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IMPACT OF IMAM GHAZALI ON EAST AND WEST PHILOSOPHERS

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ABSTRACT

Abu Hamid Al-Ghazali (450 A.H/ 1058 A.C) known as “Algazel” in the West, is one of the most eminent thinker of Islam. Writings of Imam Ghazali influenced such great Muslims scholars like Maulana Room, Shoi-Khul-Ishraq and Shah Wali Ullah. They have reflected the rational ideas of Ghazali in their even the eminent Persian poet like Attar, Rumi, Saadi, Hafiz and Iraqi. He tried to reconcile the texts of Islam with the teaching of prevailing philosophy and science. No only Muslims but also Western philosophers reflected and influenced by the ethical philosophy of Imam Ghazali. Western philosophers translated his many books in English, French and Latin languages.

Keywords: Algazel, Nizamih, Hujjatu-i-Islam, Revival, Influence

Alfred Guilloume says:

The Christian West became acquainted with Aristotle by way of Avicenna, Al-Farabi and Alghazel.

His masterpiece “Thay-ul-Uloom” was medely read by Muslims, Jews and Christians and influenced Thomas Aquinas and even Blaise Pascal. Ghazali, undoubtedly is one of the greatest thinkers of Islam who has immensely contributed to cultivating the social, political, ethical and metaphysical outlook of Islam.¹

Alfred Guilloume, “Philosophy and Theology,” the legacy of Islam, edited by Thomas Arnold and Alfred Guillaume, London: Oxford University Press, 1931

Abu Hamid Al-Ghazali known as ‘Algazel’ in the West is one of the most eminent thinkers of Islam. He had the rare distinction of being appointed as the principle of Nizamiah University of Baghdad, the greatest University In that period at the early age of 34 and later on turned into a specific and roomed about for 12 years in search of truth and mental peace, ultimately finding solace in “Sufism.”

Ghazali has immensely contributed to valeting the Social, Political, Ethical, Theological and Metaphysical outlook of Islam. Imam Al-Ghazali exerted great influence over the East and the West scholars.

Al-Ghazali was born in 1058 A.C 540 in a small town of Kherson called “Toos”²

Imam Ghazali was the training a philosopher and by conviction a mystic. He can be truly called a scientific mystic whose religious experience followed his intense intellectual efforts and rational judgments.

He is thus regarded as a Mujaddid or reviver, and Imam or leader by millions of Muslims today, for the combated the paganistic trend of his day and was the torch-bearer of rationalistic Muslim renaissance.³

Bashir Ahmad Dar says about Imam Ghazali:

Rightly has posterity given him the title of Hujjat-al-Islam (defender of Islam with the help of his reason) and not Qutb or Sufi or Ghauth etc.⁴

Jamil Ahmad says:

Ghazali was highly respected in both the great durbars of the Islamic world the saljuks and the Abbasids, which were the centers of Islamic glory and splendor.⁵

In compliance with the request of Abbaside Caliph Al-Mustazhar Billah who, to some extent, was responsible for the emancipation and reorientation of Islamic religious thought, Ghazali wrote a book in reply to the dogmatic beliefs of “Batimia” cult and named it as “Mustazahari” after the name of the caliph.⁶

Influence on Muslim Scholars:

The writings of Al-Ghazali influenced such great writers like Maulana Room, Shaikhul Ishraq, Ibn Rushd and Shah Wali Ullah, who have reflected the rational ideas of Ghazali in their works even the eminent Persian poet like Attar, Roomi, Saadi, Hafiz and Iraqi derived their inspiration from the writings of Ghazali and he was mainly responsible for infusing mysticism in Persian poetry and directing it towards right channels. He tried to reconcile the tents of Islam with the teaching of prevailing philosophy and science.⁷

Alferd Guillaume writes about Imam Ghazali:

Another writer whose work had great influence in the West was Algazel (Abu Hamid ibn Muhammad al-Tusi Al-Ghazali, (1058-1109). Surnamed Hujjatu-l-Islam, Islam’s convincing proof, his varied life was lived aimed the significant intellectual and religious movements of his day. In turn he had been philosopher scholastic, traditions, septic, and mystic. A man of unquestionable sincerity and firm moral purpose—one of the comparatively few men of his race who consistently exerted himself to awake in his co-religionists a zeal for morality—he has retained in Islam a position somewhat comparable with that of St. Thomas, Aquinas in Christianity. In reading his theological treatises one remembers only with an effort that the author is a Muhammadan unless a reference to the trinity or the incarnation is called for.⁸

Alfred Guillaume writes in his book Islam about Imam Ghazali:

Passing over the many books that were written to explain the mystics' faith and to show that Sufism was true in spirit and in form to orthodox faith and practice, we come to a man who established the right of Sufis to a place in the heart of the citadel of orthodoxy. This man is one of the greatest figures in the religion of Islam. He had distinguished himself in all the philosophical, legal and other studies of his time. He was professor at the Nizamiya Madrasa in Baghdad and was recognized as the greatest contemporary authority on theology and law.

He further says about resemblance St. Thomas and Al-Ghazali:

Some of the more important question on which St. Thomas and Algazel agree are the, value of human reason in explaining or demonstrating the truth about divine things the idea of contingency and necessity as demonstrating the existence of God.⁹

Sir Thomas Adam writes about the efforts of Al-Ghazali:

To a large extent he succeeded in making of orthodoxy mystical, it was impossible in the nature of things that equal success should attend his efforts to make mysticism orthodox. He drew into the movement a strong and fairly tolerant body of conservative opinion, which acted as a break in the stormy times ahead.¹⁰

Adam says about the research of Soul and concept of God of Al-Ghazali:

And though his doctrine of the soul as a substance in which God causes His essence and qualities to be reflected a mirror illumined by the divine spark-might have led a bolder mystic into heretical speculations, he himself stood in no such danger.¹¹

Guillaume Writes:

It was Raymond Martin who perceived the value of Alghazeles Tahafat al-Falasifa, or incoherence of the philosophers and incorporated a great deal of it, which is a polemic against the philosophers and scholastics of Islam, into his pugir Fidei. Raymond translates the title of Algazel's attack on the philosophers Ruina seu praecipitium philosophorum. Alghazel's mental and religious attitude appealed to Christian scholars from the moment the his writings could be read and they still repay careful study, Algazel, Rasi (Al-Razi) and aversoes he cites in Latin, always giving the title of the book from which his quotation is drawn.

Among Algazel's words was a treatise on the place of reason as applied to revelation and the theological dogmas. This work presents many parallels in its arguments and conclusions with the summa of St. Thomas, a fact which can hardly have more than one explanation.

Muslim philosophy had penetrated deep into the west much before Descartes time and most of the works of Al-Ghazali had been translated into Latin before the middle of the sixth century and since then had exercised a considerable influence on Jewish and Christian scholasticism.

The Dominican Raymond Martin had freely used the Hebrew translation of Tahafat al-falasfah, another of Al-Ghazali's works and incorporated a great deal of it in his pugio fidei. Pascal too had been deeply affected by his thoughts. The influence that Al-Ghazali had on modern European thought has not so far been fully appreciated.

Although all other masterpieces of Al-Ghazali had been translated into latin before 545/1150 and had admittedly by influence on the western scholastic thought, there is no evidence that Al-Ghazali's al Munqidh al-Dalal had been translated into Latin before is Descartes's time.

But there is so much internal evidence in the most remarkable parallel of that work with Descartes's discuss d_____ method, printed in 1047/1637 that is becomes impossible to deny its influence on the father of modern philosophy in the West.¹²

His autobiography has often been compared to the confessions of St. Augustine. His great work, the revival of the religious science and his smaller but very important mystic work. The Nichel of the Light (مشكوة الانوار), contains the fruit of his life's labours. It is a comprehensive statement of dogmatic, moral, ascetic and illuminative theology and has no rival in the theological literature of Islam.¹³

It is rather strange that Europe had paid greater attention to the works of Al-Ghazali and preserved has invaluable literary and philosophical treasures.¹⁴

Nicholson says:

To a large extent he succeeded in making orthodoxy mystical, it was impossible in the nature of things that equal success should attend his efforts to make mysticism orthodox.¹⁵

Ghazali set himself to study afresh the several systems of philosophy and theology and embodied his results in his works which were later translated into several European languages, especially in Latin. His books on Logic, Physics and Metaphysics become Known through the translators of Toledo in the twelfth century A.C.¹⁶

According to Alfred Guillaume, “The Christian West become acquainted with Aristotle by way of Avicenna. Al, Farabi and Alghazel, Gundisalus’s encyclopedia of knowledge relies in the main on the information he has drawn from Arabian sources.”¹⁷

Thomas Adams writes:

Henceforward the Sufis are definitely within the fold of Islam, for according to Ghazali and the majority of Muslims after him, the revelations bestowed on the saints supplement those of the prophets as the source and basis of all read knowledge.¹⁸

Khawaja Jamil Ahmad writes about the influence of Al-Maunkad min Alzalal.

A second book, entitled Al-Mankad min Alzalal, in which Ghazali has penned the changes of his religious ideas and the facts about Prophet hood, was published in Arabic along with its French translation in French and M. Pallia and M. Schmoelder wrote commentary on it.¹⁹

Thomas Adams says:

The story of Ghazali’s Conversion to Sufism, as told by himself, is on classic of its kinds.²⁰

Influence of Maqasad-ul-Falsafa

Its importance for our purpose is that Algazel set himself to study afresh the several systems of philosophy and theology and embodied his results in works which were translated into Latin. His books on logic, physics, and metaphysics became known through the translators of Toledo in the twelfth century, though so far as concerns metaphysics Alghazel’s influence did not equal that of Avicbron, which, being in the main stream of Spanish thought, was firmly established among the Latin until Averroes and St. Thomas drove it into backwater.²¹

Triton, A.S. says about Ghazali’s philosophy and its effects:

In the history of mysticism Ghazali is important and a sketch of his life will be useful. He was a successful teacher of law in Baghdad.

Ghazali become the new champion of Islam. He cast off the extravagances of the mystics and though he heard words which cannot be uttered he made no attempt to repeat them.²²

Tritton also writes about the character of Imam Ghazali on mysticism. He says: Ghazali was acclaimed as the restorer of his age, the great renewer the proof of Islam: hence for word mysticism, rooted on the pillars of Islam, was part of religion.²³

Al-Ghazali is a towering figure in Islam his influence is enormous. Ghazali the most influential theologian of medieval Islam.²⁴

Miguie Asin wrote the biography of Imam Ghazzali with the title of Algazel. He offered the analytical of Ihya-ul-Ulum in his book algazel. He translated of some parts from Tahaf-tul-Phalasafa in Algazel.

H. Bauer translated totally Ihya-ul-Ulum-Uddin, he also translated (قواعد العقائد) “Principle of Theology” which is the chapter of Ihya-ul-Ulum in his book Die Dogmatic Al-Ghazali’s

H.A. Hames also published a bridged edition of Ihya-ul-Ulum. His celebrated work, Makasid ul Falasifa in which he has nicely arranged the problems of Greek philosophy is not traceable in Islamic countries. This book has also become translated in the Spanish language. The book deals with different branches of philosophy namely logic, physics and metaphysics.

Goshi, a German professor, has written a book about Alghazel in the German language, published in Berlin in 1858 in which he has quoted several pages out of Ghazali’ Makasid-ul-Falasifa.²⁵

Influence of Tohafat ul Falsfa:

His philosophical studies began with treatise on logic and culminated in the tahafat, in which he defended Islam against such philosophers as Avicenna who sought to demonstrate certain speculative views contrary to accepted Islamic teaching. This book was influential in Europe and Empo was one of the first to the translated from Arabic to Latin 12th Century.

Influence of Ihya Ulum-ud-din:

1- The truth, then lay with the mystics and it was Ghazali’s personal experience of this truth that inspired the great religious revival which his example no less than his works—notably the Ihya brought about in circles hitherto unfriendly to mysticism.²⁶

2- Al-Ghazali's greatest work is the revival of the religious sciences.²⁷

In 40 books he explained the doctrines and practices of Islam and showed how these can be made the basis of a profound devotional life, leading to the higher stages of Sufism.²⁸

3- He is prominent Islamic jurist theologian and mystic, was one of the most powerful minds and important figures in the history of Islam.

Western scholars have been so attracted by his account of his spiritual development that they have paid him for more attention than they have other equally important Muslim Thinkers.²⁹

Von Hammer published the book of Imam Ghazali (ابهاالولد) with original text of translation.

Abraham bar chosdai translated in Hebrew language of Bidaya Tul Hidayah (بداية الهداية) and Mizan-ul-Amal (ميزان العمل) which published in 1839.

Barbier de Maynard translated Al-Tafarqa Bain-al-Islam Wal-Zandaqa (التفرقة بين الاسلام و الزنداقه) in French language.

Khawaja Jamil Ahmad writes:

4- According to Ibn-ul-Asir, Ghazali during his tour wrote “Ihya-ul-Uloom” his masterpiece which revolutionised and profound by influenced the social and religious outlook of in diverse ways. His intense prayers and devotion to God had purified his heart and revealed the divine secrets hitherto unknown to him.³⁰

Allama Nawari writes in Bustan that Ghazali was a prolific writer and despite his exceptionally busy life.

According to Mohaddis Zainul Abadin Ihya-ul_uloom” is the nearest approach to the Holy Quran.³¹

His masterpiece “Ihya-ul-uloom,” was medley read by Muslims, Jews and Christians and influenced Thomas Aquinas and even Blaise Pascal.³²

Intellectually Algazel was a man of lesser statues than the Angelic Doctor, but nevertheless they had much in common. Their intention their sympathies and their interests were essentially the same.³³

He completed a work on general legal principles al-Mustasfa, His compendium of standard theological doctrine translated into Spanish.³⁴

Ghazali, undoubtedly, is one of the greatest thinkers of Islam who has immensely contributed to cultivating the social, cultural, political, ethical and metaphysical outlook of Islam.³⁵

Many Western scholars wrote several articles and books about the philosophy of Imam Ghazali such as:

1. Watt, W.W, Muslim intellectual, A study of Al-Ghazali
2. Macdonald, D.B, "The Life of Al-Ghazali with special reference to his religious experience and opinion"³⁶
3. Smith, M. Al-Ghazali the Mystic.
 - i. Miguel Asin, Algazel
 - ii. M. Wall, The Faith and Practice of Al-Ghazali
 - iii. Muslim scholars also wrote many books on life and philosophy of Imam Ghazali. Such as:
 - iv. Hanif Nadvi, Afkar Ghazali
 - v. Shibli Nomani, Al-Ghazali.
 - vi. Zaki Mubarak, Concept of Ikhlāq of Imam Ghazali in Arabic language and Noor-ul-Hasan Khan translated this book in Urdu.
 - vii. Hasan Qadri, Syed, Philosophy of Religion and Ethics of Imam Ghazali.
 - viii. Umar-ud-Din, M. Idea of Love in the philosophy of Al-Ghazali.
 - ix. Anwar-ul-Hasan, Educational theories and reforms of Imam Ghazali
 - x. Hanif Nadvi, Sar Gazhat-i-Ghazali which is translation of Al-Munqaz Min-Al-Dilal.

Margret Smith wrote a book by the name of Al-Ghazali. She narrates in his book the influence of Al-Ghazali on Jewish scholars.

Upon medieval Jewish though Al-Ghazali had a considerable influence. since his ethical teaching was of a standard and a type which closely resemble that of Judaism, and his works were carefully studied by Jewish scholars, not only those writings dealing with philosophy, which around wide-spread interest and discussion in Jewish circles, being studied by Maimonides among others, but his mystical works also, and within a century of his death.³⁷

The Book of Imam Ghazali *Mishkat al-Anwar* also influenced Jewish thinkers. So Margret Smith writes:

The *Mishkat al-Anwar* also around great interest among Jewish thinkers.³⁸

Isac Alfost translated *Mishkat al-Anwar* and Musa bin Habib referred this book in 16th century.

In the concept of Jewish Qubala also narrated Imam Ghazali's thinking, Margret Smith writes about this resemblance Jewish thinkers and Imam Ghazali in her book:

The grouping of the safirot of which the three highest represent the intelligible world of creative ideas, the second the moral world of creative for motion and the third the material world of creative matters. Correspond in some measure to Al-Ghazali Islam al-Malakut, the alam al-Jabarut and the alam al-Mulk wal-Shahada. (Al-Ghazali, P.218)

Barhebraeus follows Al-Ghazali very closely and quotes frequently from the Ihya.³⁹

It seems probable too that he was acquainted with the Mizan al Amal and this is likely enough, since it was well-known to Jewish circles and certain of his expressions suggest an acquaintance also with Al-Ghazali's al-Risalat al-Ladumiyya and the Kimiya al-Saada.⁴⁰

Margret Smith writes:

There can be no doubt that Al-Ghazali's works would be among the first to attract the attention of these European scholars. It has now been fully realised that Christian school asceticism and medieval Christian mysticism derived certain conceptions from Muslim writers among whom Al-Ghazali was included.⁴¹

Annemarie Schimmel:

The last great figure in the line of classical Sufism is Abu Hamid Al-Ghazali, who wrote among numerous other works, the Ihya alim ad-din (the Revival of the Religious Sciences), a comprehensive work. That established moderate mysticism against the growing theosophical trends which tended to equate God and the world and thus shaped the thought of millions of Muslims.⁴²

Influence on Kant:

Like Al-Ghazali Kant distinguished between phenomena and numina and regarded the physical world of which alone the scientific knowledge in true as the world of phenomena to which alone the categories which to him are equally subjective, are applicable, causality, substance, and attribute being excepted by Al-Ghazali like him.

How are we to explain this close resemblance between the philosophical ideas of Al-Ghazali and Kant.

We believe that this explanation can be found in the philosophy of Leibniz for, as T.H. Green observed, the doctrines of Leibniz formed a permanent atmosphere of Kant's mind despite the inspiration he received from Hume in his youth. The minds of both worked on the same lines. Kant was only a corrected and developed form of Leibniz, whereas Leibniz was an incorrect and undeveloped form of Al-Ghazali continued with the Asharite atomism. Leibniz like Al-Ghazali and Kant, regarded the world as phenomenal.⁴³

Although all other masterpieces of Al-Ghazali had been translated into Latin before 545/1150, and had admittedly exerted great influence on the western scholastic thought, there is no evidence that Al-Ghazali's *al Munqidh min al-dalal* had been translated into Latin before Descartes's time. It is for the scholars of Latin to discover that bent there is so much internal evidence in the most remarkable parallel of that work with Descartes discourse *delamethode*, printed in 1047/1637, that it becomes impossible to deny its influence on the further of modern philosophy in the West.⁴⁴

Al-Ghazali exerted great influence over the East and the West. It was the protestant revolt that freed the West from the grip of this great man's intellect, and in the East, having conquered all revival thought, it has even to this day, a hold too tight to allow any fresh movement.⁴⁵

In Shortly:

Imam Ghazali not only a philosopher but he is also a great mystic. In the history of mysticism Imam Ghazali is important and a sketch of his life will be useful. He was the successful teacher of Islamic law in Baghdad.

Annemarie Schimmel says about the influence of Imam Ghazali on West thinkers: "No thinker of medieval Islam has attracted the interest of Western Scholars more than Ghazali."⁴⁶

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² Jamil Ahmad, *Hundred Great Muslims*, p. 107

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