



**NATIONAL OPEN UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA**

# **FACULTY OF ARTS**

## **DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES**

**COURSE CODE: ISL361**

**COURSE TITLE: ISLAMIC PHILOSOPHY**

**COURSE  
GUIDE**

COURSE CODE/TITLE: ISS 361: INTRODUCTION TO ISLAMIC PHILOSOPHY

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## **INTRODUCTION**

ISL 361: Introduction to Islamic Philosophy is a two- Credit Unit Elective Course for undergraduate students of the National Open University of Nigeria. Anyone who wants to have an insight into the realm of Islamic thought will also benefit from the book. The Course opens student eyes into the world of scholasticism, critical thinking, and perfect reasoning in line with the call of Islam to philosophizing in many of the

Qur'anic verses and Traditions of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). Unlike the ancient Greek as well as other Western non-Muslim philosophers, Islamic Philosophy is seen as field that should lead one to the knowledge of God as the Ultimate Reality worthy to be worshipped and to be served alone.

This course has fourteen units ranging from the definition and scope of terms used in the course material to the personality of some great Muslim philosophers. Its course guide furnishes you with all what you will need for your success in the course. It includes what you are expected to know in each unit, the type of the course materials needed, and how to achieve maximum benefit from the course. You will also be acquainted with information on periodic tutorials and different types of assessment that are available for you in this course.

### **WHAT YOU WILL LEARN IN THE COURSE**

The general aim of this course ISL361 is to introduce you to the way Islam addresses the concept of philosophy. It is a course that will shed light on some areas of ambiguities in the universe which were philosophically solved by great men of thinking. The way Islam calls mankind to reflect on the existence of life and what the entire universe contains goes with the principle of critical thinking and thus, philosophy. Many verses of the Qur'an call men to reflect deeply on some natural entity, which shall be seen later in subsequent discussion.

At the end of this course you will be able to understand the essence of reasoning and logical thinking in finding solution to the problem of the reality and causes. Likewise, it will lead you to understand how philosophy is to be used to buttress the monotheism of the Supreme Being

### **COURSE AIMS**

The overall aims of this course are:

- To introduce you to what the Islamic philosophy really entails.
- To showcase the beauty of Islam in contributing to all spheres of life, and philosophy, in particular, which many people see as an enemy to religious dogmatism.
- To let you acknowledge the effort of the great Muslim thinkers of the past to the problem of this life and its reality.
- To assist you build a better thought on how you should use your thinking faculty to promote Islam among mankind.

To achieve this general aims of the course each Unit has specific objectives. I strongly advise that you read them before you start handling each of them. Likewise, during the course of your study kindly refer back to these aims in order to check your progress.

### **COURSE OBJECTIVES**

To get the best of this course you are advised to read through the objectives of each course unit before the beginning of the class as well as during the course of study from one time to another. The general objectives stated below are expected from you to be achieved at the end of all the units of the course. Henceforth, you should be able to do the following.

- 1- To identify the constituents philosophy.
- 2- To discuss what Islamic Philosophy really means.
- 3- To compare the Islamic Philosophy with the Western philosophy.

- 4- To distinguish between dogmatism and dynamism in religion.
- 5- To analyse the area of coherence as well as the areas of discrepancies between religion and philosophy
- 6- To enumerate works of some notable Islamic Philosophers.
- 7- To describe the transmission of philosophy from the Greeks to the Muslims and from the Muslims to the Western world.

## **WORKING THROUGH THIS COURSE**

This course is broken into four modules. Under each module there are numbers of units. You are to read this units and related materials given at the end of this guide, including others that you might lay your hand upon. You will benefit a lot in this course if proper attention is given to the exercises and assignments given at the end of each unit. Submission of each assignment is very important. Assessment will be done through exercises, assignments including the final examination.

## **COURSE MATERIALS**

The following materials are needed in this course:

- i. Course Guide
- ii. Study Unit
- iii. Textbooks
- iv. Assessment file
- v. Presentation schedule

## **STUDY UNITS**

The course units are broken down as follows:

### **MODULE 1: INTRODUCTORY**

Unit 1: Definition of Term, Philosophy and Religion.

Unit 2: Pre- Islamic Arabian thought.

Unit 3: The Greek philosophy transmitted to the Muslims.

### **MODULE 2: SOURCES AND DEVELOPMENT OF ISLAMIC PHILOSOPHY.**

Unit 1: The Sources

Unit 2: Philosophical teachings of the Qur'ān.

Unit 3: Mu'tazilism

Unit 4: Ash'arism

### **MODULE 3: NOTABLE MUSLIM PHILOSOPHERS OF THE EAST**

Unit 1: Al- Kindī

Unit 2: Al- Fārābī

Unit 3: Ibn Sina

Unit 4: Ar-Rāzī

Unit 5: Al- Ghazzālī.

### **MODULE 4: MUSLIM PHILOSOPHERS OF THE WEST**

Unit 1: Ibn Bājjah, Ibn Tufayl

Unit 2: Ibn Rushd

Unit 3: Ibn Khaldūn

Unit 4: Transmission of Philosophy by the Muslims to the West.

### **TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENT (TMAs)**

An assignment is given out for every unit of the course. It must be submitted to the tutor for marking. Assessment will be based on four of these assignments while the best three performances will be used for 30% grading. The marked obtained in the best three with the final mark obtained at the end of the course will be used in computing the overall result.

Further information on assignment will be found in the assignment file. You must make sure that you submit each of your assignment to the tutor as early as possible.

### **SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISES (SAEs)**

The exercises together with the tutor marked assignment (TMAs) help in achieving the aims of each unit in particular, and objectives of the course in general. The self-test questions on the section you have covered assist in evaluating your progress and maximum understanding of the course.

### **REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING**

Text materials from NOUN are useful for you in this course. Each unit contains a list of references and other resources from which you can gain a lot. Materials written in Arabic on this course can assist as well. Resources are also available for you on the internet. With these materials your knowledge of the course will be enhanced. Try as much as possible to search through many materials on this course. A list of most of the books suggested as references can be seen below.

### **REFERENCES AND FURTHER READINGS**

- 1- De Boer, T. J. *The History of Philosophy in Islam*.
- 2- Sharif, M. M. *A History of Muslim Philosophy*.
- 3- Saheed Shaykh, M. *Studies in Muslim Philosophy*.
- 4- O' Leary De Lucy. *Arabic Thought and Its Place in History*.
- 5- Montgomery Watt; (*Islamic Survey Series I*); *Islamic Theology and Philosophy*.
- 6- Encyclopaedia of Islam.

### **ASSESSMENT FILE**

Your assessment will be done on both the tutor marked assignment and the written examination. The final marks will be the total sum of the marks obtained from both of them. The tutor marked assignment counts for 30% of your total score. This invariably means that you must submit your TMA(s) on time.

### **COURSE OVERVIEW AND PRESENTATION SCHEDEULE**

Unit	Title	Week	
<b>Module 1</b>	<b>PHILOSOPHY AND ISLAM</b>	<b>Week 1</b>	
<b>Unit 1</b>	Definition and scope of terms	<b>Week 1</b>	<b>Assignment 1</b>
<b>Unit 2</b>	Pre- Islamic Arabian thought	<b>Week 2</b>	<b>Assignment 2</b>
<b>Unit 3</b>	The Greek philosophy transmitted to the Muslims.	<b>Week 3</b>	<b>Assignment 3</b>

<b>Unit 4</b>	The Source and the development Of Islamic Philosophy.	<b>Week 4</b>	<b>Assignment 4</b>
<b>MODULE II</b>	<b>ISLAMIC ATTITUDE TOWARDS ACQUISITION AND SPREAD OF WISDOM.</b>		
<b>Unit 1</b>	The philosophical teachings of the Qur'an	<b>Week 6</b>	<b>Assignment 6</b>
<b>Unit 2</b>	Philosophy and Religion.	<b>Week 7</b>	<b>Assignment 7</b>
<b>Unit 3</b>	The <i>Mu'tazilites</i> and their doctrines	<b>Week 8</b>	<b>Assignment 8</b>
<b>Unit 4</b>	Transmission of Philosophy by the Muslims to the West.	<b>Week 9</b>	<b>Assignment 9</b>

<b>MODULE III</b>	<b>NOTABLES AMONG THE EARL MUSLIM PHILOSOPHERS</b>		
<b>Unit 1</b>	Al- Kindī and Al- Fārābī	Week 10	Assignment 10
<b>Unit 2</b>	Ibn Sīnā and Ibn Khaldūn	Week 11	Assignment 11
<b>Unit 3</b>	Al- Rāzī and Ibn Rushd	Week 12	Assignment 12
<b>Unit 4</b>	Ibn Bājjah and Ibn Tufayl	Week 13	Assignment 13
<b>Unit 5</b>	Al- Ghazzālī	Week 14	Assignment 14
<b>Unit 6</b>	Revision	Week 15	Assignment 15

### FINAL EXAMINATION AND GRADING

Your final examination constitutes 70% of the total course grade. It comes at the end of the course. Duration of the examination is between two and three hours. Make sure you cover all the areas of the course during your reading hours. For you to get good marks you are advised to revise all what you have passed through in your assignment, all the fourteen units, as well as your materials.

### COURSE MARKING SCHEME

The breakdown of the course assessment marks can be seen in the table below.

Assignment (The Best Three out of the Four Marked)	30%
Final Examination	70%
Total	100%

### HOW TO GET THE MOST FROM THIS COURSE

The study units replace the university lecture in distance learning. This is one of the great advantages of distance learning; you can read and work through a specially designed study materials at your own pace, and at a time and place that suit you best. Think of it as reading the lecture instead of listening to the lecturer. In the same way, a lecturer might give you some readings to do, the study units tell you where to read, and which are text materials or set books to consult. You are provided with exercises to do at appropriate points, just as a lecturer might give you an in-class exercise. Each of the study unit follows a common format. The first item is an introduction to the subject

matter of the unit, and how a particular unit is integrated with the other units and the course as a whole. Next to this is a set of learning objectives. These objectives let you know what you should be able to do by the time you have completed the unit. These learning objectives are meant to guide your study. The moment a unit is finished, you must go back and check whether you have achieved the objectives. If this is made a habit, then you will significantly improve your chances of passing the course. This will usually be either from your set books or from a Reading section .The following is a practical strategy for working through the course. If you run into any trouble, telephone your tutor. Remember that tutor's job is to help you. When you need assistance, do not hesitate to call and ask your tutor to provide it.

- 1- Read this Course Guide thoroughly, this is your first assignment.
- 2- Organize a Study Schedule. Design a 'Course Overview' to guide you through the Course. Note the time you are expected to spend on each unit and how the assignment relate to the units. Whatever method you choose to use, you should decide on and write in your own dates and schedule of work for each unit.
- 3- Once you have created your own study schedule, do everything to stay faithful to it. The major reason why students fail is that they get behind with their course work. If you get into difficulties with your schedule, please, let your tutor know before it is too late to help.
- 4- Turn to Unit 1 and read the introduction and the objectives for the unit.
- 5- Assemble the study materials. You will need your set books and the unit you are studying at any point in time. As you work through the unit, you will know what sources to consult for further information.
- 6- Keep in touch with your centre. Up-to-date course information will be continuously available there.
- 7- Well before the relevant due dates (about 4 weeks before due dates), keeping mind that you will learn a lot by doing the assignment carefully. They have been designed to help you meet the objectives of the course and, therefore, will help you pass the examination. Submit all assignments not later than the appropriate date.
- 8- Review the objectives for each study unit to confirm that you have achieved them. If you feel unsure about any of the objectives, review the study materials or consult your tutor.
- 9- When you are confident that you have achieved a unit's objectives, you can start on the next unit. Proceed unit by unit through the course and try to pace your study so that you keep yourself on schedule.
- 10-When you have submitted an assignment to your tutor for marking, do not wait for its return before starting on the next unit. Keep to your schedule. When the assignment is returned, pay particular attention to your tutor's comments, both on the tutor- marked assignment form and also the written comments on the ordinary assignments.
- 11-After completing the last unit, review the course and prepare yourself for the final examination. Check that you have achieved the unit objective (listed at the beginning of each unit) and the course objectives (listed in the Course Guide).

## TUTORS AND TUTORIALS

Kindly utilize the guidance of your tutors judiciously. Among your tutors responsibilities are:

- Marking your assignment.
- Assessing your performance
- Commenting on your assignment.

Having the name, phone number and address of your tutor at hand for easy contact is a wise act indeed. Don't skip any of your tutorials. The dates, times and locations of these tutorials will be made available to you. Discussing your difficulties with your fellow students as well as with your tutor will surely put your fit firm on building a formidable confidence in what you know. You can gain tremendously from the course tutorials by trying as much as possible to draw questions before coming to the tutorial from the unit you are not ok with. Don't ever feel shy to put these questions before your colleagues and your tutor as well.

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

ISS 316: Introduction to Islamic Philosophy is a course that provides you with the basic understanding of philosophy in Islam. Its main objective is to acquaint you with the way Islam looks into Philosophy as well as some philosophical issues in Islam.

This course guide has been designed to ease your learning in such a way that both the aims and the general objectives are duly achieved.

You are advised to make maximum use of the course guide. This will let you have the anticipated result.

It is hoped that you will find the course exciting and essential. We thus, wish you a successful study ahead.



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**MODULE 1: INTRODUCTORY**

**Unit 1:** Definition of Term, Philosophy and Religion.

**Unit 2:** Pre- Islamic Arabian thought.

**Unit 3:** The Greek philosophy transmitted to the Muslims.

**Unit 1: DEFINITION OF TERM, PHILOSOPHY AND RELIGION**

1.0 Introduction

2.0 Objectives

3.0 Main Content

    3.1. Definition of term

    3.2. Between philosophy and religion

4.0 Conclusion

5.0 Summary

6.0 Tutor marked Assignment

7.0 References and Further Readings

**1.0 INTRODUCTION**

As you might have been aware philosophy is a branch of knowledge that attaches importance to the use of reasoning faculty, as Islam too does, in understanding issues and finding solution to problems. The fundamental nature of existence, reality and knowledge are some of the concerns of both philosophy and Islam. This Unit introduces you to the art of philosophy from an Islamic view – point. It looks into the etymology of the term philosophy and its equivalence in the Islamic culture. The unit also addresses the relationship between religion and philosophy.

**2.0 OBJECTIVES**

At the end of this unit you will be able to:

- determine the etymology of the word ‘philosophy’
- determine the word as an Islamic knowledge.
- differentiate between an ordinary thinker and a philosopher.
- Define religion in different ways
- Draw the relation between revelation and intellect, if any.
- Discuss the areas of discrepancies between religion and philosophy
- Discuss the impact of philosophy in religion.

**3.0 MAIN CONTENT****3.1 Definition of Term**

The word ‘philosophy’ is derived from two Greek words ‘*philo*’ and ‘*sophia*’. *Philo* means love while *Sophia* means wisdom or knowledge. In Arabic the corresponding meaning for *philo* is *hubb* while that of *sophia* is *hikmah* or *ma’rifah*.

The word philosophy was earliest used by a Greek Historian named Herodotus, in his writing. Likewise, the word philosopher was firstly used by the Greeks and thus, was used by Socrates (c.470- 399 B.C) and Pythagoras.

Later, the Arabs arabised the word philosophy as *falsafah* and the word philosopher as *faylasūf* to connote the same meaning given them by the Greek Historians and Philosophers; and thus, *falsafah* means love of wisdom and knowledge while *faylasūf* means lover of wisdom and knowledge.

Philosophy searches for a general understanding of values and reality by chiefly speculative rather than observational means. It studies the fundamental nature of knowledge, reality, and existence.

There is a critical question that begs for logical answer. Human beings are the only creature endowed with the faculty of reasoning. As a result of this, they find reason(s) behind everything they come across; be it the creation, the purpose of creation and every individual thing they perceive or feel as well as the abstract beings. Human beings strive to know the reality of all the creatures as well as all what they perceive, feel or sense. The reason behind the creation of heaven and earth and all what they both contain - seas, mountains, air, day and night, the sun, the moon and the stars as well as all visible and invisible things are greatly explored by human beings. With all these human activities that translate into their love for wisdom, knowledge and its acquisition, should we then conclude that every man is a philosopher? The answer to this question is NO. This is because philosophy is distinctively given a branch of knowledge meaning which specializes in exercise of reasoning faculty in finding remedy to the ambiguities of the universe and the problems of the creation. Whosoever does this and investigates into the interconnectivities between existential phenomena; such as time, space, motion, direction and light, could be called a philosopher. At the same time, a specialist who has attained intellectual perfection and strong ability in understanding issues quickly in ways different from that of an ordinary or lay man could be called a philosopher. Likewise, any trained and experienced specialist in philosophy that investigates into the causes of things and the reality of things as well as engages him / herself in intellectual discussions for the love of knowledge is called a philosopher.

### **Self Assessment Exercise**

Trace the origin of the terminology 'philosophy' and its Arabic equivalent.

Differentiate between an ordinary thinker and a philosopher.

### **3.2 Philosophy and Religion**

Religion is one of the activities of mankind on earth. Each individual tends to believe in one thing or the other. Religion is the service and worship of God or the supernatural. In other words, it is the belief in and worship of a superhuman controlling power, especially a personal God or gods. It is a system of human beliefs, ideals and practices which are harder to define than it may at first appear. Religion is more than or should not be seen as what some theories say it be. Different theorists such as that of sociologist, economist, psychologist, anthropologist, theologian and philosopher define religion in conformity with what they believe it should be. Among these definitions are: "Religion: Human beings' relation to that which they regard as holy, sacred, spiritual, or divine." (*Encyclopaedia Britannica* (online, 2010).

"Religion: Relation of human beings to God or the gods or to whatever they consider sacred or, in some cases, merely supernatural." (*Britannica Concise Encyclopedia* (online, 2010).

From the lexical point of view, (1) "Religion: A general term used to designate all concepts concerning the belief in god(s) and goddess(es) as well as other spiritual beings or transcendental ultimate concerns." (*Penguin Dictionary of Religions* (1997).

(2) "Religion: a cause, principle, or system of beliefs held to with ardor and faith." (*Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* (online, 2010).

In an economic point of view: "Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, just as it is the spirit of a spiritless situation. It is the opium of the people." (Karl Marx). According to Marx, religion is one of those social institutions which are dependent upon the material and economic realities in a given society. It has no independent history but is instead the creature of productive forces. As Marx wrote, "The religious world is but the reflex of the real world."

In a sociological point of view: "A religion is a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden—beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called a Church, all those who adhere to them." (Emile Durkheim).

A psychoanalyst Sigmud Freud says that: "Religion is an illusion and it derives its strength from the fact that it falls in with our instinctual desires." (Sigmund Freud, *New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*).

Other opinions, views and definitions given to religion by different people some of them could be seen below:

"To be religious is to have one's attention fixed on God and on one's neighbour in relation to God." (C.S. Lewis, "Lilies that Fester" in *The Twentieth Century* (April 1955).

"Religion is the human attitude towards a sacred order that includes within it all being—human or otherwise—i.e., belief in a cosmos, the meaning of which both includes and transcends man." (Peter Berger).

"Religion is something left over from the infancy of our intelligence; it will fade away as we adopt reason and science as our guidelines." (Bertrand Russell).

"Religion is the daughter of Hope and Fear, explaining to ignorance the nature of the Unknowable." (Ambrose Bierce).

"We go into religion in order to feel warmer in our hearts, more connected to others, more connected to something greater and to have a sense of peace." (Goldie Hawn, Beliefnet interview).

"Religions are the great fairy tales of conscience." (George Santayana).

"Viewed systematically, religion can be differentiated from other culturally constituted institutions by virtue only of its reference to superhuman beings." (Melford Spiro).

"Religion is a set of symbolic forms and acts which relate man to the ultimate conditions of his existence." (R.N. Bellah).

"Religion consists in a set of things which the average man thinks he believes and wishes he was certain of." (Mark Twain).

"Religion is excellent stuff for keeping common people quiet." (Napoleon Bonaparte).

"Religion itself is nothing else but Love to God and Man. He that lives in Love lives in God, says the Beloved Disciple: And to be sure a Man can live nowhere better." (William Penn)

"Religion, whatever it is, is a man's total reaction upon life." (William James).

Some of the definitions brought by different scholars out of which some of them are mentioned above go with Islamic view on what religion should be while some of them go against it. Kent is wrong to describe religion as an imposition of moral feelings in man. This is a wrong impression as religion is not opposed to the intellect. Hegel is right to say that religion is philosophy at an ambiguous point. This is because metaphysical contemplations without guidance may be dangerous and may lead to erroneous conclusions.

However, religions are of different types: There are some people who take supernatural beings as their objects of worship. Some of these supernatural beings are angels, spirits, demons, and Jinns. At the same time, some people believe in the worship of animals, inanimate objects, such as trees, stones, mountains, hills, and rivers. The heavenly bodies, such as; the sun, the moon and the stars, are also objects of worship to other set of people. On the other hand, many people incline to the worship of the Creator of the heavens and the earth, the Supreme Being, God. This last group is under the umbrella of Abrahamic faith. Judaism, Christianity and Islam are in this category.

Through normal and correct thinking one can philosophise which is the truth among all acclaimed religion. It is uncalled for to see religion as a dogmatic matter that should be unquestionably accepted. The true religion that can be proved both with the text and reason among all religions is only the Abrahamic faith. It is revealed from heaven and cannot be understood only by the right thinking men. The Supreme Being implores mankind to think and reflect over religious issues freely before acceptance of the religion He sent to mankind. Reflection and contemplation over the creation, the alternation of days and nights, the systematic orderliness of the natural laws as well as the natural/ divine arrangement of the universe in a uniform manner, is synonymous with philosophy. Consequently, this leads man to convincing acceptance of the divine laws and rules from heaven (revelation). If man utilizes his reasoning faculty appropriately, he would realize the truth in divine religious injunctions and would see that they are reasonable.

Religion guides the intellect and illuminates its way from darkness as it moves towards the metaphysics. Without religion man will just be wandering with his intellect that at times, build a strong reasonable fortress and at another time, destroys what it has built. Many verses of the Qur'an enjoin mankind to philosophise on religious matter for them to get convincing acceptance of the revelation through intellect.

One can find the following points when comparing religion with philosophy:

- Religion is a divine science and philosophy is a human one.
- The way of religion is faith and that of philosophy is reason.
- Theology occupies a rank higher than philosophy.
- The knowledge of the Prophet is immediate and through inspiration and that of the philosopher is by way of logic and demonstration.
- An adequate and sure knowledge of God is the final objective of philosophy.

### **Self Assessment Exercise**

Analyse different definitions given by different theorists on religion and explain those ones that correspond with Islamic view on what religion should be.

### **4 CONCLUSION**

Philosophy is a branch of knowledge that widens the thinking horizon of men. With it, many people are able to prove the existence of the greatest cause (God) while other groups are able to go astray by denying the existence of God. There are some ambiguities in life that need much clarification. Things can be philosophically solved or compounded by men of higher thought and reasoning.

Religion and Philosophy are inseparable instrument for man to attain a great height in this world and in the hereafter. Philosophy assists in confirming the truth brought by the religion while religion assists philosophy from straying through rigorous intellectual works. Philosophy assists in knowing the true religion from the fake and false ones. Likewise, religion assists in knowing the right thought from the wrong ones.

### **5 SUMMARY**

The word philosophy was first used by Herodotus, a Greek historian. We also come across the word in the legacy of Greek philosophers like Socrates and Pythagoras. *Falsafah* is the Arabic equivalent of philosophy while *faylasuf* is equivalent of the philosopher. The literal meaning of philosophy came from the combination of the two Greek words: ‘*philo*’ meaning love and ‘*sophia*’ meaning wisdom or knowledge. It is only a trained and experienced person in philosophy that could be called a philosopher.

Philosophy could be regarded as an instrument of revealed religions. The truths of a heavenly religion are allowed to be verified through philosophizing of its claims. The result of this gives a right thinking man approval of the facts brought by religion. Example of this is Islam. Nobody can comprehend its facts except a right thinking person who is able to apply his intellect wisely on each of its principles. Islam is not a dogmatic religion that commands its adherents to close their eyes and follow it. Rather, their eyes are expected to be widely open for them to ponder on what it brings for them before a convincing acceptance. Any aspect of Islamic faith that is seen to be accepted dogmatically, its reasons can be expressed or addressed intellectually.

### **6 TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENT**

- 1- Discuss what philosophy really means and the personality of a bonafide philosopher.
- 2- Draw the relation between revelation and intellect, if any.
- 3- Discuss the areas of discrepancies between religion and philosophy

### **7.0 REFERENCES AND FURTHER READINGS**

1. H.A.R. Gibb & J. H. Kramers, Shorter Encyclopedia of Islam, Leiden, 1961
2. M. Saheed Sheikh (n.d.). *Studies in Muslim Philosophy*, Lahore, Pakistan.
3. De Boer, T. J. *The History of Philosophy in Islam*. (London, Luzac 1903)
4. O' Leary De Lucy. *Arabic Thought and Its Place in History*. (London 1939)

## **UNIT 2: THE PRE- ISLAMIC ARABIAN THOUGHT**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 Polytheism
  - 3.2 Belief in Jinns
  - 3.3 Belief in Human Soul
  - 3.4 Belief in Resurrection
  - 3.5 Belief in Predestination
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor marked Assignment
- 7.0 References and Further Readings

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

In this unit, we shall look at some basic elements of Arabian thought before the advent of Islam. Some of these are their belief in and worship of gods and deities, their belief in human soul and life after death, their belief in predestination as well as some moral ideas.

### **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

At the end of this unit you will be able to do the following:

- Describe the pre- Islamic Arabian thought and belief in gods.
- Discuss the pre- Islamic Arabian belief in both human soul after death and pre-destination.
- Discuss the moral issues enjoyed by the pre- Islamic Arabs.

### **3.0 MAIN CONTENT**

The type of life among the Arabs, before the light of Islam came into their land, was very pathetic. Their religious as well as their socio- economic conditions were very appauling. Competition to survive the hardship of desert life was so over- whelming and thus, alarming. All these, put together, fashioned their thought and belief. This can be proved through the descriptions given by their poets in that period in their poetical verses as well as their history found in the Qur'an and Islamic literatures.

#### **3.1 Polytheism**

Almost every Arab tribe has its own god(s) in the pre- Islamic period. It was recorded that inside the Ka'abah in Makkah there were more than three hundred idols. Every blessed day has its own idol that should be worshipped. It was during the time of danger or hardship that their belief in the Supreme God whom they called Illah used to surface. After the danger, the Supreme God is left for other gods. This was their religious life in Arabia before Islam; as confirmed by the Qur'an.

ذَرْأَيْنِ إِذَا هُوَ إِنِّي لَمْ يَدْرِي

Meaning:

*And when they board a ship, they supplicate Allah, sincere to Him in religion (that is, faith and hope). But when He delivers them to the land, at once they associate others with Him. (Q29: 65)*

Some of these gods were mentioned in the *Qur'an*.<sup>١٤</sup> Ibn al- Kalbi gathered the names of Arabian gods in a pamphlet he wrote. Some of these deities were personification of abstract ideas which were conceived in a thoroughly concrete fashion; such as jadd (luck), sa 'ad (fortune), wadd (love or affection) and manaf (high position).

The Pre-Islamic Arabs also used to worship the heavenly bodies such as the sun, and the planet Venus. This could be testified to through their names Abd-Shams (Servant of sun) and Abd al-'Uzza (the Servant of the mightiest (planet)). They venerated these bodies and believed that they had impact and effect in their day to day success and failure.

### 3.2 Belief in Jinns

Furthermore, the pre-Islamic Arabs believed in the existence of demons (Jinn) and held them in an esteemed position for their crafty and mischievous deeds in human being and animals. Whosoever turned insane is considered to be possessed with Jinn. Likewise, anybody who is capable of doing things in a different from normal way or wiser than other people is considered to be possessed by the Arabs. At times, eminent poets among them were believed to have been possessed by Jinn. They believed that no one is capable of bringing verses of poetry in different ways and forms other than a possessed one. Likewise, an eloquent orator among them is considered possessed. Their belief in supernatural beings got to a stage that the Makkans believed there were relationship between Illah and the Jinns and that they were partners. The *Qur'an* affirms this acclamation. Prior to the light of Islam in Arabia, a number of men had appeared in various parts of the century with conviction that idolatry was absurd and nonsensical. This set of people was called Hanifs; as used in the *Qur'an* to describe Prophet Abraham as the first Hanif. With this, old polytheism was fading bit by bit in Arabia until the mission of Prophet Muhammad emerged to proclaim monotheism for all mankind.

### 3.3 Belief in Human Soul

Soul is considered as air which is identifiable with breathing among the Arabs. Hence, the word 'nafs'; meaning; breathing. It later came to mean human essence or his personality itself. It is also called 'rūh' meaning spirit, in the *Qur'an*. *Nafs* and *Rūh* are of no difference to the Muslim theologians when discussing soul in their works. The Arabs of the old believed that when a person passed away, on his death- bed, his soul escaped through his nostril while in the case of violent death such as battle field and armed robbery attack the soul passes out through the wound. They believed that when a person is killed, the soul of the murdered would appear above the grave crying out 'give me blood to drink'. This is believed to be continued until revenge (*tha'r*) is done against the killer. Revenge (*tha'r*) then was very brutal. The death of an Arab kinsman

may attract more than one person's life among the family of the murderer in revenge for a single soul. Consequently, a fierce battle between two Arab tribes may ensue for a longer period.

However, with all sanctity accorded to human soul, pre- Islamic Arabs did not clearly believe in life after death (resurrection). They used to challenge the Prophet asking him:

وَآءِ نَأْنٍ وَآءِ نَأْنٍ .

Meaning:

*And they used to say, 'When we die and become dust and bones, are we indeed to be resurrected.' (Q56: 47).*

So far these Arabs could not comprehend resurrection after death the issue of punishment and reward for our deeds on earth after the resurrection was of no importance to them.

### 3.4 Belief in Resurrection

The first time the pre- Islamic Arabs heard of resurrection was when the Jews and the Christians came into their land. At that period, both Judaism and Christianity claimed a considerable following among its inhabitants. Jewish colonies were rampant in Madinah and several other towns of northern Hijāz with their religious studies centres and religious teachers. Likewise, Judaism came to the Arabian Peninsula after it had been greatly influenced by Greek culture. It was prevalent in Alexandra and on the Mediterranean coast where both the East and the West mixed together. The Christian sect that was famous to most of the Arabs was Gnosticism. Their priests and monks used to attend the Arab fairs. It was at this type of gathering the Arabs initially heard about resurrection, judgement, paradise and hell before Islam came into the Arab land, but resurrection was still not clear to them.

### 3.5 Belief in Predestination

The pre-Islamic Arabs believed that events in the life of human beings were predetermined and therefore inevitable. No matter how amount of their struggle to avert a predestined occurrence be, that incident will undoubtedly come to pass. They used to sing this in their words, adages, maxims and proverbs. They were grossly fatalists. This idea might have been born out of their practical experience of life. Their natural environment could not help but to engrave fatalism into their heart. Arabs were seemed to be helpless victim of nature to a sympathetic degree. A prolonged draught may result in famine and death thereafter. Sudden attack of hostile neighbouring tribe as a destruction of his animals may take them from grace to grass in a few hours. The circumstance of desert life seems to have encouraged the growth of fatalistic tendencies among the Arabs. Even, in the first century of Islam, the doctrine of predestination was very popular among the Muslim masses.

### Self Assessment Exercise

Evaluate the pre-Islamic Arabian thought in line with what the intellect could analyse.

## 4.0 CONCLUSION

The pre-Islamic Arabs thought either in gods or soul, or predestination could be linked with the type of life they were used to. However, there were some of their thoughts that could be considered as moral act among them. Some of them were bravery in battle, fortitude in warfare, patience in misfortune, generosity to needy and the poor, persistence in revenge, loyalty to ones fellow-tribesmen, hospitality to the wayfarer and respect for their fellow-tribesmen. They preferred a male child to a female one for their love in strength and struggle.

## 5.0 SUMMARY

Before the intermingling of foreign thoughts and culture, the pre-Islamic Arabs believed in gods, deities, Jinn and in the danger period, Supreme Being-Illah. They also believed in sanctity of human soul but not in resurrection. Predestination had a place in their belief as well as some moral acts. Some of these moral ideas were generosity, loyalty to one fellow-tribesman, revenge of a lost soul, courage in battle and fortitude in warfare as well as hospitality to guests and way farer.

## 6.0 TUTOR MARKED EXERCISE

- 1- Describe the pre- Islamic Arabian thought and belief in gods.
- 2- Discuss the pre- Islamic Arabian belief in human soul, life after death and predestination.
- 3- Discuss the moral issues cherished by the pre- Islamic Arabs.

## 7.0 REFERENCE AND FURTHER READINGS

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### **UNIT 3: THE GREEK PHILOSOPHY TRANSMITTED TO THE MUSLIMS.**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor marked Assignment
- 7.0 References and Further Readings

#### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

There were some contributing factors that facilitated the emergence of philosophy in Islamic thought. One of them was the influx of Greek Philosophical ideas. In this unit, we want to trace the path through which Greek Philosophy was transmitted to the Muslims.

#### **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

At the end of this unit you will be able to:

1. Give an account of how Greek Philosophy passed unto the Muslims.
2. Itemize the philosophical activities of *Bayt al-Hikman* (the Home of Philosophy).
3. Discuss the contributions of Hārūn Rashīd, Al-Manṣūr and al-Ma'mūn to the growth of Islamic philosophy during their era.

#### **3.0 MAIN CONTENT**

The Greek culture and ideas shifted from Greece to Rome and Alexandra after the fall of their greatness. Besides those two centers, other centers of culture were established in Asia Minor, Mesopotamia, Syria and Iran of which the following towns were prominent as centres where their philosophical schools were located: Antioch, Ceasarea, Selucia, Harran, Nisibis, Edesia and Junde-Shapur.

Greek Philosophy had a far reaching influence upon the Muslim Philosophy. The Greeks had made the most important contribution to ancient philosophy and the Muslims devoted much to the study of their philosophy. Greek Philosophy reached the Muslims as great living force and generated in them a thirst for the study of philosophical problems. However, it influenced the Muslims thought only in form but not in spirit.

Plotinus (207-270 A.D) propounded neo-Platonism at Rome. He was an anti-Christian Philosopher. His philosophy was detached from Christianity. But his followers, during the period between 3<sup>rd</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> centuries, developed neo- Platonism to be more and more theological; and scholars, especially at Alexandra, under the guidance of Clement and Oregon.

Special mention may be made in this connection that Christianity and Zoroastrianism were supported by Roman and Iranian empires respectively. However, Oregon had to leave Alexandria for Palestine owing to local intrigue. There, at Cesarea, he founded

a school on the line of the one at Alexandria. Shortly after that in (270 A.D) a similar type of school was established at Antioch by Malchion. Nearly 50 years later, another school was established at Nisibis amidst Syriac-speaking Community and then it was removed to Edessa and again brought back to Nisibis in the middle of 5<sup>th</sup> century.

Theological controversy had started earlier between the Alexandrian school and the school of Antioch headed by Nestorians on the question of the relationship between humanity and divinity of Christ. According to the Nestorians, they are separated in Christ whereas the Alexandrian school differed from them and maintained them to be fused in him. Nestorian migrated to Nisibis and reopened a school there under the protection of the Persian King. They defended Christian doctrines by theories drawn from Greek philosophy. They did not only begin missionary propaganda for their theology but also pleaded for Hellenic philosophy. Gradually they started extensive work throughout central Asia down into Arabia. They translated Greek works into Syria Language and afterwards rendered them into Arabic. Thus, Christianity mixed up with Greek philosophy played a vital part in moulding and developing the pre-Islamic Arabs.

By the middle of the 6<sup>th</sup> century, Mir Abba founded school at Selucia just like the one at Nisibis. Later Nou –Shriwan, the Persian King welcomed the Greek scholars at Junde-Shapur (Zoroastrian school founded by him), when Justinian, the Byzantine Emperor, closed the school at Athens. Here at Junde-Shapur many available works on philosophy, science and medicine were developed to a remarkable extent.

Harran in West Syria became the center of secular learning from about the death of Alexander the Great. It continued to be the center of Greek paganism and neo-Platonism till the rise of the Muslims. In short, the following agencies helped the transmission of Hellenism into Muslim culture.

- (a) The Christian Missionaries who were Neo-Platonic philosophers.
- (b) The Zoroastrians of Junde-Shapur.
- (c) The Greek pagans with their school at Harran.

These agencies became the nurseries for the newly born Muslim thought. When the Muslims conquered many of the above places, they came into direct contact with Hellenic philosophy. O' Leary says: 'Muslim theology developed in an atmosphere saturated with Hellenistic culture.'

Al-Mansur and al-Ma'mun were great patrons of learning. They engaged many scholars with a view to translating the important books of other languages into Arabic. Al-Ma'mun developed *Bayt al-Hikman* (the home of philosophy), which was established by Harun Rasheed. The Academy started a brilliant career under his supervision and guardians.

It is said that al-Ma'mun sent a royal message to the Roman Emperor requesting him to send books of ancient thinkers. The Emperor complied with the request and sent five camel loads of books to Baghdad. With these materials the quality of translation was improved. The work of translation continued even after the death of al-Ma'mun. As a result, a large number of translations were produced. All books of Empedocles, Pythagoras, Plato, Aristotle, Theophrasitus, Alexandra, Aphrodisius, Porphyry, Plutarch and Plotinus were translated into Arabic. Beside the classical works of

original thinkers, the whole Greek literature dealing with Mathematics, Astronomy and Medicine was translated into Arabic. Books dealing with Greek religion and history were also translated. These translations greatly facilitated the culture of Hellenistic Philosophy among the Muslims. Greek Philosophy had the greatest and permanent influence upon the Muslim thinkers who were known as *Falasifah* by providing them great variety of details for the theories they developed.

### **Self Assessment Exercise**

Give an account of different agencies that helped in the transmission of Greek philosophy to the Muslims.

### **4.0 CONCLUSION**

The religious conquests carried out by the Muslims to many foreign lands later reshaped its philosophy. Likewise, the influence of other religions with Islam met with the people. The great Roman Empire was built on a philosophy and was ruling with this philosophy before Islam entered it. The same thing applied to the Persian Empire and the Indian. The Abbassid caliphs of the Golden Age of Islam incorporated the attitude of plucking wisdom wherever it came from and regardless of its owner. They built the Home of Wisdom and later developed it. With this acquisition of knowledge and its development, Islam was able to rule many parts of the world at that period.

### **5.0 SUMMARY**

Greek Philosophy had a far reaching influence upon the Muslim Philosophy together with the Christian Missionaries who were Neo- Platonic Philosophers. The Greek philosophy moved from Greece to Rome and Alexandra as centres of culture. Other centres of culture were established in Asia Minor, Mesopotamia, Syria and Iran. Prominent school of culture and philosophy were founded in Antioch, Ceasarea, Seluca, Harran, Nisibis, Edesa and Junde-Shapur. When the Muslims conquered many of the above places, they came into direct contact with Hellenic philosophy. Prominent among the agencies that assisted to fashion the Muslim Philosophy were:

- The Christian Missionaries who were Neo-Platonic philosophers.
- The Zoroastrians of Junde- Shapur.
- The Greek pagans.

These agencies became the nurseries for the newly born Muslim Philosophy.

### **6.0 TUTOR MARKED EXERCISE**

1. Give an account of how Greek Philosophy passed unto the Muslims.
2. Itemize the philosophical activities of *Bayt al-Hikman* (the Home of Philosophy).
3. Discuss the contributions of Hārūn Rashīd, Al-Manṣūr and al-Ma'mūn to the growth of Islamic philosophy during their era.

## 7.0 REFERENCES AND FURTHER READINGS

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**MODULE II:** The Sources and the development of Islamic Philosophy.

**Unit 1:** The Sources

**Unit 2:** Philosophical teachings of the *Qur'ān*.

**Unit 3:** Mutazilism

**Unit 4:** Asharism

**UNIT 1: THE SOURCES**

1.0 Introduction

2.0 Objectives

3.0 Main Content

    3.1 The *Qur'ān* and *Hadīth* as Sources of Islamic Philosophy

    3.2 Internal Factor

    3.3 External Factor

4.0 Conclusion

5.0 Summary

6.0 Tutor marked Assignment

7.0 References and Further Readings

**1.0 INTRODUCTION**

It is not uncommon to see different cultures mixing together through contacts among people of these cultures in any area of their life. Islamic culture was able to meet with cultures of people on whose land Islam erected its pillars. However, these people were with different cultures, religions, languages, civilizations and education and ways of thinking. Any of these cultures that go against the Islamic spirit were reformed while those that did not were imbibed into the melting point of Islam. Among those things that were incorporated into Islamic ways of life are knowledge, wisdom and philosophy of these nations. The Greek Philosophy assisted the Muslims to develop their own philosophy which was derived from different sources. In this unit, we shall look at the basis of Muslim Philosophy and how it was developed.

**2.0 OBJECTIVES**

At the end of this unit you will be able to do the followings:

- Identify the sources of Islamic philosophy.
- Analyse *Qur'ānic* verses as well as the Prophetic traditions that inspired Philosophy.
- Give an account of the development of Muslim Philosophy.

**3.0 MAIN CONTENT**

**3.1 The *Qur'ān* and *Hadīth* as Sources of Islamic Philosophy**

The *Qur'ān* and *Hadīth* are the real basis of the Muslim philosophy. Since philosophy is love of knowledge and wisdom, the impetus given to them by the Muslims came directly from the Holy *Qur'ān* and sayings of the Holy Prophet Muhammad.

In the very first verses revealed to the Prophet Muhammad (S) there is a command for him to read in the name of the Lord. In another passage of the Holy Book, God commands him to pray for increase in knowledge. So also the Holy book attaches

great importance to *Hikmah* (wisdom, rationalism.) ‘*Whosoever has been given Hikmah has been given a great wealth*’. (Q.) One of the chief attributes of God is al-*Hakīm* (Q.). Man is the highest creation of God. He is endowed with reason and freedom of thought. Pursuit of knowledge is his duty. His perfection lies in the acquisition of knowledge and not in the blind faith of religious dogmas. It is knowledge for which man is superior to angels and is the vicegerent of God on earth (Q.2: 29-34). Every man should reflect on the natural phenomena, the creation of heaven and earth, the changes of season succession of day and night, the moon, the stars, the sun, the seas, the clouds, the winds and the laws around him. He should try to know his own self and the world around him. He should try to ponder over the mysteries of death and birth, growth and decay of all things and beings. He should try to know all of them by inferences, observation and by rational experience.

Meanwhile, the sayings of the Prophet (SAW) are also replete of importance of knowledge and wisdom. In such saying we have; ‘The first thing created was reason and God has not created anything better than reason.’ ‘He who leaves his home in search of knowledge walks in the path of God.’ ‘To seek knowledge is a compulsory act for every Muslim man and woman.’ Knowledge enables the possessor to distinguish right from wrong.’ ‘Seek knowledge from cradle to grave.’ The angels offer their wings to the seeker of knowledge.’ ‘To listen to the words of the learned and instill into others the lessons of science is better than religious exercises.’ ‘The ink of a scholar is holier than the blood of martyr.’ ‘An hour of contemplation and study of God’s creation is better than seventy years prayer.’ ‘To listen to the instructions of science and learning for one hour is meritorious than standing up in prayer for thousand nights.’ ‘He who travels in search of knowledge, to him God shows the way to paradise.’ Seek knowledge even if you are to go to China for it.’

Thus, the teaching of the *Qur’ān* and saying of the Prophet led the Muslims to intellectual activities and pursuit. These two sources were the sacred breast on which Muslim philosophy was fed from its infancy. The seed of Muslim thought were supplied by the *Qur’ān* and the Hadith and then it was left to environment to develop. Besides the *Qur’ān* and Hadith, some other factors- Internal and External - may also be mentioned that subsequently moulded the trend of Muslim philosophy.

### **3.2 Internal Factor**

Every verse was revealed to the Prophet (SAW) as a solution to some problems. Muhammad (SAW) is the last Prophet. After his death no such revelation will be possible. So his followers were advised to explain some factors of life with ‘*aql* (reason) some with *naql* (revelation/ tradition) and some others with *kashf* (intuition). The provision of ‘*aql*, *naql* and *kashf* has given rise to three schools of thought. Those who gave emphasis upon reason are known as *Mu’tazilities*; those who laid much emphasis upon tradition are called *Asharities*; and those who laid much emphasis upon intuition are known as the Sufis.

Islam is a dynamic religion. It can adjust itself to the needs and requirements of the time. Now the tendency of fitting the *Qur’ān* with the changes of time became the fruitful source of *Qiyās*, *Ijmā‘*, and *Ijtihād*.

*Qiyās* (Analogical Deduction); when the Muslims fail to solve a problem with the help of the *Qur'ān* and Hadith, they take recourse to solve the same by deducing conclusions from the parallel cases of the *Qur'ān* and Sunnah.

*Ijmā'* (Consensus of Opinion); It is the opinion of the learned Jurists on certain dispute points. Here the Jurist meet to settle that dispute by the help of the *Qur'ān* and the sayings of the Prophet. It rests upon the conscience of the Community.

*Ijtihād* (Exercise of Judgement); It means exercise of Judgement in the light of the *Qur'ān* and the Hadith to a particular situation. *Ijtihād* is a counterpart of *Ijmā'*. Iqbal calls it the principle of movement in Islam. It provides scope for individual judgement in religious matters. The conservative section of the Muslims takes it in a narrow sense and is of the opinion that *Ijtihād* is applicable only to the extent approved by *Ijmā'*. But the progressive section takes it in a wider sense and maintains that there is scope for *Ijtihād* to reject even the fixed codes of religious life in the light of modern conditions for the individual and the community as well.

Islam presents an ideology, which satisfies the demands for both stability and change. God has given general principles only and has endowed man with freedom of thought and reason. With the help of these faculties, men can apply those principles in every age in the way best suited to the spirit and conditions of that age. It is only through *Ijtihād* that men can apply divine guidance to the problems of their times.

Just before the death of the Prophet, the Muslims were divided into two political parties over the question of selecting their Khalifah because the Prophet could not do it during his lifetime. Later, when the Umayyads came to power, they developed a new philosophy to justify their claims and generated an attitude of optimism in the mind of the people. During the early periods the Muslims were of one mind. But when they began a carrier of conquest and expansion, new elements of various nationalities and traditions began to mix up with the interpretation of *Qur'ānic* verses. New converts began to interpret the *Qur'ānic* verses in their own way and as a matter of fact, differences of opinion arose in the united camp of the Muslims. Muslims Scholars, however, were quite naive to the situation. They endeavoured towards harmonising different views with the help of reason. As a result of this attempt, they developed a number of sciences, such as philosophy, Commentary, Rhetoric, Theology, Jurisprudence, Grammar etc. These sciences were immensely helpful towards removing misunderstanding in the teaching of Islam.

### 3.3 External Factor

Greek Philosophy: After the fall of the Greeks, the culture of Hellenistic philosophy agencies helped the transmission of Hellenism into Islamic culture.

- The Christian Missionaries who were Neo-Platonic philosophers.
- The Zoroastrians of Junde-Shapur.
- The Greek pagans with their school at Harran.

These agencies became the veritable nurseries for the newly born Muslim thought. They did not produce anything of outstanding merit but they had kept up an intellectual tradition and later offered a solution for the growth of Muslim philosophy. O Leary remarks; ‘these schools supplied the soil on which Muslim theology and science put forth their luxuriant root’.

The Persian Influence: being inspired by the new faith the Muslims of Arabia began a career of conquest, country after country, for spread of Islam. The Persians embraced the religion of the victors and thus became new converts to Islam. But they, especially the upper class Persians could not shake off their own heritage. The Persians as a nation were superior to the Arabs. They developed an idea of superiority complex and introduced many new elements and ideas of their own into Islamic culture. They were responsible for introducing mystic tendencies and the theory of divinely appointed *Imām* in Islamic thought.

Christain and neo- platonic influence: The Umayyad rulers were very liberal in their attitude. They appointed many non- Muslims in their state management and administration. During the rule of those liberal minded rulers, the Christian missionaries who were Neo- Platonic philosophers came in close contact with Islam. They used to participate in religious debates and theological discussions arranged by their leaders. Under the Abbasid rulers, Baghdad became the centre of culture and learning. Scholars from different parts of the world used to throng together in that great cosmopolitan city for free discussion. It happened to become the meeting place of the West and the East. An Academy was established during the epic literatures of the world. They also engaged some Christian missionaries for the work of translation.

The Indian Influence: It was during the Abbasids that the Indian ideas reached the Muslims first. When the Muslims flourished in trade and commerce, they came in close contact with Indians. As a matter of fact, Indian culture, especially Buddism and Vedantism and their mystic tendencies exerted a significant influence towards the development of Muslim Philosophy, especially Islamic mysticism.

Conclusively, Muslim philosophy originated independently from the *Qur'ān* and the *Hadīth*. Later, its subsequent development was not due to a single factor but different factors, both internal and external. But the external factors should not be regarded to be the sole sources of Muslim philosophy. They merely helped the growth and the development of Muslim philosophy at a later stage.

### **Self Assessment Exercise**

Write briefly on the following: '*aql, kashf, naql, ijma'*, *Ijtihād*, and *Qiyās*, and *hadith*.

## **4.0 CONCLUSION**

Islamic Philosophy was born not out of nothing. The idea of philosophy in Islam was never unprecedeted in human life. Other religion, such as Judaism, Christianity, and, even, the pagan of India had been known with different thought before Islam came to live with them. One of the additions brought to them by Islam was the support given by Islam to reasoning and sieving philosophy with revelation.

## **5.0 SUMMARY**

The *Qur'ān* and *Hadīth* are the real basis of the Muslim philosophy. This was like that when the Prophet was alive. After his demise, Islam, being the last heavenly religion to mankind, must continue to find solution to the problems encountered by the Muslims. It is a dynamic religion. Since no revelation will come down to the

people after the *Qur'ān*, there is a need for ways of deducing solution both from the *Qur'ān* and the *Hadith* of the Prophet. The *Ijma'*, *Qiyās*, and *Ijtihād* came to find solution to undetermined problems during the time of the Prophet. The changes of time became the fruitful source of *Qiyās*, *Ijma'*, and *Ijtihād*. These three tools *Qiyās*, *Ijma'* and *Ijtihād* were used as internal sources of Islamic philosophy after the *Qur'ān* and *Hadith*. Secondly, the influences of the Greek, the Persian, the Indian, the Christian as well as that of the Neo- Plato had great impact in the formation of the Muslim philosophy.

## **6.0 TUTOR MARKED EXERCISE**

- 1- Examine the primary sources of Islamic philosophy.
- 2- Identify and discuss some *Qur'ānic* verses as well as the Prophetic traditions that served as basis for the emergence of Philosophy.
- 3- Discuss the internal and external factors that aided the Muslim philosophy.

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## **UNIT 2: THE PHILOSOPHICAL TEACHINGS OF THE QUR'ĀN.**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 Theory of Knowledge (Epistemology)
  - 3.2 Man's Power and Freewill
  - 3.3 God and the World
  - 3.4 Soul of Man
  - 3.5 Ultimate Reality
  - 3.6 God's Relation to Man
  - 3.7 Death and Life after Death
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor marked Assignment
- 7.0 References and Further Readings

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

The *Qur'ān* is a book essentially religious not philosophical but it deals with all those problems which religion and philosophy have in common. Both have to say something about problems relating to the significance of expression such as God, the world, the individual soul and the inter-relation of these things. Both have something to say about good and evil, free - will and life after death. The *Qur'ān* also throws light on such conception as appearance and reality, existence and attributes, human origin and destiny, truth and falsehood, space and time, permanence and change, eternity and immortality. The *Qur'ān* gives an exposition of the people of the universal truth regarding these problems in a language and terminology, which the people immediately addressed, could easily understand with the intellectual background they had at the time of its revelation. So also, the people of other lands and other times, speaking other languages with their own intellectual background could easily interpret. A brief account of the *Qur'ānic* teaching on the religious and philosophical problems mentioned above is given below.

### **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

At the end of this unit you will be able to do the following things:

- Extract some *Qur'ānic* verses that on which Islamic philosophy was laid.
- Describe the Islamic view on the followings: Ultimate Reality, God and the World, the theory of knowledge, soul of man, man's power and freewill, death and life after death, and God's relation with man.
- Discuss the Islamic teaching on soul, on epistemology.

### **3.0 MAIN CONTEXT**

#### **3.1 Theory of Knowledge (Epistemology)**

Man alone has been given the capacity to use names for things (Q2:31) and also has been given the knowledge which even the angels did not possess. Among

men those who are granted wisdom are indeed granted great good. (Q2:269). Understanding raises a man's dignity. Those who do not use the intellect are like beasts, deaf, dumb and blind. The ideal of the intellect is to know truth from falsehood. As an ideal value for man, wisdom means the knowledge of facts, ideals and values.

Scientific knowledge comes from the natural phenomena. The natural phenomena are signs of God. Symbols of the ultimate reality are expressions of the truth as the human behaviour is the expression of the human mind. Natural laws are the set ways of God in which there is no change.

Man can know the ways of God and the law of nature by observing things, mountains, rivers, and fields of corn or other forms of vegetation, garden of olive, farm of date palm and fruit of all kinds which may be seen in different colours; though, wet from the same source. They are also seen in different qualities; though, growing in same farm. By studying the birds flying in the sky and thinking how they are so held up and likewise by observing the clouds and wondering how they are made those who think can know God and can conquer all that is on earth and heaven, night and day, and the sun, moon , and stars (Q16:12). Knowledge of phenomena world is a blessing for which we must be thankful to God.

No less important for individuals and nations is the study of history. The life, every nation as a collective body, moves and passes through rises and falls, successes and reverses till its appointed period comes to an end (Q7:34). For every living nation there are lessons in the history of the people that have lived in the past. Therefore, man is urged to study the Days of God, the momentum period of history, the period of divine favour and punishment, the period of nation, glory and decline. People should travel over the land to see what has been the end of those who neglected the law of nature.

God never changes the condition of a people until they change themselves. Therefore, it is important to take lessons from the past. In the story about the past, there are instructions for men of understanding. The rise and fall of nations, the outline of great events of history and their consequences provide lesson for their guidance and warning. Let them remember momentum event of the life of such people and societies as the Israelites, the Margians, the Serbians, the Romans, the Christians, the people of Sheba, the people of Marchians Ad, Samud, Lut, Companions of Cave (the Seven Sleepers) Gods and Magog, Prophets like Noah, Abraham Ismail, Isaac, Jacob, David, Soloman, Joseph, Moses, Herod, Jona, Jesus and other personages who were great for their piety power and wisdom, e.g., Mary, the Queen of Sheba, Dhu 'l-Qarnain (probably Cyrus of Iran or Alexandra the Great) and the Pharaoh etc.

So much importance has been given to history that fifteen chapters of the *Qur'ān* have been given title bearing historical significance. Indeed the study of contemporary history has not been ignored. The *Qur'ān* refers to contemporaneous events, such as battle of *Badr*, *Tabuk*, the trade and commerce of the *Quraish*, the hypocrisy of those

who were enemies by pretending to have embraced Islam and the animosity of persons like *Abu-Lahab* and his wife.

### **3.2 Man's Power and Freewill**

God has subjected for the use of man everything in the heavens and on earth, the sun and the moon, day and night, rivers and seas and the ships that sail, springs and streams, mountains, the animal kingdom, vegetable kingdom and that mineral kingdom. He has made man His vicegerent on earth. God has given man the will to choose, decide and resolve to do good or evil. He has endowed him with reasoning faculty so that by his own effort he may struggle and explore possibilities. Besides this, he has given him guidance through revelation and inspiration and has advised him to return evil with good and to repel it with what is best (Q23: 96 and Q41: 34). Hence, if a man chooses to do good, it is because in giving him this benefit God has willed him to do so. He never changes the gracious benefit, which He has bestowed on a people until they change themselves (Q8: 53 and Q13: 11). Therefore, whatever good comes from man or to man is ultimately from God. On the other hand, man's nature has bias against evil, his reason is opposed to it, and he has been given a warning against evil through the revealed books, therefore, whatever evil comes from him or to him is from his own soul.

In the scheme of things man's soul is not that of a blind, deaf, dumb and driven herd of goats. So even his free choice of evil is a part of the scheme of things and no one will choose a way unto God unless it fits into that scheme (Q76:30 and Q81: 29).

There is no compulsion in faith. God's guidance is open to all who have the will to profit by it. Whoever wills let him take a straight path to his Lord. Truth is from God. Then whosoever wills, let him believe it, and whosoever wills, let him reject it. The prophet has been sent to every nation for guiding the whole of mankind. Their duty is to preach, guide and inspire by persuasion and not to force the people to anything nor to watch over their doings or dispose of their affairs (Q6:106). They cannot compel mankind against their will to believe.

#### Self Assessment Exercise

Discuss the limit of man's power and freewill.

### **3.3 God and the World**

God is the omnipotent. To Him is due the prima origin of everything. He is the Creator who began the process of creation and adds to creation what He pleases. To begin with, He created the Heavens and Earth, joined them together as one unit of smoky substance and then clove them asunder. (Q 21:30). He created the Heavens and the Earth as separate existence with all their produce, in six days (i. e., six great epochs or periods of evolution). Serially considered, a divine day signifies a very long period, say, thousand years of our reckoning (Q 22:47) or even fifty thousand years (Q 70:4). His decisions are executed in the twinkling of an eye or even quicker, for there is nothing to oppose His will. When He says, "Be" behold! It is. He draws the night as a veil over the day, each seeking the order in rapid succession. He created the sun,

moon and stars, all governed by the laws ordained by Him and under His command every creature in the Heaven and Earth willingly submit to His laws. The sun runs its course for a period determined so does the moon. The growth of a seed into a plant bearing flowers and fruits, the constellation in the sky, the succession of day and night – these and all other things show proportion, measure, order and law. He, it is, who is the Creator and Restorer of all forms. He, it is, who sends down water from the sky in due measure, causes it to soak in the soil, raises to life, the land that is dead and then drains it off easily.

God is the lord of all the worlds and of all mysteries. He has power over all things and to Him belong all forces of the Heavens and the Earth. It is He who spread out the Earth like a carpet, sends down water from the sky in due measure to revive it with fruit, corn and plants, and has created pairs of plants, which separate from the others, and pairs of all other things. He gives the Heavens' canopy its order and perfection and night its darkness and splendour, the expanse of the Earth, its moisture, pasture and mountains, streams, springs, and seas, sheep and cattle, pearls and corals. Likewise, wind and rain, night and day and things we human beings do not know.

To God belong the dominion of the Heavens and the Earth and everything between them. To Him belong the East and the West. Wheresoever you turn, there is His presence, for He is all-pervading. Neither slumber can seize Him nor sleep. His throne extends over the Heavens and the Earth, and he feels no fatigue in guarding and preserving His creatures, for He is the most high and Supreme in glory, exerted in might, and Wise. (Q 2:255).

It is He who gives life and death and has power over all things. God is the omniscient. With Him are the keys of the unseen, the treasures that none knows but Him. Verily, nothing on the Earth or in the Heavens is hidden from Him, not even as much as the weight of an atom. On the earth and in the sea, not even a leaf does fall without His knowledge. He knows what enters the Earth and what comes out from it, what comes down from Heaven and all that ascends to it. No secrets of the Earth are hidden from Him, but He Has full knowledge of all things.

God is the best to judge and is never unjust. It is man that wrongs his soul. On the day of judgement, He will set up the scale of justice and even the smallest action will be taken into account. For those who refrain from wrong and do what is right there is a great reward. Divine punishment is equal to the evil ones. It may be less, besides being most just, God is most loving, most merciful and forgiver of all sins, but is never more than the evil done. Such is not, however, the case with His reward. He is the most munificent and bountiful and therefore, multiplies reward for good deeds (Q 6:106). These rewards are both of this world and the hereafter.

### **Self Assessment Exercise**

Describe the Quranic view on God and the World.

### **3.4 Soul of Man**

The soul of man is of divine origin, for “God Has breathed a bit of His own spirit into Him (Q 15:29, 32:9, and 38:72). It is an unfathomable mystery; a command of God, the knowledge of which only a little has been given to man. The conscious self or mind is of three degrees. In the first degree, we have the evil – commanding mind (*nafs ammarah*) which man shares with animal. In the second degree, it is the conscientious or morally conscious mind (*nafs lawwamah*) struggling between good and evil and repenting from the evil done. In the third degree, it is a mind perfectly in tune with the divine will and it is the mind of peace (*nafs mutmainnah*).

### **3.5 Ultimate Reality**

The ultimate beings or reality is God (Q2:186): “That is because God is the (only) Reality and because what else they invoke besides Him is falsehood; and because He is the Most high, Most Great”. God as described by the *Qur’ān* for the understanding of man is the soul self-subsisting and pervading, eternal and absolute reality. He is the alpha and the omega, the seen and the unseen. He is transcendent, meaning, His full glory cannot be known or experienced by us because we can know only what can be experienced through the senses. No vision can grasp Him. He was before time, space and the world sense. Of the exact nature of God, we can know nothing. But in order that we may apprehend what we cannot comprehend, He uses similitude from our experience. He is the light of the heaven and earth. The parable of His light is as if there were a niche and within it a lamp, the lamp enclosed in glass. The glass as if it were a brilliant star: lit from a blessed tree, an olive, neither of the east nor of the west, whose oil is well nigh luminous, though fire scarce touched it; light upon light.”

Likewise, for our understanding, He described through revelation His attributes by similitude from what is loftiest in the heaven and the earth and in our own experience. This He does in a language, which the people addressed to, may easily understand. God is divine, self-subsisting, eternal, all-powerful, all knowing, all beauty, most just, most loving and all good.

As a living reality, God desires intercourse with His creature and makes it possible for them to enter a fellowship with Him through prayer, contemplation and mystic gnosis (knowledge) and light with His light the houses of those who do not divert from the remembrance of God, nor from regular prayer, or from the practice of regular charity.

God is one and there is no god but Him. And there is none like Him. He is too high to have any partner. If there were other gods besides Him some of them would have lorded over others. He is the one and not one in a trinity. They do blasphemy who say, God is Christ the son of Mary “for said Christ: “O children of Israel, worship God, my Lord and your Lord.” (Q 5:75).

#### **Self Assessment Exercise**

Expatiate on the Qur’ānic philosophy “God is the Ultimate Reality”.

### **3.6 God's Relation to Man**

God created man's spirit out of nothing and created mankind from these single spirit. He created his mate and from the two of them produced men and women in large number (Q 4:1). From the point of view of personal history and perhaps, also from the point of view of evolutional processes, man is created for an appointed term or period as being growing gradually from the Earth and extract of certain elements of the Earth, then by receiving nourishment from the object of substance and being endowed with life like all other things taken the form of water and mud, moulded into shape in due proportion as a life- germ like a clot of blood growing into a lump of flesh, further developing into bones, clothed with flesh and finally emerging as a new creation, a human being in two sexes, gifted with hearing and sight, intelligence and ability to express himself, destined to become God's deputy on Earth, decreed to die one day and destined to be raised again in the day of resurrection. In reality, man is the highest of all that is created, for God has created him in the most beautiful form. He is born with divine spirit breathed into him (Q 38:72). He is nearer to man than his jugular vein. His is with him wherever he may be and He sees all that he does. Wherever he turns, there is the presence of God, for He is all pervading. He listens to the prayer of every supplicant when he calls on Him.

### **3.7 Death and Life after Death (Eschatology)**

Death of the body has been decreed by God to be the common lot of mankind. Wherever a man is, death will overtake him, even, if he is on a tower strong and high. No soul can die except by God's permission, the term has been fixed (Q3:145). But every soul shall be given taste of death and in the end brought to God duly judged on the day of judgement. Only he who is saved from fire would be admitted into Paradise. It is then that he will have attained the goal of his life.

There are some people who think Resurrection is far from their understanding. They ask, "how shall they be raised up after they have been reduced to dust from bones (Q36:77)? Let them remember that they were created out of nothing: first as dust, then a sperm, then like clot of blood, then a piece of flesh, partly formed and partly unformed, kept in the womb for an appointed term, then brought out as babes and then nourished until they reach an age of full strength. And further, let him reflect over the fact that the earth is first barren and dry; but then when God pours down rain it is stirred to life and bring forth every kind of beautiful plants in pairs. Let them understand that He who created the heaven and earth is able to give life to the death. He has power over all things (Q36:81).

God created man from the earth, into it shall he return and from it shall he be brought out again (Q20:55). For every one after death there shall be an interval (called *barzakh* stage) lasting to the day of resurrection. On the day, all dead shall be raised up again. We do not know in what form we shall be raised but as parable, the *Qur'ān* describes the day of resurrection as follows: "on that day there shall be dreadful commotion, the heavens shall render asunder and melted like molten brazen, the sun folded up, moon darken and shall be joined together and the star shall fall in terrible repeated commotion. The earth shall be shaken and pounded into powder. The mountain shall crumble to atoms flying here and there like wool. The ocean shall boil over and the grave shall be turned upside down." "A trumpet shall be blown and there

shall come forth every individual soul and rush forth to thy Lord” (Q36:51). All shall fully remember their past deeds. “Anyone who had done an atom of good deed shall see it and anyone who had done an atom of bad deed shall see it”. They will also recognise one another; though, each have too much concern of its own and will not be able to help others. They shall all now meet their Lord. There will be no intercessor except God’s (Q2:255); or those whose permission is granted by Him. “The scale of justice shall be set up and justice shall be done and everything will be brought to account and all shall be paid for their past deeds.”

The sinners will meet a grievous penalty, which shall not be more than evil they had committed (Q37:38-39) and for a period longer or shorter shall go through a state of pain and remorse designated in the *Qur’ān* as hell. The righteous shall be saved from hell and shall enter a state of perpetual peace designated as Paradise. Paradise has been described in the *Qur’ān* in terms of what average human being value most, dignity, honour, beauty, luxury, sensory pleasure, and Hell has been described in terms of what they detest. People shall be sorted out into three classes:

1. Those who would be foremost and nearest to God, with whom He God is well pleased and they are well pleased with God, shall have no fear, no grief, no toil, no fatigue, no vanity and no untruth. They shall enjoy honour and dress in fine silk and brocade and decorated bracelets of gold and pearls; they shall live forever (Q18:31) in Paradise. They shall be given fruit and flesh of their own choice in dishes of gold to eat. Their faces shall be bright with the brightest of happiness. They shall have as companions, chaste women as their wives (Q43:70). Those who believe and whose family follows them in faith to them God shall join their family, their ancestors, their spouse and their offspring (Q5:122). Rest, satisfaction and peace would reign all round, this would be their salvation, but their greatest reward, and their supreme felicity would consist of being in the presence of God.

2. Companion of the right hand: they shall have their abode in another garden. They would sit on thrown in the garden having flowers, in cool long extending sheets by the side of flowing river. They would recline on cushions and carpets of beauty and so would their pretty and chaste companions belonging to a special creation. They would greet one another with “Peace”. They would also have all kinds of fruits.

3. Companion of the left hand who shall be in the middle of fire with distorted faces and roasted skins; neither alive nor dead, under the shadow of black smoke. They shall have only boiling water to drink and distasteful plant (*zaqum*) to eat; nothing shall be there to refresh them or to please them.

The bliss of Paradise is never the final stage for the righteous, and the agony of Hell is never the final stage for the unrighteous. Just as we experience the glowing sunset the evening and then the full moon of night one after another, so also shall every one progress whether in Paradise or in Hell stage by stage towards his Lord (Q86:6 and Q16:19).

### **Self Assessment Exercise**

Discuss life after death as depicted in the *Qur’ān*.

## 4.0 CONCLUSION

Philosophical teaching in the holy *Qur'ān* is more than what has been explained in this unit. However, this unit attempted to give an apprehensive guidance on the rest that you can come in contact with during the course of your study through your further reading materials. There are many philosophical issues which are discussed both by Islam and the non - Muslim philosopher; though, their conclusion may differ to a certain degree. With the concurrence of this between them, one can finally see that Islam has its own principle in the field of philosophy.

## 5.0 SUMMARY

Philosophical teachings of the holy *Qur'ān* are the fundamental principles on which Muslim philosophy is based. Both the Muslim and non- Muslim philosophy have something in common about problems relating to the significance of issues such as God, the earth, the human soul, good and evil, power and free - will and life after death, and the inter-relation of these things. The *Qur'ān* discusses such conception as appearance and reality, existence and attributes, human origin and destiny, truth and falsehood, space and time, permanence and change, eternity and immortality.

## 6.0 TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNNMENT

- 1- Highlight some *Qur'ānic* verses having bearings on God and the world.
- 2- Discuss the *Qur'ānic* epistemology.
- 3- Give a bird's eye portrayal of *Qur'ānic* eschatology.

## 7.0 REFERENCES AND FURTHER READINGS

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**Unit 3: Mutazilism**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 Origin and significance of Mutazilism
  - 3.2 Fundamental Principles of the Mutazilah
    - 3.2.1 Principle of Divine Unity
    - 3.2.2 Principle of Divine Justice
    - 3.2.3 The Promise of Reward and the Threat of Punishment
    - 3.2.4 The state between belief and unbelief
    - 3.2.5 To command the doing of right and forbid the doing of wrong.
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor marked Assignment
- 7.0 References and Further Readings

**1.0 INTRODUCTION**

Any talk on the Muslim philosophy without a reference to the impact of the *Mu'tazilites* is an incomplete work. This is based on the fact that they were the pioneer Islamic sect that used to celebrate rationalism in finding solution to human problem. It was this school that developed the interpretation of the *Qur'ān* in a rational way. Origin and doctrines of this school shall be dealt with in this unit.

**2.0 OBJECTIVES**

At the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- Describe the origin of *Mu'tazilism* and what it really means.
- Discuss the basis of the *Mu'tazilites* doctrines.
- Highlight the basic principles of *Mu'tazilism*.
- Analyse *Mu'tazilites*'s view-points on some philosophical issues.
- Explain the contributions of five notable *Mu'tazilite*' leaders to Muslim philosophy.

**3.0 MAIN CONTENT.****3.1 Origin and significance of Mutazilism**

Like other schools and sects in Islam, *Mu'tazilism* came into being in the later times of the Companions of the holy Prophet. It had its inception nearly two centuries after the migration (*Hijrah*) of the Prophet to Madinah. During the Prophet's own lifetime Islam consisted of simple and broad principles. This simplicity of the creed continued for some time after him. The wars that ensued between Islam and the world super powers at that period, the Romans and the Persians, after the death of the Prophet, completely absorbed the mental and physical energies of the Arabs. The Muslims in the beginning were so much occupied with the propagation of their faith that they had little time to indulge in abstract discussions about its dogmas. Even then there was a group of Companions, (The people of the bench) who did not have much to do with military campaigns, and thus had leisure enough to be busy with theological studies and other

pursuits. They tried to rationalize the practical ramifications of religious doctrines; though, they did not allow reason free traffic into religious matters. ‘Ali, Ibn Mas‘ud, ‘A’ishah, and Mu‘adh bn Jabal may not be left out in this regard. These were the people who prepared the ground for the school of Mu‘tazilism.

With the advance of Islamic culture in the expanding empire, it is natural that various new issues should have cropped up and new schools of thought come into existence. The Kharajites and the Shi‘ites were among the prominent political sects in Islam at that period. Later, the school of the Qadarites, the real founders of Mu‘tazilism, also had its foundation in the political development of the period. The first man who proclaimed the doctrines of the Qadarites was Ma‘bad al- Juhani. He lived in the early days of the Umayyads. It was reported that Ma‘bad al- Juhani with ‘Ata’ bn Yassar, one of his companions, came one day to the celebrated Muslim divine, Hasan al- Basri, and said: ‘O Abu Sa‘id, these rulers (The Umayyad rulers) shed blood of the Muslims and do grievous things and say that their works are by the decree of Allah’. Hasan replied: ‘the enemies of God, they are liars’. Thus, the first doctrine laid down by the early *Mu‘tazilites* was: ‘Man is accountable for his own evil doings; these should not be ascribed to God’. This is known as the doctrine of *qadar*; hence, the designation *Qadarites* given to the early *Mu‘tazilites*. For the same reason they were also called ‘*Adalites* that is, the holders of the justice of God, for justice of God can be vouchsafed only by holding man responsible for his actions. Ma‘bad al- Juhani preached these doctrines publicly and was therefore put to death by Hajjaj in 80/699 under orders of Caliph ‘Abdul Malik.

Ghaylān al- Dimashqī came after the slain of Ma‘bad al- Juhani to preach the similar views. He also preached that it was incumbent on every Muslim to urge people to do right actions and to check them from doing wrong. This addition by Ghaylan overtly interfered with and threatened the maintenance of the Umayyad rule. As a result of this Ghaylān was killed by Hishām bn Abdul Malik when he came to power in 105/723. Ghaylān’s death enlivened the cause on which he was killed. Its teachings gained currency and exerted an ever-growing influence.

Thousands of people came to subscribe to the Mu‘tazilite views and outlook. At this time two great personages born in the same year 80/699 appeared like two stars on the horizon of Mu‘tazilism. They were Wāsil bn ‘Aṭā and ‘Amr bn ‘Ubayd. Both of them were pupils of Hasan al- Baṣrī who used to give his lectures in the great mosque of Baṣrah. It was to Wāsil bn ‘Aṭā the origin of Mu‘tazilism was credited by most people while some people credited its progress and advancement to Wāsil bn ‘Aṭā and ‘Amr bn ‘Ubayd who carried an impressive aura of scholarship and learning around them.

Mu‘tazilism was so named based on an occurrence. The story goes that one day *Imām* al- Hasan Baṣrī was imparting instruction to his pupils in a mosque. Before the lessons were finished someone turned up and addressed him thus: ‘Now, in our own times, a sect of people has made its appearance, the members of which regard the perpetrator of a grave sin as an unbeliever and consider him outside the fold of Islam. Yet, another group of people have appeared who give hope of salvation to the perpetrator of a grave sin. They submit that such a sin can do no harm to a true believer. They do not in the least regard action as a part of faith and hold that as worship is of no use to one who is an unbeliever, so also sin can do no harm to one who is a believer in God. What, in

your opinion, is the truth position and what creed should we adopt?'. *Imām* al- Hasan was on the point of giving a reply to this question when a long-necked pupil of his got up and said: 'The perpetrator of grave sins is neither a complete unbeliever nor a perfect believer; he is placed mid-way between unbelief and faith- an intermediate state (*manzilah bayn manzilatayn*). Having spoken, he strode to another corner of the mosque and began to explain this belief of his to others. This man was Wāṣil bn ‘Aṭā’. The *Imām* shot a swift glance at him and said: 'I 'tazala 'anna', i. e., 'he has withdrawn from us'. From that very day Wāṣil and his followers were called *al- Mu'tazilah*, the Withdrawers or Secessionists. The title of *al-Mu'tazilah* came into vogue after the death of *Imām* Hasan al-Baṣrī, according to Ibn Munabbih. He also said that 'Amr bn 'Ubayd and his followers avoided the company of Qatadah; they were, therefore, given the name *al-Mu'tazilah*.

*Mu'tazilites* therefore are the people who in some of their beliefs were diametrically opposed to the unanimous consent of the early theologians or the People of the Approved Way (*ahl al- sunnah*). The leader of all of them was Wāṣil bn ‘Aṭā’ who was born in 80/699 at Madinah and died in 131/ 748. It was the Muslims who used to call this sect *al-Mu'tazilah*. Rather, they themselves called themselves people of unity and justice (*ahl- at- tawhid wal- 'adl*). By justice they imply that it is incumbent on God to requite the obedient for their good deeds and punish the sinners for their misdeeds. By unity they imply the denial of the divine attributes. Undoubtedly, they admit that God is knowing, powerful, and seeing, but their conscience does not allow them to admit that these divine attributes are separate and different from the divine essence. This is because if the attributes of God are not considered to be identical with the essence of God, 'plurality of eternal' would necessarily result and the belief in unity would have to be given up. This, in their opinion, is clear unbelief (*kufr*). Unity and justice are the fundamental principles of the beliefs of *al-Mu'tazilah* and this is the reason why they call themselves 'People of Unity and Justice'.

### Self Assessment Exercise

Trace the origin of Mutazilism. What does the sect signify?

### 3.2 Fundamental Principles of the Mutazilah

In the opinion of Abu al- Husayn al- Khayyāt, a great *Mu'tazilite* authority, there are five fundamental principles of *al-Mu'tazilah* which one claiming to be a *Mu'tazilah* must subscribe to in their entirety:

- 1- Divine unity (*al- tawhid*).
- 2- Divine justice (*al- 'adl*).
- 3- The promise of reward and the treat of punishment (*al- wa'd wal wa'id*).
- 4- The state between states of belief and unbelief (*al-manzilah bayn manzilatayn*), and finally
- 5- To command the doing of right and to prohibit the doing of wrong (*amr bi'l ma 'rūf wa'l nahy 'an al- munkar*).

The first two doctrines may be said to be more central than the rest of them for the *Mu'tazilites* verily called themselves 'the People of Unity and Justice', as rightly mentioned above.

**3.2.2 DIVINE UNITY:** The *Mu'tazilah* were called the Unitarians par excellence in so far as they idealized the conception of divine unity almost to a philosophical abstraction. They raised some specific issues, four to be precise, each of which has an important bearing on the problem of divine unity.

- a. Relation of the attributes of God with His essence.
- b. Createdness or uncreatedness of the *Qur'ān*.
- c. Possibility of the beatific vision of God.
- d. Interpretation of the anthropomorphic verses of the *Qur'ān*.

**a. Relation of the attributes of God with His essence.** The *Qur'ān* has described God as the Knower (*al- 'Alim*), the Powerful (*al- Qadir*), the Living (*al-Hayy*), the Orthodox (*Sifatiyyah*, in particular), hold that such expressions obviously mean that God possesses the qualities of knowledge, power, life, e.t.c. To this, the *Mu'tazilah* objected: God is one, and describing His qualities in this way ascribes plurality to Him. The lurking fear with them was that these qualities might even come to be apostatized; should the qualities be considered as entities apart from the divine being that would certainly amount to polytheism. The *Mu'tazilites* explained the divine attributes such as the knowing, the powerful, the living and so on and so forth by saying that God knows, is powerful, is living, and so on and so forth, as to his being and not that He possesses the qualities of knowledge, power, life,etc. apart from his essence. Some of the *Mu'tazilites* maintained that these qualities must be considered in a negative way; nothing positive could be asserted of God for that would jeopardize His absolute unity. This would mean that there is in God the complexity of subject and predicate whereas God is a unity in the purest and the most absolute sense. Alike the Hegelians, the *Mu'tazilites* reduced God finally to an absolute unity shorn of all qualities. This cold and bleak concept of unity could not satisfy the orthodox who look for nothing less than a personal God. The whole problem of the relation of God's attributes with His essence is a self-created difficulty of the *Mu'tazilites*. By its very nature it is an impossible problem entirely above the comprehension of human reason: revelation alone has the claim to guide us here.

**b. Createdness and uncreatedness of the *Qur'ān*.**

It was held by the *Mu'tazilites* that the *Qur'ān* is an originated work of God and it came into existence together with the prophethood of the prophet of Islam. The *Mu'tazilites* very strongly denied the eternity of the *Qur'ān* on the plea that God alone is Eternal. According to them, those who believe in the uncreatedness of the *Qur'ān* and make it co-eternal with God take unto themselves two gods and hence, are polytheists.

**c. Possibility of the beatific vision of God.**

All the Muslim scholastic philosophers, *Mu'tazilites*, and orthodox alike, have maintained that the beatific vision is the *summum bonum* of human life. They, however, differ with regard to the nature of that vision. The *Mu'tazilites* hold that vision is not possible without place and direction. As God is exempt from place and direction, therefore, a vision of him is possible neither in this world nor in the

hereafter. They also opined that God could not be seen with physical eye either in this world or in the next, as in their opinion, is above space and time. Abu a- Hudhayl and the majority of other *Mu'tazilites* maintained: ‘we would see God only with our mind’s eye, i.e., we would know Him only through the heart.

#### **d. Interpretation of the anthropomorphic verses of the *Qur’ān*.**

The *Mu’tazilites* naturally interpreted all the anthropomorphic statements in the *Qur’ān* such as the face, the hands, and the eyes of god or His sitting upon the Throne as merely metaphorical expressions. They repudiated literalism of all types in order to maintain the pure unity of God. The *Mu’tazilites* perforce made an allowance for the principle of interpretation (*ta’wil*) of the verses of the holy *Qur’ān*. They also denied the prophet’s ascension to the heavens in the physical sense. They denied the physical punishment in the grave, and so also, the balance, the bridge, and other eschatological representation. *Mu’tazilites* recognized, however, the possibility of the resurrection of the body, as well as paradise and its sensuous pleasures and hell and its bodily torments.

#### **Self Assessment Exercise**

Examine the implication of the Mutazilites principle of Divine Unity in brief.

#### **3.2.5 DIVINE JUSTICE:**

The justice of God makes it incumbent upon Him not to do anything contrary to justice and equity. It is unanimous verdict of the *Mu’tazilites* that the wise can only do what is salutary (*al- Salah*) and good, and that God’s wisdom always keeps in view what is salutary for His servants; therefore, He can not be cruel with them. He cannot bring into effect evil deeds. He cannot renounce that which is salutary. He cannot ask His servants to do that which is impossible.

The *Mu’tazilites* hold that good and evil can be apprehended by and distinguished through the faculty of reasoning. Like, the Kantians, they made morality independent of theology and emphasized the objective validity of good and evil. It seems that the personality of God, according to the *Mu’tazilites* was steadily vanishing behind the absolute law of righteousness. Against this opinion, the orthodox maintains that there can be no necessity for God even to do justice. He is absolutely free in what He does. Good and evil have their nature by God’s will and man can know them only through God’s injunctions and commands. Thus, except through revelation, there can neither be theology nor ethics.

The *Mu’tazilites* deemed some degree of human freedom a necessary postulate to vouchsafe man’s moral responsibility and God’s justice. They maintained, in their reasoning, that God does not saddle human beings with tasks beyond their power. The *Qur’ān* says:

. و !

Meaning:

‘(*God*) does not impose (any task) on the soul but to the extent of its capacity’

The *Mu’tazilites* were strong upholders of the freedom of man, since they were followers of *Qadarites*. Man’s freedom and God’s justice both must go together. Man should be considered responsible for his actions, otherwise God would not be justified

in punishing the sinners in the life after death. According to them, things are not good or evil because God declares them to be so. No, God makes the distinction between good and evil on account of their being good or evil. Goodness or evil of things is the cause of the commands and prohibitions of the Law. The human intellect is capable of perceiving the goodness and the evil of a few things and no laws are required to express their goodness and evil. Example of this is that it is commendable to speak the truth and despicable to commit oneself to untruth. This shows that the evil and goodness of things are obvious and require no proof from the Shari ‘ah. Some of the *Mu‘tazilites* argued that infants in no case would be condemned to the punishments of hell because, having never exercised free will, no responsibility devolves upon them.

### **Self Assessment Exercise**

Examine the implication of the Mutazilites principle of Divine Justice in brief.

#### **3.2.4 THE PROMISE OF REWARD AND THE THREAT OF PUNISHMENT**

The *Mu‘tazilites* maintain that it is obligatory on God to reward the virtuous and punish the wicked and that He could not do otherwise. Contrary to this, the orthodox and particularly the *Ash‘arites* believe that reward and punishment are entirely God’s gifts. He can reward whom He wills and punish whom He wills. It is certain, however, that He will favour the righteous and punish the wicked as He has promised to do so; but no consideration can bind His discretion and compel Him to do this or that. To impose compulsion on Him is to reduce him to a dependent being or even to a machine which must move an act without any choice of its own. To get it clear, what will be the difference between God if he is compelled to reward the virtuous and punish the wicked, and a magistrate or a judge whose decisions are guided by a penal code? On the other hand, the *Mu‘tazilites* believed that the *Qur’ānic* promise of reward and threat of punishment cannot go unfulfilled; otherwise, God’s truthfulness becomes doubtful. God never changes His words and so it is given in the holy *Qur’ān*; ‘*there is no changing in the words of Allah*’ (Q10: 64).

### **Self Assessment Exercise**

Examine the implication of the Mutazilites principle of promise of reward and the threat of punishment in brief.

#### **3.2.5 THE STATE BETWEEN THE STATES OF BELIEF AND UNBELIEF**

This doctrine was the beginning of the *Mu‘tazilism* when Wasil bn ‘Ata withdrew from the sitting of his teacher, *Imām Hasan al-Basri*. This was more political than theological in nature. The *Mu‘tazilites* submitted that as soon as a man commits a mortal sin he never remains a believer nor becomes an unbeliever but occupies a middle position. If he dies without repentance he would be condemned to hell fire, with the only difference that the punishment inflicted upon him would be less severe than that inflicted on an unbeliever. They based this doctrine on the authority of the *Qur’ān* and the Hadith.

### 3.2.5 TO COMMAND DOING OF RIGHT AND FORBID DOING OF WRONG.

This doctrine is shared both by the orthodox and the *Mu'tazilites* but with difference emphasis. It is among the practical theology of the *Mu'tazilites*. The orthodox believe that it is a *fard al-kifayah*, that is, it would suffice if someone carried out this injunction on behalf of the group. On the other hand, the *Mu'tazilites* consider it as a *fard al-'ayn*, that is, it is incumbent on every Muslim to carry out the task. With the opinion of the *Mu'tazilites* on this doctrine, they deemed it necessary to spread their creed not only by word of mouth, but also by force of State authority. This led to the institution of *mihnah* (inquisition) against all those who did not subscribe to their religious views, particularly, that of the createdness of the *Qur'ān*.

To sum it up, the *Mu'tazilites* are thoroughgoing rationalists. They received quite hospitable treatment at the hands of the Abbasids. During the reign of Mansur, the *Mu'tazilites* gained much development. Important developments took place which gave *Mu'tazilism* supremacy and a significant position in the Islamic world during the reign of al-Mansur. He applied himself to the propagation of arts and sciences. He had books on philosophy and sciences were available in Sanskrit, Persian, Syriac or Greek translated into Arabic. These translations, made under royal patronage, greatly encouraged the study of philosophy and science. The Jews, the Christians, the Parsees, etc., gave particular attention to raising philosophical issues with regard to religious gogmas and even took the liberty of criticizing Islam. Mansur gave complete freedom of argument and discussion. Orthodox theologians bouts with non-Muslims; but the weapons of dogma were ineffective in these contests. The *Mu'tazilites* were fully equipped with the weapons of reason and dialectics, they smashed the arguments of non-Muslims and silenced them. They came to rescue Islam from the hands of its rationalist enemies. With this, the *Mu'tazilites* gained a distinguishing prestige that made most of the distinguished scholars of that time to subscribe to their views.

In addition to this, during the time of al-Ma'mun, the *Mu'tazilites* received great honours at the court of al-Ma'mun. Al-Ma'mum was a pupil of Abu al-Hudhayl Allaf and al-Nazzam (both were great *Mu'tazilites*). He was very fond of listening to the debates between people belonging to different religions. He also used to allow them complete liberty of thought and speech. In all such debates and religious contests it was the *Mu'tazilites* who used to come out victorious. They, thus, proved themselves to be protectors of Islam.

In the same vein, the two Abbasids rulers, after al-Ma'mun, - al-Mu'tasim and al-Wathiq- lent their support to the *Mu'tazilites* wholeheartedly. It was at the time of al-Ma'mun and al-Mu'tasim that the house of philosophy/wisdom (*Bayt al-Hikmah*) was greatly developed.

#### Self Assessment Exercise

Expatiate on the Mutazilism's principle of 'to command doing of right and forbid doing of wrong.'

#### NOTABLE FIGURES AMONG THE *MU'TAZILITES*

During the golden age of Islam, the *Mu'tazilites* were able to occupy a leading role in the field of sciences, theology and philosophy. Among their great leaders are: Wasil bn 'Ata' (born in 80/ 699), 'Amr bn 'Ubayd (born in 80/ 699), Abu al-Hudhayl 'Allaf (born in 131/ 748 and died in 226/ 840), Al-Nazzam (died in 231/ 845), Bishr bn al-

Mu‘tamir (died in 210/ 825), Mu‘ammar (died in 228/ 842), Thamamah (died in 213/ 828), Al- Jahiz (died in 255/869), Al- Jubba’i ( born in 235/849) and Abu Hashim (born in 247/861 and died in 321/933).

### **Self Assessment Exercise**

Enumerate the notable figures among the Mutazilites.

### **4.0 CONCLUSION**

Apart from the basic doctrines of the *Mu‘tazilites* mentioned above there are other corollaries, some of which are : the *Mu‘tazilites* deny the miracles (al- Karamah) of the saints (walis), they deny the existence of the recording angels, they did not believe in the signs of the last hour, such as Gog and Magog (Yajuj and Majuj) and the appearance of the antichrist (al- Dajjal). Likewise, the *Mu‘tazilites* saw it as incumbent on the Muslim community (Ummah) to appoint an *Imām*, they also deny the physical existence of the tank (*al-Hawd*), they also deny the physical ascention of the Prophet (al- Mi‘raj) to the heavens,etc.

### **5.4 SUMMARY**

*Mu‘tazilites* are thorough- going rationalists that give reasoning a very vital role to play in ironing out religious, ephemeral and eternal issues. It came into being as far back as the two centuries after *Hijrah* (Migration of the Prophet from Makkah to Madinah). The head of the sect was believed to be Wasil bn ‘Ata’, a pupil of *Imām* Hasan al- Basri. Some of their principles are: Divine unity (*al- tawhid*).Divine justice (*al- ‘adl*), promise of reward and the treat of punishment (*al- wa‘d wal wa‘id*), state between states of belief and unbelief (*al-manzilah bayn manzilatayn*), and command the doing of right and to prohibit the doing of wrong (*amr bi‘l ma ‘ruf wa‘l nahy ‘an al-munkar*). There are other doctrines which are corollaries to those mentioned above, some of which are: denial of Allah’s attributes, denial of the beatific vision, denial of promise and threat as understood by the orthodox, belief in the createdness of the *Qur’ān* the problem of creation of the actions of man as well as the problem of the will of God.

### **6.0 TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNNMENT**

1. Discuss the basis of *Mu‘tazilites* doctrines.
2. Give a detailed account of the basic principles of *Mu‘tazilism*.
3. Analse four religious issues which are philosophically discussed by the *Mu‘tazilites*.
4. Discuss the contributions of *Mu‘tazilites* to Muslim philosophy.

### **7.0 REFERENCES AND FURTHER READINGS**

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## **Unit 4: Ash'arism and Its Fundamental Doctrines**

### **CONTENTS**

- 1.0: Introduction
- 2.0: Objectives
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  - 3.1: Origin and Fundamental Principles of al-Ash'ariyyah
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### **1. 0. INTRODUCTION**

Ash'arism is the name of a theological school of thought in Islam that surfaced during the 4th -5th /10th – 11th centuries. It was “an effort not only to purge Islam of all non-Islamic elements which had quietly crept into it but also to harmonize the theological teachings of the religion. “It laid the foundation of Sunnism (Orthodoxy) putting divine revelation above reason. Its origin and fundamental doctrines are presented for you in this Unit.

### **2.0. OBJECTIVES**

After you have gone through this unit you should be able to

- (i) define Ash'arism
- (ii) trace origin of the Ash'arites movement.
- (iii) enumerate the fundamental doctrines of the Ash'arites
- (iv) discuss them critically.

### **3.0: MAIN CONTENTS**

#### **3. 1. Origin and Fundamental Principles of al-Ash'ariyyah (Ash'arism)**

Ash'arism is a departure from a system of purely rationalistic theology to reliance upon the word of God (*Qur'ān*), the Tradition (*Hadīth*) and the usage (*Sunnah*) of the practice of the Holy Prophet and the pattern of life of early Muslim *Ummah* (*salaf*).

At first, it was only a gradual and unconscious shifting of attitude. Afterwards the tendency of human mind to ascribe broad movements to single men asserted itself and the whole was attributed to the name of Abu 'l-Hasan 'Alī bn Ismā'īl al-Ash'arī (d.c. 330/945). It is true that with his efforts the change became generally felt, but it had already been long in progress. As a matter of fact, many schools of theology, similar to that of al-Ash'arī, arose simultaneously in different countries, e.g. the

Zahirites' school in Spain, the Tahāwī's school in Egypt, and al-Māturidīs school in Samarqand.

Al-Ash‘arī's School superseded them all and flourished because it had among its adherents and exponents such able thinkers as al-Bāqilānī, *Imām* al-Haramayn, Al-Ghazzālī, Fakhru ‘d-Dīn a`r-Rāzī, etc, etc.

The fundamental doctrines in which the Ash‘arites vehemently refuted the Mu‘tazilites may be summed up as follows:

- (1) God's attributes are real and separate entities from him.
- (2) The Glorious *Qur’ān* is uncreated; i. e. eternal;
- (3) Possibility of the Beatific Vision.
- (4) God's seating himself on the Throne.
- (5) Freedom of will.
- (6) Divine law/Revelation is the way to acquisition of compulsory knowledge.
- (7) The world is originated not eternal.
- (8) Faith is conviction; work is only complimentary to faith.
- (9) God is not compelled to do anything
- (10) Reward and Punishment, sending of Messengers and Beatific vision of Divine Being are in the category of possible matters.
- (11) God wills good and evil.
- (12) Non - voluntary deeds of man are in accordance with *qañā’* and *qadar*.
- (13) God creates man's voluntary deeds.
- (14) Only Prophets are infallible.
- (15) The questioning, joy and punishment in the grave are real.
- (16) Resurrection will be both in body and soul.
- (17) Intercession for the grave sinners are real.
- (18) Paradise and Hell exist perpetually.
- (19) *Imāmate* is not an essential pillar of Religion.

We hereby give the Ash‘arites' arguments on some of the principles in some details.

### **Self Assessment Exercise**

Give a brief account of the origin of Ash‘arism and enumerate its fundamental doctrines.

### **3.2 Attributes of God and Their Relation with His Essence**

(i) The Asharites admitted that God has qualities but with the qualifications of *mukhālafah lil-hawādith* and *bilā kayfa walā tashbih*, i. e. the qualities and attributes ascribed to God must be understood to be inapplicable to human beings and so we should 'not ask how and draw comparisons'. Terms used for human beings must have quite different meaning when applied to God. God's attributes not only defer to those of mankind in degree but they defer in their whole nature. Expressions or ideas regarding God should be divested of all human elements, according to the Asharite principle of *tanzīh*.

(ii) Al-Ash‘arī is reported to have refuted Abu ‘l-Hudhayl ‘Allāf's identification of God's attributes with His essence in the following manner: Abu ‘l-Hudhayl ‘Allāf says that God's knowledge is God, and so he makes God knowledge.

He must be asked to invoke knowledge instead of God, both being identical, and say in his prayers: "O knowledge, forgive me". He made this remark in all seriousness.

### **Self Assessment Exercise**

Discuss the Asharites' view on the relation between the attributes of God and His essence.

### **3. 3. Createdness or Uncreatedness of the Holy *Qur'ān***

(i) The Orthodox Ash'arites very strongly upheld the eternity and the uncreated-ness of the *Qur'ān*. They based their view, not on Jewish or Christian doctrine of the Logos, as some of the Orientalists and even the Mutazilites have alleged, but on the verses of the holy *Qur'ān* such as:

(a) The command is God's first and last' (Q.30. 4), that is the command which indeed is through God's word (*Kalām Allah*) is eternal and uncreated.

(b) Are not the creation and the command His?" (Q.5:5). They say: Here God speaks of the command as something other than the act of creation which, according to the Ash'arites, implies that God's command does not belong to the category of created things. Further, God's command, by its very nature, is through His word or His speech; hence *kalām Allah* or the *Qur'ān* is uncreated.

(c) God says: 'Our word to a thing when we intend it is only that We say to it, "Be" and it is (*kun fayakūn*). Al-Ash'arī argued, if the *Qur'ān* were supposed to be created, 'the word 'Be' must have been uttered to it before it could have come to existence. If God should say 'Be" to the *Qur'ān* which is itself the 'word of God' a word will be said to another word. From the very logic of this position it would become necessary that a word should be uttered to another word for the latter to come into being. Thus one word would depend on another and the other upon next and so on and so forth to an infinite regression which, according to the Ash'arites, is unthinkable and impossible. Thus by reducing supposition to an absurdity, they claimed to have proved that the *Qur'ān* is uncreated.

(ii) The Mutazilites made the allegation that the Asharites, by preaching the doctrine of the uncreatedness of the *Qur'ān*, were advocating the Christian idea of Logos and tripping into *shirk*, i. e. polytheism. They argued that, should Ash'arites insist upon the uncreatedness of the *Qur'ān* they would make it co-eternal with God and thus teach that He has His partner co-existent with Him from eternity.

Interestingly enough, the Ash'arites made a similar charge against the Mu'tazilites and called them 'the polytheists of the first order'. They argued that whosoever insists on the created-ness of the *Qur'ān* comes very close to favouring the view of the infidels that the *Qur'ān* was a product of Prophet's own mind. The Ash'arites alluded to a verse of the holy *Qur'ān* in which God has spoken of the polytheists' belief about the *Qur'ān* that 'it is merely the word of a mortal' (Q.74: 25).

### **Self Assessment Exercise**

Examine the polemics between the Asharites and the Mutazilites on the problem of the eternity of the *Qur'ān*.

### 3.4 Possibility of the Beatific Vision.

The Asharites advanced the following proofs in support of their view about the possibility of Beatific Vision even in the physical sense.

(A) *Proof from the Qur'an*. References were made to the following verses of the *Qur'an* in support of their position:

(i) *That day will faces be splendid, looking towards their Lord* (Q.75: 22, 23).

The possibility of Beatific Vision is clearly indicated herein, according to the Ash'arites, as a gift which would be granted by God to the people of Paradise on the Day of Resurrection.

(ii) He Moses said: *O my Lord, show me thyself so that I may gaze upon Thee* (Q. 7:143)

Al-Ash'arī contended that had the vision of God been impossible of realization, Moses would not have asked for it. Moses was an Apostle of God and thus free from sin or gross error. How could he ask for an absurd and impossible thing?

(B) *Proof from the Hadīth*. The Asharites called the attention of the Mutazilites to the following saying of the Prophet in which, in reply to a question about the possibility of seeing God on the Day of Resurrection, he is reported to have said: "You will see your Lord as you see the full moon while you will not disagree among yourselves"

(C) *Proof from Logic*. The logical arguments in favour of Beatific Vision are listed below:

(i) God can show us every thing that exists. Therefore he can show himself to us. (ii)

He who sees things sees himself. God sees things. Therefore God sees himself. (iii)

He who sees himself can make himself seen. God sees Himself. Therefore He can make Himself seen.

(iv) The Highest good is realizable in the highest world. The Beatific Vision is the highest good. Therefore Beatific Vision is realizable in the highest world.

Al-Ash'arī asserted that those who denied the Beatific Vision of God reduced God to a mere philosophical abstraction and even to a nonentity.

#### Self Assessment Exercise

Explain the views of the Ash'arites on the Beatific Vision.

### 3.5 God's Seating Himself upon the Throne.

From the following verses of the *Qur'an* it was quite clear to the Ash'arites that God is seated on His throne high up in the heavens:

- (i) The Merciful is seated on the throne (Q.20:4)
- (ii) The good word rises up to Him (Q.35:11)
- (iii) God took him (Jesus) up to Him (Q.4:156).
- (iv) Hereafter shall they come up to Him (Q.19:95)
- (v) What! Are you sure that He who is in the heaven will not cleave the earth beneath you? (Q.67:16)
- (vi) And thou shall see the Angels circling around the throne uttering the praises of their Lord (Q.30:74-75)

These verses of the *Qur'ān* were further corroborated by a tradition of the Prophet in which he is reported to have said that God descends every night to the lower heavens and asks: Is there anyone who is to make a request? I am here to grant it to him. Is there any one who asks for forgiveness? I am here to forgive him. This goes until dawn.

In addition to the above evidence from the *Qur'ān* and the *Hadīth* for God's seating Himself upon the throne al-Ash 'arī advanced the following argument: If God is at all places as the Mu'tazilites have maintained, this would compel one to admit that God is under the depths and the created beings are below Him. If this is true, He must be under that above which He is and above that under which He is. Since this is a complete absurdity, one cannot say that God is at all places.

Al-Ash 'arī attacked the Mu'tazilites and others who made use of allegorical interpretations and asserted that God is at all places, by saying that if this interpretation were true then it might be logically concluded that God is also in the womb of Mary.

### **Self Assessment Exercise**

What are the doctrines of the Ash'arites on the *Qur'ānic* verse "*The Merciful (God) is seated on His throne high up in the Heaven*".

### **3.6 Free- Will**

On the issue of free – will the old orthodox position was absolutely fatalistic (jabarism). The Mutazilites, following the principle of divine justice, made out a case for man's free – will. Al-Ash 'arī struck a middle course. 'Man cannot create any thing; God is the only Creator; nor does man's power produce any effect on his actions at all. God creates in His creature power (*qudrat*) and choice (*ikhtiyār*). Then He creates in him his actions corresponding to the power and choice thus created.' According to al-Ash'arī, though the action of the creature is created by God both as to its initiative and as to its production yet it is acquired by the creature. Acquisition (*kasb*) corresponds to the creature's power and choice previously created in him; he is only the locus (*mahall*) or subject of his action. In this way al-Ash'arī is supposed to have accounted for free will and made man responsible for his actions. For example he says, a man writes with a pen on a piece of paper. God creates in his mind the will to write and at the same time He grants him the power to write thus bringing about the apparent motion of the hand and the pen and the appearance of the words on the paper. Thus the whole theory of acquisition amounts to al-Ash'arī saying that the significance of man's freedom lies in his consciousness of freedom in himself. Man gives assent to the works, which are accomplished in him by God, and claims this as his own.

### **Self Assessment Exercise**

Summarise the discussion on man's power and free – will as taught by al-Ash 'arī.

### **4.0: CONCLUSION**

The whole of the third *hijrah* century was the era of powerful reaction to Mu'tazilites' rationalist teachings. The Traditionalists adhered strictly to literal

interpretation of the *Qur'ān* and refused to allow reasoning in-road to religious docytrines. They even regarded any theological discussion as (*bid'ah*); Their reaction against the Mutazilites went to such an extent that even the anthropomorphic verses of the *Qur'ān* were interpreted by them in a purely literal sense. For instance “Gods settling Himself upon His Throne” is understood literally; the how of it is unknown, belief in it is obligatory and questioning about it is an innovation. Every dogma was to be believed in without raising question ‘how’ or ‘why’.

But such an attitude of blind faith could not be maintained for any length of time. Islam, which is meant to be a Universal religion and a force, had to adapt itself to new thoughts and new environments. So, there arose gradually a party from among the *Ahlu `s-Sunnah wa `l-Jama 'ah*, the Traditionalists and the majority opinion (i.e. the orthodox section of the *Ummah*) who realized the necessity of putting Islam on a solid ground by advancing reasons for the traditional beliefs and defending beliefs against all sorts of attacks, internal and external; and thus purging the Islamic faith of all the non-Islamic elements that has crept into it. They founded the orthodox theology of Islam by using *kalām*-the philosophical method, in order to meat the dialectical reasoning of the Mu'tazilites. These theologians who employed *Kalām* for the defense of their faith were therefore known as *Mutakallimun*.

## 5.0: SUMMARY

Ash 'arism was the school of *Ahlu `s- Sunnah wa 'l-Jamā 'ah*. It was begun almost at the same time in different places of Muslim World; in Mesopotamia, by 'Alī bn Ismā'īl al-Ash'arī (d.circa 941-945 A. D.); in Egypt, by al-Fahāwī (d.942 A. D.); and in Muslim East i. e. Iraq, Iran, Sind and Hind, by Mansūr al-Māturidī. Among these three al-Ash 'arī was the most popular hero before whom Mu'tazilite system crumbled; and he came to be known as the founder of the orthodox theology. The school founded by him was known after him as *al-Ash'ariyyah* (Asharism).

## 6.0: TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. (i) Highlight the events that led to the emergence of Ash'arism.  
 (ii) Enumerate the fundamental doctrines of the theological school.
2. Compare the views of the Mutazilites and the Asharites on Divine Unity or Divine Justice.
3. Write notes on
  - (i) Attributes of God and Their Relation with His Essence
  - (ii) God's seating Himself on the Throne

## 7.0 REFERENCES AND FURTHER READINGS

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### **MODULE 3: NOTABLE MUSLIM PHILOSOPHERS OF THE EAST**

- Unit 1:** Al- Kindī (c. 185/801 – C. 260/873)
- Unit 2:** Al- Fārābī (258/870 – 339/950)
- Unit 3:** Ibn Sina (370-428/980-1037)
- Unit 4:** Al- Ghazzālī (450/503- 1058/III C.E.).

#### **UNIT 1: AL – KINDĪ (C.185/801- C. 260/873)**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 Pedigree, Educational Pursuit and Fame.
  - 3.2 Al-Kindī's Works
  - 3.3 His philosophy
  - 3.4 Relationship between Philosophy and Religion
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor marked Assignment
- 7.0 References and Further Readings

#### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

The prominent ones among the Muslim thinkers who studied and wrote epitomes and criticisms of Greek philosophy, and who began to philosophise along the Greeks lines and raised up the wisdom and knowledge of Hellas from the dead and passed them unto the West and East were Al-kindī, Al-Fārābī, Ibn Maskawaih, Ibū Sīnā , Ibnu ‘l-Haytham, Ibn Bājjah , Ibn Tufayl, al-Ghazzālī , Ibn Rushd and Ibn Khaldūn. The school moved from a synthesis of Neo-platonism, Aristotelianism and Islam to Aristotelianism pure and simple. Most of them wrote books on several subjects besides philosophy. Their attitude was empirical and scientific. In this unit we shall look into life, works and philosophy of both al- Kindī and al- Fārābī.

#### **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

- Give an account of the life and education of both al- Kindī and al- Fārābī.
- Explain the characteristics and chief elements of al- Fārābī's philosophy.
- Discuss the philosophical works of both al- Kindī and al- Fārābī.
- Describe how al- Kindī brought an harmony between religion and philosophy.
- Analyse the contributions of al- Kindī and al- Fārābī to the Islamic philosophy.
- Criticise the speech made by Charles, the Prince of Wale on Islam and the legacy it left in the West.

#### **3.0 MAIN CONTENT**

##### **3.1 Pedigree, Educational Pursuit and Fame.**

His full name is Abu Yusuf Ya‘qūb bn Ishāq bn al- Sabbath bn ‘Imrān bn Ismā‘il bn al- Ash‘ath bn Qays al- Kindī from the Kindah, one of the great Arab tribes before Islam. His grandfather- al- Ash‘th bn Qays adopted Islam and was considered one of

the Companions (*Sahābah*) of the Prophet. Al-Ash‘ath went with some of the pioneer Muslims to al- Kufa, where he and his descendants lived. Ishāq bn al-Šabbāh, al-Kindī’s father, was governor of al- Kūfah during the reign of the Abbassid Caliphs al-Mahdī and al-Rashīd. Most probably, al-Kindī was born in the year C. 185/801, a decade before the death of al- Rashīd. Kūfah and Baṣrah in the second/ eight and third/ ninth centuries were the two rivalry centres of Islamic culture. Kūfah was more inclined to rational studies and in this intellectual atmosphere, al- Kindī passed early boyhood. He learnt the *Qur’ān* by heart, the Arabic grammar, literature and elementary Arithmetic, all of which formed the curriculum for all Muslim children. He, then, studied Fiqh and the new - born discipline called Kalām. But it seems that he was more interested in sciences and philosophy, to which he concentrated the rest of his life, especially after he went to Baghdad.

Philosophical studies in the second/eight centuries were in the hands of Christian Syriacs, who were primarily physicians. They started through encouragement by the Caliph, to translate Greek writings into Arabic. Being the first Arab Muslim to study science and philosophy, al- Kindī was rightly called ‘the Philosopher of the Arabs’.

A complete knowledge of Greek science and philosophy required proficiency in Greek and Syriac languages into which to the latter many Greek works had been translated. It means al- Kindī learned Greek and mastered the Syriac language from which he translated several works. He also revised some of the Arabic translations, such as al- Himsī’s translation of Plotinus Euncads which passed to the Arabs as one of the many philosophical books, clarified their difficulties and summarized their deep theories.

Al- Kindī’s notoriety for avarice was equal to his fame for knowledge. This bad repute was sequel to al- Jāhiz’s caricature of him in his *Kitāb al- Bukhalā’*. However, al- Kindī lived a luxurious life in a house, in the garden of which he bred many curious animals. It seems he lived aloof from society, even, from his neighbourhood of a wealthy merchant, who never knew that al- Kindī was an excellent physician. Once the merchant’s son was attacked by sudden paralysis and no physician in Baghdad was able to cure him. Someone told the merchant that he lived in the neighbourhood of the most brilliant Philosopher, who was very clever in curing that particular illness. Al- Kindī cured the paralysed boy with music.

### **Self Assessment Exercise**

Write a short biography of Al-Kindī.

### **3.2 Al-Kindī’s Works**

In Baghdad, he was connected with al- Ma’mūn, al- Mu’taṣim, and the latter’s son, Ahmad. He was nominated tutor of Ahmad bn al- Mu’taṣim to whom he dedicated some of his important writings. Ibn Nabātah says: ‘ Al-Kindī and his writings embellished the empire of al- Mu’taṣim’. He also flourished under the reign of al-Mutawakkil (r. 232- 247/ 847- 861). As related by ibn Abu Usaybi‘ah, al- Kindī, at that time, was at great fame for his advanced knowledge and his library. There was a story: Muhammad and Ahmad, the sons of Musa bn Shākir, who lived during the reign of al-Mutawakkil, were conspiring against everyone who was advanced in knowledge. They sent one Sanad bn Ali to Baghdad so that he might get al- Kindī

away from al- Mutawakkil. Their conspiracies succeeded to the point that al-Mutawakkil ordered that al- Kindī should be flogged. His whole library was also confiscated and put in a separate place, where it was labeled as ‘Kindian Library’.

However, most of his numerous works (about 270) were lost. Ibn al- Nadīm and later al-Qifti classified his writings, most of which are short treatises into seventeen categories: 1- Philosophy. 2- Logic. 3- Music. 4- Arithmetic. 5- Globe. 6- Astronomy. 7-Astrology. 8- Geometry. 9- Sphere. 10- Medicine. 11- Dialectic. 12- Psychology. 13- Politics. 14- Cause (Meteorology). 15- Dimension. 16-on species of metals, chemical...17- of First thing.

This shows to what extent al- Kindī’s knowledge was encyclopaedic. This made Cardano to consider him as one of the twelve greatest minds. Some of his scientific works were translated by Gerard of Cremona into Latin and influenced very much the thought of medieval Europe. Scholars studied al-Kindī, until his Arabic treatises were discovered and edited, merely on the basis of the extant Latin translations. His *De Medicinarum Compositarium Gradibus* was published in 938/1531. Albino Nagy (1315/ 1897) edited the medieval translations of these treatises; *De intellectu*; *De Sanno et vision*; *De quinque essentis*; *Liber introductorius in Artem logicae* demonstrations.

Since the discovery of some of his Arabic manuscripts, a new light has been thrown on al- Kindī’s philosophy. Compendium containing about twenty- five treatises was found by Rither in Istanbul. Now they have all been edited by different scholars; Walzer, Rosenthal, Abu Ridā’ and Ahmed Fouad El-Ehwany. There are other short treatises discovered in Alepo, but they have not yet been edited. It has become possible to a certain extent, to analyse al- Kindī’s Philosophy on more or less sure grants.

### Self Assessment Exercise

Assess the place of Al-Kindī’s works among the philosophers.

### 3.3 His Philosophy

Philosophy, as a body of knowledge, came to be acknowledged as a part of Islamic culture through al- Kindī. Hence, the early Arab historians called him the ‘Philosopher of the Arabs’. Although, it is true that he borrowed his ideas from neo- Platonic Aristotelianism, but it is also true that he refined and put those ideas in a new context. By conciliating Hellenistic heritage with Islam, he laid the foundations of a new Philosophy. Indeed, this conciliation remained for a long time the chief feature of this Philosophy. Furthermore, the fact that al- Kindī specialized in all the sciences known at his time - as sufficiently evident by his writings, made Philosophy a comprehensive study embracing all sciences.

Evidently, al- Fārābī, ibn Sīnā, and ibn Rushd were first scientists before becoming Philosophers unlike al- Kindi. For this reason, ibn al- Nadīm ranked al-Kindī in the class of natural Philosophers. He said: ‘al- Kindī is the best man of his time, unique in his knowledge of all the ancient sciences. His books deal with different classes of sciences, such as; Logic, Philosophy, Geometry, Arithmetic, Astronomy, etc. We have connected him with the natural Philosophers because of his prominence in science’.

As earlier discussed in the beginning of this course material that philosophy is the knowledge of truth, Muslim Philosophers just like the Greeks believed that truth is something that is over and above experience and that it lies immutable and eternal in a supernatural world. In his treatise on ‘first Philosophy’ al- Kindī defined Philosophy like this; ‘Philosophy is the knowledge of reality of things within man’s possibility, because the Philosophers end in his theoretical knowledge is to gain truth and in his practical knowledge to behave in accordance with the truth’. At the end of the treatise, God is qualified by the term ‘Truth’, which is the objective of Philosophy. ‘The True one ( Al-Wāhid Al-Haqq) is then , the First, the Creator, the Sustainer of all that He has created....’. This view is borrowed from Aristotle’s metaphysics, but the unmovable mover of Aristotle is sub-titled by the Creator. This difference constitutes the core of the Kindian system.

Basically, Philosophy is classified into major divisions; theoretical studies and practical studies. The theoretical studies include Physics, Mathematics, and Metaphysics while the practical studies comprises of Ethics, Economics, and Politics. A later writer, however, quoting al- Kindī, gives the classification of Philosophy as follows: ‘Theory and Practice are the beginning of the virtues. Each one of the two is divided into the physical, mathematical and theological parts. Practice is divided into guidance of oneself, that of one’s house, and that of one’s city’. Ibn Nabbata, quoting also al-Kindī, mentioned only the theoretical divisions. ‘The Philosophical sciences are of three kinds: the first in teaching (*Ta’līm*) is Mathematics which is intermediate in nature; the second is Physics, which is the last in nature; the third is theology which is the highest in nature’. The priority of Mathematics goes back to Aristotle, but the final sequence of the three sciences beginning with Physics came from the later Peripatetics. Most probably, al- Kindī was following Ptolemy, who gave a division of sciences in the beginning of al-Magest. Mathematics was known to the Arabs from that time on as the ‘first study’.

The definition of Philosophy and its classification, as mentioned above, remained traditional in Muslim Philosophy. As Mustafa Abdul- Razāq puts it; ‘ this attitude in understanding the meaning of Philosophy and its classification according to subject matter directed Muslim Philosophy from its very outset’. First Philosophy also known as Metaphysics is the knowledge of the first cause, because all the rest of the classifications of Philosophy is included in this knowledge. The method followed in the study of first philosophy is the logic of demonstration. From now on, logic will be the instrument of the Philosophers in their quest for truth. Al- Kindī’s value as a Philosopher was debated in ancient times because of the lack of logical theory in the system. Sa‘īd al-Andalusī says: ‘al- Kindī wrote on Logic many books which never became popular, and which people never read or used in the sciences, because these books missed the art of analysis which is the only way to distinguish between right and wrong in writings, no one can profit, unless he has sure premises from which he can make the synthesis’. It is difficult for us to give an exact idea concerning this charge until his logical treatises are discovered. But the fact that al- Fārābī was called the ‘second master’ because of his introducing Logic as the method of thinking in Islamic Philosophy seems to corroborate the judgement of Sa‘īd just mentioned above.

### **Self Assessment Exercise**

Expatiate on why al-Kindi was called ‘the Philosopher of the Arabs’.

### 3.4 Relationship between Philosophy and Religion

Al- Kindī directed Muslim Philosophy towards an agreement between Philosophy and Religion. Philosophy depends on reason, and religion relies on revelation. Logic is the method of Philosophy; faith, which is believed in the realities mentioned in the *Qur'an* as revealed by God to his Prophet, is the way of religion. From the very outset, men of Religion mistrusted Philosophy and the Philosophers. Philosophers were attacked for being heretics. Al- Kindī was obliged to defend himself against the accusation of religious spokesmen that ‘the accusation of the knowledge of reality is atheism (*Kufr*)’. In his turn, al- Kindī accused those religious spokesmen for being irreligious and traders with religion.

However, the relationship between Philosophy and religion is laid down on the basis of three agreement; 1- that theology is part of Philosophy; 2- that the Prophet revelation and Philosophical truth are in accord to with each other, and 3- that the pursuit of theology is logically ordained. Philosophy is the knowledge of thee reality of thins, and this knowledge comprises theology (al- Rububiyyah), the science of monotheism, ethics, and all useful sciences. As far as religion is concerned, the Prophets have ordained the pursuit of truth and practice of virtue. The pursuit is necessary for it is either necessary or it is not necessary. If theologians (those who oppose its pursuit) say that it is necessary, they should study it; if they say that it is not necessary, they have to give the reason for this and present a demonstration. Giving the reason and demonstration is part of the acquisition of the knowledge of reality. It is necessary then that they should have this knowledge and realize that they must obtain it.

Al- Kindī was able to make a sharp distinction between religion and philosophy. He compared the religion of Islam with Aristotle’s philosophy. The divine science, which he distinguished from philosophy, is Islam. In al- Kindī’s view, the *Qur’ānic* arguments, being divine, are more sure, certain, and convincing than the philosophical arguments which are human. The *Qur’ān* gives solutions of some very important problems, such as the creation of the world from nothing, and resurrection. He, thus, holds that the *Qur’ānic* arguments are beliefs, clear and comprehensive and that they lead to certainty and conviction. Hence, they are superior to the philosophers’ arguments. An example of such arguments is to be found in the answer to the infidels who asked, ‘Who will be able to give life to bones when they have been reduced to dust?’ The answer is: ‘He who produced them originally will give life to them.

Contrary to al- Kindī’s general view that theology is a part of philosophy we can find the following points:

- 1 Theology occupies a rank higher than philosophy.
- 2 Religion is a divine science and philosophy is a human one.
- 3 The way of religion is faith and that of philosophy is reason.
- 4 The knowledge of the Prophet is immediate and through inspiration and that of the philosopher is by way of logic and demonstration.

Al- Kindī was able, as the first philosopher, to open the door for the philosophical interpretation of the *Qur’ān*, and thus, brought about an accord between religion and philosophy. He paved the way for al- Fārābī, ibn Sīnā , and ibn Rushd. He reduced religion to philosophy, by taking the way of the logicians. At the same time, he was able to reduce religion as being a divine science which could be known by a prophetic

faculty, and thus, raised it above philosophy. Through philosophical interpretation religion was able to be conciliated with philosophy.

### **Self Assessment Exercise**

Give a detailed account on al- Kindī and his philosophy.

### **4.0 CONCLUSION**

Al- Kindī was the first Arab Muslim to study science and philosophy. He was a great philosopher who was able to harmonise between religion and philosophy. His philosophy came to be acknowledged as a part of Islamic culture. Some of his works were translated into Latin by Gerard of Cremona. Al- Kindī's knowledge was so encyclopaedic to an extent that he was able to contribute to many fields of knowledge. He also created new philosophical ideas after extracting from Neo-Platonic Aristotelian philosophy. The discovery of some of his Arabic manuscripts threw a new light on his philosophy.

### **5.0 SUMMARY**

Al- Kindī was a great philosopher of the old in the history of the Muslim philosophy. He was among those figures that helped in building a lasting legacy and history for the Muslims during the Abbasid era. His exploration of the book of Allah (*Qur'ān*) threw light into his heart with which he was able to construct an intellectual tower from which Muslims and non- Muslim were able to benefit.

### **6.0 TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNNMENT**

1. Give an account of the life and education of al- Kindī.
2. Discuss the philosophical works of al- Kindī
3. Analyse the contributions of al- Kindī to the Islamic philosophy.
4. Describe how al- Kindī brought about harmony between religion and philosophy.

### **8.0 REFERENCES AND FURTHER READINGS**

1. Yusuf, Ali A. (1975), *The Holy Qur'ān*, Text, Translation and Commentary, ed. London, The Islamic Foundation.
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## **Unit 2: AL- FĀRĀBĪ (c.258/870- 339/ 950)**

### **CONTENTS**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objective
- 3.0 Main Contents
  - 3.1 Short Biography
  - 3.2 The Works of al-Farābī
  - 3.3 Major themes in the philosophy of al-Farābī
    - 3.3.1 Logic
    - 3.3.2 Unity of philosophy
    - 3.3.3 Theory of the ten Intelligence
    - 3.3.4 Theory of the Intellect
    - 3.3.5 Theory of Prophecy
    - 3.3.6 Interpretation of the Qur'ān
- 4.0 Conclusions
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor Marked Assignments
- 7.0 References and Further Reading

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

Unit 1 of this Module introduced you to the prominent ones among the Muslim thinkers who studied and wrote epitomes and criticisms of Greek philosophy, and who began to philosophise along the Greeks lines and raised up the wisdom and knowledge of Hellas from the dead and passed them unto the West and East. Ten of such Muslim thinkers were enumerated while Al-kindī, the first of them was studied in details. Al-Fārābī, Ibn Maskawaih, Ibū Sīnā, Ibnu 'l-Haitham, Ibū Bājjah, Ibū Tufail, al-Ghazzālī , Ibū Rushd and Ibū Khaldūn. It was noted that movement from synthesis of Neoplatonism, Aristotelianism and Islam to Aristotelianism characterized their contribution. It was also pointed out that most of them on several subjects besides philosophy. In this unit we shall look into life, works and philosophy of al- Fārābī.

### **3.0 OBJECTIVES**

#### **At the end of this Unit you will be able to**

- Give an account of the life and education of al- Fārābī.
- Explain the characteristics and chief elements of al- Fārābī's philosophy.
- Highlight the major themes in the philosophical works of al- Fārābī.
- Identify the impact of al- Fārābī in the study of philosophy and place him in proper perspective.

### **3.0 MAIN CONTENT**

#### **3.1 Short Biography**

Muhammad bn Muhammad bn Tarkhan bn Uzlugh Abu asr al- Fārābī was born in about c.258/870 at a village called Wasij in the vicinity of Farab in Transoxiana. It has been believed that he was a Turkish by birth. His father was a general and he himself

worked as a judge for some time. The basis of his early education was religious and Linguistic. He studied in his surrounding at the initial stage. He studied jurisprudence, Hadith, and the exegesis of the *Qur'ān*. He learnt Arabic, Turkish as well as Persian. He did not neglect to benefit himself from the rational studies which were current in his time, such as Mathematics and Philosophy. At the time he developed an extreme interest in rational studies, he left his home for other towns and cities to acquire more knowledge, mainly in Baghdad, where learning and scholarship activities were well known of at that period. Al- Fārābī met a renowned logician of that period, Bishr Matta ibn Yunus, and studied logic under him for some time. He surpassed his teacher. Being a great expositor of Aristotle's logic and on account of the eminent position he had gained in this field, he was called 'The Second Teacher', that is, the second Aristotle. He was the first Turkish Philosopher to make name. Al- Fārābī spent twenty years in Baghdad before he left for Aleppo to work in the brilliant and scholarly court of Sayf al- Dawlah, al- Hamdani (rule 333-357/944- 67). In this court there were most distinguished poets, philologists, philosophers, and other scholars. In spite of the strong Arab sympathies of the court, no racial bias or prejudice could mar the scholarly and cultural atmosphere in which Persians, Turks, and Arabs argued and disputed and agreed or differed in the name of disinterested pursuit of knowledge. In that court, al- Fārābī, first and foremost, lived as a scholar and seeker of truth. The glamour and the glory of the court never allured him, and, in the garb of Sufi, he addressed himself to the hard task of a scholar and a teacher; and he wrote his books and his treatises among murmuring rivulets and the thick foliage of shady trees.

Mac Donald maintains that al- Fārābī was the very base of the pyramid of Muslim Philosophy while Ibn Khallikan says that no Muslim thinker was able to reach the same position with al- Fārābī in philosophical knowledge. His system was a creative synthesis of Platonism, Aristotelianism and Sufism. He was able to harmonise between Greek philosophy and Islam. It was by the study of al- Fārābī's writings and the imitation of his philosophical systematization that Ibn Sīnā attained to such eminence in philosophy as he did. The great Christian scholarstics, namely, Albert the Great and St. Thomas Aquinas, acknowledged their indebtedness to al- Fārābī in the development of their own systems. Al- Fārābī laid down several rules for teachers honestly striving to train the young students in philosophy. No scholar should start the study of philosophy until he gets very well acquainted with natural sciences. His main philosophical views may be summarized under five headings: 1- Ontology; 2- Metaphysical Theology; 3- Cosmology; 4- Rational Psychology; and 5- Political Philosophy.

Al- Fārābī remained in Syria till his death in 339/950 except for several short journeys abroad, such as his journey to Egypt towards the end of his life. Al- Fārābī was so exalted that the Amir, Sayfu 'd-Dawlah, with his entourage attended the funeral service in honour of the dead scholar, al-Fārābī.

### **Self Assessment Exercise**

Give a short biography of al-Farābī

### **3.2 The Works of al-Farābī**

Al- Fārābī's works may be divided into two equal parts; one dealing with logic and the other with other studies. The logical works are concerned with the different parts of Aristotle's *Organon*, either in the form of commentary or paraphrase. Most of his writings, however, are still in manuscripts. The second category of his works deals with the other branches of philosophy, physics, mathematics, metaphysics, ethics and politics. A good part of it is available and it gives a clear idea of the various aspects of al- Fārābī's philosophy. Al- Fārābī did not mention medicine, and his discussion on chemistry was rather in the nature of a defense than in the form of elaboration and analysis. There is no evidence of his having written any of his books before the age of fifty, and even, if he did write any, it is not certain whether it is philosophical or theological. Ibn Kallikhan maintains that al- Fārābī wrote most of his works in Baghdad and Damascus. Scholars have attempted to make a chronological list of his works.

The style of al- Fārābī is characteristically concise and precise. He deliberately selects his words and expressions as he profoundly thinks of his ideas and thoughts. His aphorisms are pregnant with profound significance. He avoids repetition and redundancy and prefers brevity and conciseness. It seems that al- Fārābī was in favour of esoteric teaching and believed that philosophy should not be made available to the uninitiated among the masses, and that philosopher should expound their ideas garbed in obscurity, mystification and ambiguity. His method is almost identical with his style. He collects and generalizes; he arranges and harmonises; he analyses in order to compose; he divides and sub-divides in order to concentrate and classify. In some of his treatises, division and classification seem to be his only objective. In addition to this, he is fond of opposites; he gives the opposite of almost every term he uses. His main concern has been to elucidate the basis of a theory and the foundation of a doctrine, to clear up obscurities, and to discuss controversial questions in order to arrive at the right conclusions.

In the fourth and fifth/tenth and eleventh centuries, al- Fārābī's works became widespread in the East and they eventually reached the West where some Andalusian scholars became his disciples. Some of his writings were also translated into Hebrew, Latin and various European languages. Those of his works that were translated into Latin and Hebrew had their influence on Jewish and Christian scholasticism.

#### **Self Assessment Exercise**

Assess the philosophical works of al-Farābī

### **3.3 Major themes in the philosophy of al-Farābī**

Al- Fārābī's philosophy has its distinct features and clear-cut aims. Al- Fārābī adopted some of the doctrines of previous philosophers, he constructed them in a form adaptable to his own cultural environment, and made them so closely knit that his philosophy has become most systematic and harmonious. Al- Fārābī is logical both in his thinking and expression, in his argument and discussion and his exposition and reasoning. His philosophy might have depended on some false presuppositions, and might have expounded some hypothesis which modern science has refuted; yet, it placed a very significant role and influenced several schools of thought in subsequent

time. Here are some of his philosophical studies: 1- Logics. 2- The unity of philosophy. 3- Theory of the ten intelligences. 4- Theory of the intellect. 5- Theory of prophecy, and 6- Interpretation of the *Qur'an*.

### 1-LOGIC:

Al- Fārābī was very devoted to logic. His contribution to logic is in two-fold. Firstly, he has properly and lucidly expounded the logic of Aristotle to the Arabic-speaking world. Secondly, he laid the basis for the division of reasoning, indicating that it is demonstrative if it leads to certainty; dialectical if it leads to a semblance of certitude through good intention; sophistical if it leads to a semblance of certitude through bad intention and falsity; rhetorical if it leads to a probable opinion; and poetical if it leads to imagery giving pleasure or pain to the soul. These different kinds are used according to the situation and the standard of the audience. Philosophers and scholars make use of demonstrative reasoning, theologians resort to dialectic syllogisms, and politicians take refuge in rhetorical syllogism. The type of syllogism that should be used to address any group depends on the type of group one wishes to address with regard to their understanding.

### 2- THE UNITY OF PHILOSOPHY:

Al- Fārābī maintains that philosophy is essentially one unit. Thus, is imperative for great philosophers to be in accord, the pursuit of truth being their one and only aim. Al- Fārābī believes in the existence of only one school of philosophy, the school of truth. Therefore, the terms Peripatetic Platonist, Stoics, and Epicureans denote only names of groups of philosophers; all constitute one single school of philosophy. Plato and Aristotle, ‘being the originators of philosophy and the creators of its element and principles and the final authority as regards its conclusion and branches’, are closely in accord in spite of some of their apparent and formal differences. Parties and Cliques are a nuisance in philosophy as well as in politics. Al- Fārābī, as a philosopher and historian, as been fully aware of the danger of partisanship in philosophy. This partisanship was caused by the fanatics among the disciplines of the great philosophers. Instead of attempting to harmonise the doctrine of various philosopher this disciplines managed to widen the gap between two masters by stressing shades of difference and sometimes, even by altering and misrepresenting their doctrines.

This attitude of al- Fārābī is identical with the attitude of the twelfth/ eighteenth century philosophers towards the dispute and dissensions of the Renaissance philosophers.

### 3- THE THEORY OF THE TEN INTELLIGENCE

This theory constitutes a significant part in Islamic philosophy; it offers an explanation of the two worlds: heaven and earth; it interprets the phenomena of movement and change. It is the foundation of physics and astronomy. Its chief concern is the solving of the problem of the One and the many and the comparing of the mutable and the immutable. Al- Fārābī holds that the One , i. e, God, is the Necessary by Himself; hence, he is not in need of another for His existence or His subsistence. He is an intelligence capable of knowing Himself; he is both intelligent and intelligible. He is quite unique by His essence. Nothing is like Him. He has no

opposite or equivalent. Al- Fārābī holds that from the Necessary One flows or emanates only one other by virtue of Its self- knowledge and goodness. This emanent is the first intelligence. By first intelligence of the One flows another intelligence. By virtue of its thinking of itself as possible in itself flow the matter and form of the ‘first heaven’, because every sphere has its specific form which is its soul. In this way, the chain of emanations goes on so as to complete the ten intelligences, and nine spheres and their nine souls.

The tenth and last intelligence, or agent intelligence, is that which governs the sublunar world. From this intelligence flow the human souls and the four elements. These intelligences and souls are hierarchical. Their numbers are ten consisting of the first intelligence and the nine intelligences of the planets and spheres, because al- Fārābī adopts the same theories as held by the Greek astronomers, especially by Ptolemy who opines that the cosmos consists of nine encircling spheres all of which move eternally and circularly around the earth. Intelligences and souls are the originators of this movement. Every sphere has its own intelligence and soul. The tenth intelligence manages the affairs of the terrestrial world while the soul is the immediate mover of sphere by acquiring its power from the intelligence.

However, al- Fārābī does not deny the law of causality and the connection between causes and effects. Through the doctrine of the ten intelligences al- Fārābī was able to solve the problem of movement and change as well as the problem of the One and the many. Likewise, he has used the doctrine of the ten intelligences to reconcile between the traditional Aristotelian theory of matter and the Islamic doctrine of creation.

#### 4- THEORY OF THE INTELLECT

Al – Fārābī has been fully aware of the significance of the problem of the theory of intelligence among the philosophers. He has also recognized in the problem an epitome of the whole Theory of knowledge. He has closely identified it with his own philosophy; for it is related to the theory of the ten intelligence, and it is also the foundation of the theory of prophecy. He has dealt with the problem of the intellect in several places in his works; and he has devoted to its elaboration a whole treatise, ‘On the different meanings of the intellect’. This treatise had a wide circulation among the scholars of the East and the West in the Middle Ages, and it was translated into Latin at an early date. Al- Fārābī classifies the intellect into practical intellect which deduces what should be done, and theoretical intellect which helps the soul to attain its perfection. The latter is again classified into, material, habitual, and acquired.

The theory of intellect by al- Fārābī is based on Aristotle. Al- Fārābī himself declares that his theory depends upon the third part of *De Anima* of Aristotle, however, he added his own contributions to the theory. The general acceptance of this theory in the Middle Ages is very clear. Ibn Sīnā embraced it and added to vigour and clarity to it. Ibn Rushd was also influenced by it. Maimonides (a Jew) copied it while the Christians also dealt with its problem because it is concerned with the theory of knowledge and it is closely connected with the doctrine of the immorality of the soul. This theory has also given rise to different schools, some favouring and the others opposing it. Finally, al- Fārābī’s Theory of the Intellect has been the most significant

of all theories developed by Muslim thinkers, and it has exercised a great influence on Christian philosophy.

### 5- THEORY OF PROPHECY

It is imperative for a Muslim philosopher to give due reverence to prophethood, to reconcile rationality with traditionalism, and to identify the language of the earth with the words of heaven. This has been the endeavor of al- Fārābī. This is because the basis of every revealed religion is revelation and inspiration. A prophet is a man endowed with the gift of communion with God and the ability of expressing his will. Islam, as well as all the great Semitic religions, has heaven as its authority. His theory of prophethood may be considered to be one of the most significant attempts at the reconciliation of philosophy and religion. It may also be considered to be the noblest part of his system; it has its foundation both in psychology and metaphysics; and it is also closely related with politics and ethics.

Al- Fārābī's attempt at reconciliation was not the only motive behind this theory. In the third and fourth/ ninth and tenth century, a wave of skepticism refuting prophecy and prophets was prevalent. Its spokesmen copied some of the arguments held by the unbelievers in prophecy. At the head of these skeptics was ibn al- Rawandi who was once one of the Mu'tazilites but later rejected their doctrine, and Muhammad bn Zakariyya' al-Rāzī , the physician, a tough and powerful adversary. The latter in particular refuted any attempt to reconcile philosophy and religion, assumed that philosophy is the only way to reform both the individual and the society and that religions are the source of conflict and strife. This attack aroused all the various Islamic centres to defend their dogmas. Al- Fārābī had to contribute to that defense. He explained prophecy on rational ground and gave it a scientific interpretation.

The theory of prophecy by al- Fārābī had an obvious impact not only on the East and the West but on medieval and modern history.

### 6-INTERPRETATION OF THE *QUR'ĀN*:

Some of the religious tenets are traditional (Sam'iyyat); they are matters indemonstrable by ways of reasons, such as miracles and the day of judgement, with all the occurrences in that day. The believers have to accept them as a pillar of their religion, and thus, remain content with the veracity of their sources. Al- Fārābī attempts a different interpretation. He admits the validity of miracles since they are the means of proving prophecy. He holds that miracles, although, supernatural do not contradict natural laws. For the source of these laws is to be found in the world of spheres and its intelligences which manage the terrestrial world; and once we get in communion with that world matters other than those of the habitual cause happens to us. A prophet, as mentioned above, has a spiritual power by means of which he is associated with the agent intelligence. It is through this communion that he causes rain to fall, the moon to split asunder, the stick to be transformed into a snake, or the blind and the leprous to be healed. In this way, al- Fārābī tries as the stoics had done before to reduce to causality matters beyond the habitual cause of nature and even contradictory to it.

No spiritualism is so closely related to idealism as that of al- Fārābī. Although, al- Fārābī's doctrine is a reflection of the middle ages, it comprises some modern and

even, contemporary notions. He favours science, advocates experimentation and denies augury and astrology. He believes in causality and determinism that he refers to causes even, for those effects which have no apparent causes. He elevates the intellect to a plane so sacred that he is driven to its conciliation with tradition so that philosophy and religion may agree.

#### Self Assessment Exercise

Write short notes on major themes in Al- Fārābī's philosophy.

#### 4.0 CONCLUSION

Al- Fārābī was born into an environment where cultural and intellectual movement flourished in its utmost level of the time. He studied in Baghdad and remained there for twenty years before he later moved to Aleppo. In Aleppo where the Court of the ruler Sayf al- Dawlah was, al- Fārābī engaged in the intellectual service of this Court. He was in this Court initially as a scholar and later as a scholar and a seeker of truth. The chief elements of his philosophy are: logic, the unity of philosophy, theory of the intellect, theory of the ten intellect, theory of the prophecy as well as the philosophical interpretation of the *Qur'ān*.

#### 5.0 SUMMARY

Al- Fārābī was great philosophers of the old in the history of the Muslim philosophy. He was able to contribute his quota to the development of science and philosophy during the Abbasid regime. He was among those figures that helped in building a lasting legacy and history for the Muslims in the past. Their exploration of the book of Allah (*Qur'ān*) threw light into their heart with which they were able to construct an intellectual tower from which Muslims and non- Muslim were able to benefit.

#### 6.0 TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNNMENT

1. Give account of the early life and career of al- Fārābī.
2. Assess the contribution of al- Fārābī to the Muslim philosophy.
3. Highlight the chief elements of al- Fārābī's philosophy.
4. To what extent would you regard al- Fārābī's philosophy Islamic.

#### 8.0 REFERENCES AND FURTHER READINGS

1. Yusuf, Ali A. (1975), *The Holy Qur'ān*, Text, Translation and Commentary, ed. London, The Islamic Foundation.
2. Maududī, Abul A'lā, (1979), *The Meaning of the Qur'ān*, Islamic Publications Ltd. Lahore – Pakistan
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### **UNIT 3: IBN SĪNĀ (370-428 AH/980-1037 CE)**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor marked Assignment
- 7.0 References and Further Readings

#### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

In the last unit we discuss life and works of al- Kindī and al- Fārābī; their philosophical works in particular. Here we shall discuss life and works of Ibn Sīnā with a view to addressing their contributions to Islamic philosophy.

#### **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

At the end of this unit, you will be able to do the following things:

- Give brief life history of Ibn Sīnā.
- Give an account of their philosophy with which they were addressed among the Muslim philosophers.
- Discuss their areas of agreement and areas of difference of their doctrines with that of non- Muslim philosophers.

#### **3.0 MAIN CONTENT**

His name was Abu ‘Ali al- Husayn bn Abdullah bn Sīnā (370-428/980-1037). He was generally known as Ibn Sīnā or Avicenna (a Latin distortion from Hebrew- Aven Sīnā). He was an encyclopaedist, a philosopher, a physiologist, a physician, a mathematician, an astronomer and a poet. He was believed to be the most famous scientist and philosopher of Islam and one of the greatest of all races, places and time. His thought represents the climax of Arabian philosophy; he is called by the Arabs *al-Shaykh al- Ra’is*; meaning ‘the Shaykh and prince of the learned’. Some of the most important of his philosophical views may be summed up under the following three heads: (a) Metaphysics, (b) Psychology, and (c) Logic.

a. **METAPHYSICS:** There is a part of Ibn Sīnā’s metaphysics which seems quite old-fashioned now. In this metaphysics, Ibn Sīnā discusses a number of intelligences and the souls of planetary spheres emanating from God in hierarchical order. The theory of emanationism, has conceived by Muslim philosophers in general works under two governing principles. First, from God Who is a pure unity it is not thinkable that anything should proceed from Him except that which is itself a unity; from one only one can follow. Secondly, being as two aspects- it is either necessary or possible, it is either essence or existence. In the case of god alone, essence and existence are formed together; in all other beings, essence is separate from existence. From this, it follows that all real beings are possible by their essence and they become necessary by the existence given to them by God.

a. **PSYCHOLOGY:** Ibn Sīnā’s psychology gives a carefully systematized account of the various kinds of minds and their faculties. These have been classified according to

hierarchic arrangement. According to Ibn Sīnā , there are three kinds of minds: (a). the vegetable mind, (b). the animal mind, (c). the reasonable or human mind. The vegetable mind possesses three faculties; nutritive power, power of growth and power of reproduction. The animal mind possesses two kinds of faculties; motive faculties and perceptive or cognitive faculties. Finally, the human mind possesses reason. Reason or intelligence is considered by Ibn Sīnā more or less on the Kantian lines to be of two kinds; the practical reason and the theoretical reason. The practical reason or the active intelligence is that on which morality depends while the theoretical reason or speculative intelligence is that which enables us to have abstract thinking.

b. LOGIC: Ibn Sīnā takes Logic in a very broad; sense syllogistic logic is considered by him just a part of it. He gives logic a very important place among sciences and also recognizes its limitations. The aim of logic, according to Ibn Sīnā is to provide us with some rules the observance of which would be a safeguard against falling into errors in our reasoning. It (Logic) does not discover new truth but helps us make the best use of those we already possess and prevents us from making a wrong use of them. In addition to this, Ibn Sīnā develops his logical views more or less on the model of al-Fārābī's commentary on the logical Organon of Aristotle. He, however, subdivides the science of logic into nine different parts. This classification corresponds practically with the eight books of Aristotle preceded by Prophyry's *Isagoge*, i.e., Introduction, one of the best known works of the Oriental Middle Ages.

The most important basic feature of Ibn Sīnā's thought is that of arriving at definitions by a severely rigorous method of division and distinction of concepts. This lends an extraordinary subtlety to his arguments. It has also enabled him to formulate his most general and basic principles, viz, to every clear and distinct concept there must correspond *distinction in re*, a principle on which later Descartes also based his thesis of the mind- body dualism.

In the nature of Ibn Sīnā's system, there are some concepts and doctrines which are not only capital, but have also both been influential and originally elaborated by him to a greater or lesser extent. Among these are the following: The doctrine of Being, God and the world, doctrine of prophecy, the body- mind relationship, and theory of knowledge.

It may be said that ibn Sīnā is a citizen of two intellectual- spiritual worlds; the Hellenistic and the Islamic. This is based o the fact that he agrees with the Greek thought on some issues and at the same time agrees with the Islamic thought on other issues.

## IBN SĪNĀ 'S INFLUENCE ON THE EAST AND THE WEST

The influence of ibn Sīnā 's thought has been enormous. In the East, his system has dominated the Muslim philosophical tradition right down to the modern era when his place is being given to some modern Western thinkers by those who have been educated in modern Universities. In the *Madrasahs* run on traditional lines, ibn Sīnā is still studied as the greatest philosopher of Islam. This is because no subsequent philosopher of equal originality and acuteness produced a system after him.

To say that ibn Sīnā has dominated the philosophical tradition in Islam is certainly not to say that he has dominated the Islamic tradition itself. On the contrary, his

influence within Islam suddenly and sharply dwindled after the polemics of al-Ghazzālī and later on, of al- Rāzī and then declined and became moribund.

The influence of Ibn Sīnā's thought in the West has been profound and far-reaching. His works were translated into Latin in Spain in the middle of the sixth/twelveth century. His influence in the West started penetrating palpably since the time of Albert the Great, the famous saint and teacher of St. Thomas Aquinas. Aquinas' own metaphysics and theology will be unintelligible without an understanding of the debt he owes to ibn Sīnā. This influenced can be felt in Aquinas' works like *the Summa Theological and the Summa contra Gentiles*. The large amount of criticism frequently rained by Aquinas, and other Western philosophers, on ibn Sīnā shows in what esteem ibn Sīnā was held in the West.

In addition to this, ibn Sīnā's influence is not restricted to Aquinas, or to the Dominican Order or even to the official theologians of the West. The translator of his *De Anima*, Gundisalvus, himself wrote *De Anima* which is largely a wholesale transportation of ibn Sīnā's doctrine. The same thing happens to the medieval philosophers and scientists, Robert Grosseteste and Roger bacon. In the same vein, the finest of the late medieval commentators of Aristotle, Duns Scotus and Count Zabarella, also bear witness to ibn Sīnā's enduring influence. In fact, the historic influence of ibn Sīnā is a phenomenon which is being realized in the West.

Contemporary research in the philosophical thought of ibn Sīnā has brought to light some very significant aspects of his metaphysics. Professor J.L. Teicher of Cambridge University, for one, is of opinion that in ibn Sīnā's speculative system we come across clear anticipations of some of the foremost views of Descarte, Kant and even those of Bergson's; only ibn Sīnā philosophical terminology, according to him, is somewhat foreign to a modern student of philosophy. Descarte is certainly forestalled by ibn Sīnā in his (1) methodological doubt. (2). the certitude of 'I think; therefore I am', and (3). the ontological and cosmological arguments for the existence of God. As far as the views of Kant are concerned, we met in ibn Sīnā not only a well marked distinction between the theoretical and practical reason but also a clear-cut statement of the antinomies of pure reason.

### **Self Assessment Exercise**

Discuss the doctrines of Ibn Sīnā and his influence on general philosophy.

### **4.0 CONCLUSION**

Ibn Sīnā or Avicenna was a philosopher, a physiologist, a physician, a mathematician, an astronomer, an encyclopaedist and a poet. His name was an household name in both the Western and the Eastern world as far as scholarship is concerned. He left an alluring legacy which could not be neglected by the pen of history. Both the West and the East are indebted to him for his achievement as a Muslim scholar who never left his works to float on the sea of philosophy without binding it with religious ropes.

### **5.0 SUMMARY**

Ibn Sīnā was Abu 'Ali al- Husayn bn Abdullah bn Sīnā. His thought represents the climax of Arabian philosophy; he is called by the Arabs al- *Shaykh al- Ra'is*; meaning 'the Shaykh and prince of the learned'. Some of the most important of his

philosophical views may be summed up under the following three heads: (a) Metaphysics, (b) Psychology, and (c) Logic. Influence of ibn Sīnā's thought has been enormous both in the East and in the West, and thus, far-fetched.

### **1.0 TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENT**

1. Describe the life of both Ibn Sīnā and Ibn Khaldūn.
2. Give an account of their philosophy with which they were addressed among the Muslim philosophers.
3. Discuss their areas of agreement and areas of difference of their doctrines with that of non-Muslim philosophers.

### **8.0 REFERENCES AND FURTHER READINGS**

1. Yusuf, Ali A. (1975), *The Holy Qur'ān*, Text, Translation and Commentary, ed. London, The Islamic Foundation.
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### **UNIT 3: ABUBAKR MUHAMMAD AL- RĀZĪ 251/ 864 - 313 / 925**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 Brief Biography of Abubakr Muhammad al- Rāzī
  - 3.2 Al- Rāzī's Philosophy
    - 3.2.1 Metaphysics
    - 3.2.2 Space
    - 3.2.3 Time
    - 3.2.4 Science, Philosophy and Religion
  - 3.3 Al-Rāzī's Works
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor marked Assignment
- 7.0 References and Further Readings

#### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

In the last unit, life and works of Ibn Sīnā were discussed with a view to addressing his contributions to Islamic philosophy. An attempt shall be made in this unit to study life and works of another Muslim great thinkers, Al- Rāzī.

#### **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

At the end of this unit, you will be able to do the following things:

- Describe the life of Abu Bakr Al- Rāzī .
- Discuss his areas of agreement and areas of doctrinal difference with that of non- Muslim philosophers.
- State some of the scholastic works of Al- Rāzī.

#### **3.0 MAIN CONTENT**

##### **3.1 Brief Biography of Abubakr Muhammad al- Rāzī**

Abu Bakr Muhammad ibn Zakariya ibn Yahya al-Rāzī was born in Rayy(a town near modern Tehran) on the first of Sha'bān in the year 251/ 864, (the exact dates of his birth and death are unknown, according to some account; in fact, little authentic is known of the details of his life). In his early life, he was a jeweler, money changer, or more likely a lute-player who first left music for alchemy and then at the age of thirty or after forty left alchemy because his experiments in it gave him some eye disease which obliged him to search for doctors and medicine. As a physician, he is sometimes ranked even higher than Ibn Sīnā. He was very studious and worked day and night. According to Max Meyerhof, al- Rāzī is undoubtedly the greatest physician of the Islamic world and one of the great physicians of all times.

Al- Rāzī's master was 'Ali ibn Rabbān al-Tabarī, a doctor and philosopher, who was born in Mery about 192/ 808 and died some years after 240/855. With ibn Rabbān al-Tabarī he studied medicine and perhaps also philosophy. It is possible to trace back al-Rāzī 's interest in religious philosophy to his master, whose father was a rabbinist versed in the scriptures. Al-Rāzī became famous in his native city as a doctor. He

directed the hospital of Rayy in the times of Mansur ibn Ishaq ibn Ahmad ibn Asad who was the Governor of Rayy from 290-296/ 902-908 in the name of his cousin Ahmad ibn Isma'il ibn Ahmad, second Samanian ruler. It is to this Mansur ibn Ishaq ibn Ahmad that Rāzī dedicated his *al-Tibb al-Mansūrī*, as it is attested by a manuscript of this book. From Rayy al-Rāzī went to Baghdad during the Caliph Muktafi's time (r. 289/ 901-295/907) and there too directed a hospital. Al-Rāzī was generous humane towards his patients and charitable to the poor, so that he used to give them full treatment without charging any fee and even stipends.

Al- Rāzī later became blind in his life. This began with cataract. Perhaps, the reason for the gradual weakening of his sight that finally brought blindness to his eye was that he was always writing and studying. Some say that the reason for his blindness was that he used to eat too much of broad beans (*baqilah*). They say that he refused to be treated for cataract saying that he "had seen so much of the world that he was fed up". But this seems to be more of an anecdote than a historical fact. It was one of his pupils from Tabaristan that came to treat him, but, he refused to be treated saying that it was useless as his hour of death was approaching. Some days after, he died in Rayy, on the 5th of Sha'ban 313 27th of October 925.

Al-Rāzī studied medicine under 'Ali ibn Rabbān al-Tabarī. He studied philosophy under al-Balkhi. This al-Balkhi, according to ibn al-Nadim, had travelled much and knew philosophy and ancient science well. Some even say that al-Rāzī attributed to himself some of al-Balkhi's books on philosophy.

Some of al-Rāzī's opponents are as following:

- 1) Shuaid ibn al-Husain al-Balkhi, with whom al-Rāzī had many controversies, one of these controversies was on the theory of pleasure. His theory of pleasure is expounded in his *Tajdid Ladhdhat al-Nafs* from which Abu Sulaiman al-Mantiqi al-Sijistani gives some extracts in *siwan al-Hikmah*. Al-Balkhi died before 326/940.
- 2) Ibn al-Tammar, whom Kraus believes to be perhaps abu Bakr Hussain al-Tammar. He was a physician and had some controversies with al-Rāzī . Ibn Tammar refuted al-Rāzī 's *al-Tibb al-Ruhani* and al-Rāzī answered this refutation.
- 3) Al-Hasan ibn Mubarik al-Ummi, to whom al-Rāzī wrote two epistles
- 4) Mansur ibn Talhah, who wrote a book on "Being" refuted by al-Rāzī .
- 5) Muhammad ibn al-Layth al-Rasa'ili whose writing against alchemists was answered by al-Rāzī .
- 6) Ahmad ibn al-Tayyib al-Sarakhsī (d. 286/899), an elder contemporary of al-Rāzī . Al-Rāzī refuted him on the question of bitter taste; al-Rāzī refuted also his master, Ya'qub ibn Ishaq al-Kindi who had written against the alchemists.
- 7) Jarir the doctor who had a theory about the eating of black mulberry after water-melon.
- 8) Abu Hatim al-Rāzī the most important of all his opponents d. 322/933-934) and one of the greatest Isma'ili missionaries. He reproduced controversies between him and al-Rāzī in his *A'lām al-Nubuwah*. Thanks to this book, al-Rāzī 's ideas about prophets and religion are preserved for us.

- 9) Al-Kayyal, a Mutakallim, against whose theory of the *Imām*, al-Rāzī wrote a book.
- 10) We should add to all those known by names many others who were refuted by al-Rāzī especially the Mu'tazillah and several Mutakallims.
- 11) Abu al-Qāsim al-Balkhi, chief of the Mu'tazilah of Bagdad (d. 319 931), was a contemporary of al-Rāzī ; he composed many refutations of al-Rāzī 's books, especially his '*Ilm al-Ilahi*'. He had controversies with him especially on time.
- 12) Al-Misma'i, a Mutakallim who had written against the materialists and against whom al-Rāzī wrote a treatise.

#### Self Assessment Exercise

Give a short biography of Abubakr al-Rāzī.

### 3.2 AL- RĀZĪ'S PHILOSOPHY

Al- Rāzī is a pure rationalist who believes in reason and in reason alone. His exaltation of reason is best expressed on the first page of his *al- Tibb al- Ruhani*. He says: God, glorious is His name; has given us reason in order to obtain through it from the present and future the utmost benefits that we can obtain; it is God's best gift to us... It is by reason we perceive all that is useful to us and all that makes our life good. By it we know obscure and remote things, those which are hidden from us; by it, too, we succeed to the knowledge of God, which is the highest knowledge we can obtain. Reason should be referred to in everything and be allowed to judge all matters; we should do according to its commands to us.

Even the most rationalistic mind could not exalt reason so clearly and so highly. There is no place for revelation or mystic intuition. It is only logical reason which is the unique criterion of knowledge and conduct. No irrational force can be invoked. Al-Rāzī is against prophecy against revelation, against all irrational trends of thought.

The real doctrine of al-Rāzī should be searched for in his *kitab al-Ilm al-Ilahi*. Among his philosophical doctrines are as follow:

#### 3.2.1 METAPHYSICS

As a philosopher al- Rāzī is an original and independent thinker. He does not follow the trodden path of Aristotelian physics and metaphysics. When one begins to expound al-Rāzī 's metaphysics, one at first comes across a small treatise attributed to him: *Maqālah li Abi Bakr Muhammad Ibn Zakariya al-Rāzī fi ma ba'd al-Tabi'ah*. There is much doubt about the authenticity of this treatise, because its contents do not agree entirely with al-Rāzī's known doctrines. So, either it may belong to another period of al-Rāzī's intellectual known doctrines or it may contain only a systematic historical expose of other people's ideas without reference to his own, or it may not be by al-Rāzī at all. Therefore, some scholars thought it to be spurious and cannot even belong to another period of al-Rāzī's spiritual development.

The fundamental concepts in the metaphysics of al- Rāzī are the five eternal principles as reported from the ancient Greeks which he names as follows: 1. Creator; 2. Universal Soul; 3. Prime Matter; 4. Absolute Time; 5. Absolute Space. These principles have been expounded in an independent work titled: 'Discourse on the Five

Eternal Elements'. Al -Rāzī's philosophy is chiefly characterized by this doctrine of the five Eternal. But he distinguished between time and duration by saying that number applies to the one and not to the other, because finiteness attains numerality and therefore, the philosophers have defined time as the duration of what has a beginning and an end, whereas duration (*dark*) has neither beginning nor end. He said also that in Being these five are necessary: the sensible in it is the matter formed by composition; it is spatial, so there must be a space; alternation of its modes is a characteristic of time because some precede and others follow and it is by time that oldness and newer and simultaneous are known; so time is necessary.

The body of the sphere is also composed of the particles of matter, but of composition differs from the compositions of other bodies. The proof of this is that the movement of the sphere is not directed to the centre of the world, but to its periphery. Its body is not very compact, as that of the earth, not very rarefied as that of fire or air.

Qualities such as heaviness, levity, darkness and luminosity are to be explained by the more or less vacuity which is within matter. Quality is an accident which is attributed to substance, and substance is matter.

Al-Rāzī gives two proofs to establish the eternity of matter. First, creation is manifest; there must then be its Creator. What is created is nothing but formed matter. Why then do we prove, from the created, the anteriority of the Creator, and not the anteriority of the created being? If it is true that body is created (or more exactly: made (*masnu*) from something by the force of an agent, then we should say that as this agent is eternal and immutable before His act, what receives this act of force must also have before it received that act. This receiver is matter. Then matter is eternal.

The second proof is based on the impossibility of *creation or nililo*. Creating that is to say, making something out of nothing is easier than composing them in forty years. This is the first premise. The wise creator does not prefer to do what is farther from His purpose to what is nearer, unless He is incapable of doing what is easier and nearer. This is the second premise. The conclusion from these premises is that the existence of all things should be caused by the Creator of the world through creation and not by composition. But what we see is evidently the contrary. All things in this world are produced by composition and not by creation. It necessarily follows that He is incapable of *creation ex nihilo* and the world came to be by the composition of things the origin of which is matter.

### 3.2.2 SPACE

As it is proved that matter is eternal and as matter should occupy space so there is eternal space. This argument is nearly the same as that given by al-Iranshashi. But al- Iranshashri says that space is the manifest might of God. Al-Rāzī could not follow his master's vague definition. For him, space is the place where matter is.

Al-Rāzī distinguishes between two kinds of space; universal or absolute and particular or relative. The former is infinite and does not depend on the world and the spatial things in it.

Vacuum is inside space and consequently, inside matter. As a proof of the infinity of space, the partisan (a) Iranshashri and al-Rāzī ) say that a spatially thing cannot exist without space, though space may exist without spatialist things. Space is nothing but the receptacle for the spatialised things. What contains the two is either a

body or a not- body. If it is a body, it must be in space and outside this body there is space or no space; if no- space it is a body as finite. If it is not- body, it is space. Therefore, space is infinite.

### 3.2.3 TIME

Al- Rāzī is against those Aristotelian philosophers who maintain that Time is the number of the movements of the body, based on the fact that if it were so, it would not have been possible for two moving things to move in one time by two different numbers.

Al- Rāzī maintains that Time is eternal. It is a substance that flows. He distinguishes between two kinds of time: absolute time and limited time. The absolute time is durable, external and moving while the limited time is that of the movements of the spheres and of the sun and the stars.

### 3.2.4 SCIENCE, PHILOSOPHY AND RELIGION

Unlike most of the Muslim philosophers, al- Rāzī denies the possibility of reconciling philosophy with religion. According to him, religions- most of them- are hostile to philosophical speculation and in a way also to scientific research. His views against religion are the most violent that appeared in the course of the Middle Ages. It is alleged that in these works al- Rāzī took up to some extent the arguments of the contemporary Manichaeans against positive religions.

## 3.3 AL-RĀZĪ 'S WORKS

Al- Rāzī ,s works are on different topics. The works can be classified as follows:

- (a) Philosophy and hypothetical science
- (b) Logic
- (c) Metaphysics
- (d) On medicine
- (e) Mathematics and Astronomy
- (f) Commentaries, abridgments and epitomes
- (g) Physics
- (h) Theology
- (i) Alchemy
- (j) Atheistic books and othe miscellaneous works

### SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Analyse the contribution of al- Rāzī to Muslim philosophy.

## 4.0 CONCLUSION

Al- Rāzī , when compared with his time, he is considered as the most vigorous and liberal thinker in Islam and perhaps, in the whole history of human thought. He is extremely confident in the power of reason. He believed in man, in progress, and in God the Wise. He did not believe in any religion. He had no organized system of philosophy. He is an original and independent thinker.

## 5.0 SUMMARY

Abu Bakr Muhammad ibn Zakariya ibn Yahya al-Rāzī was born in Rayy on the first of Sha'ban in the year 251/ 864. He was better known as a physician and a philosopher. The fundamental concepts in the metaphysics of al- Rāzī are the five eternal principles: 1. Creator; 2. Universal Soul; 3. Primeval Matter; 4. Absolute Time; 5. Absolute Space. Different philosophical works are credited to him just as works on other disciplines, most importantly, in the field of medicine.

## 6.0 TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. Describe the life of both Abu Bakr Al- Rāzī and Ibn Rushd.
2. Discuss their areas of agreement and areas of difference of their doctrines with that of non- Muslim philosophers.
3. State some of the scholastic works of Al- Rāzī and Ibn Rushd.

## 7.0 REFERENCES AND FURTHER READINGS

### 9.0 REFERENCES AND FURTHER READINGS

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**UNIT 4: AL- GHAZZĀLĪ (450/503- 1058/III C.E.)**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 Brief Life History
  - 3.2 Al-Ghazzālī's Search for Truth
  - 3.3 Al- Ghazzālī's Attack on the Philosophers
  - 3.4 Metaphysics, Causality, Space, Time and Logic
  - 3.5 Sufism, Self/Soul
  - 3.6 God, the World and the Hereafter
  - 3.7 Ethics
  - 3.8 Al-Ghazzālī's Impact in the History of Muslim Thought.
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor marked Assignment
- 7.0 References and Further Readings

**1.0 INTRODUCTION**

Any attempt to discuss philosophy in Islam without mentioning Al- Ghazzālī is grossly incomplete. In this unit, you will be acquainted with the life and works of the great theologian, ṣūfī, Jurist and philosopher.

**2.0 OBJECTIVES**

At the end of this unit, you will be able to do the following things:

1. Describe the life of al- Ghazzālī and his works.
2. Précis the various scholastic groups examined by al-Ghazzālī in his search for truth.
3. Analyse al-Ghazzālī's condemnation of the metaphysics of the philosophers.
4. Expatiate on al-Ghazzālī's concept of causality.
5. Explain al-Ghazzālī's submissions on Space, Time and Logic.
6. Discuss al-Ghazzālī's submissions on Sufism, Self and Soul.
7. Highlight al-Ghazzālī's impact in the history of Muslim Thought.
8. Give Al-Ghazzālī's philosophy of life on earth and in the hereafter
9. Provide an eye-bird's view of Al-Ghazzālī's perception of Ethics.
10. Discuss al- Ghazzālī's influence on both Jewish and Christian scholasticism.

**3.0 MAIN CONTENT****3.1 Brief life History**

Al-Ghazzālī , Abu Hamid Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn Ahmad al- Tūsī al-Shafī‘ī was born in 450/1058, at Tabaran near the city of Tus is Khurāsān. His father was a pious dervish Sūfī figure, an illiterate and dealer in cotton thread (Ghazzāl). His epithet, al- Ghazzālī thus derived from this occupation of his father.

Al- Ghazzālī lost his father at an early age and spent his orphan years in the custody of a pious ṣūfī who happened to be his father's friend along with his brother who also later made a mark as a great mystic. At his boyhood stage, he began the

study of theology and canon- law initially in his native town under Shaykh Ahmad ibn Muhammad al- Rādhkhānī al-Tūsī and then at Jurjān under the Imām abu Naṣr al- Ismāīlī. According to al-Ghazzālī, his desire for all these at that period was acquisition of wealth and reputation. He later stayed for a while in Tus and possibly during this period studied Sufism under Yusuf al- Nassāj.

When he reached twenty he enrolled at al- Nizāmiyyah Academy of Nishāpur to study under Imām al- Haramayn, al- Juwaynī who was the most distinguished Ash‘arite theologian at that period. Among those subject taught in that academy are theology, natural sciences, Sufism, dialectics, philosophy, canon- law and logic. His tutor, *Imām* al- Haramayn was a teacher who gave room to freedom of thought and expression of his pupils. He used to engage them in debates and discussions of all kinds. Through all these exercises, al- Ghazzālī was able to display his proof of great learning and a tendency towards philosophising. Al- Ghazzālī was a born critic and possessed great independent of thought. His hatred for dogmatic teaching began while he was in this academy. He, thus, freed himself from the bondage of authority (*taqlīd*) and even showed the signs of skepticism.

Furthermore, al- Ghazzālī later became a disciple to Fadl bn Muhammad bn ‘Ali al- Fārmadhī al-Tūsī. Al- Fārmadhī was a pupil of al- Ghazzālī’s uncle. It was from al- Fārmadhī that al- Ghazzālī learnt more about the theory and practice of Sufism. He even practiced rigorous ascetic and *ṣūfī* exercises under his guidance but not to the desired effect. Unfortunately, al- Ghazzālī felt philosophically dissatisfied with the speculative systems of the scholastic theologians and could not accept anything on authority. At the same time, the *ṣūfī* practices also failed to make any definite impression on him for he had not received any sure results.

Al- Ghazzālī was at his twenty- eight when al- Fārmadhī and *Imām* Haramayn died 477/10884 and 478/ 1085 respectively. He was so energetic, ambitious and famous throughout the Islamic world at that time for his scholastic activities. He, therefore, joined the court of Niżām al-Mulk where scholars and learned men in different fields used to display their talents. When al-Ghazzālī was thirty- four, Niżām al- Mulk appointed him to the Chair of Professor of theology in the Niżāmiyyah Academy at Baghdad in 484/1091. This was as a result of the wealth of knowledge he had acquired in different fields.

As a Professor in Baghdad, Ghazzālī made a thorough study of philosophy. He was convinced with the fact that philosophical theory could not form the basis of religious thought. He made a line of demarcation between philosophy and religion. In his opinion, philosophy cannot give true information of the reality; philosophy is nothing but organised common Sufi in his mystical act of experience can have the knowledge of truth. It is only in this act of experience that the can attain truth.

Al- Ghazzālī gave final shape to the teachings of the *Asha‘rites* and modified their system with a touch of Islamic mysticism. His system is regarded as the highest form of Muslim theology as well as the highest authority of the Sunni school of Islamic Jurisprudence. He is known as the saviour of Islam because he saved the religion of Islam from the foreign and non-Islamic influences. He was more of a reformer than a critic. His *Iḥyā’ Ulūm-ud-Dīn* (Revival of Religious Sciences) is considered to be the greatest work on religion ever produced in the history of Muslim thought. It is said “if the book of Islam were destroyed it would be but a slight loss if

only the *Ihyā'* of Al-Ghazzālī were preserved. The *Ihyā'* was originally written in Arabic, and Al-Ghazzālī himself wrote an abridgement of it in Persian language under the title of *Kimiya Sa'adah* (the Alchemy of Happiness) it contains eight sections of that abridgement ...For his meritorious works, the Muslims have coveted him with the title of *Hujjatu 'l-Islam* (the proof of Islam). Professor MacDonald calls Ghazzālī the greatest, certainly the most controversial figure in the history of Islam, and the only teacher throughout the generations ever put by Muslims on the same level with the four *Imāms* of the Islamic schools of Jurisprudence.

Al-Ghazzālī started his research with an attitude of skepticism, Descartes, long after, followed the same method in his philosophical pursuit. It is said that if Descartes knew Arabic, he would have been called a plagiarist. Descartes doubted even the primary ideas of his own mind as they are of deceptive nature, for, they are accumulated through sense-organs and sense-organs often deceive us in the act of perception. Therefore, perceptual knowledge cannot always be relied upon and hence cannot be true.

### **Self Assessment Exercise**

Give a short biography of al-Ghazzālī.

### **3.2 Al-Ghazzālī's Search of Truth**

In his research of truth, he reviewed the various schools of thought. They were:

1. The Scholastic theologians.
  2. The Talimites.
  3. The Philosophers.
  4. The Sufis.
1. The scholastic theologians (Asharites) could not give any positive doctrine for the attainment of truth.
  2. The Talimites also could not satisfy al-Ghazzālī as their approach was dogmatic in search of truth.
  3. The philosophers, who call themselves masters of logic and demonstration, were condemned by al-Ghazzālī in consideration of incompetency of reason, their only institution to deal with the ultimate truth.
  4. The sufis, who claim to know the manifestation of truth by an immediate act of intuition as common men perceive material phenomena, had a great appeal to him.

For the purpose of his scrutiny, Al- Ghazzālī divided philosophers into three groups.viz Materialists (*dahriyūn*), Deists / Naturalists (*tabī'iyyūn*) and Theists (*ilāhiyyūn*). The materialists opine that matter contains the promise and potency of all forms of existence. That is, matter is the only reality from which the existence of all other beings is derived and not through any act, work or design of any creator. They do not believe in a Creator. They maintain that, matter is eternal and guided mechanically by its inherent laws. Al-Ghazzālī could not agree with them

that the doctrine regards everything to be inert matter while his view of soul is essential reality.

The Deists believe in God (Creator) without accepting revelation. *Al-Ghazzālī* rejected this theory also as it deprives the world of its spiritual value.

Theists are persons who were influenced by the teachings of Aristotle. Aristotle's philosophy led them to intellectualism. *Al-Ghazzālī* made critical study of those views. He left no stone unturned to establish his own views and chalked out a general scheme of philosophical sciences. Some are connected with religion among these sciences while others are not. Those that are connected with religion are Metaphysics, Politics, Ethics and Psychology. Those that are not connected with religion are Mathematics, Logic, Physics, Arithmetic, Geometry, Astronomy and Medicine.

After careful examination of all the philosophical system, *al-Ghazzālī* declared the extreme *Mu'tazilites* and philosophers as the enemies of Islam. Some of the *Mu'tazilites* gave so much emphasis upon intellect that they were inclined to identify Aristotle with the holy *Qur'ān*. This was really a fatal attempt. It was *al-Ghazzālī* who successfully restored the prestige of Islam from its confused state of existence brought about by the *Mu'tazilites*

### **Self Assessment Exercise**

Give short notes on the various groups examined by *al-Ghazzālī* in his search for Truth.

### **3.3 Al- Ghazzālī's Attack on the Philosophers**

The critical examination of the method and doctrines of the philosophers is the most exciting and important phase of his intellectual inquiry. He was not as such against philosophical investigation. In the history of Muslim thought, he was the first theologian who was thoroughly schooled in the ways of the philosophers. The doctors of Islam before him considered this as a dangerous study. They at times, dabbled into it just to qualify themselves for polemics against the philosophers. Whereas, *al-Ghazali* believed that a man cannot grasp what is defective in any of the sciences unless he has so completely grasped the science in question. This in such a way that he equals its most learned exponents in the appreciation of its fundamental principles and even goes beyond and surpasses them. *Al- Ghazzālī* never said a word against the philosophers till he had completely mastered their systems. Among his philosophical works are: *Mi'yar al- 'ilm fi fann al- Mantiq* (The Touchstone of Science in Logic), *Maqasid al- Falasifah* (The Intentions of the Philosophers), and *Tahafut al- Falasifah* (The Incoherence of the Philosophers). Also among his celebrated works is *Ihya' 'Ulum al- Din* ( The Revival of Religious Sciences), *Maqsad al- Asma'* (The Intention

of Names), *al- Munqidh* (The Deliverer), *Mishkāt al- Anwār* (The Niche of Lights) and *Minhāj al- 'ābidīn* ( The Path of the Worshippers).

Some of the philosophical problems analysed by al- Ghazzālī in these works, most of the time, against the philosophers, and seldomly, in support of their views are:

### 3.4 Metaphysics, Causality, Space, Time and Logic

#### METAPHYSICS:

Al- Ghazzālī condemned metaphysics. He declared the Muslims who inclined to this doctrine as unbelievers. He reduced their views into twenty propositions of which three are religious and seventeen heretical. He declared al- Fārābī, Avicenna and their followers who tried to identify the *Qu'rān* with Aristotle as enemies of Islam. This was based on the fact that they made an attempt to indentify *Qu'rān* with Aristotle. To refute the views and to prove them to be futile he wrote his world famous book *Tahāfut al-Falāsifah* ‘Destruction of Philosophers’. The propositions opposed by *al-Ghazzālī* are the following:

1. That, Life hereafter will be spiritual and not corporeal. Therefore, future rewards will be spiritual and not corporeal. *Al-Ghazzālī* agrees with them so far they add spiritual punishment but differ when they reject physical punishment for in that case it contradicts the assertion of the divine law.

2. Al-*Ghazzālī* says that a view by the philosophers that God knows only the universals and not the particulars is irreligious. This is due to the fact that the *Qu'rān* asserts truly, ‘*Not an atom's weight in heaven or earth can escape His knowledge*’.

3. Likewise, their view that the world is eternal and not created. It is also irreligious. All these views were rejected by al- *Ghazzālī* as extremely irreligious and heretical.

However, al- *Ghazzālī* does not condemn as irreligious the philosophical views of those Muslim philosophers in their denial of the attributes of God and how they maintain that He knows by His essence only and not by any attributes accessory to His essence.

#### Self Assessment Exercise

Analyse *al-Ghazzālī*'s condemnation of the metaphysics of the philosophers briefly.

#### CAUSALITY:

Al- *Ghazzālī* conceives God to be the Cause of all causes. He is the only efficient cause and the final cause. He is the beginning and He is the end. The final cause is uncaused, self-caused and the first cause. He holds that the Divine causality should be defined as free Creative Might. He is free in will and efficient in operation. No limit can be set to His causative activity. Thus *al-Ghazzālī* advocates the Qu'ranic view of causation. Creation was with certain object and end. The underlying purpose is knowledge of God and love of God. Thus he believes in immanent causality. What Hume advocated later, Al-*Ghazzālī* had realized seven hundred years earlier. In similar to Hume's opinion, he maintains that there is no necessary connection between the antecedent event and the consequent event, the preceding and the succeeding

phenomena. Though there is no necessary connection, the succession is uniform and not chaotic. Al-Ghazzālī maintains that causality is nothing but uniform succession of events in nature. With regard to this conception, he was in advance of his age. Now, the uniformity of succession is causal connection. In the causal connection, we cannot proceed on through an infinite series of causes and effects. We must stop at a point. An infinite regress of causes and effects is unthinkable or inconceivable and as such absurd. According to the philosophers, the essence of the first cause is thinking that it is willing. Thus, it is not an act of thinking that created the world but an act of willing. God has created man in His own likeness. Thus human soul is endowed with essence of willing. Willing resides in the soul. God soul is the only causality. The act of thinking presupposes the act of willing. It is volition and not cognition that creates. It is Volo- Ergo- Sum and not Cogito-Ergo-Sum. God is creative will. He creates everything in nature and in the universe. Every object in the world has not only been once created by God but from moment to moment they are being created by the direct personal act of God. God is the only true cause of everything.

### **Self Assessment Exercise**

Expatiate on al-Ghazzālī's concept of causality.

### **SPACE AND TIME:**

The philosophers hold that the world is eternal. It flows from God to eternity. It is finite in extent and infinite in duration. That is, finite in space and infinite in duration. That al- Ghazzālī argued that such a view involves contradiction. For space and time cannot be of different nature. time is infinite, space must also be infinite. Space and time are relation of things. This relation of thing is created by God in us. He agrees with Kant in as much as space and time are necessary pre-conditions of all experiences. We cannot think things without space and time first of all make experiences possible. Space is external perception and time is pure intuition. i. e. the former is outer experience and the latter is inner experience. But at last al- Ghazzālī maintained that space and time were created by God along with things and they are only relation between things created by Him in us.

### **LOGIC:**

Al- Ghazzālī opines that the science contains nothing for and against religion. Its object is to study different kinds of proofs in reasoning and arguments. Although, he was opposed to Aristotle; yet he accepted his logical axioms are firmly established. The principle of contradiction was of much significance to him as he applied the principle to refute the different doctrines of the philosophers, namely:- World, Soul, Universe and God. But logic is not free from abuse. For, logicians demand certain conditions as postulates which lead them to absolute certainty but on religious questions they cannot postulate any of these conditions. This is a serious disadvantage arising from the study of logic.

### **Self Assessment Exercise**

Explain al-Ghazzālī's submissions on Space, Time and Logic

## SUFISM, SELF AND SOUL:

### Sufism

Al- Ghazzālī made a thorough study of the works of the Ṣūfīs and came to the conclusion that one must combine theory with practice. Detachment from the worldly affairs is not the true method for the achievement of perfection and his grace. He stressed on two kinds of revelation: major and minor. The major revelation can be received even by ordinary man in a state of ecstasy provided that he develops his soul by self-culture and discipline. A Sufi renunciates worldly luxury and enjoyment and devotes himself to the love of God. Intuition or ecstasy of the Sufis is a sort of revelation according to Ghazzālī . The Prophets and the Sufis can reach up a stage wherefrom they can see God in their own souls. A Sufi must have a firm faith in three things: God, inspiration and the Last Judgement.

Thus Ghazzālī developed Sufism and gave a final shape to place it on Islamic foundation. He died as a great Sufi (at Tus) on 19-12-1111 A.D. His death has been narrated by his brother Ahmed: ‘On Monday at dawn my brother performed the ablution and prayed. Then he said, ‘Bring me my grave clothes’, and he took them and kissed them, and laid them on his eyes and said, I hear and obey the command to go into the King. And he stretched out his feet and went to meet Him and was taken to the Good-will of God’ Most High’.

### SELF/ SOUL:

Al-Ghazzālī, like Kant, insists that the philosophers through their natural arguments cannot give any conclusive proof for the spirituality, substantiality, unity, immortality, e.t.c, of the soul. He made an incisive and analytic attack on the philosophers on this as that of Kant but probably more violent. He even joined the philosophers to refute the position of the scholastic theologians, who maintained that the soul is a kind of subtle body or an accident and not a substance. His conception of human soul is essentially based on the teachings of the *Qur’ān* and Hadith.

Al- Ghazzālī’s conception of soul runs parallel to his conception of God. Soul is unity like God and primarily and essentially a will like God. The soul is a substance which is simple, indivisible and immutable. Human soul is spiritual and abstract. It is a shadow of the Universal soul, bearing likeness to God Himself. The soul is a mirror on which the image of God is reflected in an act of intuition. Intuition is the only faculty of the soul by which the knowledge of God can be experienced. The self is the key to the knowledge of God. ‘He who knows himself knows God’. There is nothing nearer than the self and without knowing the self we cannot know anything else. The first step to self-knowledge is to know both the aspects. The soul does not belong to the visible world but to the invisible. It has come to this world as a traveler visits a foreign country. It is written in the *Qur’ān*, ‘*they will question thee concerning the spirit, Say: The spirit comes by the command of my Lord*’ (Q17: 85). The body may be figured as kingdom, the soul as the king, difference senses and faculties as constituting an army, reason as the prime minister, passion as the revenue collector and anger as the police officer. The revenue collector and the police officer must be subordinate to the king but if they lord over reason the soul will be ruined. If the soul

is made dirty by the lower faculties, true knowledge of God cannot be attained. The duty of the king (reason) is to keep the soul clean, pure and unperturbed. The multiple experiences come and go but the soul as a substance remains forever. The proper nourishment of the soul is love of God. To be absorbed in the love of anything but God is the fall of soul. The body perishes while the soul endures. The soul is to take care of the body. The bodily needs are simple and they should be supplied in accordance with the dictates of reasons. In his opinion, vice is the disease of the soul. Prophets are spiritual physicians who guide and cure men from their mental and spiritual diseases.

### **Self Assessment Exercise**

Summarise al-Ghazzālī's conclusions after his thorough investigations on Sufism, Self and Soul.

### **3.6 God, the World and the Hereafter**

#### **GOD:**

Al-Ghazzālī believes that God is a living Being. He is exempted from anthropomorphic attributes. However, God has infinite number of attributes which do not affect the unity of His being and not the same as that of the created beings. The attributes should be taken in a higher sense because He is purely a Spiritual Being.

God is the Creator and Controller of all universes, Nourisher, Sustainer, Destroyer, Omnipresent, Omnipotent, Omniscient, Unlimited, All-Vigilant, the Compassionate, the Merciful, the Just, the True, the Holy, the Peaceful, Undivisible, Unit, Ever Active, the Faithful, Remaker, Generous, and All Loving . He is free from all desires, Who has existed and shall exist, Who is not born of anybody and who has not given birth to anybody. Love of God is the duty of every Muslim. ‘He who knows God loves him’ said, ‘Whoever wishes to see God, God wishes to see him’. This is the reason behind Sufi’s renunciation of the worldly luxury and enjoyment and devotes himself to the love of God.

#### **THE WORLD:**

The world is just like a market-place passed by traveler on their way to their final destination. It is just like a guest-house where we stay for a while. A man has got two qualities: essential and non-essential. As long as he is with non-essential qualities, he is said to be in this world’: when they depart and his essential attributes remain, he is said to have gone to ‘the next world’. The world we do live consists of three department,-animal, vegetable and minerals. The products of all these three as stated above are needed by man. They are given by God only to keep the body fit vehicle for soul in its journey to the next world. The worldly pleasures and enjoyments are always ignored by the religious and pious men. This world is a place for preparation for the next world. The world is a curse, and all which in it is also in a curse except the rememberance of God are ‘those good things’ which, as the *Qur’ān* says, ‘pass not away’.

### THE HEREAFTER:

This is discussed under metaphysics in philosophy. Muslims are kept well informed about the joy of heaven and pains of hell which will follow this life. Man has got two souls: an animal soul and a spiritual soul. The animal soul is the seat of heart and the spiritual soul is an angelic nature. The animal soul dies but the spiritual soul endures. Prophet said, ‘Death is a welcome gift of God to the believers. Man was sent down into this world against his will. God said in the *Qur’ān*: ‘*Go down from hence all of you: there will come to you instruction from Me, and those who obey the instruction need not fear, neither shall they be grieved*’ (Q2: 38). The future life of a man will be determined according to the merits and demerits of his activities in this present world. Thus, death is the gate-way of entrance to the next world.

### Self Assessment Exercise

Give Al-Ghazzālī’s philosophy of life on earth and in the hereafter in a nut-shell.

### 3.7 Ethics:

Al- Ghazzālī is the best known Muslim writer on moral subjects. He was widely read scholar who was very versed in the ethical thought of the Greeks from which he was influenced, though he did not depend on Greek philosophy for his inspiration. Ethics is the study of good conduct in man. It lays down rules and principles for regulating human actions in the moral world. It investigates the final end, the Supreme Good, the Ideal End, Ultimate purpose of human life. It is studied under psychological and philosophical methods. Al-Ghazzālī maintains that such a study is dangerous. According to al- Ghazzālī, Philosophy cannot give good guide to the seal path of Ultimate Good. It is only religion which guides and regulates our activities in the moral world. What Ethics calls search for *Summum Bonum*, the Ideal End or the Ultimate Purpose, al- Ghazzālī calls the search for God. Such a search for God is possible only by the development of our intuitive faculty. And only in a state of ecstasy we can have a direct vision of the Divine illumination (*a’n-nūr al-ilāhī*). The soul rises to a higher level and it can easily distinguish between right and wrong. The soul is conscious of its union with God and attains his grace. Such should be the conduct of a wise man. Asceticism is the spirit that runs throughout al- Ghazzālī’s ethics. He does not deal with the heroic virtues like courage, bravery, e.t.c, in detail. Rather, he lays greater emphasis on the purification of the heart after one has severed all ties with this world.

### Self Assessment Exercise

Provide an eye-bird’s view of Al-Ghazzālī’s perception of Ethics.

### 3.8 Al-Ghazzālī’s Impact in the History of Muslim Thought.

The following may be summed up as the impact left behind as an hallmark in the history of Muslim philosophy:

- a. Al- Ghazzālī ’s greatness lies in the fact that his thoughts anticipated the main features of Western philosophy from Descartes to Bergson. He thus exerted greater influence over the East and West.
- b. Al- Ghazzālī occupies a place on the level with the four *Imāms* of Islam.

- c. Al- Ghazzālī is the defender of Islam. He saved Islam from its deterioration and decay brought about by the influences of non- Islamic agencies and reconciled between religion and philosophy.
- d. Al- Ghazzālī led the people back from the scholastic speculations to the teaching of the *Qur’ān* and *Hadīth*. He saved Islam from the influences of Greek Philosophy. He placed religion above philosophy.
- e. Al- Ghazzālī proved the superiority of intuition over intellect and considered revelation as the true source of knowledge.
- f. Al- Ghazzālī shaped Sufism on Islamic foundation.
- g. To Al-Ghazzālī , love of God is the surest method of attaining knowledge of God.
- h. Al- Ghazzālī condemned Mu‘tazilism and reformed Ash‘arism. He also freed the Sunni school from Ash‘arite dogmatism.
- i. Al- Ghazzālī was the last great Iranian scholastic. With the fact that many scholars of repute in Iran, Turkey, Egypt, and India were products of his age, none could attain his popularity.
- j. He was a voluminous writer. Over seventy works are credited to him. He wrote twenty theses on the views of philosopher. He lived only 55 years on earth with that immense contribution to scholarship.
- k. Al- Ghazzālī emphasizes on religious discipline and activities. He placed faith (*Iman*) in between fear and hope, for strengthening religious motive in man. Fear of fire in hell and hope of happiness in heaven destined to keep up a Muslim in a balanced position. This will induce him to rightful deeds and refrain him from misdeeds and irreligious activities.
- l. Al- Ghazzālī declares the Muslim rationalists, who tried to identify the *Qur’ān* with the Aristotle as enemies of Islam and thus restored the position and prestige of the *Qur’ān*.
- m. Al- Ghazzālī saved Islam from the un- Islamic speculations and laid stress on the empirical aspect of Islam. He sees religion as a phenomenon which is more than law and doctrine. It is rather, according to him, soul,s experience.
- n. Al- Ghazzālī brought down philosophy to the average level of understanding with a view to showing the futility and inherent defects of philosophy.

### **Self Assessment Exercise**

Highlight al-Ghazzālī’s impact in the history of Muslim Thought.

### **4.0 CONCLUSION**

Al- Ghazzālī’s greatly influenced Jewish and Christian Scholasticism and modern European philosophy. The scene for the reception of al- Ghazzali’s teaching with regard to philosophy was set by Saadia Gaon , who may be described as the Al- ‘Ash‘arī of Eastern Judaism. However, the first man to take the role of al- Ghazzālī in Jewish scholasticism was his contemporary, Jehuda Halevi who was born in Toledo about 479/1086. After him came another Jewish thinker, Hasdai Crescas (741- 813/ 1340- 1410), who drew his inspiration from al- Ghazzālī ’s *Tahāfut*.

Works of al- Ghazzālī were later translated from the Arabic version to Latin and soon after to Hebrew. *Maqāṣid al- Falāsifah* is one of those works by al- Ghazzālī which the Christian and Jewish scholars enjoyed through its translated copy. Dominican Raymun Martin (d. 684/ 1285) was one of the greatest of the European Christian writers who was influenced by al- Ghazzālī. St. Thomas Aquinas was one of the greatest of the Christian writers who acknowledged his indebtedness to al- Ghazzālī .

## 5.0 SUMMARY

The Objective Section of this Unit has itemized the major issues in the contributions of al-Ghazzālī to the Muslim philosophy. This included the training received by him in his educational career, a précis of the various scholastic groups examined by him in his search for truth, analyses of his condemnation of the metaphysics of the philosophers, an expatiation of his concept of causality, his submissions on Space, Time, and Logic. It also included a short exposé of al-Ghazzālī's submissions on Sufism, Self and Soul, and philosophy of life on earth and life after death. A highlight of al-Ghazzālī's perception of ethics and impact in the history of Muslim Thought concluded the section.

## 6.0 TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. Discuss the life of al- Ghazzālī and his works.
2. Give an account of al- Ghazzālī's attack on the Greek philosophers and their Muslim protagonists.
3. Enumerate the areas of Kantian philosophy which are in conformity with Ghazzālī an's philosophy.
4. Explain the areas of similarity between al-Ghazzālī and Descartes.
5. Explain how far the influence of al-Ghazzālī's philosophy is felt in both Jewish and Christian scholasticism.

## 6.0 REFERENCES AND FURTHER READINGS

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## **MODULE 4: Muslim Philosophers of the West**

**Unit 1:** Ibn Bājjah (d.1139), Ibn Tufayl (d.1185)

**Unit 2:** Ibn Rushd (520-95/1126-98)

**Unit 3:** Ibn Khaldūn (732-808/1332-1406)

**Unit 4:** Transmission of Philosophy by the Muslims to the West.

### **UNIT 1: IBN BĀJJAH (D.533/1138) AND IBN TUFAYL.**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor marked Assignment
- 7.0 References and Further Readings

#### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

In the last unit, the life and philosophical works of the Muhammad al-Ghazzālī were imparted to you. Major themes in his contribution to philosophy were highlighted and expatiated upon. His disputation with the philosophers as well as the positions occupied by him in the various circles of philosophers of the East and the West were analysed for your reading and digest. An attempt shall be made in this unit to study life and works of another two Muslim great thinkers, Ibn Bājjah and Ibn Tufayl.

#### **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

At the end of this unit, you will be able to:

1. Describe the life of both Ibn Bājjah and Ibn Tufayl.
2. Give an account of their contribution to the Muslim philosophy.
3. Discuss their areas of agreement and areas of doctrinal differences with that of non-Muslim philosophers.

#### **3.0 MAIN CONTENT**

##### **3.1 Ibn Bājjah. d.533/1138**

Abu Bakr Muhammad ibn Yahya ibn al-Sa'igh (generally called ibn Bājjah and known as Avempace or Avenpace both in Latin and English, was a celebrated Spanish Muslim philosopher, commentator of Aristotle, scientist (i.e. physician, mathematician and astronomer), poet and musician. The significance of the title 'Ibn Bājjah, of which Avempace (Avenpace) is a Latin distortion, is unknown. Ibn Khallikan derived it from a Frankish word meaning silver. The Arabic *misbah* 'Ibn Sa'igh' too means literally the son of a goldsmith.

He was born in Saragossa about the end of the fifth century, i.e. before 1106 C.E.; the exact date of his birth is not known. He finished his academic career at Saragossa and prospered there. He was an accomplished scholar of Arabic language and literature and claimed to be well versed in twelve sciences. Historians were unanimous in regarding him as a man of vast knowledge and eminence in various sciences. Due to his growing fame, Governor of Saragossa, abu Bakr Sahrawi, appointed him as his vizier.

He practiced as a physician in his native city, but after the fall of Saragossa to the Christians in 513/1118 he resided in Seville, via Valencia, later to Granada. Later on, he went to Fez in Morocco where he was made vizier at the Almoravid court. On his arrival to Shatibah, he was accused of heresy and atheism and imprisoned by Amir abu Ishaq Ibrahim bn Yusuf ibn Tashifin. He was later freed probably by the recommendation of his own disciple, father of ibn Rushd. When he was at Fez, he entered into the Court of the Governor, ibn Tashifin. He rose to the rank of vizier by dint of his ability and rare scholarships. The post he held for twenty years. He was later accused of heresy at the time of great troubles and turmoil in the history of Spain and north-west Africa when lawlessness and chaos prevailed all over the country. As a result of this, he was poisoned to death in 533/1138 by Ibn Zuhr (a famous physician of the time) through the intrigue of his enemies.

The many-sided Ibn Bājjah wrote a good number of small treatises on medicine, geometry, astronomy, natural science, alchemy and philosophy. He criticised some of Ptolemy's assumptions in astronomy, thus preparing the way for Ibn Tufayl and al-Bitrūjī.

In philosophy he wrote many treatises, a number of them on logic, a treatise 'On soul', another 'On the Union of Universal Intellect with Man', 'A Farewell Letter', and 'The Regime of the Solitary'.

To these may be added commentaries on physics, meteorology, zoology and other works of Aristotle. The most famous of his philosophical treatises, in fact the only ones which have come down to us, are 'The Regime of the Solitary' and 'A Farewell Letter' which he wrote to a friend who was leaving Spain for Egypt. Both these works are, at present, known originally through their Hebrew translation; 'A Farewell Letter', however, was also translated into Latin. His 'Regime of the Solitary' was perhaps inspired by the adverse circumstances and the uncongenial environment in which he was placed. His were the days of orthodoxy and obscurantism rather than of liberalism and enlightenment. As a philosopher and free-thinker all along he developed a keen-edged sense of loneliness – hence the title of his work: 'The Regime of the Solitary'.

In his philosophy, Ibn Bājjah was skilled both in the theory and practice of the mathematical sciences, and devoted to speculative studies like logic, natural philosophy and metaphysics. He has undoubtedly relied in philosophy and logic on the works of al- Fārābī which he had made considerable additions to. He adopted an entirely different method of philosophical investigation. He deals with the problems on the basis of reason alone. He was also an admirer of Aristotelian philosophy whose works Ibn Bājjah wrote commentaries on.

Ibn Bājjah is an attributive pluralist rather than a monist in Metaphysics. According to him, there are three kinds of entities that may be considered ultimate, namely: matter, soul and intellect; in modern terminology they correspond more or less to matter, life and mind. To bring out the respective differentia of the three, Ibn Bājjah observes that whereas matter is moved from without, intellect or spirit unmoved in itself confers movement upon others and soul occupies a middle position being that which moves itself. Thus matter is not free: its movements are not explained with reference to itself but with reference to intellect and soul. On the other hand, soul is free in its activities. Both intellect and soul, confer movement upon

matter but, whereas soul may be moved by itself, intellect itself remains unmoved. There is no change in the latter; it is perfect. Its forms and principles are eternal; there is so to say a higher kind of necessitarianism in their working.

On the basis of his ontological views Ibn Bājjah could very well explain the determinism of nature, the freedom of man's ego and the necessitarianism of reason.

The relation between soul and intellect or spirit as well as intellect and knowledge is considered by Ibn Bājjah at length. He maintains that the form of matter is the spiritual principle of the matter which may subsist apart from matter or material objects. Thus the universals subsist independently of the material particulars; they are separate substances, or spiritual entities. Ibn Bājjah believes that the contemplation of these abstract forms of universals gives us a contact with the realm of the spirit and assists us in the apprehension of the ultimate reality. The first stage in the development of the spiritual in man depends upon the comprehension on the spiritual, i.e. the rational in the material world. The next stage is to apprehend the *a priori* perceptual forms like those of space and time. Further developed, the ego of man comes to recognize the pure reason apart from the sense-experiences and apprehends the *a priori* principles such, for instance, as the fundamental laws of logic and the axioms of mathematics. Ibn Bājjah, the universal in the particulars, the *a priori* forms of sense-experience and the *a priori* principles of Pure Reason, are apprehended through intuition rather than through discursive intellect. The apprehension of these comes from above, i.e. from the active intellect. The highest stage in the development of the spiritual or the rational in man is to have a direct apprehension and contact with the purely rational reality or with the pure thought of the spirit, i.e. the so-called active intellect. In Ibn Bājjah's opinion, the intellect is the most important part of man. He maintains that correct knowledge is obtained through the intellect which alone enables us to attain prosperity and to build character.

Ibn Bājjah describes *ittisal* or the union of the human intellect with active intellect of which it is an emanation as a supreme beatitude and the *summum bonum* of man's life, just like most of the Muslim philosophers did. By the operation of the active intellect on the latent intellect in man the latter is awakened to the spiritual life, but eternal life consists in the complete union of man's intellect with the active intellect.

In addition to this, Ibn Bājjah believes that thought is man's highest function. Through thought man comes to comprehend the ultimate reality, just like the opinion of the Hegelians. In the highest grade of knowledge which is self-consciousness, i.e. consciousness of the pure reason by itself, thought becomes identical with reality. He adds that our perceptual experiences of the particulars as compared with the purely conceptual experiences of the universals are deceptive.

Regarding mystic ecstasy he has no special aspiration for it. According to him, it is an experience of emotional nature communicable only through imagery and metaphor. He does not hesitate to separate himself from the orthodox theologians and the mystics. He feels sorry that al-Ghazzālī should have emphasized mysticism and revelation at the expense of philosophy, for the regards the teachings of revelations as the figurative presentations of the truths which are more completely and clearly comprehended through pure reason. This is quite in line with the Hegelian mode of thinking; no wonder, he was poisoned to death on the charge of atheism.

Ethical views of ibn Bājjah can be gathered from his ‘Regime of the Solitary’. Moral action, according to him, is the action which belongs to the true nature of man. The action directed by reason is a free action, accompanied with the consciousness of a rational purpose. If somebody, for instance, breaks a stone to pieces because he has stumbled against it he behaves without purpose like the child or the lower animal, but if he does this in order that others may not stumble against it, his action must be considered manlike and directed by reason.

As far as ethics is concerned, Ibn Bājjah divides actions into animal and human. The former are due to natural needs and are human as well as animal. To declare an action animal or human it is necessary to have speculation in addition to volition.

Ibn Bājjah occupied himself mostly with the problems of relation of man to society and concluded that to act in a rational way a man has to keep himself ‘far from the madding crowd’ and their lower enjoyments. He maintained that an ideal society of wise men would grow up like plants in the open air without the need of a gardener’s care. It is interesting to note that there is no need of a gardener’s care. It is interesting to note that there is no need of physicians, psychotherapists and judges in a society of the wise. They behave as friends amongst themselves attached to one another through love. As friends of God, they would find a repose and bliss in their continuous search for the absolute truth.

### **Self Assessment Exercise**

Discuss life and philosophical doctrines of Ibn Bājjah .

### **IBN TUFAYL (d.1185)**

Abu Bakr Muhammad bn Abdul- Malik bn Muhammad bn Tufayl al- Qaysi was known as Ibn Tufayn and in Latin as Abubacer. He was a Spanish Muslim philosopher, physician, mathematician, poet, and scientist. He was the first great leader of philosophical thought in the *Muwahhid* Spain. He belonged to the prominent Arab tribe of Qais. He practiced medicine at Granada, and also became secretary to the government. Later, in 549/1154, he became Private Secretary to the Governor of Ceuta and Tangier, a son of Abdul- Mu’mín, the first *Muwahhid* ruler of Spain who captured Morocco in 542/ 1147. He finally rose to the eminent position of the physician and Qadi of the Court and vizier to the *Muwahhid* Caliph Abu Ya‘qub Yusuf (r. 558- 80/ 1163- 84). Caliph Abu Ya‘qub Yusuf had keen interest in philosophy and his Court was turned into an abode of galaxy of leaders of philosophical thought and scientific method. He, thus, made Spain ‘the cradle of the rebirth of Europe’. It was through this Caliph ibn Tufayl had opportunity of meeting with ibn Rushd.

Ibn Tufayl’s fame rests on the celebrated philosophical romance work he authored: *Hayy bn Yaqzān* (The Living One, son of the Vigilant). It was one of the most remarkable books of the Middle Ages. This work has been translated into a number of languages. Its translated copy can be found in Hebrew, Spanish, Russian, Latin, Dutch, Persian, Urdu, French and English. The book, *Hayy ibn Yaqzan*, symbolically represents the theme that human intellect partakes of the divine intellect and hence has the capacity to know reality in its innermost truth, independent of

prophetic revelations as recorded in the scriptures. Ibn Tufayl uses the word ‘intellect’ in a very wide sense, almost in the sense of ‘the mystic’s vision’. This is in alignment with the philosophy of Neoplatonism of which the book has quite a good share.

The book has a sub-title, namely *Asrar al-Hikmat al-Ishraqiyah*, ‘Secrets of the Illuminative Philosophy’, which indeed is the title of a work by Ibn Sīnā . *Hayy Ibn Yaqzan* too is the title of a short mystical allegory written by Ibn Sīnā . There are some points of resemblance between Ibn Tufayl’s book and the *Tadbir al-Mutawahhid* (The Regime of the Solitary) of Ibn Bājjah . Ibn Tufayl, however, drew his inspiration, not only from Ibn Bājjah , but also from the earlier philosophers beginning with al-Fārābī. In the introduction of his work, Ibn Tufayl praises his predecessors, notably al-Fārābī, Ibn Sīnā , al-Ghazzalī and Ibn Bājjah , though he also expresses some disagreement with them.

The story of the novel, *Hayy Ibn Yaqzan*, briefly is as follows:

A boy is born without parents on a lonely tropical Island near the Equator (probably the Island of Ceylon). A gazelle feeds the boy and becomes his first teacher. Suckled by the gazelle he grows up among the animals and learns their language. Later he arms himself with a stick and recognizes the importance of his hands. He now becomes a hunter. The gazelle that suckled him dies and shortly afterwards Hayy begins to dismember its body with a sharp stone, till at last he comes to the conclusion that heart is the central bodily organ and the seat of the principle of life. He also gets thereby his first notion of some invisible thing that escapes the animal organism after its death. As the body of the gazelle begins to decay Hayy learns from the ravens how to bury it. By chance he discovers dead trees catching fire through the rubbing of their dry branches; he brings the fire to his dwelling place and keeps it going. This discovery induces him to reflect in the invisible fire of the animal warmth which he notices in the living creatures, as a result, he dissects other animals.

His skills make further progress. He clothes himself in skin, learns to spin wool and flax and make needles. Swallows show him how to build a house and he teaches birds of prey to hunt for him and learns the use of eggs of birds and the horns of cattle. Hay studies the animals of island, its plants and minerals and its atmospheric phenomena, etc. and this attains at the highest degree of knowledge possessed by the most learned of the natural scientists. Hayy then passes from science to philosophy and later from philosophy to mysticism.

He is struck by the multiplicity of the natural phenomena and endeavours to find a principle of unity in them all, and finally the all-pervading unity of the world. From his study of physical nature in every part of which he makes the distinction between matter and the spiritual from, ‘he infers the existence of a pure and invariable form as the cause of all that is’. Observing diligently and pondering deep, Hayy makes a venture to know the Deity from His manifestations in Nature. God seems to him to have free-will and to be wise, knowing, merciful, etc.

Hayy now proceeds to study his own spirit: the medium through which he has obtained the knowledge even about the attributes of God. He comes to realize that he belongs to a realm above the animal kingdom and that he is akin to the spirit that controls the celestial spheres. It is in respect of his body only that he belongs to the earth, his soul or spirit, which is the highest that is in him, is indubitably of a celestial

origin. That by which he has come to recognize the Supreme Being must itself be akin to that Being.

These reflections urge him to lay down the rules for his future conduct. He restricts his bodily wants to what is absolutely necessary. He prefers to eat ripe fruits and vegetables and it is only in case of necessity that he resorts to animal food while he fasts as often and as long as possible. He resolves that no species of animals or plants should become extinct on his account. He aims at scrupulous cleanliness and in his walks round the beach of the island; he maintains a certain harmony in all his movements in conformity with those of the heavenly bodies. Through such measures Hayy is gradually enabled to raise his true self above the heavens and the earth and thus reach the Divine Spirit. At this stage, in place of his earlier philosophical meditations on the existence of God, he begins to enjoy a 'beatific vision' and mystical union.

After Hayy has often enjoyed the raptures of mystical ecstasy, his solitude is interrupted by a visitor. Upon an adjacent island live a people, who, though avowed followers of the Islamic faith, are given to worldly pleasures. A friend of Salaman, the ruler of this island, named Asal (Absal) with a view to devoting himself to study and ethical self-denial sets towards Hayy's island supposing it to be uninhabited. Here he meets Hayy and when the latter at last acquires human language the two are convinced that the religion of the one in its rational interpretation and the philosophy of the other are substantially the same. With a view to preaching this pure version of the dogma to the credulous multitude, Hayy proceeds to the neighbouring island accompanied by Asal. But their mission fails and the two friends are finally convinced that the Prophet acted wisely in giving the truth to the people under a veil of figurative language. They, therefore, decide to go back to the uninhabited island so that they may further give themselves to the life consecrated to God.

*Philosophical Bearings of Hayy Ibn Yaqzan.* Studied closely Ibn Tufayl's philosophical novel gives interesting views about problems of great philosophical import. Is natural religion, i.e. religion without revelation possible? The novel seems to accord this opportunity in the most conspicuous terms. Even if God had not revealed Himself through His prophets, the scientists, mystics and philosophers would have discovered Him through the study of nature, human self and universe. By the study of Nature it should be possible even to work out the attributes of God such as His wisdom and love. This is an empirical approach *par excellence* towards the proof and recognition of God. God is verily the unifying principle of the universe and the philosopher should not take long to arrive at this truth. The mystic, by delving deep into himself, obtains the vision of God in the spiritual aspiration of his own soul. For him it is not only the vision, it is a living contact with the Ultimate Reality – a union with God. It becomes evident to him that God and human spirit are akin to each other; human spirit verily partakes of the Divine Spirit; hence the title *Hayy Ibn Yaqzan*.

Ibn Tufayl in his novel clearly brings out the distinction between the two forms of knowledge: the logical and mediate and the intuitive and immediately. It is only through the latter that we have living with the Divine Reality. The former, however, has the advantage of being expressible in words and is thus communicable to others.

But, there are no means of expressing the latter save by imagery and parables; hence the philosophical allegory

The central theme of the novel is the avowal of a close affinity between religion and philosophy; the philosopher through his vision comes to recognize the profound truths of the dogmas of religion, clothed though they are in a figurative language. The philosopher who alone comprehends the deep significance of religious truths should, however, desist from an attempt of making the multitude understand the philosophical interpretation of religious dogmas. People are much too engrossed in the social and economic struggle of life and are seldom disciplined enough to comprehend the philosophical subtleties and profundities. According to ibn Tufayl, . Philosophy is purely intellectual apprehension of truth in concepts and images which by their very nature, are beyond the grasp of conventional modes of expression.

Ibn Tufayl concludes that the Holy Prophet was right in presenting the truths of religion to the masses in the language of the *Qur'an*. It is admittedly true that people in general can be disciplined to a moral and social order only by the religion of parables, miracles and ceremonies and supernatural punishments and rewards; thus alone can they be induced to lead a moral life.

#### **4.0 CONCLUSION**

Ibn Bājjah was skilled both in the theory and practice of the mathematical sciences, and devoted to speculative studies like logic, natural philosophy and metaphysics. In his philosophy, he deals with the problems on the basis of reason alone while his ethical philosophy he declares actions to be animal or human.

*Hayy Bin Yaqzan* is the only celebrated philosophical romantic work of Ibn Tufayl. It is his only extant work till today. Its influence on the succeeding generations in the West is greatly felt. It is recognized as one of the remarkable books of the Middle Ages. It is said that it resembles *Arabian Nights*, The book is translated to many European and Eastern languages. Its method is both philosophical and mystical. One of the Spanish writers, Gracian Baltasar declared his indebtedness to ibn Tufayl which occupied the world's attention during the first four decades of last century.

#### **5.0 SUMMARY**

Ibn Tufayl (in Latin as Abubacer), was a Spanish Muslim philosopher, physician, mathematician, poet, and scientist. He was the first great leader of philosophical thought in the Muwahhid Spain. He belonged to the prominent Arab tribe of Qays. He practiced medicine at Granada, and also became secretary to the government. He was later alleged of heresy and consequently, was poisoned.

Ibn Bājjah is known as Avempace or Avenpace, in Latin and English respectively, was a celebrated Spanish Muslim philosopher, commentator of Aristotle, scientist (i.e. physician, mathematician and astronomer), poet and musician. Ibn Bājjah wrote a good number of small treatises on medicine, geometry, astronomy, natural science, alchemy and philosophy. He also criticised some of Ptolemy's assumptions in astronomy. He maintains that there are three kinds of entities: matter, soul and intellect. He also maintains that correct knowledge is obtained through the intellect. And this alone enables us to attain prosperity and to build character.

**6.0 TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENT**

1. Describe the life of both Ibn Bājjah and Ibn Tufayl.
2. Give an account of their philosophy with which they were addressed among the Muslim philosophers.
3. Discuss their areas of agreement and areas of doctrinal difference with that of non- Muslim philosophers.

**8.0 REFERENCES AND FURTHER READINGS**

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**UNIT 2: IBN RUSHD (520-95/1126-98)****CONTENTS**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor marked Assignment
- 7.0 References and Further Readings

**1.0 INTRODUCTION**

Muhammad bn Ahmad ibn Rushd (520-95/1126-98), better known in the Latin West as Averroes, lived during a unique period in Western intellectual history. Just fifteen years before his birth, al-Ghazzālī (1058-1111), had died after striking a blow against Neoplatonic philosophy and its protagonists among the Muslim Philosophers. From such bleak circumstances emerged the Spanish-Muslim philosophers, of which the jurist and physician Ibn Rushd came to be regarded as the final and most influential Muslim philosopher, especially to those who inherited the tradition of Muslim philosophy in the West. This Unit provides you with an overview of Ibn Rushd's contributions to philosophy, emphasizing his commentaries, his original works in Islamic philosophy, and his lasting influence on medieval thought and the Western philosophical tradition.

**2.0 OBJECTIVES**

At reading and digestion of this Unit you should be able to

- Give a biography of Ibn Rushd

**3. MAIN CONTENTS****3.1 Brief Life History**

Ibn Rushd, was the greatest philosopher of the Muslim West in the Middle Ages. He was born in Cordova to a renowned family famous for their deep knowledge in *Fiqh*. His father and grandfather held the office of the Chief Justice of Andalus. By the virtue of his family background he was able to reach a high standard in Islamic Studies. He acquired the Islamic sciences by oral transmission from an authorized doctor. His father taught him *al- Muwatta* of Maliki School. From that authorized he studied the *Qur'ān* and its exegesis, the *Hadīth*, *Fiqh*, Arabic language and literature, among others. In addition to this, he had other scientific studies, such as medicine, physics, philosophy, astronomy, mathematics, and logic, from different scholars.

Ibn Rushd was famous with the title ‘Commentator’ in medieval Europe. This was mentioned by Dante in his Divine Comedy (Inferno). During Dante’s time ibn Rushd was considered to be the greatest commentator of Aristotle’s works. He wrote this commentary on Aristotle’s work by the command of a leader of the Almohids (*al-Muwahhidūn*) who conquered Cordova in 543/ 1148 and toppled the government of the Almoravides (*al-Murābitūn*). Ibn Rushd was able to serve three successors of ibn Tumart (who claimed to be al- Mahdi): Abdul- Mu’mīn, Abu Ya‘qub, and Abu Yusuf. These Almohid rulers had strong interest in philosophy, astronomy, astrology, and secret interpretation. It was Abu Ya‘qub, one of these leaders, that ordered him to write the commentary on Aristotle’s work. Ibn Rushd also attained eminence as a physician and astronomer, but this has been overshadowed by his position as a philosopher.

Aristotle for Ibn Rushd was the supremely gifted thinker, the greatest philosopher ever born, and the sage who was in possession of an infallible truth. Ibn Rushd’s philosophy represents the culmination of Muslim thought in one essential direction, i.e. in the understanding of Aristotle. From al-Kindi onward it has been the effort of nearly all the Muslim philosophers to understand the system of Aristotle, but most of them could not succeed in this endeavour because of their unfortunate sidetracking into the stagirite’s apocryphal works. By the time of Ibn Rushd quite a large number of Aristotle’s works had become available in Arabic and the spuriousness of many pseudo-Aristotelian works had come to be recognised. He wrote three kinds of Commentaries: the great, the middle and the lesser. The great commentaries are called the *Tafsir*, following the model of the exegesis of the *Qur’ān*. The lesser ones are called *talkhis*, meaning: summary. One may say that these commentaries reveal the true Rushdian philosophy.

Ibn Rushd was an enthusiastic admirer of Aristotle’s logic: without it one cannot be happy. For his devotion to Aristotle, Ibn Rushd had to pay heavily. The main difference between Ibn Sīnā and Ibn Rushd thus was that the latter has a purer and more thorough understanding of Aristotle. Ibn Rushd was attacked severely by the orthodoxy for his attempt to bring Aristotle and Islam together. The theologians felt that Ibn Rushd, in order to reconcile Islamic dogmas with Aristotelian philosophy, had reduced the former to a bare minimum; they were very bitter on this and leveled many charges of heresy against him.

As a philosopher, Ibn Rushd found that it was his duty to defend the philosophers against the fierce attacks of the *fuqahā’* and the theologians. The main doctrines of Ibu Rushd’s systems which later brought the charge of heresy upon him concerned the question of the eternity of the world, the nature of God’s apprehension and foreknowledge and the immortality of the human soul and its resurrection. Ibn Rushd may easily appear heretical with regard to these doctrines, but one comes to realize that he in no way denies the dogma. He only interprets it and expounds it in his own manner so as to bring it into conformity with philosophy.

### **Self Assessment Exercise**

Comment on the Biography of Ibn Rushd.

### 3.2 HIS PHILOSOPHY

#### 3.2.1. *Eternity of the World*

As far as the doctrine of the eternity of the world is concerned, he does not deny the principle of creation but only offers an explanation of it which is different from that given by the theologians. Ibn Rushd apparently seems to submit that the world is eternal but at the same time makes the important distinction, as empathetically as he can, between the eternity of God and the eternity of the world. There are two kinds of eternities: eternity with cause and eternity without cause. The world is eternal because of a creative and moving agent eternally working upon it; God, on the other hand, is eternal without a cause. The priority of God to the world does not consist with reference to time; God's existence does not imply time, since He exists solely in timeless eternity. God's priority to the world consists solely in His being its cause and that from all eternity. For Ibn Rushd there is no creation *ex nihilo* once for all, but rather a creation renewed from moment to moment. According to his views, a creative power is perpetually at work in the world, moving it and maintaining it. It is easy to reconcile this notion with that of evolution and even with the Bergsonian type of evolution, through with Ibn Rushd it is not so much the creatures as the creative power which evolved, the final result being the same.

#### 3.2.2 *Knowledge of God*

Regarding the knowledge of God, Ibn Rushd seems to subscribe to the view of the philosophers that God apprehends His own being only. With the philosophers this supposition is necessary in order that God may retain His unity, for if He should recognize the multiplicity of things He would have multiplicity in His own being. This line of thinking forces God to live entirely within Himself and has knowledge of the existence of His own self only and nothing besides that. In this case God's omniscience becomes doubtful. Obviously, this was only a twisted interpretation of the doctrine of the philosophers forced upon them by the theologians in order to bring them to an embarrassing predicament.

Ibn Rushd's system has greater elasticity; it vouchsafes that God in the knowledge of His own essence knows all the things of the world, for finally He is the ultimate source and ground of them all. God's knowledge is not like that of man's; it is a higher kind of knowledge of which we humans can form no idea. This is because God would have sharers in His knowledge if such happens. Furthermore, God's knowledge like that of human beings is not derived from things; rather things derive their being through God's knowing them. God's act of creating and knowing is the same in the sense that God's knowledge is verily the cause through which things come into existence. Ibn Rushd does not circumscribe God's knowledge merely to the universals. For him it is not legitimate to make the distinction between the particulars and the universals with references to God's knowledge; this distinction is of human origin and does not apply to God. God's knowledge can be called neither particular nor universal. Hence the accusation of the theologians that the system of Ibn Rushd leaves no scope for God's omniscience or knowledge of the world with its multiplicity of particulars is altogether unfounded.

### *3.2.3 Personal Immortality of Human Soul*

Ibn Rushd has been further charged with denying personal immortality to human soul, for the individual souls after death, according to him, are alleged to pass into the universal soul. What Ibn Rushd is supposed to have said about soul applied merely to intellect. The soul must be distinguished from intellect not only in the system of Ibn Rushd but also in the systems of other Muslim philosophers. Intellect in man is the faculty through which he knows the eternal truths without the media of sense-organs, e.g. fundamental laws of thought, the axioms of mathematics, ultimate values, etc. These come to it from the over-mind of the universe, i.e. the active intellect, which is their real source and origin. During its temporary abode in the body the intellect of man suffers separation from active intellect, but after the body has perished at death, itself being imperishable, it goes back to be merged once again into active intellect to live there in eternity along with other intellects. Thus, the immortality of the intellects is not individual but collective; it is not personal immortality but corporate immortality.

This, however, is not the case with human soul. Soul with Ibn Rushd is a driving force which sustains life and effects the growth of organic bodies. It is a kind of energy which gives life to matter. It is not altogether free from matter like intellect but, on the contrary, is closely associated with it. Yet it is independent of the body and can be considered apart from it as form, which is closely associated with matter, can yet be conceptually abstracted from it and conceived independently of it. Thus soul being independent of body may continue to exist after the death of the body in an individual capacity. Ibn Rushd, however, adds very judiciously that a convincing proof for the immortality of human soul cannot be given merely through philosophical argument.

Ibn Rushd's belief in personal immortality is fully confirmed by his view regarding the nature of bodily resurrection. Had he considered personal immortality altogether impossible, as it is alleged, the question of resurrection would not have arisen with him at all. It is a different matter if the theologians have no spared him of heterodoxy even on this score and have reproached him with the denials of the resurrection of the body. His is not the denials but only an interpretation and exposition of the dogma in a manner different form that of the theologians. The body which we shall have in the next world, according to him, will not be the same as our body now, for what has passed away is not reborn in its identity. It can at best appear as something similar. Life hereafter is not mere endlessness but a perpetual growth and development and a continuation of this very life. Just as the soul is to grow and evolve from one stage to another, so has the body to grow and acquire new attributes. The life hereafter will be of a higher kind than this life; bodies there will be more perfect than they are in their earthly form. He carefully avoids all mythopoeia account of life hereafter and disapproves of all popular eschatological representations made merely to feed the imagination.

As Ibn Rushd was subjected to severe criticism by the orthodoxy right in his own lifetime he had of necessity to make his position as clear as he could with regard to the relation of religion and philosophy. He expounded his view on the subject substantially in his two able works (1) A Decisive Discourse on the relation between Religion and Philosophy, (*Faṣlu 'l-Maqāl*) and (2) 'An Exposition of the Methods of

Argument concerning the Doctrines of Religion (*Kashfu `l-Manahij*). His first principle is that philosophy must agree with religion; this in fact was the belief and hope cherished by all the Muslim philosophers. Like Francis Bacon, Ibn Rushd believed that though a little philosophy might incline a man towards atheism a deeper study of it would enable him to have a better understanding of religion.

### INTERPRETATION OF THE *QUR'ĀN*

Ibn Rushd has been believed to have put forward the formula of two truths: the philosophical and the religious. The prophets, in order to appeal to the masses, make use of allegories, parables and metaphors; the philosophers, however, express themselves in a higher and less material form. With regard to the language of the scriptures a distinction must be made between the literal sense and the allegorical sense. If a passage is found in the text of the *Qur'ān*, which appears to contradict the results of philosophy, we may suspect that the passage really has a meaning other than the apparent meaning. This deeper meaning has to be sought after. It is the duty of the multitude to keep to the literal sense: to seek the correct interpretation is the task of the learned. To take a concrete instance the simpleminded would take the statement: 'God is the heaven', in the literal sense and localise Him somewhere in the skies. The learned, knowing that God cannot be represented as a physical entity in space, would interpret this statement to mean that God is exalted above all that is earthly and human. They would maintain that God is everywhere and not merely in the heaven; but if the omnipresence of God be taken again in a spatial sense, this assertion of the learned is also liable to be misunderstood. According to Ibn Rushd, the philosopher who interprets the statement 'God is in the heaven' to mean that God is nowhere but in Himself expresses the purely spiritual nature of God much more adequately than anybody else. Instead of 'God is in the heaven' the philosophers would rather say that 'the heaven is in God'. Thus it might more justifiably be said that space is in God than to say that God is in space.

The philosophers should, therefore, make it a practice not to communicate their interpretations of the dogma to the masses. To this end, Ibn Rushd had insisted that religious dogmas be explained to various people according to their intellectual level. He grades people into three classes. The first and the largest of them is of those who develop a pious faith in the dogmas of religion because of the sermons they receive from the pulpit; they are easily swayed by the mere oratorical effect of speech. This is the class of the unsophisticated orthodox. The second class consists of those whose understanding of religion is based partly upon reasoning but largely on the uncritical acceptance of certain premises from which that reasoning proceeds. Such is the class of the scholastics and the theologians. The third and the last class is the smallest of them all. This comprises those who succeed in having a rational understanding of religion: their beliefs are based on proofs proceeding from premises which have been thoroughly examined and established.

Finally, the tug of war between religion, science and philosophy both in the West and the East at that period put ibn Rushd into disgrace, persecution and later on, exile to Lucena, near Cordova, in 593/ 1196. His writings were publicly burnt. Ibn Rushd was later pardoned and called back from exile by al- Manṣūr. The former then went to Marrākush till his death in 595/ 1198.

## SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Discuss the contributions of ibn Rushd to Muslim philosophy together with the bone of contention between him and the orthodox.

### 4.0 CONCLUSION

Ibn Rushd was the greatest philosopher of the Muslim West in the Middle Ages. He was an enthusiastic admirer of Aristotle's logic. Ibn Rushd was able to defend the philosophers against the fierce attacks of the *fuqahā'* and the theologians. He was charged with denying personal immortality to human soul. In his philosophical doctrines about the interpretation of the Qurān, he maintained that religious dogmas be explained to various people according to their intellectual level.

### 5.0 SUMMARY

Ibn Rushd was famous with the title 'Commentator' in medieval Europe. He is considered as the commentator on Aristotle's work. He was able to defend the philosophers against the fierce attacks of the *fuqahā'* and the theologians.

### 6.0 TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. Write a brief life history of Ibn Rushd.
2. Highlight the areas of differences between al-Ghazzālī and Ibn Rushd.
3. State some of the major contribution of Ibn Rushd to philosophy.

### 7.0 REFERENCES AND FURTHER READINGS

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## **UNIT 3: IBN KHALDŪN (732-808/1332-1406)**

### **CONTENTS**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 A Profile of Ibn Khaldūn as a philosopher
  - 3.2 The Prolegomena (Muqaddimah) of Ibn Khaldūn
  - 3.3 Philosophy, Its Dangers and Limitations According to Ibn Khaldūn
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
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- 7.0 References and Further Readings

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

The contribution of the Philosopher we are going to study in this Unit to philosophy as a whole and that of the Muslim philosophy in particular is remarkably immence. He is the acclaimed first philosopher of history and if he did not surpass all reknowned sociologists past and present he ranked equally with them. Ibnu Khaldun sojourned in Tunisia, Spain and Egypt among other Muslim countries. The title of his work which has been rendered into several languages is *al-Muqaddimah* meaning the Prolegomena. He made it an Introduction to his magnum opus the history of the world which is extant in volumes. Come on board with me and enjoy reading the life, academic career, and the unique contribution of Ibn Khaldun to scholarship and philosophy.

### **2.0 OBJECTIVE**

At the end of this Unit you will be able to

- Discuss the profile of Ibn Khaldūn as a philosopher
- Highlight philosophical themes in the Muqaddimah of Ibn Khaldūn
- Philosophy, Its Dangers and Limitations According to Ibn Khaldūn

### **3.0 MAIN CONTENT**

#### **3.1 A profile of Ibn Khaldūn as a philosopher**

‘Abd Al-Rahmān bn Khaldūn (732-808/1332-1406) was a Muslim historian, philosopher economist, politician and pedagogue. He was the father of the science of history, and one of the founders of sociology. His position as a philosopher in the professional sense of the term has almost been completely eclipsed by this fame as a sociologists and theorician of history. He was hostile towards philosophy and, like Kant, derided philosophers metaphysics. His pronouncements against philosophy are philosophically so significant that no student of philosophy can afford to ignore them.

Ibn Khaldūn produced an independent and original note in Muslim philosophy by doing away with all the Aristotelian and Neoplatonic borrowings. He was one of the first to make a real critical study of the nature, limitations, and validity of human knowledge. He was impressed by none of the Muslim philosophers going before him. He can be compared with Al-Ghazzālī; for both of them had a highly critical attitude towards philosophy, and both strongly maintained that it is not through reason

alone but through religious experience that we apprehend the nature of ultimate reality.

The philosophical views of Ibn Khaldūn are available to us not through any regular and independent work on philosophy but in an introductory volume ‘on the methods of history, called *Muqaddimah*, that is, ‘Prolegomena’ which he wrote before he launched upon his voluminous history, of the world. It is a ‘prolegomena not to all future metaphysics like that of Kant’s, but to all future history, yet, significantly-enough, it serves the former purpose as well as the latter; Both students of philosophy and students of history would benefit from its study no less immense.

Ibn Khaldūn contribution to the science or philosophy of history, epistemology, ontology, sociology, and other cognate branches of study is overwhelming. He is also considered to be the father of the philosophy of history and the founder of sociology.

The great thinkers of the world bestowed upon Ibn Khaldūn many commendatory remarks. The followings are just a few of them.

- (1) Robert Flint, a British philosopher command says; ‘..as regards the science or philosophy of history, Arabian literature was adorned by one most brilliant name. Neither the classical nor the medieval Christian world can show one of nearly the brightness as Ibn Khaldūn.... As a theorist in history he had no equal in any age or country.... Plato, Aristotle, and Augustine were not his peers and all others were unworthy of being even mentioned along with him... He was admirable alike by his originality and sagacity, his profundity and his comprehensiveness.
- (2) Arnold Toynbee, a great British historian, says; ‘ ...in the *Muqaddima* to his Universal History he has conceived and formulated a philosophy of history which is undoubtedly the greatest work of its kind that has ever yet been created by any time to place... in his chosen field of intellectual activity he appears to have been inspired by no predecessor.
- (3) George Sarton, an American historian of science, Ibn Khaldūn was a historian, political, sociologist, economist, a deep student of human affairs, anxious to analyse the past of mankind in order to understand its present and future... one of the first philosophers of history, a forerunner of Machiavelli, Fodin, Vice, Comte and Cournot.

### **Self Assessment Exercise**

Give a critical evaluation of Ibn Khaldūn’s philosophy.

#### **3.2 The Prolegomena (*Muqaddimah*) of Ibn Khaldūn.**

Through his *magnum opus* which he wrote by way of an introduction, (*Muqaddimah*) the rain of all these praises fall on him. His major work *Kitab al-'Ibar* is a universal history written in seven volumes. It seems as if the *Muqaddimah* gave rise to new subjects, *viz* science or philosophy of history and sociology, and in a way that it almost overshadowed the rest of Ibn Khaldūn’s works. It also seems as if Ibn Khaldūn had aspired to become a great historian and instead became a great theorician of history. The *Muqaddimah* is a sort of encyclopedia in a handy form and really a treasure-house of information. It

contains information on many fields of knowledge. Some of them are: geography, climatology, agriculture, alchemy, astrology, magic, ethnology, anthropology, pedagogy astronomy, history, politics, economics, literature, philology logic, dialectics, metaphysics, mysticism, propheticism, psychology parapsychology (clairvoyance, telepathy, divination, dreams) medicine, midwifery, music, meteorology etc.

Ibn Khaldūn opens his 'Prolegomena' by discussing the purpose or value of history, its kinds, and the errors into which historians fall while recording and reporting events. The purpose of history for him is to analyse the past of man in order to understand his present and future and not to arouse the curiosity of the reader. At the same time, the aim of history for him is to describe the story of human civilisation and not merely to narrate the stories of kings and dynasties or prepare the chronicles of wars and pacts. The work is essentially the record of human society, its growth and decay, under different geographical, economic, political, religious and other cultural conditions

Furthermore, Ibn Khaldūn calls attention to a number of pitfalls into which the historians are liable to stumble while he was discussing the scientific method of historical research some of which are: poetic exaggeration, inability to place an event in its proper context, partisanship towards a creed or an opinion, over-confidence of one's resources mal-observation, drawing analogies on superficial resemblances, temptation to win the favour of royal or high-ranked personages, etc. An historian is expected by Ibn Khaldūn to have developed an insight into the laws governing the structure of human society and its transformations. He should have a scientific approach towards the understanding of historical changes. These should not be explained away as had been done in the past merely by alluding to the accidents of Nature such as earthquakes, floods, sandstorms, epidemics, etc., important though they may be. Nor should the great changes in history be explained away with reference to divine interventions. Ibn Khaldūn seems to have no faith in *deus ex machina*. The historian should be biased by no speculative or theological prepossessions. He is required to base his explanations strictly on some empirical evidence, i.e. his own observations and experiences and those of others. While searching for the causes of historical changes he should carefully look into the Climatic, territorial, occupational, economic, social, religious and other cultural conditions of the people under singly. History and sociology are considered by Ibn Khaldūn to be cognate sciences; the study of sociology is a necessary prelude to the study of history. He has a keen realisation of sociological laws governing the course of history. Ibn Khaldūn was the first to state these laws clearly and show their practical application.

### **Self Assessment Exercise**

Highlight philosophy of history as presented in the Ibnu Khaldūns Prolegomena.

### 3.3 Philosophy, Its Dangers and Limitations According to Ibn Khaldūn

Ibn Khaldūn's philosophical views and his attitude towards philosophy may be gathered from the few sections scattered in his Prolegomena entitled 'Dialectics' 'Science of Logic', 'The Dangers and Fallacies of Philosophy', 'Metaphysics', etc.

(a) LOGIC: According to ibn Khaldūn, logic, at its best, sharpens the mind of a student. It makes him only clever and pedantic and not a genuine seeker after truth. Its function is essentially a negative one: it helps us only in knowing what is not true, but not what is true. Ibn Khaldūn pulls logic down from the high place which Ibn Rushd put it and thus, calls it a mere auxiliary or instrumental science and feels sorry that so much time in the educational institutions should be given to the study of this subject.

Logic does not give us any positive knowledge with regard to a particular branch of study; for this we have to resort to observations and experiences, our own and those of others. A genius or a man endowed with scientific talent would generally think logically enough without any formal training in logic. On the other hand, a scholar, in spite of his discipline in logic, may commit many logical fallacies in his actual thinking.

(b) DIALECTICS: According to Ibn Khaldūn, dialectics is only an instrumental science and it only performs merely a negative function. Dialectics is the use of reason and rhetoric to establish the truth of the dogmas of religion and thus amounts to a sort of scholastic philosophy. Ibn Khaldūn, observes that '*ilm al- Kalam*' originated only as a weapon of defence against the atheists and the non-Muslims who attacked the doctrines of Islam. But he adds that though dialectics can very well disprove the arguments against doctrines of religion, it can hardly offer any conclusive arguments to establish the truth of these doctrines. With dialectics we may silence the skeptic and yet fail to convince him and make him religious minded. Dialectics should not be supposed to prove truths of religion, for that is beyond the scope of logical argumentation. Among the negative effects of dialectics is that it is often reduced to mere rhetoric of the worst kind. Its upholder is often lost in the subtleties and sophistries of words and thus tracks off the path of truth. In addition to this, he is generally tempted to show off his own mastery of words rather than seek the truth. Truth thus becomes hidden to him under his playing with words and its styles.

(c) DANGERS AND FALLACIES OF PHILOSOPHY: According to Ibn Khaldūn, the dangers of philosophy are mainly due to the various presumptions and prepossessions of the philosophers; these indeed are false or at least unfounded, yet they do much harm. Some of them he mentions as follows:

- (i) The salvation of human soul is possible merely through abstract philosophical cogitation.
- (ii) Philosophy is competent enough to understand and interpret the truths of religion and is thus capable of being reconciled with it.
- (iii) In the graded series of emanations from God to the world God is directly related only to the first item of that series, namely, the First Intelligence.

- i. The Muslim philosophers were of opinion that true happiness and salvation of human soul lies in abstract philosophical contemplation, just as opined by the Greek masters, Plato and Aristotle,. But this, according to Ibn Khaldūn, is contrary to actual experience: philosophy is a perpetual quest leading nowhere; the more you study it, the greater the confusion and doubt that it brings. Instead of bringing happiness and salvation it might bring misery-and curse.
- ii. According to the Muslim philosophers, philosophy and religion give us the same truth. The only difference is that in philosophy the truth is given in abstract terms while in religion it is clothed in figurative language so as to be intelligible to the masses. Reconciliation of philosophy and religion has been the hope and aspiration of almost all the Muslim philosophers. They believe that a philosopher is not only competent to understand the truths of religion but further that he comprehends them in a purer and better way. According to Ibn Khaldūn all this is highly presumptuous on the part of the philosophers. Ibn Khaldūn warns the philosophers to be aware of the limitations of their method which is nothing but that of concept-formation and abstract reasoning. This he maintains in line with Kant. Through this method, Ibn Khaldūn holds that the philosophers can never reach the ultimate truth independently of religion. Further, there arises no question of reconciling the religious truth with the philosophical truth, for the philosophers have none to offer; their claim that they too possess truth remains unsubstantiated in the final analysis. They further cannot fully comprehend the religious truth which is more a matter of inner intuition, i.e. living experience, than abstract conceptualization and wordy argumentation. Due to the limitation in their method, the philosophers can succeed in reconciling the doctrines of religion with those of philosophy only by a lifeless and listened interpretation of the religious doctrines.
- iii. Ibn Khaldūn strongly suspects the theory of the emanation of a number of intellects and souls from the being of God in an hierarchical fashion as expounded by al-Fārābī, Ibn Sīnā and others to be without any logical or empirical base. It seems to him to be a sort of philosophical cobweb. According to this theory, God is directly related only to the First Intelligence, i.e. the first item of the entire series of emanations between God and the world. On the other hand, the world is directly related only to the last item of that series. This creates a wide gulf between God and the world. If such is the view subscribed to by the Muslim Neo-Platonists, they may be easily shown to be advocating a curious brand of materialism. To say that the world is not the result directly of God's act of creation but an emanation from the last item of the series of emanations is to concede that the world has evolved-from the primal matter.

(d) METAPHYSICS: Ibn Khaldūn believes that metaphysics is an impossible phenomenon. His arguments against this lie in bringing out the limitations of human knowledge which he defends in many ways. The knowledge of the phenomenal world is based on the perceptual experiences while the knowledge of a percipient is limited by the number and capacity of his sense-organs. An example of this is a blind man that has no idea of the visual experiences or the deaf of the auditory ones. Their

denial of the reality of visual experiences and auditory experiences respectively is nothing but gross fallacy. One should learn to feel humble regarding his knowledge of the phenomenal world. This is because the number and the range of our own perceptual experiences are also much limited. There may be beings in the universe better equipped for the knowledge of things, both in range and quality than we are.

There may be beings of an order higher than we are. And as there are grades of being so there are grades of knowledge. Our knowledge, as compared to the knowledge of the higher beings, may be analogous to the knowledge of the animals, as compared to ours. Ibn Khaldūn describes reasoning as a faculty through which we form concepts out of a number of precepts and consequently move from the less general concepts to the more general ones. It is through the processes of analysis and synthesis that we form a general concept from the particular percepts; through the same process we move from the less general concepts to the more general ones. But the more general a concept is, the simpler it is, for as the denotation of a term increases, its connotation decreases. Finally, we reach the most general and simplest of the concepts, i.e., being, essence or substance. Here human reason comes to its limits; it cannot go beyond these ultimate concepts, nor can it explain their mystery.

At another place Ibn Khaldūn remarks that reason is a faculty through which we find the causal connection between things and trace a chain of causes and effects. The more intelligent a person is, the greater the number of things or events that he connects through a causal nexus. For Instance, in the game of chess a more intelligent player can calculate a greater number of possible moves to be made one after the other than a less intelligent one. The whole universe is an architectonic whole and the things are bound together through the chain of causes and effects. As we run through this entire gamut of causal connections we come ultimately to the notion of the first cause, for the series of causes cannot go on regressing infinitely.

### **Self Assesment Exercise**

Describe philosophy, its dangers and limitations according to Ibn Khaldūn.

### **5.0 CONCLUSION**

In the same vein, Ibn Khaldūn's work, *al-Muqaddimah* discusses the philosophical views and his attitude towards philosophy. This may be gathered from the few sections scattered in his Prolegomena entitled 'Dialectics' 'Science of Logic', 'The Dangers and Fallacies of Philosophy', 'Metaphysics'. It seems as if the *Muqaddimah* gave rise to new subjects, viz science or philosophy of history and sociology. The impact of this figure in the fields of sociology, history as well as religious views against some rational problems in some times could never be over-emphasized.

### **5.0 SUMMARY**

Abu Zaid 'Abd Al-Rahman, Ibn Khaldūn (732-808/1332-1406) was a Muslim historian, philosopher economists, politician and pedagogue. He was the father of the science of history, and one of the founders of sociology. His position as a philosopher

in the professional sense of the term has almost been completely eclipsed by this fame as a sociologists and theorician of history. Ibn Khaldūn produced an independent and original note in Muslim philosophy by doing away with all the Aristotelian and Neo-Platonic borrowings. He was one of the first to make a really critical study of the nature, limitations, and validity of human knowledge. He was impressed by none of the Muslim philosophers going before him. He draws out the dangers and fallacies of philosophy as well as its incompetence to iron out all problems encountered by man on earth.

## 6.0 TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. Describe the life of both Ibn Sīnā and Ibn Khaldūn.
2. Highlight philosophy of history as presented in the Ibnu Khaldūns Prolegomena.
3. Describe philosophy, its dangers and limitations according to Ibn Khaldūn

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## **UNIT 4: TRANSMISSION OF PHILOSOPHY BY THE MUSLIMS TO THE WEST.**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objectives
- 3.0 Main Content
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Tutor marked Assignment
- 7.0 References and Further Readings

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

The West was greatly indebted to the Muslims regarding transmission of ancient knowledge and philosophy. At the time the Western Europe was in its Dark Age, Muslims civilization had reached its peak and glamour in the arts and sciences. It was later when the Muslim Spain became centre for knowledge and sciences that Europe was influenced and was able to begin its renaissance from the Dark Age. In this unit, light shall be thrown on the transmission of philosophy by the Muslims to the West.

### **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

At the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- Discuss the impact of Islam on the West as regard science and philosophy.
- Analyse the ways through which philosophy and science were transmitted into the West by the Muslims.
- Describe the impact of Hellenism in developing the Arab- Muslim thought.

### **3.0 MAIN CONTENT**

From the 7<sup>TH</sup> century to the 12<sup>TH</sup> century was a period of Islamic glory. The Muslims received old philosophical traditions from Alexandria, Syria and Persia and then passed them on to Europe entirely as a new tradition. During this period the Muslims became leaders of philosophical thought. They mastered Greek thought, developed many new sciences thereby opened door for European Renaissance.

Draper remarks, ‘the Arab has impressed his intellectual stamp upon Europe, and not into remote a future will Christendom concede this truth.’ O’Leary writes, “It was they (Muslim philosophers) who were largely responsible for awakening Aristotelian studies in the Latin Christendom, and it was they who developed the Aristotelian tradition which Islam had received from Syria community, correcting and revising its contents by a direct study of the Greek texts and working out their conclusions on lines indicated by the Neo-platonic commentators”. Many scholars of the West have endorsed his view. But there are some who hold an opposite view and agree with Überweg when he says that the whole philosophy of the Arabians was only a form of Aristotelians tempered more or less with Neo-platonic conception; But a close and critical examination will reveal the true value in Muslim thought.

The contribution of Muslim thinkers towards the Renaissance in Europe cannot be over- emphasised. The Muslim philosophy forms the background of the modern philosophy of Europe. It was a dominating force in the University of Paris throughout the thirteenth century. Muslim philosophy was carried to England by Franciscan Friars.

Latin translation of Ibn Rushd's book was prescribed in Cambridge in 1109 A.D. Roger Bacon came under the direct influence of Arabic language. He found in Al-Kindī the first writer of optics. Those who underestimate the contribution of the Muslims towards the Renaissance in Europe ignore a very important link in the development of modern philosophy. Iqbal, a modern Muslim philosopher, writes, "the fruits of modern European Humanism in the shape of modern science and philosophy are in many ways only a further development of Muslim culture". Many European colleges and universities cultivated Muslim philosophy with great enthusiasm. The study of Muslim philosophy was the fashion of the day. Thomas Aquinas, Duns Scotus, Dante, Rogers, Bacon, Francis Bacon, Descartes, Spinoza and many others were influenced by Muslim philosophy. The study of Muslim philosophy is essential in order to understand their philosophy,

In addition to this, we can find that the same problem is discussed and the same conclusion is reached in Muslim as well as in European Philosophy. Sometimes the method of approach is different but the conclusion is the same. For instance, both Al-Kindī and Weber reach the same conclusions on the problem of stimulus and response (sensation). At the time Weber got the suggestion from Mathematics and Astronomy al-Kindī got his own idea from medicine. In some time, method is the same but conclusion is different. 'Ihya 'Ulumu'l-Din' of Ghazzālī and 'Discourse of Method' of Descartes begin with universal doubt, but doubts led Ghazzālī to mysticism while it leads Descartes to rationalism.

Nevertheless, the value of Muslim philosophy becomes obvious. Throughout the entire development of Muslim thought, the natural sciences were not divorced from philosophy. Windleband remarks, "In Arabian Metaphysics Dialectics always balanced by Natural philosophy". The Muslim thinkers were great scientists. The name of Ibn Sīnā , Al-Kindī, Ibn Maskawaih, Ibn Tufail may be mentioned as examples. These thinkers had a passionate love for truth and were men of independent spirit. Most of them were declared infidels by the orthodox theologians but they paid no heed to them. Muslim philosophy never lost sight of moral values. It was never degenerated to pure intellectualism. It brought about a synthesis between intellectualism and moral values. Muslim philosophy was never isolated from social purpose. The good of the community was not ignored in it. Muslim philosophy was never an armchair speculation. It offered a systematic code of life for noble living. It helped the Muslims to defend their religion.

Finally, the Charles, the Prince of Wale has this to say: "Medieval Islam was a religion of remarkable tolerance for its time, allowing Jews and Christians the right to practise their inherited beliefs, and setting an example which was not, unfortunately, copied for many centuries in the West. The surprise, ladies and gentlemen, is the extent to which Islam has been a part of Europe for so long, first in Spain, then in the Balkans, and the extent to which it has contributed so much towards the civilisation which we all too often think of, wrongly, as entirely Western. Islam is part of our past and our present, in all fields of human endeavour. It has helped to create modern Europe. It is part of our own inheritance, not a thing apart".

### **Self Assessment Exercise**

How was the West intellectually before Islam entered through Spain.

#### 4.0 CONCLUSION

Islamic philosophy contributed in no little immense to the building of the modern Europe. Muslims were the first people to illuminate the European land intellectually. It was after the transfer of wisdom, knowledge and philosophy to the West that they were able to build the legacy which their descendants are enjoying till today. It is absurd and uncalled for to label Islam as a retrogressing tool in the contemporary age. This is because so far the history of Islam could not be identified with such an odd appellation why should it be given to it today?

#### 5.0 SUMMARY

The ancient Muslims were the receivers of the old traditions from Alexandria, Syria and Persia. They were also the designers that rebranded these intellectual traditions and then passed it on to Europe entirely as a new tradition. During this period the Muslims became leaders of philosophical thought. After they had collated and understood the Greek intellectual legacy and that of other renowned nations in the past, they developed many new sciences and thus, opened door for European Renaissance out of its Dark Age.

#### 8.0 TUTOR MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. Discuss the impact of Islam on the renaissance of the West as regard science and philosophy.
2. Analyse the ways through which philosophy and science were transmitted into the West by the Muslims.
3. Describe the impact of Greek philosophy in developing the Arab-Muslim thought.

#### 7.0 REFERENCES AND FURTHER READINGS

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