) whose name was Ṭāt. The word Ṭāt became ṣāb afterwards. Gilānī conjectured about this title that it might have ascribed with Thābit bin Qurrah after being privileged in Abbasid court. But if it is true than it can be said that the title of ṣābī is genealogical and not religious, yet at the end he nullified his assumption saying that generally Sabeans are mentioned in books as a religious group. Ibid, p.21

was not much advanced to that of their ancestors living in the marshmallows of Iraq. Gilānī narrated more than one incident that took place during the Abbasid period between Iraqi Sabeans, depicting their low standard of moral and ethical values. Even two real brothers were not in good terms with each other.¹⁷⁵ Ignorance about their religious tradition during the Abbasid period is explained by their slavery and miserable life for many generations at the hands of Persians. Nevertheless he commented that what to say of their religious and moral condition during slavery and ignorant life!

He concludes that Sabeans' religious life style was dependent on their Persian rulers and the type of people who lived with them.¹⁷⁶ He further adds that perhaps such type of information reached our Muslim exegetes that is why they were not able to give a final word about them.¹⁷⁷

Gilānī commented on the opinion of the Exegetes in a pathetic way. It seems that he wanted to degrade their views on the basis that they just related and narrated the information that reached them from different sources and didn't employ their creative faculty to search about Sabeans in different periods of history. We do not see eye to eye with him at this point. He didn't consider the fact that every discipline has its own field of research. Similarly there are numerous principles and methodologies for Qur'ānic exegesis. For instance, the exegetes when they interpret a verse they have to look for the literal meaning of the text, for them the context is also very important, the connection of one verse to the others must not be broken and so on.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁵ Ibid, p.24-26

¹⁷⁶ For instance they started worshipping the objects of Astronomy like sun, moon and stars, while living with primitive Iraqians. Then they came to know of Jewish and Christian teachings, sacred scriptures and Prophets' names through Rabbis and Bishops.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid, p.26

¹⁷⁸ For detailed account of the views of Exegetes see Sharifullah bin Mehbūb Ilāhī, *Majbūm al-Šābiyah 'nd al-Muslimīn wa al-Gharabiyīn*, unpublished Masters thesis, faculty of Uṣūl al-din, department of comparative religions, International Islamic university, Islamabad without year of Pub, pp.20-25 , also see Mawlāna Manāzir Ahsan Gilānī: 'ālim -i bē Badal, pp. 739-741

Secondly Gilānī has not mentioned the opinions of other Muslim scholars like theologians, jurisprudents, expert of linguistics, etc. They gave their opinions about Sabeans that should also be considered when dealing with this topic.

In fact Sabeans are studied by classical and modern Muslim scholars irrespective of their field of interest because their study is based on Qur'ānic verses. Exegetes, jurisprudents, theologians, historians and religionists have dealt with this sect but according to aims and purposes that they had in their minds and matched to their fields.

Gilānī concluded that Qur'ānic Sabeans are not the natives of Iraq. With this the second part of his article starts. It is in this part that Gilānī comes up with his own creative ideas in the light of al-Mas'ūdī's and al-Bairūnī's historical works. The question under consideration is the same as who are the Qur'ānic Sabeans? Gilānī starts by raising another important question. Why have Sabeans been mentioned in the Holy Qur'ān along with the major religious traditions of Muslims, Jews and Christians? Throughout the history of Sabeans their number did not reach a few lacs.¹⁷⁹ Secondly, if the Qur'ān has dealt with every small and big religious group then this earth is full of them and it is evident that not all of them have been dealt in Qur'ānic discussions.

According to al-Mas'ūdī, Chinese and Indians were badly indulged in idol worship until Būzāsaf¹⁸⁰ (Buddha) emerged in India who himself was an Indian. He proclaimed Prophethood and that he was an intermediary between the Creator and His creations. He founded the religion of Śābīah in India. He also narrated the gist of Buddha's teachings i.e. to concentrate on that one which is beyond and higher, since life originated from that world and every one will return to it one day: Since al- Mas'ūdī frequently traveled to India so he availed the opportunity of getting first hand information about Indian religions after meeting

¹⁷⁹ Gilānī mentioned an article authored by an Iraqi scholar. He is of the opinion that Qur'ānic Sabeans are not other than the dwellers of Iraq. He while talking about their flourishing in History says that their status was not more than a local group of Iraq. During Turkish rule their number didn't exceed to a few lacs. From this Information, Gilānī derived that they would surely have become even less in number during Muslim rule in Iraq.

¹⁸⁰ Arabic pronunciation of Buddha is Buzāsaf.

its emperors. He also mentioned the corruption and distortion in the original message of Buddha, till the time came that people started worshipping Buddha's sculptures.¹⁸¹

The second historical proof is taken from al-Bairūnī's *al-Āthār al-Bāqiyah* who was of the view that Būzāsaf was the founder of the Sabean religion. He emerged in India after an year of Tehmōrath, an Iranian emperor. He invited people towards Sabean religion and a good number of people answered his call. At present Buddha's descendants are found in India, China and Turky. The People of Khurāsān labeled them as *Shamnān*.¹⁸² (*Bahārāt*)¹⁸³ Traces of Bhudha's followers are found in the neighboring areas of Kharāsān that are intertwined with India.¹⁸⁴

As we have seen in previous lines, al-Mas'ūdī and al-Bairūnī are the two Historians, Gilānī heavily relied on. But our research shows that he has based his study and analysis on some writings of both scholars. Apart from *Murūj al-Dhahab*, al-Mas'ūdī has also written *al-Tanbīh wa al-Ishrāf* in which he has also provided precious information about the Sabbeans. In this book he put the label of Sabbeans on different religious groups like Chinese, Egyptians, and Romans. He also says that the Shamans of China, ancient Egyptians and Hiraineans, all were Sabbeans. The Qibṭī people before Christianity and Romans before the Christianity of Constantine were also Sabbeans. He further says that today the descendants of Egyptian Sabbeans are known as Harrāneyans.¹⁸⁵

Al-Bairūnī mentioned in his *al-Āthār al-Bāqiyah* about Sabbeans other than that quoted by Gilānī. We found him dividing Sabbeans into two groups.

¹⁸¹ *Maqālāt -i Gilānī*, p.27-29

¹⁸² Gilānī commented on *Shamnān*. It is frequently talked about in polemical writings of Muslims as a particular group of Indian philosophers and thinkers. But it is clear from Al-Bairūnī's account that it is in fact a label given to Buddhists by the people of Khurāsān. So *Shamnān* took the form of *samaniyyah* when transferred to Arabic, *Ibid*, p.32

¹⁸³ *Bhārat* is the plural of *Bahār* which was the centre of Buddhist monasteries in ancient times. With the passage of time it became the name of that province in India as *Bihār*. for further detail *Ibid*, p.31-32

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¹⁸⁵ *Mashūm al-Šābi'ah 'ind al-Muslimīn wa al-Gharabiyīn*, p.36

a) Iraqians, whom Nebuchadrezzar brought with him from Jerusalem. The climate of Babylonia suited them and they preferred staying there instead of going back to Syria. Although they were orthodox Jews, yet they were inspired by Zoroastrianism. That is why traces of Zoroastrianism are also found in their religion. A majority of them live in Iraq. Al-Bairūnī named them as *real Sabeans*.¹⁸⁶ They resemble a lot in their characteristics and dwelling place with Mandaeans.¹⁸⁷

b) Harrāniyans; the followers of Buddha who lived in Harrān.¹⁸⁸

Another important question struck Gilānī's curious mind i.e.: why were Buddhists ascribed as Ṣābi'ah, why did they become famous as Sabeans in Arab countries, and lastly why were the converts to Islām labeled as Sabeans?

To reinforce his stand he offered two types of proofs for answering the above questions. These are geographical and religious proofs from within Buddhism. Geographically it is said that Buddhist monks reached Persia and the Middle Eastern countries. This point has also been discussed earlier that Arabs were familiar with Buddhism in some way or another. As far as religious proofs are concerned, Gilānī stated that Buddha's teachings clearly reflect traces of a revealed religion, that is a middle path between the requirements of body and soul,¹⁸⁹ detachment (*zuhd*) from worldly life, everything in this world is going to end. In order to attain the everlasting and eternal life one should fulfill the requisites of Nirvana that are a set of ethics, like not to lie, murder, commit theft, etc.

All these teachings very much resemble to the teachings of Islām. He also presents his view that *tanāsukh* or the doctrine of Āwāgon which is believed to be one of the cardinal doctrines of Buddhists is actually bodily resurrection on the Day of Judgment. He further states that *pittar Janam* or *Āwāgon* is the later interpretation or distortion of the original message of

¹⁸⁶ Mawlānā Manāzir Ahsan Gilānī: 'ālim i bē Badal , p.742

¹⁸⁷ *Mafhūm al- Ṣābi'ah 'ind al-Muslimīn wa al-Gharabiyīn*, p.42

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid*, p.42

¹⁸⁹ Gilānī while mentioning Buddha's teachings discovered an interesting historical fact that in India during the time of Mahātma Buddha and even before his times, a technique was prevalent to attain different purposes. It was named *Dardān* which means to tease and harm oneself in front of the object of worship in order to compel him for his mercy. The man becomes a sort of superman after getting the power of *dardān*. The forests of India were once used to be full of the seekers of *dardān*. Nowadays this technique is famous as *Yarwān*, *Ibid*, pp.43

Buddha Perhaps due to the gap of centuries between the oral and written tradition of Buddhism, researchers even today discover such things from the dumped teachings of Buddha.¹⁹⁰ But he himself is not satisfied with these proofs on the

Apart from this article, in his other writings Gilānī also argued that Buddhism is a revealed Religion. To reinforce his view he refers to the following Qur'ānic verses:

By the fig, and the olive. By mount Sinai. By this city of security (Makkah) (95: 1-3) as Dr. Mohammad Hamid Allah has mentioned. According to all the commentators of the Qur'ān four Prophets have been mentioned in these verses. The olives refers to Christians who were intimately associated with the mount of olive, Sīnā refers to Moses who was granted the Torah on the Sinai. This city of peace alludes to Makkah. But what about the first word of the verse—the fig? Commentators of the Qur'ān have been speculating about its meaning... According to Mawlānā Gilānī, the followers of Buddha unanimously believe that he received his Nirvana, the first revelation, under a wild fig tree. Mawlānā infers, therefore, that Qur'ān which refers to other great religions of the world has also mentioned Buddhism in a very subtle way. Since the Arabs did not know much about the life of Buddha so Qur'ān does not deal in detail with him.¹⁹¹

Similarly Gilānī viewed that Buddha was a Prophet and has been mentioned in the Qur'ān under the name Dhū'l- Kifl. The word literally means the man of Kifl. Kifl is the Arabicised version of Kapilavastu— a place near Benaras where Buddha was born.¹⁹² Also, the commentators of the Qur'ān did not say the final word about the Prophet Dhū'l- Kifl and the people to whom he was sent. This point also reinforces Gilānī's stand.

Rashīd al-dīn Fażlullah, a famous contemporary historian in his *Tārīkh -i Hind* stated that Buddha's sculpture was also present among the idols that were demolished by Prophet

¹⁹⁰ For further details see Ibid, p.35-37

¹⁹¹ Muhammad, Hamidullah, *The Emergence of Islam*, translated and edited by Afzal Iqbal (International Islamic university Islamabad: Islamic research Institute,1908-2002), p.254

¹⁹²Ibid, p. 254

Muhammad (saw) after the conquest of Makkah. This statement also reinforces Gilānī's standpoint and can be presented as a satisfactory answer to his question.¹⁹³

At the end of this discussion Gilānī presented four hypotheses regarding the question under consideration as why were Buddhists called Sabeans by Arabs?

- a. It is quite possible that the word Šābī was ascribed to Buddhist missionaries who preached Buddhism in Arab countries. But this is a mere assumption as the names of missionaries are not preserved in recorded history.
- b. It is also possible that Buddhists were named as Sabeans by Arabs just like European people gave several names to Muslims like Saraceen¹⁹⁴, Moor¹⁹⁵, Turk¹⁹⁶ and etc.
- c. Third assumption is about language transformation. The key words of Buddhism like sadhārath, sādhō, samādhī, so bhadrā. All these words start with the Arabic alphabet sīn and they can easily be transformed to ūdād. Just like Buddha became Būzāsaf in the process of shifting from English to Arabic.
- d. The fourth and the last hypothesis is that the name of first Buddhist preacher in Arab and Middle Eastern countries was Tāt and Šāb was the title given to him. So his followers were named afterwards as Sabeans, according to the literal meaning of Šābī.¹⁹⁷

All the above points are a mere assumptions on Gilānī's part. He did not say the final word about any of them. So his approach in this regard is phenomenological and non judgmental.

Apart from al- Mas'ūdī and al- Bairūnī other classical and modern scholars of history are also found, discussing about Sabeans in their writings. Ibn al- Nadīm, Ibn Hazm, Shahrastānī,

¹⁹³ Mawlāna Manāzir Aḥsan Gilānī: *ṭālim-i-bē Badal*, p.737

¹⁹⁴ European scholars take back the origin of Sārāsīn to either ṣehrā nashīn (the dwellers of desert) or Sāriqīn (thieves). Gilānī refuted them by discovering a historical fact that originally the word was Sārāqīn, the first wife of Hazrat Ibrāhīm (pbuh). Jews claimed that Hājra, the second wife of Abraham (pbuh) was the maid of Sāra. Arabs were the progeny of Hazrat Isma'il who was the son of Hājra (pbuh). So the whole Arab world became the servants of Sāra in Jewish view. But in fact Hājra was the daughter of Egyptian king. See *Maqālāt-i-Gilānī*, p.44

¹⁹⁵ In Gilānī's view the word Mūr is possibly ascribed to the Muslims of morocco.

¹⁹⁶ In Indian subcontinent Muslims are called Turks because Islam was introduced to Indians by Turk invaders.

¹⁹⁷ Literally Šābī means the one who walks on the right path.

to name a few.¹⁹⁸ Gilānī should also include their views in order to have a comprehensive study of Sabeans.

Apart from Gilānī's view about Sabeans we have collected the opinions of other Muslim scholars that would be mentioned below. This comparative study will help us understand the topic in a better way. Among them some opinions are drawn from Gilānī's colleagues, friends and contemporaries in order to know how far his thought was inspired by his academic milieu.

Mawlānā Maudūdī in his commentary of Qur'ān expressed his opinion about this sect known as Sabeans, while commenting on (17: 22), he states that in ancient times two groups were famous by the name of Sabeans. First were the followers of Yaḥyā (pbuh) and were found in Iraq. The Second were star worshipers who claimed to be the descendants of Hazrat Shīth and Idrīs (pbuth). In this verse the first group is mentioned because in his view the second group was not ascribed with this name during the time when Qur'ān was revealed.¹⁹⁹

Sayyid Sulaimān Nadīvī who was a good friend and teacher of Gilānī, also gave his opinion about Sabeans in his *Tārīkh Arz al-Qur'ān*. He first narrated the views of Muslim and Western Scholars then stated that after reading this we can easily evaluate that the proposals of early and later Muslim scholars and modern western scholars are two sides of the same coin. From early Muslim scholars he authenticated Ibn al-Nadīm, Al-Hasan al-Baṣrī, Mujāhid and Qatādah and from later period Ibn Taimiyah. He further adds that the origin of Sabeans was Kildān. Their original religion was worshipping Babylonians gods. They received their inspiration from Majōs regarding *Nūr* and *dhulmab*, from Greeks in philosophy, from Jews they derived the names of Prophets and from Christians their concept of *rūh al-Quđus* and *al-Kalimah*.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁸ For an account of their view see Mawlānā Mañāzir Aḥsan Gilānī: 'ālim -i bē Badal , p.743

¹⁹⁹ Sayyid Abū al-A'lā Maudōdī, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, vol iii (Lahore:Idārah Tarjamān al-Qur'ān), 45th ed, April 2007,p.210

²⁰⁰ *Mađhūm al-ṣābiyah 'ind al-Muslimīn wa al-gharabiyīn* ,p.49

In 2009 Ikrām Chaghtāi²⁰¹ presented a valuable work on Sabeans. He has authored an article in which he compiled the opinions of Muslim and western scholars regarding Sabeans. He mentioned the opinions of Muslim Exegetes; classical and modern, historians, scholars of linguistics and Orientalists.²⁰²

Mawlānā Saēd Ahmed AkbarĀbādī, a contemporary Muslim scholar, also wrote about Sabeans. In his view Sabeans and Hunafā' are synonyms; the followers of Abrahamic monotheistic tradition. But in Makkah they were famous by Hunafā'. With the passage of time, they also inspired from polytheism and most of them indulged in polytheism. Shortly before the advent of Islam, a group emerged in Arabian Peninsula who searched original version of Abrahamic tradition and showed no link with idol worshipping. Quraysh of Makkah named them Sabeans, since they changed their previous religion or in the view of Qureish deviated from the right path.²⁰³

Among all the scholars, Muslims and Westerners, Gilānī's approach is unique. He was the only researcher who has tried to prove that Sabeans are the descendants of Buddha who called people towards the religion of Sābi'ah in India.

²⁰¹ Ikrām Chaghtāi has compiled a book *Mawlānā Manāzir Ahsan Gilānī: Ālim i bē badal*, comprised of numerous articles and biographical notes about Gilānī. Most of its contributors are his contemporaries who lived and worked together with him. At the end of this compilation he presented an article about Sabeans that is a good academic research based on the opinions of Muslim Exegetes, Historians and Orientalists.

²⁰² For detailed account of Orientalists' approach towards Sabeans see *Mawlānā Manāzir Ahsan Gilānī: Ālim i bē Badal* pp.744-749

²⁰³ Ibid, p.749

3.3:Refutation of Jesus Christ's Divinity: A *kalāmī* Study.

As indicated earlier, the works of *Mutakallimīn*, irrespective of their different schools of thought, serve as one of the four primary sources for a Muslim if he wants to study the religions of the world. It is evident from the very definition of *'Ilm al-Kalām* by one of its champions *'Ażud al-dīn al-İjī* in *Sharḥ al-Mawāqif*. According to him

علم الكلام هو علم يقتدر معي على إثبات العقائد الدينية بإيراد الدليل ودفع الشبه²⁰⁴

The scholars of *'Ilm al-Kalām* used to hold polemical discourses on two paradigms i.e. Intra-religious and inter-religious. Often they held lengthy discussions on monotheism, abrogation, revelation, resurrection and so on. These are also the cardinal issues to be addressed by the major world religions.²⁰⁵

It is in fact one of the distinguishing features of Muslim scholarship that included world religions from its very beginning, getting basic principles and basic information from the fountain heads i.e. *Qur'ān* and *Sunnah*. Therefore I have studied *Gīlānī*'s methodology of *'Ilm al-Kalām* in order to highlight this feature. The significance of this type of study has been doubled and urgent than ever before in contemporary times when modern western study of religion is dominant. Hence we shall see that apart from his expertise in other disciplines *Gīlānī* also left a treasure of rare knowledge in *'Ilm al-Kalām*.

Gīlānī defines *'Ilm al-Kalām* as a verbal struggle in order to filter right from wrong; particularly in the context of religion.²⁰⁶ He viewed that, as there are specific rules and techniques applied in *Kalāmī* science, therefore it cannot be comprehended by every one. He added that in *'Ilm al-Kalām* right is differentiated from wrong but after a lengthy discourse, so this is an indirect and unsafe way for a lay man.²⁰⁷

Despite the above definition of *'Ilm al-Kalām* and its complexity, he has authored a book on this subject namely *al-Dīn al-Qayyim*. In what follows, I will explicate his services as a

²⁰⁴ DR.M.Dhīn Muhammād, *Min al-manābij fi 'ilm al-dīn al-Muqārin* (Hawliyat al-Jāmi'ah al-Islāmiyah, issue 1, 1993), p.83

²⁰⁵ Ibid, p.84

²⁰⁶ *Al-Dīn al-Qayyim*, pp.66

²⁰⁷ for further detail look Ibid: p.66

Mutakallim in the light of an example i.e. refutation of Jesus Christ's divinity. This example has been taken from Gilānī's commentary on surah al-Kahf namely *Tadhkir bi Surat al-Kahf*. The whole work depicts his unique style of thinking and carries in itself various subtle points. We have taken the portion of the Surah that talks about the cardinal belief of Christianity i.e. Jesus Christ as the son of God. 'And to warn those who say "Allah has begotten a son. No knowledge has they of such a thing, nor had their fathers. Mighty is the word that comes out of their mouths. They utter nothing but a lie'. (18: 4-5).

The point that compelled Gilānī's mind to ponder over these verses and to raise his pen on this topic is Qur'ānic style of commenting on this belief of Christianity. Besides direct usage of the word *Nasārā* (Christians), the verse says "*those who say "Allah has begotten a son*". He asked that if it just a literary style or hold in it some deeper insights". So he thought to explore what these verses actually have to say.

In his view the word 'son' is the most important in the whole verse and deserves special attention. In the Arabic language generally two words are used for son i.e. walad and ibn. In common usage one frequently replaces one with the other. So why has Allah (swt) used Walad instead of ibn?

Having this question in mind he deeply analyzed the word 'walad'. Walad is derived from *wiladāh*. It means when it is said that Zaid is the son of 'Umr, the relation of father and son is present between them. He further analyzed the nature of the relation between them by formulating two premises and then inferring results from them.

First premise: father is not the creator of his son since he does not bring his son out of nothing. Potentially the son was present in the father in the form of sperm which he transfers in his wife during consummation. He is completely unaware of the physical and mental attributes of his son. Hence the father's role is nothing but a pathway which son has to cover in order to come in this world.

Second premise: The child of human beings is always a human and this stands true for all species. It means that the species of father and son is always the same. Son resembles his father in all his attributes. Otherwise it would be against the universal law of nature.

Both of the above premises about the relation of father and son appeal to common sense without any complexity. Gilānī concludes by stating that if Christians claim that Jesus Christ is the son of God, what do they actually mean and on what basis they form the basis of their religion?

The ultimate result of the first premises is that Jesus Christ is not the creature of God and hence he neither needs him for his existence nor for all his attributes. According to the second premise Jesus Christ is God, resembling him in all his attributes.

In this way the single word *walad* demolishes the foundation of the whole belief system of Christianity. He further states that this is the significance of *walad*. The Holy Qur'ān when it uses *walad* instead of *ibn* in all places while dealing with Christianity, because only *walad* has the ability to discover the frightful and astonishing reality of Christian belief. The difference between the two words, as Gilānī mentioned is that in Arabic language *walad* is used for one's actual child while *ibn* is sometimes spoken for someone dear to oneself, to show love care and affection.²⁰⁸ If both words are synonyms then there would be no specialty for Christian belief of *Waladullah*.

Another worth considering point that he made is the difference between polytheism (shirk) of Christians and that of other religions of the world. On one side Jesus Christ is God's son (which means that he is not God's creation) and on the other side they claim oneness of the Creator. The simultaneous justification of both claims is illogical. They use the word *waladullah*, however in fact they are making a partner with God. Polytheism, wherever it is found in the world, can never deny the oneness of the creator of this universe. In the whole

²⁰⁸ Gilānī illustrates the difference between *walad* and *ibn* by giving a Qur'ānic example. And (both) the Jews and the Christians say "We are the children of Allah and his loved ones" ... (5: 18). They meant behind using this word that the Children of Isrā'il are superior and closer to Allah (swt) than other nations. Their relation with Allah is similar to that of son and father full of love and affection. If both words would be dealt on equal grounds

history of polytheism man worshipped other creatures assuming that they have the power to affect their lives. Unawareness or misunderstanding of the word *makhlūq* is the root cause of polytheism in its various forms. Generally it is man's nature that he wants to understand things with the help of examples. So he applies the examples of his every day life on the relationship between Creator and His Creation. Like the relation of father and son and that of carpenter and chair. The second humiliating aspect, *Gilānī* mentioned of Christian doctrine of *walad ullaḥ* is the person of mother with father and son. He said that the story does not end here just with the concept of the son of God, but the presence of father and son necessarily demands the existence of mother which would open an unending series of matters that are purely human and against the perfection and highness of Allah (swt). The things that can never be imagined about Lord automatically start coming to mind. He commented that at most Christians could have the right to ask 'who is the father of Jesus Christ?' on the unusual birth of Jesus Christ but this is extremely illogical if they haven't found his father from among human beings, it means that his father is Allah Almighty. Unawareness of one's father does not mean that Allah is one's father.²⁰⁹

For the justification of their claim, Christians are empty handed. They don't have any type of knowledge, neither direct nor indirect (through hearsay from forefathers).

Gilānī concludes that the whole history of mankind did not witness such a complex and dangerous form of polytheism which has demolished the whole science of God. That is why the Qur'ān forcefully condemned them stating that 'Mighty is the word that comes out of their mouths. They utter nothing but a lie'.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid*, p.123

Chapter 4: *Manāzir Aḥsan Gīlānī* and the ‘Other’.

- Islamic Approach Towards Other Religions
- Prophethood: A Historical and Comparative Study
- Islam: Inclusivist or Exclusivist?

4.1: Islamic Approach Towards Other Religions

Religious pluralism is not new and alien to Islām. The matter of fact is that geographically before modern times, Islām was the only religion that was in contact with all the major religions of that era.

Sayyid Husein Naṣr very beautifully illustrates this geographical map. He says:

It(Islam) had met Judaism and Christianity in its birth place in Arabia and afterward in Palestine, Syria and Egypt: the Iranian religions such as Zoroastrianism and Manichaeism after its conquest of Persia in 7th century; Hinduism and Buddhism in eastern Persia and India shortly thereafter; the Chinese Religion through the silk route as well as through Muslim merchants who traveled to Canton and other Chinese ports; the African religions soon after the spread of Islam into Black Africa and some fourteen hundred years ago; and Siberian Shamanism in the form of the archaic religions of the Turkic world.²¹⁰

Gilānī has beautifully dealt with the phenomena of religious diversity by explicating his point of view. In this regard, like other orthodox Muslim scholars, Gilānī's understanding is directly derived from the Qur'ān and the Sunnah. But he adopted a unique style for the presentation of his ideas. As we have mentioned in chapter one, his literary style was to dress new clothes to old thing. While addressing non Muslims he mentioned that Islam does not separate the adherents of other religions from their ancestors, rather it invites them to become a Jew or a Christian or a Hindu in a more complete and strict sense by eliminating all the discrepancies and loopholes that corrupted their Religious tradition in the course of History.²¹¹ It bridges the gap that has occurred with the passage of time between them and the correct version of their own Religion. It is a filter that purifies all other Religions from internal and external impurities. Hence, in principle Islam does not demand conversion rather it invites all to replace their doubt with certainty. In addition to this Islam brought with it some partial fulfillments. Gilānī exemplifies this scenario stating that those who have eight rupees and they have lost it, Islam returns them their lost eight rupees with the addition of

²¹⁰ Muhammad Suheyl Umar, ed., *The Religious Other: Towards A Muslim Theology of other Religions in a post-Prophetic age* (Lahore: Iqbāl Academy, 2008) ,p.121

²¹¹ Manāzir Ahsan Gilānī, *Musalmānon kī firqa bandiyon kā afsāna*, (Lahore: Idāra Islāmiyāt, 1976) , p.56

two as a prize. He exclaimed astonishingly that only a crazy stupid man would reject this handsome offer.²¹²

In the context of the relation between Islam and other religions, Gilānī offers several theoretical and practical proofs derived from the verses of the Holy Qur'ān and the life of the Holy Prophet Muḥammad (saw). For instance the Qur'ān binds all the messengers of God in the relationship of brotherhood irrespective of the diversity of nations they have been sent to. The famous Qur'ānic verse that talks about the kinship of Prophets ends with the criteria of Guidance (*hudā*) and Muḥammad(saw) was demanded to fulfill this criteria and follow this feature of the previous Prophets. So in his view the relation of *hudā* is deeper, stronger, more meaningful and universal than kinship. Similarly, the Prophet Muḥammad (saw) used 'my brother (*akhī*)' for the previous messengers. The *hadīth* of ascension²¹³ further elaborates that the Prophets who didn't have kinship with Muḥammad (saw) welcome him by saying welcome o' my pious brother (*marhabā bī al-akh al-ṣālih*).²¹⁴ This universal brotherhood, strongly binded with guidance is the message of Islam since fourteen hundred years for the whole world.

The second Qur'ānic criteria mentioned by Gilānī fixes the nature of the relation between Islam and other religions is historical. In this regard Jews and Christians are closer to Islam than other prehistoric religions. The Qur'ān explicitly names them 'the People of the Book'. He clarifies his point that it is not to say that Judaism and Christianity are historically authentic religions. They are not protected from theoretical and practical distortions and weaknesses; rather he means that they are near to Islam in the time line of history. That is why the ratio of truth is greater in them as compare to other religions.²¹⁵

In this way the Qur'ān has maintained the historical relationship of Muslims with all other religions. This criterion guides a Muslim as how to deal with the phenomenon of religious diversity.

²¹² See *Foyūzāt-i Gilānī*, p.179-180

²¹³ أخرجه الإمام البخاري في صحيحه، كتاب الصلاة، باب كيف فرضت الصلاة في الإسراء، 349، 1/359، رقم المزدوج.

²¹⁴ *Musalmānon ki firqa bandiyon kā afsāna*, p.41

²¹⁵ *Ibid*, p.45

Early Muslims kept all the above mentioned standard before their eyes as milestones towards the way to other religions. Their community was multireligious in real sense of the word. Gilānī offers several proofs for it. For instance 'Abdullah bin Salām was permitted by Prophet Muḥammad (saw) to recite Qur'ān and Bible turn by turn, i.e. the former on one night and the latter at the other.²¹⁶

Thus for a Muslim, every religion is sacred, its representative is honorable, its scripture is holy and its adherents are brothers. Now he can study any religion without any hesitation, but keeping in mind that Islam presents the standard, uncorrupted and final version of all the previous religions. It is to purify other religions, not to be purified.²¹⁷ It also puts a heavy responsibility on the shoulder of every Muslim. Gilānī narrates the example of the deviations that took place during the Ṣahābās' period, when Muslims started getting inspired from the People of the Book instead of inspiring them. Imām Būkhārī relates the complete Hadith in which 'Abd Allāh bin 'Abbās suggests the Muslims to be careful and aware about this issue as he feared that this deviation might not get in extreme position.²¹⁸

²¹⁶ Ibid, p.49

²¹⁷ Ibid, p.50

²¹⁸ Ibid, p.54

4.2: Prophethood: A Historical and Comparative Study

As stated above, Mawlānā Gilānī has worked on History of Religions more than any other branch of comparative Religions. The following stance²¹⁹ clarifies his interest in History even when he approaches a particular phenomenon from a comparative perspective.

In this instance he has compared the personality of Prophet Muḥammad (saw) with the representatives of other religions. The principles are approximately the same as described earlier, i.e.: universality of revelation and Prophethood. The theme of comparison is Prophethood and the critical study of various sacred scriptures in the light of History. The primary objective of this comparison is to clarify the position and status of Prophet Muḥammad (saw) among other messengers. The difference between Muḥammad (saw) and other Prophets is of universality versus particularity. The relation between them is complementary in nature.

Gilānī has dealt with the religious representatives and sacred scriptures of Hinduism, Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam. His major concern is the personalities of Prophets, but as their life histories and teachings are recorded in the scriptures they have left for their people. After the death of Masters, it is the scripture that serves as a milestone and kindle light for their disciples. He states that Vedas of Avatars, records of Buddha, Gathas of Zoroaster, Torah of Moses (Pbuh), Gospels of Jesus Christ are not preserved from distortion and corruption. Historical criticism with its various forms has proved their incredibility.

Gilānī starts with Hinduism saying that names of Avatars are not preserved in the records of History, what to say of their works. Klostermier, a well known author on Hinduism also reinforces this fact that: "Hinduism is unlike any of the other major Religions of the world. It

²¹⁹ This example has been drawn from the preface of Gilānī's book *al-Nabi al-Khatam* (Karachi: Muḥammad Ali Kārkhāna Islāmī Kutub, 1995), p.11-32.

does not trace its teachings to the authoritative words of an identifiable founder nor its origin to a specific date in history".²²⁰

Similar is the case with the life history and teachings of Buddha. He adds that Hinduism and Buddhism in their present form are full of mythology. The personality of Zoroaster is the matter of dispute among contemporary historians. A majority of them try to prove him as a legendary figure. Among twenty one parts of Zend and Avesta²²¹ only one part is available which serves as the source of Zoroastrian rituals and customs.

The situation of 'the people of the Book' Jews and Christians is not much different from others. The life history of Moses is not present before Jews. Among various sacred scriptures of Jews, Gilānī gave special attention to Torah. It is probably due to that dislike other religions Jewish history has long records of destructions and persecutions at the hands of outsiders that ultimately resulted in the distortion of Torah. After the death of Moses (pbuh), Torah was left with the twelve clans of The Children of Isrā'īl. After such a long history of persecution and destruction, the distortion of Torah is the natural outcome. It was burnt and turned into ashes by every persecutor, but still Jews claim that they have revived it.

At this point Gilānī raised a very important historical question from Jewish history i.e. where did the ten tribes of Banū Isrā'īl get lost after the first Jewish persecution and exile at the hands of Shalmāneser and his son Sargōn? He presented three views of Historians regarding their placement.

I. The most popular view is that the dwellers of Afghanistan and N.W.F.P are actually the ten lost tribes of Banū Isrā'īl, who first embraced Buddhism and then entered the sway of Islam. Moreover a scrap of Torah was also found in the tribal areas of N.W.F.P, natives of these areas call them Israelites, and linguistics also supports this view since there are words in Pashto language that resemble with Hebrew.

²²⁰ K Klos Klostermier, *Hindu Writings : A short Introduction to major sources* (Oxford:Oneworld Pub, 2000) , p.1

²²¹ sacred scriptures in Pārsī Religion

- II. Some historians claim them to be the bankers of Rājpōtāna and Brahmans of India.
- III. Some others suppose that they lived in Sindh, since the traces of Shāmrōnī civilization in Sindh supports this view.²²²

Gilānī 's approach is phenomenological and non judgmental regarding all these views, however he commented on all the above opinions, saying that no one among the above nations can ever boast of being labeled as Jews.

Apart from historical criticism or source criticism Gilānī also employed textual criticism or Internal criticism on Torah. He gave numerous examples for this type of criticism. Such as incidents that clearly took place after the death of Moses (pbuh), records of Moses' (pbuh) death and the story of his funeral, how can such a book be ascribed as revealed on Moses' (pbuh)? Prophets of Torah are not infallible creatures and intact personalities rather picturised as indulging in immoral activities. Attributes ascribed to God negate his supremacy and omnipotence.

Jesus Christ (pbuh) after staying with Banu Israel for two years and a half declared himself that he had to go otherwise his fellow Prophet would not come. He also narrated the whole story of the election of four Gospels among hundreds.²²³ According to Gilānī, the purpose of Jesus Christ's prophecy was to give glad tidings for the future Prophet whose name would be Parcalete.²²⁴ That is why he was not given a separate Shari'ah. His function was just the fulfillment of Mosaic Law. He served his purpose to the best but Christians are not willing to admit that reality.

Gilānī substantiates his point of view with the following Qur'ānic verse:

And (remember) when Allah took the covenant of the Prophets, saying: 'Take whatever I gave you from the book and Hikmah (understanding of the laws of Allah), and afterwards there will

²²² *Al-Nabī al-Khātam*, p.18

²²³ For details see *al-Nabī al-Khātam*, p.23, 24.

²²⁴ Qur'ān also mentions this characteristic of Muḥammad (Ssaw) in the following verse. The word Ahmad has been translated in Greek as Parcalete. Its translation is being revived every year like the Holy Spirit, the Concooler, Advocate and etc. But a group among Christian scholars testified that the exact translation of Parcalete is Ahmēd. See *al-Nabī al-Khātam* , p.25

come to you a messenger (Muhammad) confirming what is with you: you must, then, believe in him and help him'. Allah said: 'Do you agree (to it) and will you take up my covenant (which I conclude with you)? 'They said; we agree. He said: Then bear witness; and I am with you among the witness (for this). (3:81)

He said that all the previous Prophets have fulfilled their oath through their ardent feelings and glad tidings about Muhammad (saw) which is still preserved in their Holy Scriptures even after much distortion and corruption.²²⁵ He further adds that it was Allah's intervention that verses about the praise and advent of Muhammad (saw) are still preserved in previous scriptures.²²⁶

Gilānī added that the function of the Prophets (peace be upon them) who proceeded Muhammad (saw) was to prepare the humanity to welcome the leader and Master of the whole humanity. He has expressed this relation very beautifully saying, that all previous Prophets prepared humanity to receive Muhammad (pbuh) just like the agricultural land is dug out before sowing of seed. Jesus Christ made the western land ready just like Buddha who did the same for eastern land before five hundred years of Jesus Christ.

Buddha anticipated about Muhammad (saw) before he breathed his last. Gilānī recorded the complete dialogue between Buddha and his disciple Nandā. During his conversation with Nandā, he asked about the master after him. He replied that he neither was the first Buddha to come nor the last. There would emerge another Buddha at his time. Gilānī also quoted the features of future Buddha as the most venerated person with enlightened heart whose practical life would be full of wisdom. He will preach a comprehensive and complete religious

²²⁵ Gilānī quoted several Biblical verses from the book of Prophets. For instance ... You caravans of Dedanites, who camp in the thickets of Arabia, bring water for the thirsty; you, who live in Tema, bring food for the fugitives. They flee from the sword, from the dawn sword, from the bent bow and from the heat of battle (Isaiah 21:13-15).

Let the desert and its towns raise their voices; let the settlements where Kedar lives rejoice. Let the people of sila sing for joy; let them shout from the mountaintops. (Isaiah 42:11)

God came from Teman, the Holy one from mount Paran. His glory covered the heavens and his praise filled the earth (Habakkuk 2:3).

...the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire will come, says the Lord almighty. But who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears, for he will be like a refiner's fire and purifier of silver... (Malachi 3:1,2)

²²⁶ Ibid, p.37

life style like him. On inquiring as to how he would be recognized; Buddha answered: His name would be Maitreya.²²⁷

Apart from the above prophecy that Gilānī narrated; there are several other proofs in Buddhist scriptures that describe the physical and moral features of Maitreya, the future Prophet. We will mention a few of them in the following lines.

On questioning one of his disciples about future Buddha, he asked his master "some time ago you have spoken to us of the future Buddha, who will lead the world at a future period and who will bear the name of Maitreya. I would now wish to hear more about his powers and his miraculous gifts". Hearing this Buddha replied. He will have a heavenly voice which reaches far: his skin will have a golden hue, a great splendor will radiate from his body, his chest will be broad, his limbs well developed, and his eyes will be like lotus petals.... And then The supreme sage, he will with a perfect voice preach the true Dharma, which is auspicious and removes all ill.... Under Maitreya's guidance hundreds of thousands of living beings shall enter upon a religious life and attain Nirvāna. He, the best of men, the compassionate teacher will preach the true Dharma, which is compassionate towards all living beings.²²⁸ (Translation by Edward Conze, in his Buddhist Scriptures (Penguin books, 1959), p.238-242

The following anticipation of Buddha is also worth quoting regarding the future Buddha.

Listen attentively with one heart. A man whose spirit shines brightly, a man whose mind is completely unified, a man whose virtue excels every one. Such a man will truly appear in this world. When he preaches precious laws, all the people will totally be satisfied as if the thirsty drink sweet drops of rain from heaven. And each and every one will attain the path of liberation from struggles. (Buddhism: Sutra of the great accomplishment of the Maitreya)²²⁹

In fact it is not only Jesus Christ and Buddha that anticipated about Muḥammad (Pbuh), more or less all major religions forecast about him. Although much has been distorted in their sacred scriptures yet what is left, talks about the prophethood of Muḥammad (saw).

Hindu sacred scriptures forecast the coming of Muḥammad (saw) in the last of all Prophets.

In Bhavishya Purana the prophecy runs as follow:

²²⁷ Ibid, p.26

²²⁸ Apart from these Characteristics Buddha also described other future of the future Maitriya in much detail, for more elaboration see Mircea, Eliade; *From Primitives to Zen: A thematic source book of the History of Religions* (London: William Collins sons & co. Ltd, 1967), pp.401, 402.

²²⁹ World scripture: A comparative anthology of sacred texts

A malechha (belonging to a foreign country and speaking a foreign language) spiritual teacher will appear with his companions. His name will be Muḥammad (Saw). Raja (Bho) after giving this Maha Dev Arab(of angelic disposition) a bath in the 'panchgavya' and the Ganges water, (i.e., purging him of all sins) offered him the presents of his sincere devotion and showing him all reverence said, 'I make obeisance to thee.' ye! The pride of mankind, the dweller in Arabia. You have collected a great force to kill the devil and you yourself have been protected from malechha opponents. ; O ye! The image of the most pious God the biggest Lord, I am a slave to thee, take me as one lying on thy feet.(Bhavishya Purana Parv 3, Khand 3, Adhya 3 , Shalok 5 8)

There are several other verses of Hindu sacred scriptures that prophesize about Prophet Muḥammad (saw) as Muḥammad Moddassir Ali has mentioned it in his Master's thesis.²³⁰ Pārsī also know of The Prophet Muḥammad (saw) through their sacred scriptures of Dasātīr and Zend Avistā. Translation from the original Pahlavī language is as follow:

When the Persians should sink sow in morality. A man will be born in Arabia whose followers will upset their throne, religion and everything. The mighty still necked-ones of Persia will be over powered. The house which was built (referring to Abraham building the Ka'ba) and in which many idols have been placed will be purged of idols, and people will say their prayers facing towards it. His followers will capture the towns of the Parsis Tūs and Balkh and other big places round about. People will embroil with one another. The wise men of Persia and others will join his followers.²³¹

In his book *al-Dīn al-Qāyyim*, Gilānī described the personality of Prophet Muḥammad (saw), the nature of his prophecy and finally to the nature of people to whom he first emerged as a Prophet.

He states that since man is the vicegerent of Allah (swt) on this earth, his uncountable attributes have been variously distributed in him. The variation of the manifestation of Lord's attributes has given birth to the difference of ranks and grades in man and ultimately it has made two groups, or in other words there are two type of vicegerency. General: holded by every human being. Specific: holded by Muḥammad (saw) only. It is in Muḥammad (saw) that

²³⁰ For exact quotation of these verses see *The concept of Revelation and Prophet hood in Hinduism: A critical Islamic view* pp.100-105

²³¹ *Islām, The Religion of all Prophets* (Pakistan: Begum Ayesha Bawany Waqf, 1990) ,p.9

all attributes of Allah (swt) have been fully manifested, so he is the most complete person of the world. That is why it is said that Muḥammad is not merely a name, it is the final act of the Lord.²³²

Prophet Muḥammad (saw) came at the last of all prophets. Every claim of prophecy after him failed like a pack of cards.²³³ Gilānī gives two types of reasons for it.

1. Allah (swt) has promised to keep the message of Islam safe in the form of Qur'ān and Sunnah till the Day of Judgment.
2. The present age of globalization when the whole globe has shrunken to a small village through the means of communication. In the present age the possibility of spreading the message of Muḥammad (saw) is more than ever before.

He concludes that now the whole world is one village, so as its prophet and book.

In his book *al-Dīn al-Qayyim*, Gilānī has given proofs for the finality of Prophet Muḥammad's (saw) Prophecy. Such as;

1. No one among the previous Prophets claimed to be the last of all Prophets; rather their case is quite opposite to that of Prophet Muḥammad (saw). Torah, Gospels, Vedas and other sacred scriptures witness glad tidings about him as we just quoted several verses from them.²³⁴
2. Belief in Muḥammad (saw) as the final Prophet is justified even if previous sacred scriptures would have remained undistorted and uncorrupted. Because he fulfills all the criteria and basis on which other People have faith on their Prophets. Rather all Prophetic features apply on Muḥammad (saw) in a better and complete way. So there is no room for rejecting his claim both on

²³² *Al-Dīn al-Qayyim*, p.170

²³³ Gilānī also mentioned Jewish accusation the prophethood of Muḥammad (saw). They didn't believe him as the final messenger of God claiming that Moses (Pbuh) was the last Prophet. But their claim was proof less according to Gilānī, since they didn't make this claim when Jesus Christ (pbuh) proclaimed his prophecy among them. *Ibid*, p.130

²³⁴ *Ibid*, pp.170-171

intellectual and natural grounds. The Holy Qur'an when it says; Say (o' Muhammad) I am not a new thing among the messengers (of Allah i.e.: I am not the first messenger)... (46:9) also offers the same proof under consideration.²³⁵

At the end of all the above mentioned proofs Gilānī concluded that today belief in Muhammad (saw) as the last Prophet has become practical necessity for humanity since it is the only authentic source to know God's will.²³⁶

The characteristics of Arabs made them eligible for Prophet Muhammad (saw) addressing to them as the last representative of divine word. Before they were preached Islam, they had positive qualities like generosity, bravery, hospitality and etc. Among them Gilānī mentioned their bravery and freedom.²³⁷ He has chosen this feature because it suits the context. Unlike Banū Isrā'il they lived a free life in Arabian Desert, knowing very well how to safeguard their progeny.

It is true that Slavery, though a physical phenomenon, corrupts minds and souls as well. No creativity can be expected from a slave. It leaves its impressions on generations. Arabs were free of this curse. That is why Arabian Peninsula became the centre of Muhammad's call for demolishing the bad and prevailing the good.

²³⁵ Ibid,p.170

²³⁶ Ibid, p.171. Gilānī at another occasion has proved faith on Muhammad (saw) through Monotheism. Monotheism in its real sense means worshipping Allah according to his will and making his obedience the focal point and end purpose of one's life. Only such definition of Monotheism guarantees one's eternal success. Now the question is 'what is the source of knowing Allah's will that is authentic and completely reliable'. Otherwise his faith on the unity of Allah would just be a meaningless verbal claim. That only authentic and reliable source is Prophet Muhammad (saw). Non believers on Muhammad (saw) would face painful punishment at the Day of Judgment. Ibid,p.167

²³⁷ Gilānī quotes the following biblical verse ... he will be a wild donkey of a man: his hand will be against every one and every one's hand against him...(Genesis 16: 12)

4.3: Islam: Inclusivist or Exclusivist?

What should be man's response to different Religions, found in the face of this universe with special reference to salvation? To give a satisfactory answer is the duty of religion. So every religion comes up with an answer that decides the attitude of its adherents with the members of other religions and so Islam is.

In Islamic tradition the issue of multiplicity of religions has remained important since the beginning because its roots are present in the Qur'aan: the source book for every Muslim. The famous Qur'aanic verse of Al-Baqarah says:

Verily those who believe and those who are Jews and Christians, and Sabians, whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day and does righteous good deeds shall have their reward with their Lord, On them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve. (2: 62)

This verse has been declared one of the most controversial verses of the Qur'aan. Muslim scholars of various disciplines have interpreted it in different ways. In contemporary world when the issue of exclusivism, Inclusivism or pluralism is hot, Muslim Scholars once again tried to interpret this verse and have different speculations.

Gilānī has also taken this verse into account in order to investigate the attitude of Islam towards other religions particularly with reference to salvation.

Before presenting his own view Gilānī gave a glimpse of the scenario during his time as a preface. He mentioned the group among Muslim scholars who adopted an inclusive approach referring to the verse concerned. They claim that to believe in Allah, the Day of Judgment and to do good deeds are sufficient for salvation. It explicitly means that faith in Muḥammad (saw) as the last Prophet is not necessary for the qualification of salvation and hence Non Muslims will also enter paradise.

An Eminent Muslim scholar and Gilānī's contemporary, Abū al-Kalām Āzād's (1888-1958) opinion is also inclusive in this regard. His point of departure is the background of Qur'aanic approach towards other Religions. He illustrated that before the Qur'aan was revealed, religion was considered the root cause of division and conflict among different religious

groups like Jews, Christians and the People of Arab.²³⁸ Every one of them regarded his religion as the only right path towards God, the absolute truth exclusive to others.²³⁹ All of them focused on the hard side of his religion and forgot the real essence behind religious practices and customs. In this scenario Qur'an as the final speech of God was revealed whose emphasis was on the unity of truth which results in the unity of mankind. According to Mawlānā Azād like all laws of nature, law of spiritual fulfillment was also necessary for every human being irrespective of his colour, race, language, and geographical status. So God's messengers came with the universal message i.e.; Worship only one God in every corner of the earth.²⁴⁰ It is not consonant with divine justice to discriminate between his creatures as to guide some of them and deprive others. On the other hand Qur'an taught that though religion is universal to all, religious customs and practices vary according to different places and times and was necessary. It finally proclaims that as truth is not exclusive to a particular religious group so salvation is also not confined to one Religion. All those who worshiped only one God and have faith in the Day of Judgment will attain salvation.²⁴¹

After briefly presenting the inclusive approach, Gilānī gives his own opinion while commenting on the verse concerned. He made two points .Firstly, he said that there are many verses of Qur'an that end with this glad tiding 'on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve'.²⁴² No ingredient of faith has been mentioned in these verses then what does it mean? Does ehsān or charity suffice for salvation? It is evident that this is the wrong interpretation of these verses. So why the verse concerned is being interpreted literally? The fact is that these verses are not meant to mention the pillars of faith in full length that are necessary for

²³⁸ The Holy Qur'an (2:113),

²³⁹ Ibid (2:111)

²⁴⁰ Azād, Abū al-Kalām , *Um al-Kitāb* (Lahore: Maktaba.-i Janāl , 2006). p.237

²⁴¹ Ashfaque Husain. *The quintessence of Islam* (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1960), pp. 85-90

²⁴² He mentions three verses of the Qur'an , all of them occurred in Al-Baqarah,

...and whoever follows my guidance, there shall be no fear on them, nor shall they grieve (2: 38)

Yes, but whoever submits his face (himself) to Allah and he is a Muhsin then his reward is with his Lord, on such shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve (2: 112),

those who spend their wealth (in Allah's cause) by night and day, in secret and in public, they shall have their reward with their Lord, on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve(2:274)

salvation. The good deeds mentioned in these verses are necessary for salvation but this is not the end. For getting the complete picture universal principles of Islam should be studied. He made the second point in the light of the background of the verse under discussion. For him the context is very important for its complete apprehension. Just before this verse, Moses (pbuh) ordered Banī Isrā’īl to go down to any town on their own demand. Rural and urban lives both have their own positive and negative features. Drawbacks of urban life are competition for better survival which results in materialistic approach towards life. The chances of getting astray and transgression also increase when man indulges in materialistic life style. He might totally forget his Lord and good deeds in the race of money. In this scenario the verse (2: 62) was revealed that guides man as how to keep himself on the right path in his urban life style where evil dominates good. The general outline of right track has been given i.e. to have faith in Allah and to do righteous deeds.

Gīlānī Concluded that those who infer from this verse that faith on Muḥammad (saw) is not a necessary ingredient for the completion of Imān and thus for salvation are adding in Qur’ān from their own side and doing injustice. Qur’ān explicitly excludes all those people who does not believe in the prophecy of Muḥammad (saw) by declaring ‘...they are in truth disbelievers...’ (4:151).²⁴³ Those who persist on believing their own religious representatives despite the distortion and destruction in their message are not only indulge in fabricating falsehood on Allah , also they commit shirk (making partner with Allah). Hence no one can doubt their end result on the Day of Judgment ... We have prepared for the disbelievers a humiliating torment (4:151).²⁴⁴

In this regard Gīlānī has mentioned a very good example of a group of people who acknowledge Muḥammad (saw) as the last and universal Prophet *hādī -i ‘ālam* but exclude themselves from this universality. Apparently they praise him, admire his physical and moral features but do not ready to accept him as their guide. In one of his articles *Gāndhi gī* or

²⁴³ verily, those who disbelieve in Allah and his messengers and wish to make distinction between Allah and his messengers saying, ‘ we believe in some but reject others’ and wish to adopt a way in between, They are in truth disbelievers... (5: 150-151)

²⁴⁴ For further details see *al-Din al-Qayyim* ,pp.167-168.

Aqīdah -i Khatm -i nubuwwat he commented on such a group of people. Eminent Hindu political and spiritual master Mahātmā Gāndhī also joined that group. Gilānī said that it is the worst form of Hypocrisy and fabricating lie on Allah (swt). On one hand they claim that God's will is the utmost purpose of their life but on the other hand they do not try to know his will through authentic way. Their end result would not be different from those who openly deny Muḥammad's Prophecy

Conclusion

In the light of what has been said in preceding chapters following things can be derived.

Sayyid Manāzir Aḥsan Gilānī was an institution in himself who excelled both in religious and rational sciences. His contribution to the study of religion is beyond any question, as it has already been depicted through his works. Modern western scholarship may not accept his services in the field of comparative Religion, since there is a long list of differences between western and Muslim approaches to the study of religion. Among them the fundamental difference is that Modern Western Scholarship starts studying religion by keeping aside any unobserved and inexperienced entity because of the influence of Darwanian theory of evolution which in the words of Eric J. Sharpe is viewed in Darwanian perspective; religion became something which it had never really been before. From being a body of revealed truth, it became a living organism.²⁴⁵ On the other side, Muslim Scholarship starts studying religion from Allah, God, and The Supreme Being and so on which is undoubtedly an unseen entity. In Islām the domain of religion starts from where science ends. For a Muslim religion is still Holy and sacred; a creed to be followed, not merely an object to be studied!

In intellectual circles Gilānī is famous for being a son of Dār al-‘Ulūm Deoband and it is due to his services in Ḥadīth sciences. It is true that his one year stay at Dār al-‘Ulūm under gigantic figures of his time was the golden period of his academic life, but his interest and learning of intellectual sciences in Madrasah Khaliliyah inculcated in him critical and analytical ability that helped him a lot in studying the phenomena of Religion. So it is rightly said by his biographers that his mind was the good representation of two schools of thought i.e. Khairābādī and Deobandī.

Despite his thirty years stay at Osmānia University that was purely a modern western institution in its essence and attributes, he was a traditional Muslim who said no to any compromise in his Islamic values. Rather he played his role well to strengthen the roots of young minds of so called modern Muslims.

²⁴⁵ *Comparative Religion: A History*, p.48

From religions of the world Gilānī worked more on Indian ones than those are found in other parts of the world. It was a practical necessity for him which he fulfilled up to his extent. He sees eye to eye to the idea of universality of Revelation and thus concluded that Hinduism and Buddhism are also revealed Religions in their original form. Hence divisions of world Religions into Aryans and Semitic is European Intrigue which clearly exhibit their political aim behind it. Their formula is "divide and rule", be it in political, social, economical or in religious sense. Muslim scholars, particularly Indians should understand this European mentality and eliminate their feelings of hatred for the followers of Vedas and Buddha. They should also spread the universal spirit and message of Islam to East.

Among all the research scholars on Buddhism, Muslims and non Muslims Gilānī's approach is unique because he is the only one researcher who tried to prove that Qur'ānic Sabeans are the followers of Buddha who invited people to the religion of Ṣābi'ah in India. To reinforce his stand he has offered proofs from within the Holy Qur'ān and from historical records of two renowned historians i.e. al- Mas'ūdī and al- bairūnī.

A few words, about Gilānī's literary style. After having studied his writings on religion I have noticed that he has adopted classical style of writing which was free from compartmentalization of disciplines. It is in fact the style of Muslim Scholars before being inspired by the western approach of dividing knowledge into different sections and categories. That is why he has discussed Epistemology, Cosmology, Philosophy and many other sciences under one heading i.e. religion. Therefore a so called modern student of Religion may find some difficulty and need some time to understand Gilānī's open ended writings.

Gilānī has employed more than one methodology in his study of world Religions such as comparative, historical, analytical, descriptive, narrative and Kalāmī according to need and purpose. He has not used all these methodologies just for the sake of methodology rather methodology for him rightly serves as a tool either to solve a problem or to erase a misconception. In other words methodology for him serves as a means and not as an end in itself. I found him an excellent historian of religion having an excellent ability to infer startling results from ordinary facts and records of history.

In the end I would say that this research paper is nothing but a preliminary to further study and academic work on Gilānī's writings on religion. During the course of my thesis I strongly felt that the following topics needed to be further studied.

In the end I would say that this research paper is nothing but a preliminary to further study and work on Gilānī's writings on religion. During the course of my thesis I strongly felt that the following topics needed to be further studied.

- Commonalities between Islam and Hinduism, is a topic that needs serious attention and should be studied more deeply, as Gilānī himself said. Apart from Maha Bharta, Scriptural reasoning should also be employed on the Holy Qur'ān and other Hindu sacred scriptures particularly Vedic ones. Even Maha Bharta needs to be further dug out on more themes other than those studied by Gilānī.
- In his book *Musalmānon kī firqa bāndiyon kā afsāna*, Gilānī also dealt with different Kalāmī sects from early history of Muslim, claiming that the founders of *Qadariyah*, *Jabariyah* and *Ma'tazilah* were inspired from Indian philosophy. Also he argued that in Islamic Taṣawwuf, the hot debate on *wahdat al-wujūd* initiated first in Indian Subcontinent. A wonderful research can be done on all these issues.
- Gilānī's book *al-Din al-Qayyim* must be studied profoundly because it is the key to his understanding of religion. It is basically the compilation of his lectures to the students of Osmānia University. Most of the times we find him skimming various issues that must be expanded.
- Sufi aspect of Gilānī's personality is quite dominant in his religious writings. It is prevalent to the extent that sometimes it was hard for me to segregate his work on world Religions and Islamic Taṣawwuf. He has also translated works of eminent classical Muslim Sufis. He being a ṣūfī and his works on Taṣawwuf should be studied separately. That can become a very good research work.
- From a sociological perspective Gilānī has worked on Chinese and Indian civilization. In his book *Hazār sāl pahle* he has provided glimpses from nineteenth and twentieth

century history by comparing Chinese society and culture with that of Indian one. In this book he has also included his own observations on many Muslim and non Muslim civilizations. This topic can also become a full fledge research paper.

اللهم أحسن عاقبتنا في الأمور كلها وأجرنا من خزي الدنيا وعذاب الآخرة، اللهم آمين.

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