

FATHER OF ISLAMIC POSITIVISM AND COLLECTIVISM: IMAM IBN TAIMIYA

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Abstract

Against all medieval Muslim thinkers' speculative thought Ibn Taimiyya's statement of Islam is kneaded in the scientific world-view of the Quran and the Sunna. He judged his tradition by the normativity of the Quran to resurrect normative Islam from beneath the debris of history. The Quranic viewpoint impelled him to undertake systematic refutation of the Greek Logic which had tainted the intellect of Muslim philosophers, scientists, theologians and Sufis. Swayed by the Hellenism, they including al-Ghazali termed the attainment of knowledge as an ultimate goal of life. Ibn Taimiyya refuted their theses. He categorized the Islamic disciplines developed by the 4th A.H as classical Islam while the later as "educated conjectures". Though he thoroughly flays the works of latter scholars yet his critique extends to the Companions and Successors as well. He is adamant to accept their errors in the early civil political wars as judicial error which under the cover of the "infallibility of ethical judgement" not only absolves them of their misconduct but bestows a single reward on them, whose position was right deserve to be doubly awarded. Ibn Taimiyya here instead of Ijtihad calls it a "misinterpretation" which far from resulting in a reward may at best be forgiven. These wars render the community rollercoaster stumbling from one extreme to the other. So long as the community was on straight [i.e., the middle] path, its unity and integrity remained intact; as soon as innovations [bidas i.e., deviations] began to take root it splits into sects. In turn, theology, law and Sufism lost organic link with the nucleus [primary principles] they had differentiated from. Al-Ghazali brought these together as basic components of Islam, however, it was mechanical juxtaposition not genuine integration. Ibn Taimiyya took a comprehensive intellectual venture to reform Islam. He realize that Muslims as "people of the middle" were tasked to remove extremities from the globe while they have become prisoners of their own extremes. As a man of the middle he judged "intellectual heritage" on the basis of the "principle of mean" and purged it of all aberrations, deviations and innovations to put the community back on the track. Marvelous was the diagnosis and so was the remedy. He smoothed out the extremes of kharijism and murijism, Asharism and Mutazila, orthodoxy and Sufism, theology and law etc., with creative integrated intellectual prowess that defies description. At the level of universal creative will of God [irada kauwnya] he accepts determinism, on the level of moral will of God he emphasizes on human will to make conscious choice between good and evil; and in his final analysis both wills are highly integrated rather than mechanically juxtaposed. Some of his intellectual postures like his unexamined acceptance of all Sunni deterministic, political, futuristic and intercessional hadiths, excessive emphasis on political obedience, failure to accommodate the Quranic principle of Shura in his political doctrine etc., are questionable still he stands tall of all medieval thinkers. He proved trail-blazer for generations to come and pulsates in the veins of modern Islam. This paper intends to explore Ibn Taimiyya's contribution to Islamic reforms.

INTRODUCTION

The early normative Islamic community met all challenges which came its way successfully since the Quran and the Prophet smoothed its rough edges to bill it as a "gold median community", so with it middle position against extremes stayed a norm. However, later its incessant disregard for the Quranic doctrine of the principle of Shura gradually but surely landed it into the abyss of political chaos. Political extremism, most often permeates into other facets of social life. Hence, as soon as religio-political wars set in the community amidst chaotic political conditions assumes schismatic character both in thought and practice. Now, "the people of the middle" with the loss of gold mean begin to oscillate between one extreme to another. Khawarij's extremism levelled allegations of unbelief [Kufr] against all who disagreed with their position. Mutazilla under the influence of Greek philosophy brought revelation at par with reason. Their excessive reliance on 'free-will' put the Power and Majesty of God in doubt. Asharites responded extreme challenges with extreme solutions. For the safe-guard of God's absolute power they termed man impotent, a mere puppet in the hands of God by the doctrine of pre-determinism so on and so forth. As the undifferentiated nucleus

of Islamic thought differentiated into different branches i.e., theology, law and mysticism with strong implications for all Islamic disciplines the difference of opinion was bound to occur, however, had the community not abandoned the “middle path” schismatic and sectarian rifts would have been minimized if not avoided at all. But gradually theology, law and mysticism assume cut throat war against each other each demanding more prestige for itself with plethora of one-sided literature on its disposal.

When al-Ghazali emerged on the scene he found theology, law and Sufism in mutual antagonism despite being essential fundamental units of Islam. His profound intellectual dilemma led him to Sufism. “His purpose was to live through the verities of the Faith and to test those verities through the Sufi experientialist method. He succeeded. The test confirmed his faith¹”. As a broad-gauged scholar he articulated a bond between theology, law and Sufism as essential components of Islamic Sharia, integral to each other. The consensus of the community over it put the conflicts among them to rest. But, this was done without addressing the basic issues of major import since al-Ghazali mostly supported and strengthened Ashrite position which along state’s interest almost led him to inculcate “personal pietism” in the community as a dominant cult. However, it was Ibn al-Arabi who built his thesis on the lines of al-Ghazali and presented the same in the cast of Avicenna’s philosophy. He stretched Ghazali’s thought to the utmost limits and with the power of poetic imagination and speculative philosophy rendered the religion, in final analysis, almost irrelevant to individual or public life.

However, it fell on Ibn Taimiya (1263-1328) to address the extremes in Islamic thought which, indeed, were extreme solutions to the problems of extra-ordinary nature and circumstances. Rediscovery of the “normative Islam” from the Quran and Sunna to reconstitute a normative Muslim community bearer of the burden to build with collective endeavor a moral social world order, was the be-all-and-an-end-all of his fatigueless intellectual endeavors. So, “claiming freedom of ijtihad for himself he rose in revolt against the finality of schools, and went back to first principles [i.e., the Quran and Sunna] in order to make fresh start. Like Ibn-i-Hazm- the founder of Zahiri School of law- he rejected the Hanafite principle of reasoning by analogy and Ijma as understood by early legists; for he thought agreement was the basis of all superstitions. And there is no doubt that, considering the moral and intellectual decrepitude of his times, he was right in doing so²”. As a scholar of the mean against two extremes he in his constructs always opts for the middle way. He “undertook a systematic refutation of Greek Logic³” and came hard on theologians, philosophers and Sufis entrenched in Greek epistemology and mediated their extremes by the prowess that defies description.

Ibn Taimiya resurrects ‘Islamic positivism and collectivism’ long buried beneath the debris of history. This, he could never find had he not been able to distill the goal of human life from the entirety of the ideological frame-work of the Quran. He convincingly concludes “the goal of human life is neither the philosophic contemplation of God nor the mystic type of love of Him...for each of these leads to the doctrine of the Unity of Being, of the identity of the world and God and so to the absolute inanity both of God and man- but the active concept of ‘ibada, a knowledge of God’s will and its fearless implementation in life. God is not something to be merely perceived, or admired and cherished but must be recognized as the One to whom alone our allegiance is due. This recognition alone is desirable as Tauhid (Monotheism) and it alone can inspire the attitude of ibada⁴”.

His severe attack against philosophy and Sufism was rooted in the Quran and orthodox conception of prophecy in Islam. Steeped in Hellenism the Muslim philosophers viewed prophecy on the touch-stone of Greek Logic not Islam’s primary sources. The goal of life, to them, was knowledge itself, and as the universe is eternal (Aristotle’s assertion) the knowledge of its objects bestows eternity on philosophers. This was their idea of immortality of the souls steeped in knowledge while the commoners having no knowledge, of lower/ inferior “selves/personalities” perish like insects etc. They brought reason at par with revelation and equated prophecy with philosophy. Hence, prophet was primarily philosopher and since his immediate addresses are masses rather than intellectual elite so he talks down to their level as they could not understand philosophic truth. They drew parallelism between cognitive element of the religio-moral experience of the prophet and cognition of the intellectuals and failed to understand that while the ordinary cognition is mere information the content of revelation is full of authority, meaning and imperviousness for the subject.

Philosophers took the idea of radical soul-body dualism from Greeks which after Ghazali’s approval became constant furniture of orthodox Islam, had no foundations in the Quran. Ibn Taimiya accuses al-Ghazali of double-speak and standing on the both sides of the aisle as on the one side standing with orthodoxy he attacks philosophy on the other he reaches the conclusions which are essence of the philosopher’s teachings. “He magnifies the renunciation of the world which was his greater preoccupation than Tauhid which is the ibada of God. Tauhid alone comprises also the true love of God⁵”. To him like philosophers goal of all action is knowledge. “What he has made the goal of human life, viz., the knowledge of God, His attributes, His actions, and of angels, in his al-Madnun- which is pure philosophy- is worse than the beliefs of the idolatrous Arabs, let alone of Jews and Christians⁶”.

The clarity of the Quranic conception of Tauhid as witnessed in the vision and conduct of the Prophet works in Ibn Taimiya as an antidote to dispel superstitions, misconceptions and misinterpretations of all sorts which seeped into the body of Islamic thought from within or without. The linchpin of his attacks against philosophy and Sufism is the “crusading moral imperative which first seeks to crush out of its way the drugs of superstition and then impel to action to restore moral order in individual and social life. In both these aspects, this activism of Ibn Taimiya has throbbed in

the veins of Modern Islam as a whole⁷". His critique of the philosophers and Sufis is justified as the upshot of philosophic discourse was the affirmation of the superiority of the philosopher over the prophet as al-Farabi and others portrayed and as Sufis like Ibn al-Arabi and Ibn Sabin etc., were philosophers they accepted this philosophical proposition and operated upon it with their own mysticism and finally established he superiority of saints over the prophets.

Al-Ghazali is accused of double-mindedness as his esoteric works like *Maari-al-Quds* meant for the intellectual elite and exoteric works like *Miraj-al-Salikin* meant for public depict. He accepts some philosophic doctrines and stands with orthodox Islam in his official public stand and knows well where to take what position. In *Tahafat* he comes hard on philosophers but abstains to label their positions as kufr. But in *Miraj-al-Salikin* which is miniature of *Tahafat* he levels allegation of heresy (Kufr) on them. In the same work he presents the account of prophecy in the light of official Kalam, but assert that "politico-legal management (siyasa) is not part of prophecy⁸". This statement has no relevance to Kalam but emerges from his habituation to mysticism and preoccupation with world renunciation. However, in the same section he while proving the prophetic mission endorses the "political management of people (siyasat al-khalq) through the Sharia law⁹". As the positivism and collectivism of the Quran had already lost in the mazes of Absolute determinism which rendered man a mere puppet in the hands of God al-Ghazali's endorsement sealed the fate of positivistic and collectivistic approach of the community for centuries to come. On this plane how could Ghazali and Ibn al-Arabi sit well with Ibn Taimiya who understood Islam as a movement of tremendous moral initiative tasked to restore relentless egalitarian moral world order? The scale of deviation from the straight normative line of Islam was so huge and so dead-cert of his position Ibn Taimiya was, that instead of subtle language he resorts to lash his attacks with no holds barred against those instrumental for such deviations. As he believed that our loyalty and allegiance is due to God alone and our salvation lies in fearless implementation of the will of God so if he finds aberrations/ deviations on the part of Companions and successors amidst early religio-political wars he does not falter to criticize them. So, Ghazali due to his Sufi-temperament led the community to 'personal salvation', 'personal pietism' which is neutral to social reality, for to Ibn Taimiya he was more embedded in speculative thought, scholastic formalism than the Quran and Sunna. The premises what Ghazali set Ibn al-Arabi's systematic speculative poetic thought stretched to the limits where religion gets redundant under the force of his over-blown humanism so though Ibn Taimiya sometimes treats Ghazali with sympathy and compassion as the latter seemed standing on both sides of the fence balancing one position with the other but the damage what Ibn al-Arabi done to the positivism and collectivism of the Quran invokes bitter ire and rebuttals of Ibn Taimiya who in his final and ultimate analysis terms him "a paragon of un-Islamic forces in Muslim thought¹⁰" since under the influence of his thought the very essence of Islam is at stake. Pivotal core of Ibn Taimiya's concern was to address the deviations to redeem the balance of Islamic thought and conduct of community. On this plane, "in sharp contradistinction to al-Ghazali's personal-ism, we find in Ibn Taimiyya what may be called Islamic positivism. His was a concern with the two central disciplines of the Sharia tradition in the form of theology and law, as well as the community that is the bearer of this kerygmatic tradition, and a serious attempt to reform that tradition¹¹". Ghazali turned to Sufism as the discipline of kalam had become over-saturated by his time and Sufism stood in sharp need of orthodox approval. So Ghazali succeeded in establishing Sufism as integral component of Islam though he fails to make it a vehicle of Islamic positivism and collectivism. But, as Ibn Taimiyya emerged on the scene the tide of Sufism had receded back with Kalam on the rise for "despite the spread of Sufism in the Middle East the continuous cultivation of unadulterated formal Kalam as the unique instrument of orthodoxy is a remarkable phenomenon¹²". So, as Kalam sets the dimensions of other Sharia sciences particularly plays vital role in formulation of law, and as much had gone wrong due to official Ashrite Kalam, Ibn Taimiyya makes fresh start. He "seeks to go back to the Quran and the Sunna and the freshness of his spirit is equated only by the harshness of his tone. With this new inspiration from the original sources of Islam, he not only attacks Ibn al-Arabi but also demolishes some of the central theses of the orthodox Asharite Kalam on the questions of human free will and the rationality and purposiveness of the Sharia commands. But Ibn Taimiyya's instrument of theological reform is kalam, nonetheless. He restates Kalam theses and elaborates them, but from the beginning to the end his argument is Kalamistic¹³".

In fact, three centuries after al-Ghazali, "by the time of Ibn Taimiyya, the tide of Sufism was running high; indeed the deluge of Ibn Arabi's pantheistic theosophy had all but submerged the orthodox aspects of Islam. It was time to apply, not the supple and somewhat greasy- albeit more appealing- methods of Sufism, but the sharp and cutting edge of Kalam¹⁴". However, he did not reject Sufism altogether. He endorsed Ghazali's choice of Sufi path against philosophy, theology and esotericism (Batinism) but added that his return to the Quran and Sunna would have been the best choice. Moreover, he says "Ijtihad of the Ulema and the Kashf of the Sufis are initially on a par and both must struggle for Sharia validation¹⁵". He knew prophetic consciousness is based on mystic experience and though the Quran terms itself a miracle against other Scriptures but the event of Revelation itself for all prophets is a miracle par excellence. This is because prophets most often claimed that we are on a clear proof and you are blinded to it. So, "mystic experience, which qualitatively does not differ from the experience of the prophet¹⁶", must be recognized as normal experiment subject to scrutiny like other life experiences. Hence, denial of Sufi experience ultimately leads one to the denial of religion itself as secular modern west did or as Sir Syed and his ideological fellows i.e., Ahl-al-

Quran rejected Sufism altogether, and like Mutazilla and medieval Muslim philosophers the prophets to them were no more than great political leaders and philosophers. Ibn Taimiyya being the paragon of traditional learning could not reject Sufi kashf altogether however he stays Sufi intuition accountable in the court of Sharia law and reason at large. He targeted mystic deliriums, Sufi ecstasies, saint's worship and other deviationist Sufi cults with great vigor, zeal, fervor and clarity of purpose but he not only does support normative Sufism but was himself a practicing Sufi. Sheikh Sirhindi the great Sufi reformer who was closer in spirit to Ibn Taimiyya, proclaims that "on all points where Sufis differ from the ulema, the truth invariably lies with ulema"¹⁷". However, Ibn Taimiyya states that "on those points where there is a difference between the ijthad of the ulema and the intuition of the Sufis, the truth cannot be said to lie automatically on either side. Both sides must compete for the validity of the point of view on the basis of Sharia proofs"¹⁸". Hence, as the challenge for Ibn Taimiyya was Ibn al-Arabi's pantheistic Sufism while Sheikh Ahmad was combating the combination of Ibn al-Arabi's Sufi-theosophy and Sufic-Vedantic monism. This is why of all Sufi theologians Majaddid comes much hard on fake Sufi traditions yet his status as a great Sufi is unquestionable but there are much misperceptions regarding Ibn Taimiyya who set forth Islam's world-view which like a light-house led many fleets of Sufi-theologians, jurists to the harbor.

However, to understand the intellectual portrait of Ibn Taimiyya it is necessary to know what was the foremost concern of his intellectual endeavors, and to what extent he succeeded in his undertaking? His voluminous works reveal that linchpin of his intellectual reforms was to diagnose what went wrong with Islam that brought moral decrepitude and intellectual decline which in turn triggered pernicious sectarian divisions. On operational level he smooths out extremes committed by theologians, law experts and Sufis by the moral vectors of the Quran and Seera. The central theses of his intellectual labors was to reconstitute and rediscover early normative community. His reevaluation and critique of Islamic thought does not stop at early formative phase of Islamic disciplines, it extends well to the Companions and Successors. So, Modoudi's critique of such great personalities in his "Caliphate and Dictatorship" was not a first work of this kind but has precedents in Ibn Taimiyya. Indian poet Ghalib presents a grand research principle that "truth is above obedience" ["Rasti bala ey taat ast"] since sanctity attached to the subject of research taints intellect. Hence, doctrine of Tauhid which Ibn Taimiyya so uniquely perceived, derived and devised from the tenor of the Quran becomes mainstay of his intellectual tools and he judges everything on this touch-stone. Speculative non-Arab temperament shows little approval of his thought, however, he is not the same which Muhammad Ibn Wahab's reform movement resurrected and adjusted to his native conditions, necessities and purpose.

The push and thrust of his intellectual dynamism reveals that he had more than enough realization that he was a member of the community whom the Quran had characterized as "gold median community", the best ever produced for mankind tasked to eliminate extremes from the globe. What went amiss with it that it entangled itself in extremities of its own making? He approved whatever developments occurred in Kalam (theology), Fiqh (law), Sufism and politics up to the beginning of fourth century A.H as classical Islam. Since then on, in all fields these disciplines began running riot and each took direction what it pleased to take and became chaotic and uncontrollable. He terms them neo-kalam, neo-fiqh, neo-Sufism and neo-politics.

He presents his diagnosis of the malaise in introductory remarks of his kitab al-Istiqama

"[This provides] a principle for the necessity of [adopting] the straight and middle road and how to follow the Quran and the Sunna [correctly] in the matter of God's names, attributes and unity in both utterances and belief; also to show that the Quran and the Sunna contain all guidance and that heretical splits and misguidance come about by abandoning part of it [i.e., guidance of the Quran and Sunna]. Further, to warn that all the corresponding *innovations have occurred by excess on the negative side or the positive side* and that their source lies in ambiguous language [resulting in] divergence and splits that necessary led to mutual heresy [takfir] declarations among these divergent groups. The basic cause of all of this, then, is that a part of truth was abandoned, a part of falsehood was adopted [and after the hardening of views] truth was deliberately concealed, and truth and falsehood were mixed up"¹⁹".

Hence, the normative tradition had kept the unity of community intact, bida i.e., innovations gave rise to sects and mutual discord. Here, we see in him "Islamic positivism" at full play for this approach is exactly what the Quran and the Sunna suggest as "Sunna is a straight path without any deviation to the right or to the left also gives the meaning of a "mean between extremes" of the "middle way" ²⁰". Abu Hanifa also clarifies his position as that of Ahl al-adl wal-Sunna, i.e., "people of the mean and the middle path". Thus, ahl al-Sunna or orthodoxy came into being on this principle of the "mean". The Quran and Sunna both share the principle of "mean" to the level where "the middle road is not only the best road, it is the only road. Many people think that to be in the middle is to be humdrum and banal and to be in the mean is to be really mean and unoriginal and un-grand. This is true if the middle or the mean is construed as something from which both sides are absent, as a negative mean, dry bones from which all flesh is gone. But this is not the mean of the Quran; what it has in mind is a positive, creative mean, an integrative moral organism"²¹". Ibn Taimiyya's diagnosis of the moral ailments of the Muslim community was based on the Quranic principle of the "mean" and everywhere in his discourse he proves himself to be a man of the "middle" and the remedies or panaceas he offers are also based on the same principle. Abu Hanifa proclaimed same approach but his methodology fails to fall on his criterion. So to Ibn Taimiyya "the Hanafites, therefore, were "the least beneficial to Muslims". This is

because the Hanafis relied excessively on speculative principles which tend to be arbitrary²²". The Hanafi's method of analogical reasoning most often misses the mark and leads away from Islamic positivism. So to Ibn Taimiyya those "jurists who rely on sharia texts (ahl al-Nusus) [instead of speculation] are far more capable of giving [correct] judicial responses and are more beneficial to Muslims than the people of opinion [ahl al-ray]...this is because in order to solve real-life activities, Muslims need to know the source texts (nusus)²³". He himself, most often draws viewpoint and reaches conclusion from the entirety of the Quran and Sunna, but here proposes texts (nusus) to solve life problems. It seems it is suggested for people of average capacities. But as analogical reasoning is a speculative principle which leads away from Islamic positivism, text based solutions are better than it. However, the normative course for him is always "gold mean" position. To him "the [true] Muslim, therefore, strives for the realization of the [Quranic], prayer, [O Lord!] lead us along the straight [i.e., *the middle*] path²⁴".

Now, after broader contour of his approach and methodology in view, we are in a safe position to understand his burden of critique against traditional theology, Islamic law and Sufism to analyze his comprehensive reform venture for course correction. First of all he negated Ghazali's position to whom Kalam was superior to fiqh (law) as to Ibn Taimiyya the Kalam which developed after 3rd century A.H having no roots in the Quran was distortion of Islam. He considers fiqh a positive science because it deals with acts while traditional Kalam turned into a plethora of conjectures after the penetration of Greek Logic and other alien ideas into Islam. He despised over-blown Kalamistic discourse on attributes and characteristics of God since God is not something to be cherished and praised. For "belief in God is absolutely essential, of course, but not in order to entice us to pry into His nature, but in order to save and develop the integrity of human personality (59:19)²⁵".

Theologians believed their discipline to be based on reason as it deals with universal principles of faith and fiqh as a body of conjectures. Indeed, it was Mutazila school who held that theology is based on reason while fiqh on revelation. Al-Ashari inherited it to employ in the service of theology. Ibn Taimiyya convincingly refutes the dichotomy of reason which Ashari asserts that Kalam is based on reason while fiqh on revealed authority on the premise that revelation itself contains reason and cognitive element as to invite the people "to think", "to ponder", "to deliberate", "to apply intellect" is a recurrent theme of the Quran. Theologians take their propositions as certain while of Law as conjectures. Ibn Taimiyya points out that "a large number of Ahl al-Kalam from among Mutazila and those that followed them from among Asharis and those fuqaha who followed them, magnify the status of dialectical theology which they title, "principles of the faith", so much so that they regard its propositions as decisive but detract from the status of positive law (fiqh) which is the science of the rules regarding human acts, to the extent that they consider it to consist of conjectures and do not count it among sciences²⁶".

To Ibn Taimiyya most of the constructs of traditional theology were reactionary in nature as those were devised as extreme solutions to the extreme challenges. Of utmost importance was the question of human free-will and accountability. It appears "the Quran is not interested in a discussion of the problem of the "freedom of human will" or "determinism" but on the basis of a true appreciation of the human nature, in releasing to the maximum the creative moral energy of man²⁷". The Prophet's attitude and the Companion's response was based on the same premise. Of course! The Quran recurrently points to the potentialities of man and their actualization for moral cause and emphasizes accountability and strict justice of God. Mutazilla and Ashairi both failed to adopt "mean" and "middle" position. Mutazilla emphasized human "free will" and extreme sense of accountability so much so that they thought God to be unable to violate demands of justice in order to forgive the sinner and "became irretrievable prisoners of their own position. But in order to assert the absolute supremacy of the moral law, the Quran equally emphatically stressed the Power, Will and Majesty of God. The religious opponents of the Mutazilla, in whose eyes the latter were denuding God of all godhead and substituting a naked humanism for the essentials of religion, in their turn, accentuated the Will and Power of God only, so much so that they became mortgaged to this doctrine totally and irrevocably and, in course of time, erected determinism into an unalterable part of orthodox creed²⁸". Now, as "determinism" of orthodoxy against the "free will" of Mutazila suited the ruling elite since "free will" invokes sense of responsibility and leads to protests. So establishment of the institution of orthodoxy was a state project to install Omnipotence of God and impotence of man into a dogma.

However, on the subject Ibn Taimiyya adopts synthetic approach and condemns the extreme positions of Mutazilla and Asharism in severest possible terms. "It ought to be known that on this point many groups of theologians and Sufis have erred and have adopted a position which is, actually, worse than that of the Mutazilla and other upholders of the freedom of the will (which the theologians and Sufis had sought to remedy). For, the upholders of the freedom of the will (at least) emphasize the Command (of God, i.e., the moral imperative)... and command good and forbid evil. But they were misled on the question of Divine Omnipotence and thought that the affirmation of a Universal Divine Will and Power... would rob God of Justice and Wisdom- but they were mistaken. These were then confronted by a number of Ulama (i.e., of the orthodoxy), pious men and theologians and Sufis who affirmed the absolute Power of God... which was so far so good. But they let go the side of command and prohibition (i.e., the moral side)...and became like those Associationists (Mushrikun) who (as the Quran informs us) told the Prophet 'If God had so willed, we would not have committed shirk... therefore, although the Mutazilla did resemble the Zoroastrians in so far as they

affirmed an agent other than God for what they believed to be evil this other group resembled the Associationists, who are much worse than the Zoroastrians²⁹”.

Ibn Taimiyya lays-bare the hollowness of the “doctrine of determinism” by highlighting its irreconcilable contradictions and lashes attack against traditional theologians. He says “One and the same person, when he is a theologian, believes in a rigorous determinism and impotency of the human will, but when he behaves a Faqih- either in the capacity of a Qadi or a Mufti, he has to assume freedom and efficacy of human will....and yet theology is supposed to be an intellectual defense of the creed and postulates of the Fiqh as the crown of the Sharia sciences³⁰”. Mutazilla were better since “commanding good and prohibiting bad” leads to the just moral social order, and latest research shows “in arena of great ideological conflict in the Middle East, in the early centuries of Islam, had successfully defended Islam against Gnosticism, Christianity, Zoroastrianism and Buddhism³¹”. However, Al-Ashari, al- Maturidi and their successor as well as philosophers and Sufis transformed determinism into a full-fledged ideology destined to be a bulwark against any moral initiative on the part of community. The doctrine, indeed, left indelible scars on the psyche of Muslim community, intellectual or physical initiative came to a grinding halt and became almost numbed.

Another challenge to the orthodoxy was Kharijism. They were Bedouin and could not understand a palpable gap between idealism and realism. To them a little deviation from the “ideal” or what they believed right was akin to heresy. Any person or group taking other opinion against them was termed unbeliever and they would wage Jihad against them. The situation flung a challenge of immense magnitude on the side of orthodox theologians to vet a definition of Muslim. Orthodoxy was again maneuvered to extreme position. No one was spared of Kharijites’ heresy declaration even great Companions like Ali etc. were declared heretic (Kafir). Theologians framed a highly loose and flexible definition that one who believes in God and proclaims himself a Muslim is Muslim. The definition triggered dichotomy of faith and acts which was a radical departure from the Quranic viewpoint and conduct of early normative community. Still had it been clarified that it was designed to provide only external legal definition of a Muslim and has nothing to do with content of Islam as such it would not prove in the long run a suicidal measure for the community. However, the definition well suited the minds who favored determinism. So, this legal and formal definition over a time became real definition of the Muslim. It transpired into a position that faith must be regarded as essentially independent of acts and acts must be judged leniently and “It was almost an exact Muslim replica of the Christian doctrine of “Justification by Faith”³²”.

However, on this problem too Ibn Taimiyya entertains a “middle of the two extremes” position, and supports his theses by the Quran and Sunna. After the assassination of third caliph Usman problem of Iman and definition of the Muslim was the first theological problem which community met with utmost confusion. The problem had been dealt confusedly and unsatisfactorily by traditional theologians, However, Ibn Taimiyya’s view-point on the subject is refreshingly synthetic as his central task was to put the things right and reorient the community in a proper direction which had indulged in serious errors. Khawarij held that good acts are integral to Iman and one who commits heinous acts loses iman while Murjia said good acts lie outside iman so the perpetrator of sins keeps his iman intact. So both Khawarij and Murjia agreed that faith is indivisible i.e, a person cannot have part of iman and lose part of it i.e., either one has full faith or no faith at all. Now, Ibn Taimiyya solves the problem convincingly as to him faith is a matter of gradations and Iman and kufr or hypocrisy can co-exist in a single person with varying degrees. “Hence, in one person both faith and hypocrisy come together; just as certain factors of faith and unbelief can converge³³”. The Quran and authentic hadiths support it. The Quran states “so that God may discernably set those apart who are hypocrite [by calling upon to join the battle at Uhd], when they were told: ‘come and fight in the cause of God and in defense [of Medina]’. They replied: ‘if we were sure that fighting would take place, we would have followed you [Muslims]’. On that day they were nearer to unbelief than to faith. They say with their mouths what is not in their hearts (3:167)”. Here, in the verse we see faith conjoined to unbelief, and authentic hadith too tells the same thing. From the entirety of the Quran and Sunna Ibn Taimiyya concludes that “Iman is not a monolithic construct. It is a veritable mosaic made up of faith and all sorts of good acts; and it can and mostly does cohabit with hypocrisy (nifaq) and unbelief (Kufr)³⁴”. Fazlur Rahman, to the present writer, convincingly employs Ibn Taimiyya’s principle of mean to differentiate between faith and unbelief when he says “determinism and free will, potency and impotency, hope and fear are, in human case, not contradictions but rather God-given tensions within whose frame-work people must work; should they violate either side of the tension and think themselves to either omnipotent or impotent, they fall into a Satanic condition that the Quran calls Kufr³⁵”.

The essence of the matter is that many verses of the Quran describe true believers as those “who attain faith and who do righteous deeds”. “Some grammarians and commentators note that the conjunction “and” is, in effect, superfluous- because in their view, to know God is already to act³⁶”. The great exegete al-Razi says “the Quran often expresses faith, in the past tense (amanu) grammatically, the use of past tense suggests that faith has already been attained- that it presumes the existence of a prior substrate or essence. In this view, good deeds do not merely follow faith; they emerge from its inner source. Deeds are conjoined to their foundation- to that inward inspiration, orientation, and moral sense that faith makes possible³⁷”. This is because commenting on 6:158 Zamakhshari concludes that “faith

without good works is here declared to be equivalent to having no faith at all³⁸”, since “convictions give rise to action. Knowledge, when it takes root, becomes the impulse to move in the world- to intervene, to build, to mend³⁹”. How, unfortunate it is that the kalam became infected with irjaist, Sufic and philosophical discourses hence from the vantage point of orthodoxy Iman stood independent of actions like Christian dogma “Affirmation by Faith” only. It lost responsibility to command good and forbid evil; and though Ibn Taimiyya set the things aright that faith entails action, it increases and decreases proportionate to the deeds and community is charged with the task of moral social order yet so powerful was the grip of Ashairism, Ghazali and Ibn al-Arabi on the psyche of community that Ibn Taimiyya went unheeded for centuries till 18th century reformer Ibn al-Wahab resurrected him from the debris of history to free the Muslim from the clutches of superstitions and innovations.

Al-Ghazali’s impact on the community was immediate and overwhelming as some orientalist characterize his works as re-birth of Islam since he struck harmony between theology, law and Sufism. However, he was an ever-developing scholar as his positions kept evolving throughout his intellectual and spiritual odyssey. In his great *Ahya* he denounces Fiqh as this-worldly science and scholars of law as corrupt men of the world. In *Jawahir al-Quran* of his middle Sufi career he puts “indeed, there is nothing in existence except God and His acts, for whatever is there besides Him in His acts⁴⁰”. So Sufism confirmed him in Asharism. This is because Ibn Taimiyya analyzing the intellectual make-up of al-Ghazali, Ibn al-Arabi, Avicenna remarked that over-obsession with Sufism and philosophy leads one to the inanity of the God and the world. Al-Ghazali in his *Ijam al-awam min Ilm al-Kalam* lashed out at theologians describing them as “immature children to whom spiritual truths must never be divulged⁴¹”. However, as he is ever-growing in final stage at last his extremist positions dissipate and every discipline falls in a proper place. He says “the Jurist are to be regarded as the builders of hospices and other facilities on the way to Mecca for the sake of the pilgrimage, while the position of the theologians is like that of the guides to the pilgrimage and guardians along the way⁴²”. Finally in his *Mustadfa* (the quintessence) a work on Jurisprudence a genuine doubt-free Ghazali emerges who divide sciences into three categories first among them are rational sciences like mathematics, geometry and astronomy etc., secondly are the purely traditionally transmitted science like Hadith and commentaries of the Quran pointing to third category he puts “the noblest of sciences are those that combine both reason and tradition; and personal thought as well as revealed authority. Now, law and jurisprudence belongs to this category because it takes a balanced path, by taking the choicest of revelation and reason. Neither is it a manipulation by pure reason, which is not welcomed by the sharia. Nor is it based on blind acceptance of pure authority which reason cannot certify to be correct nor support. It is because of the nobility of the nobility of the science of law and its cause [which is a combination of authority and reason] that God has made abundant the motivations of people to acquire it and those who are learned in it are the highest of scholars in rank and the greatest of them in prestige; and they have the largest of colleagues as followers⁴³”.

Here, the conclusions what Ghazali reaches in the last leg of his intellectual-cum-spiritual journey are those which run with Ibn Taimiyya since the beginning of his career with each discipline i.e., law, theology and Sufism falling in its proper place. He emphatically fights the case of law and jurisprudence as supreme since both govern human “acts” for to the Quran men are not what they think but are what they do. The irony is that the community failed to understand Ghazali as a compact whole and his over-blown statements of his mid-career were taken as final arguments. He says in *al-Munqidh* when dilemmas almost crippled me physically “I turned myself to Sufism”. However, when in last phase of life he resumes public life i.e., teaching and law he says “divine decree led me”, “(saqani qadarullah)” is a pregnant statement. Sufism was his personal choice while returning to law and teaching was the well-considered view in the light of entirety of his deliberations on Islamic world-view endorsed by his spiritual odyssey. So dead-cert of the veracity of this reality he was that he deems as if God had led him to this way. This is because Ibn Taimiyya entertains a very soft view of Ghazali characterizing his faith as “undifferentiated faith” and comes hard on Ibn Arabi whom he terms “paragon of everything un-Islamic”.

So far as Sufism is concerned here too Ibn Taimiyya takes middle of the road position as he adopts principle of mean to address the problems of traditional theology, law and jurisprudence. No one except secular Muslim modernist school of Sir Syed did refute and reject Sufism on the touch-stone of Western modernity in history of Islam. Ibn Taimiyy’s blitz against superstitious and fictitious Sufism and saint-worship have given him the reputation of anti-Sufism. In fact in his critique of Sufism he rejects Ibn Arabi’s pantheistic Sufism in severest possible terms which ultimately leads to world-God identity which in turn inspires inanity of God and the world. So, “Ibn Taimiyya’s virulent campaign against pantheistic Sufism is well-known, although it is a serious error, commonly committed, to regard him as an enemy of all expressions of Sufism⁴⁴”. Al-Ghazali issued cautionary note against philosophers and scientists who being entrenched in Greek philosophy denied physical resurrection and believed in eternity of the universe. As their intellectual posture virtually demolishes the fundamental theses of religion Ghazali cautioned the community to avoid their philosophical viewpoint, even scientific works of Muslim scientists as they were philosophers as well and readers could take interest in their philosophical stand. However, this ad-hoc measure again maneuvers orthodoxy to an extreme position and a transitory caution against philosophy and science assumes permanence in Sunni Islam. Hence, philosophy which due to Ghazal’s critique went underground reappeared in the name of Ibn al-Arabi’s theosophic intuitionism. “The pantheistic content of this theosophy apart, the greater disservice

that it did to the intellectual life of the community was the sharp cleavage it made between what it called “reason” and “kashf” and claimed the latter for itself in order to seek security under the supposedly unassailable citadel whereas “reason” was declared to be absolutely fallible. Now, whenever the organic relationship between perceptive and formulative reason is thus cut in a society, it can never hope to keep alive any intellectual tradition of a high caliber⁴⁵. So, moral and intellectual decrepitude of the Muslim was rooted in this anomaly which Ibn Arabi had sown and cultivated on the neat and clean land of Islamic positivism with his impressive poetic imagination and systematic philosophic thought.

Ibn Taimiyya’s harsh criticism of Ibn al-Arabi is directly proportional to the harm and damage his Sufi-theosophy done to the intellectual life of the community. This, proved in the long run an intellectual and moral perversion of tall order which still reigns supreme over a large swathes of the Muslim world. Ibn Taimiyya, distinguishes between the earlier classical Sufism and later neo-Sufism. The former has moral and ascetic concern while latter indulges in ecstasies and pleasure. He says “an excessive preoccupation with acts of worship that alienate a person from the social world is the hallmark of Christian monks and many Sufis. Both are wrong since this kind of “spiritual exercise” actually yields pleasure and is a form of self-indulgence. With the advent of “innovated” Kalam and innovated Sufism, the two became polarized, and often mortal enemies. The mutakallimin came to resemble the hard-hearted Jewish learned men, while the new Sufis increasingly resembled Christian devotees to excessive worship⁴⁶”.

Ibn Taimiyya seemed conscious that religious communities are prone to extremities and frequently cites the examples of Judaism, Christianity and Zoroastrianism that how did they opt for extreme positions one way or the other and as man is weak and unstable in nature the world of Islam is not exempted from this proclivity. So, to bring back the community from one extreme or the other to the middle position by the principle of mean is not a one-off enterprise but a continual endeavor and duty of the learned men of the community.

Thus, with the instrument of the principle of “gold median approach”, Ibn Taimiyya collapses the extremes into “mean position”. Regarding Sufism he does not let go this principle. He prefers Sufis to theologians since he deems the latter like arrogant Jew scholars who erect rigid formalism, however, as a group the Sufis are better than the proponents of dialectical theology (ahl al-Kalam). This he does in sharp contradistinction to Ahmad Bin Hanbal to which law school he belonged. Ibn Hanbal had a strong disdain for Sufism and approved some forms of theology. However, Ibn Taimiyya accepts non-extremist Sufis and terms theology a singularly unfortunate development in Islam. For the theologians for the most part indulge themselves in appreciating, praising and cherishing God at the expense of what he demands from us. And as their theological framework is most often based on Greek thought they are least bothered to understand the will of God and implement the same in flesh and blood of history. “Al-Ghazali states out of the four paths before him- theology (Kalam), philosophy, esotericism (Batinism) and mysticism (Sufism), he chose the last one. Ibn Taimiyya supported him and only regretted that Ghazali did not consider another path- namely that of the Quran and the Sunna of the Prophet⁴⁷”. He vociferously attacks Sunni Kalam i.e., Ashairism for it declares men impotent to save God’s omnipotence and renders the sense of human responsibility and accountability before God untenable. Whenever someone is brought before judge he/she is assumed to have the power to act, however, if actual actor is God and man acts metaphorically then the Quranic doctrine of reward and punishment on the day of judgement crumbles to dust.

As Sufis and philosophers too put their weight in the balance of Asharism and devise misleading arguments in its favor, both earn the wrath of Ibn Taimiyya. He judges both on his criterion of Tauhid i.e., God must be recognized as One to whom alone our allegiance is due and it alone can inspire the attitude of Ibada i.e., a knowledge of God’s will and its fearless implementation in life. So this is an *applied monotheism* which impels one to action to restore moral order in individual and social life. On this touch-stone Sufis and philosophers who stand on the side of Asharism largely fail. Hence, Ibn Taimiyya “asserts that when a Sufi divests his mind of all its positive content in order to devote himself exclusively to God, as he claims, then the devil comes to inhabit his empty mind and freely does his work there⁴⁸”. In fact, a Sufism neutral to the social reality is neither endorsed by the Quran nor the Prophetic conduct. Sufism is all about the spiritual awakening and inwardness of the moral responsibility as the Prophet’s model insinuates “to seek the ghayb it is necessary to be a recluse in the “Cave of Hira”, but once the window opens it must free one to come into the arena of the moral world to teach, struggle, and fight⁴⁹”. However, as Sufism in early period instead of a natural phenomenon was a reaction against this-worldly amoral pursuits of pleasures of the rulers and aristocrats its main thrust was simplicity and asceticism rather than a movement of moral reform. Khawaja Hassan Bassri is considered the father of early Sufism in Islam, he writes to Umar Bin Abdul-Aziz God has created nothing more hateful to him than this world, and from the day He created it He has not looked upon it. Later, this became a Sufi Hadith. So, the world-renunciation the major Sufi impulse is anti-cultural and anti-civilizational trait of Sufism. The Quran recurrently points to the natural phenomena as signs of God and invites us to ponder over them to learn the moral lessons. So, “this world in fact becomes evil and poison only if it turns into a veil concealing God from humanity instead of revealing God to humanity⁵⁰”.

As earlier said, the doctrine of wahdat al-wajud essentially leads to the inanity of God and the universe since it robs man of his moral initiative. Ibn al-Arabi's Sufi theosophy did not take into account the moral responsibility of erecting moral social order which the Quran and Seera so vividly and unmistakably depict. The ideal of love which nurtures love of God and of fellow humans in believers is the dominant feature of wujudi Tasawwuf where even para-sexual symbolism is considered a welcome development. Irja's content had relaxed moral tensions on the plea that God is excessively merciful and forgiving but monistic Sufism led the community to total moral nihilism. It emphasizes only the gnosis and love of God; Ibn Qayyim condemns it as an exercise in futile. To him "when a Sufi becomes absorbed in his divine love and forgets about mankind and even obedience to God, because he enjoys and relishes that love for its own sake, there remains no essential difference between him and a person who becomes similarly absorbed in human love and enjoys and relishes it"⁵¹.

Excesses and extremes committed by the law experts (fuqaha) could not go unnoticed by Ibn Taimiyya as this discipline deals with human acts and govern the conduct of men in society, therefore, it was very close to his heart. In fact, al-Shafi is considered to be the first person who formulated principles of law which community as a whole did accept. To Shafi, a single nus of the Quran or hadith was enough to reach a legal judgement. It gave rise to Hadith movement which culminated into uniform legal structure for Islamic state. Furthermore, nus based legislation along with finality of consensus rendered the law virtually static. Though the gate of ijtihad was not proclaimed to be closed yet in the interests of uniform legal structure it was deemed fit to be left intact. It transpired that legal rule for every person [Mujtahid] is whatever his intellectual exertion leads him to, since it was said that if he arrives a right decision he will get double reward if he reaches wrong judgement then he is entitled to single reward. Thus, developed a doctrine of infallibility of ethical judgement. This development, to Ibn Taimiyya, led to the "educated conjectures" which was at a polar distance from Islamic positivism. Hence, there arose a science of legal differences [Ilm al-khilaf] after the first three centuries of Islam. Abu Bakr al-Sayyafi was the first Shafi scholar who devoted special attention to legal differences. So, "due to the excessive blind imitation, ignorance and guesswork on the part of those associated with the study of law, issuing juridical response and the judiciary, that the scholars of dialectical theology became aggressive towards the jurists. With the result that they [the theologians] excluded positive law (fiqh), which comprises all the (religious) sciences, from the discourse of science itself, on the basis of what they observed in terms following authority (taqlid) and conjectural propositions"⁵².

Ibn Taimiyya, excoriates the intellectual stagnation of the lawyers of Islam, who oblivious of the dynamic impulse of the Quran were mostly cooking the cooked food while life was getting complex in view of emerging new realities and resultant problems which require fresh thinking on the part of fuqaha but they were content with the solutions at their disposal presented by their master jurists. He writes "Most [jurists] only know the school of law of his founder (imam). Often he would at best only have a cursory knowledge. Thus he cannot make a distinction between issues that have been clearly defined upon by scriptural texts and consensus (ijma) on the one hand, and the peculiarities of that school or instances where juridical discretion (ijtihad) flourishes...[such a jurist is] like a donkey, that merely transports old books [without understanding]"⁵³.

To Ibn Taimiyya neo-fiqh lost creative vigor and blind imitation brought it to the dead end. They [fuqaha] even attributed some wrong juridical decisions to the master jurists. For example it was stated on the authority of Shafi that a woman irrevocably repudiated can remarry her former husband after getting married with an interim husband. Similarly, it was alleged that Malik condoned sodomy. To a Sufi hadith God dwells in adolescence which led to pedophile tendencies and Persian and Turkish poetry of that period has a lot of such content. So, it was not only law (fiqh) but Sufis and theologians as well who loosened public attitude towards fiqh and as the legists were in service of state and had adopted formalism so public began to despise them and Sufism became not only a mass religion but a parallel religion itself. Ibn Taimiyya's preoccupation with fiqh was of high order as it regulates individual's action and conduct of society. His concept of Tauheed was organically linked up with Ibada which to him was not mere chanting the names of God or to worship Him in an isolation like Christian monks but it was to know the will of God and to fearlessly implement the same. The Monotheism (Tauhid) of Asharism was only the monotheism of lordship (i.e., God is sole creator- sustainer not a guide) while monotheism of the Muslim philosophers demanded only the knowledge of universe, God and man. This is because Ibn Taimiyya preferred Mutazillites to Asharites and philosophers since they believed in cardinal duty of commanding good and forbidding evil. So, fiqh was central to Ibn Taimiyya since it plays central role in governing the affairs of the community for the fulfilment of the task of which it is torch-bearer. Consider the case when the Prophet allowed some believers to stay at home as per their stated reasons and concerns during Jihad, Sura Toba vehemently reprimanded them and God said to the Prophet 'May God forgive you! Why did you permit these people (to stay at home?). As positive law (fiqh) is related to commands and prohibitions and ultimate task ahead and plays vital pivotal role in restoration of moral order on the earth on this premise it remained foremost concern of Ibn Taimiyya's intellectual endeavors and constructs.

We have elaborated Ibn Taimiyya's critique of Mutazilla and Asharism on the subject of free-will and determinism. We amply demonstrated that amidst early extreme circumstances of socio-religious conflicts and resultant challenges orthodoxy had been maneuvered to extreme positions. It offered extreme solutions to the extreme challenges in a hope

that at return of normalcy community will return to normative Islam. So, though Ibn Taimiyya's critique of both theological schools is justified but the question is what position he takes on this subject against their extremist viewpoints.

The question of free-will and determinism is an issue which had defied intellectual solution in entire history of human thought because working of nature and human conduct might be explained both on moral and scientific planes. So, the answer to this problem of high order lies in fusion of moral as well as scientific rationales. As earlier said the Quran instead of addressing this issue squarely is interested in maximizing the moral energies of man in view of his nature. "When Moses and Aron conveyed God's Message onto Pharaoh the latter asked then, who, is this Sustainer of you two, O Moses? He replied: "our Sustainer is He Who gives unto everything [that exists] its true nature and form and thereupon guides it [towards fulfilment] (20:49-50)". From here it appears that God forms the nature of humans rather than predetermines their acts. However, still man is not an ultimate actor in his deeds and actions as Universal creative will, all-comprehensive determinism, and all-compelling will of God (mashiyya) encompasses everything. So, man could not be deemed as an ultimate free actor. So to Ibn Taimiyya "they [Mutazilla] wrongly believed that if they affirmed God's universal creative will, His all-inclusive power and all-comprehensive creativity of everything [both good and evil], it would result in an objectionable affront to His justice and wisdom. They erred in this belief⁵⁴". Thus, they thought God in human terms and ignored Majesty, Mercy, and Power of Omnipotent God. On the other hand Asharism to protect Omnipotence of God deprived man of his choice to choose between right and wrong. Here, again being true to his middle of the road position or principle of mean Ibn Taimiyya resolves the problem with synthetic approach. Thus, middle of the road means synthesis of both extremes. So, in the light of the religious-moral consciousness, particularly Quranic consciousness Ibn Taimiyya finds room for both determinism and free-will.

However, in his treatment of the subject-matter Ibn Taimiyya lashes his attack against Asharism with no holds barred as their intellectual posture in an ultimate analysis renders the religion redundant and with its fatal combination with monistic/ pantheistic Sufism, any difference between good and bad vanishes into thin air. But, though Mutazilla denied omnipotence of God still they believe in commanding good and forbidding evil, and as the Kharijites were Mutazillites they termed Jihad sixth pillar of Islam since without active and effective struggle i.e., Jihad commanding good and forbidding evil was next to impossible. They [Kharijism] knew to "command good and forbid evil" is the responsibility of sociopolitical order i.e., state not the job of orthodoxy as Sunni Kalam came to believe, theirs [i.e., Ulama's] is a job to teach and preach. That is why they fought with sociopolitical order to build anew to implement their strict interpretation of religion as being Bedouin they could not understand palpable difference between idealism and realism so assuming the strict idealistic posture was a natural outcome. However, so far as the cardinal duty of "commanding good and forbidding evil" is concerned their approach to see the task through by the power of state and their declaring Jihad to be the instrument of executing the task as sixth pillar of Islam seemed in tune with the Quran. They fell prey to their extremism hence their exit from the moral arena was inevitable. As Zaid bin Zain al-Abidin was influenced by Mutazillite scholars he protested against his father that if he deems himself imam/leader he must enter the arena of moral struggle against usurpers and fulfil the task of commanding good and forbidding evil, but the prescient father replied his son 'what is your opinion about Ali's standpoint and conduct during the caliphate of first three caliphs?'. Still, Imam Zaid the founder of Zaidia law school laid his life in battlefield pursuing the task of commanding good and forbidding evil.

On this premise Ibn Taimiyya entertains preference for Mutazilla against Asharism. To him the former resemble Magians for they deem man as an ultimate free actor beside God while latter resemble Meccan pagans polytheists, who being paragon of pre-determinism said: "If God had so willed we would have committed no association (shirk), nor would have our forefathers [done so], nor would we have tabooed anything (6:148)". Ibn Taimiyya equated Mutazilla with Magians as the latter entertain dualistic conception of God since to them there is a God of goodness (Ahura) against another independent rival God of badness (daeva). So, Mutazillites belief that man in ultimate sense is an independent free actor viz.a.viz., God is akin to Magian belief who deem anti-goodness God as not only independent of true God but as an arch-rival of him. This is an unprecedented microscopic diagnosis of Mutazillite's creedal malaise by Ibn Taimiyya yet he prefers Mutazilla as a lesser evil than Asharism since the former takes on the responsibility of commanding good and forbidding evil.

Ibn Taimiyya not only does equate Asharism with polytheists and Mutazilla with Magians and wishfully prefer the latter to the former but plead his thesis with sound rationale... "Surely, the polytheists are more evil than the Magians! All Muslims agree that the Magians are acknowledged [as a religion] on their payment of a poll-tax [and are therefore not killed]. Some scholars have even held that it is possible for Muslims to marry their women and partake of their food [similar to Jews and Christians]. As for the polytheists (mushrikun), the community is unanimous in their belief that one cannot marry their women and may not eat their food. The view of al-Shafi and the more well-known opinion of Ahmad [Ibn Hanbal] and that of other scholars besides these two, is that the [polytheists] are not acknowledged by their payment of poll-tax [in order to survive]. The majority of ulama are of the view that Arab polytheists in particular cannot be allowed to pay poll tax, although the Magians are [allowed to do this] ⁵⁵". From this statement we can gauge

Ibn Taimiyya's preoccupation with "Islamic positivism and collectivism" which is surely in tune with the Quran and also understand what harm and damage Asharite creedal formula has done to the positivistic and collectivist impulse of Islam.

To Asharism everything including human acts are predetermined and preordained; monotheism means monotheism of lordship i.e., God is the sole Creator-Sustainer, not as the source of guidance. Asharism believes that only to profess that God is the lord of everything is the realization of true monotheism [Tauhid]. Ibn Taimiyya's conception of true monotheism is organically linked up with Ibada i.e., salvation lies in knowing the will of God and to implement the same. So to Ibn Taimiyya the criterion of one's belief or unbelief does not lie only in affirming God as the sole creator and Sustainer but to what extent and degree one obeys commands and avoids prohibitions. Hence, to Ibn Taimiyya who harnesses the omnipotence of God as an argument to avoid or invalidate God's commands and prohibitions is worse than the one who only affirms divine commands and prohibitions but does not affirm God's omnipotence to consider man as an ultimate free actor. So one who believes in omnipotent will of God, bears witness to His universal lordship over all creation but fails to distinguish what is commanded and what is prohibited, mere affirmation by Faith does not bring him on par with one who assumes the moral obligation to command good and forbid evil. To Ibn Taimiyya "such a person cannot claim to believe in any of the messengers or in any revealed Book. [as to such person everything is predetermined, no obligation emerges from the faith] in such a person's view Adam and the devil are equal; Noah and his people are equal; Moses and Pharaoh are equal; and the early converts to Islam [who perceived its truth without delay] and the Meccan pagans- are all equal⁵⁶".

Why does Ibn Taimiyya inveigh against Asharism so fumingly? This is because its pre-determinism numbed the moral sensors and creative faculties of the community and as it favored ruling elite, state sponsored the doctrine so much so that it became an article of faith. Sufis and philosophers came to support it ever with the finest of arguments apparently to defend Omnipotence, Majesty, Mercy, Love and Powers of God against Kharijism and Mutazilla but question is when both these became extinct, why does Asharism reign supreme till today? Does it not need course correction? In fact, pre-determinism safeguards the vested-interests of religious, mercantile and political elites, it has on its back the support of prominent scholars like al-Ghazali and al-Razi- who "vied with one another in producing ever fresh arguments to prove that man can be said to act only metaphysically, not really, since the only real actor is God⁵⁷".

Al-Razi was a theistic predestinarian of a truly frightening order. Consider his argument which he advances against human potency. He says "in order to be able to act, the would-be agent must know exactly what he is doing; otherwise he cannot be said to 'act'. But in order to know exactly what I am doing, e.g. when I am said to move my finger, I must know the consequences of this act. But when I move my finger, an infinite series of motion is initiated (both in my body and outside it) which I can never possibly know. I cannot, therefore, be said even to be able to move my finger. The motion of my finger is, therefore, an event which is created by God, or, rather, God had created it in eternity in His infinite Wisdom and Knowledge⁵⁸". Iqbal condemns al-Razi's pre-determinism in his couplet: از اشک فروشستم جوں سرمه رازی را-ستقدیر اَمم دیدم دیگر به کتاب اندر when I washed away the imprints of al-Razi from my eyes I found quite different rules, in the Quran which govern the rise and fall of communities. It is stated that al-Razi on the request of the mother of one of the Khwarazm-Shahs [who probably was a pagan] wrote a book explaining the reason why people worship stars. But not stopping at this, al-Razi endorsed star-worship. To Ibn Taimiyya he became kafir until he repented and returned to Islam. The incident shows how some intellectuals fell prey to fame and money at the hands of rulers. Hence, we are apt to say that along a sort of misconception state's interest was a key motivation for the scholars who devised and strengthened the doctrine of pre-determinism.

Sufi-theosophy brought pre-determinism to unprecedented heights. First, monistic world-view claimed "Every act or occurrence is created by God," then proceeded forward to declare that "Every act or occurrence is God". So, Muslim's initiative, intellectually and physically, became severely proscribed, until it was almost numbed⁵⁹". On this premise says Dr. Fazlur Rahman that "[Asharite] theology represents, in my view, an almost total distortion of Islam and was, in fact, a one-sided and extreme reaction to the Mutazillite rationalist theology⁶⁰".

Ibn Taimiyya's major preoccupation was applied monotheism i.e., practical implementation of the will of God which means the establishment of an egalitarian social moral order on the earth which requires relentless struggle of commanding good and forbidding evil for the execution of which God promises rewards and punishments. This is why despite his Hanbalite background Ibn Taimiyya says that "the Mutazila and Shiite Qadarites [advocates of free-will], who affirm God's command and prohibition; [affirm] threat and promise, are much better than those who equate between believers and unbelievers; and [claim] that the righteous and the unrighteous...are equal, and who regard [this confusion] to be the most profound truth and the pinnacle of monotheism⁶¹".

Now, as Ibn Taimiyya's position regarding Asharism and Mutazila has been amply clarified with relevant grounds they took, and the damage and harm their doctrines inflicted on the corporate personality, conscience and performance of the community. We are at a right stage to understand how Ibn Taimiyya employs his "principle of mean" to reach a gold mean solution. Indeed, religious, particularly the Quranic consciousness accommodates both determinism and free-will. Ibn Taimiyya throughout his writings seemed inclined to find a gold-mean of Asharite extremist determinism and Mutazila's extremist free-will. He addresses the problem from several approaches and employs different tools and

strategies. One answer to the problem he offers by explaining the will of God which work at two different levels. Firstly, premised on the Quran Ibn Taimiyya accepts universal creative will of God. It is a will that creates everything both good and evil and terms it *irada kawniyya*. Now, as religious consciousness is based on moral dualism i.e., there are always two opposing moral principles which shape human behavior and ethical framework, so the second is a religious will (*irada diniyya*), divine command which is based on commands and prohibitions. “These two aspects of the divine will [*irada kawniyya* and *irada diniyya*] are not just mechanically juxtaposed, but integrated and subsumed under the purposive activity of God, which both philosophers and Murjia denies, the Asharis included under the last mentioned, and against whom Ibn Taimiyya strongly inveighs. His explanation for the presence of evil is that it is necessary to attain the greater good. Evil is only incidental to the good and it is relatively small compared to the abundance of good⁶²”. However, Ibn Taimiyya warns that if universal creative will of God is confused with divine command or moral will of God whereby good and evil stand distinguished, or antithetically opposed it would land one into the abyss of Ibn al-Arabi’s intellectual-aesthetic religious consciousness which ends up in monism with fatal ethical consequences.

In fact, when universal creative will of God and religious [moral] will of God, are mixed up or confused with each other, ethical results are disastrous. When under the rubrics of Asharism pre-determinism stayed an article of faith it dealt a fatal blow not only to human free-will but moral will of God as well. Due to closer affinities of outlook Asharism and Murijism turned into Siamese twins so while *irja* weakened faith in divine punishments and trivialized the matter of obligations Asharite pre-determinism nullified commands and prohibitions. Now, as Ibn al-Arabi’s syncretic Sufi movement absorbed elements of every hue and color from within and without it could not ignore to muster Asharite’s pre-determinism and *Irja*’s moral laxity for its arsenal. So it was natural for it to build its intellectual edifice exclusively on the basis of **universal creative will of God** that creates everything good and evil, at the expense of **moral religious will of God** whereby good and evil stand clearly distinguished, indeed, antithetically opposed. This intellectual-aesthetic religious move was bound to demolish the basis of fundamental moral dualism what it did with a finesse that defies description. So, *Irja*’s aggressive optimism and Ashrite determinism along with his exclusive reliance on universal creative will of God ultimately led him to explain “the conflict of good and evil in terms of the waves that arise from the same sea, collide with each other, and then fall back into the same sea⁶³”. Hence, to him there remains no room for real evil. In his scheme of thought even Satan is ultimately good since he is faithfully performing the function assigned to him in the scheme of things and divine plan.

Ibn Taimiyya always relied on the Quran and Sunna and judged alien ideas and foreign elements on the same touchstone. He was well-versed in Greek philosophy but unlike Sufis and philosophers he judged it on the terms of the Quran not vice versa. His conception of universal will of God and moral will of God as creative and integrative whole is kneaded in faith. The Prophet’s conduct and model he found as an undifferentiated nucleus of theological, mystic and legal approaches. So, Sufism, theology and law must work within the premises set by him whom the Quran terms as complete standard model for humanity. Ibn Taimiyya’s intellectual endeavors converge on this principle in his burden of critique against neo-Kalam, neo-fiqh and neo-Sufism and other innovations of this ilk since these innovations are deviations from the straight Middle Path [*Sirat-e-Mustaqeem*] and having schismatic character led the community to the pernicious sectarian divisions in Islam. Ibn Taimiyya deems pre-determinism out and out un-Islamic and Ibn al-Arabi an epitome of everything un-Islamic. He cites Abu Hanifa’s contemporary Sufyan al-Thawri who disapproved the term “predetermined [*jabara*]” and said “God formed the nature of humans rather than predetermined their acts⁶⁴”. So, the million dollar question at hand is that God Who passed Muhammad (PBUH) and the believers through the severest of the tumults and crisis for implementation of His moral religious will i.e., they established just socio-economic moral order based on *Tauhid*, how could license the Ashrites, Monist Sufis and philosophers for *laissez fair* morality, or have men withdrawn from the acts of socio-economic injustices once and for all? To Ibn Taimiyya commanding good and forbidding evil for the implementation of God’s moral will is a constant continual obligation of all Muslims since man is weak and unstable in nature only a just sociopolitical order which through commands and prohibitions can rein in his lust for money, power and pleasures.

Ibn Taimiyya supports and strengthens his view of universal creative will of God and His moral will with another strategy. In his view “determinism as the all-comprehensive determinism of God, is an object of faith rather than principle of action⁶⁵”. Asharism and Sufi monism take determinism as a principle of action which destroys God’s moral will i.e., His commands and prohibitions. Ibn Taimiyya sets the things in right order by acknowledging the fact that nothing happens without God’s will, however, he states that though it is right to say that my writing these lines occurs by God’s will but until my writing actually happens I do not know what God’s will was regarding my this action. Hence, my attribution of my act to God cannot be properly attributed to God until it is a matter of past. Therefore, at first level action must be dealt under God’s moral religious will as a conscious choice of the agent, when it is done it enters category of universal creative will of God Who with power of His all-encompassing knowledge knew it, we as human being approached it as a matter of fact when it became a matter of past. This point though emphasizes on human “conscious choice in action” staying him responsible for his deeds yet when action becomes a matter of past its attribution to God’s all-comprehensive determinism invokes passivity on the part of agent since it

seldom leads to course correction. As Ibn Taimiyya bore tyranny with patience and same suggests to others that to bear hardships one must pray to God for relief but accept the misfortune not only passively but gladly.

Finally, along with previous two arguments Ibn Taimiyya employs Aristotelian concept of the efficient and teleological causes to explain determinism and freedom. God is omnipotent, nothing occurs without His will, however, God's moral will while it presupposes His universal creative will, is future oriented it is not concerned with what has happened. The major point here to ponder is that while God's power and will [irada kawniyya] is effective and only implies "is", Moral religious will of God is Sharia which implies an "ought". Every specie's sharia- way of life, nature is written on its heart, it surrenders to its inlaid or ingrained laws i.e., automatically obeys the "command" of God. So whole universe is therefore Muslim. Man's Sharia, like all other creatures is written on his heart (91:7-10). However, man unlike every other creature is endowed with a faculty of free conscious choice of obeying or disobeying God's command. So "while every other creature follows its nature automatically, man ought to follow his nature; this transformation of the "is" into "ought" is both the unique privilege and the unique risk of man⁶⁶". Hence, Ibn Taimiyya's explanation of determinism and freedom in terms of Aristotelean concept of efficient and teleological causes resolves the riddle efficiently. So, God's moral will [irada diniyya] is not concerned with what has occurred but its concern is what ought to happen. "It is, therefore, exclusively addressed to the human will in terms of what it is expected to bring out in the world. This command is Sharia. A human being, as a thinking and active agent in this world, is therefore asked to implement the Sharia in a historic context. Humans are allowed to use and interfere with the working of nature, although belief in the omnipotent but purposeful will of God must always remain in the background of their minds⁶⁷". This is because despite summoning all reserves of his positive nature, despite harnessing the actual forces and materieux of history and leaving no stone unturned, the Prophet referred every bit of his achievement to God since it is judicious interplay of universal creative will of God and His moral religious will that bestows success on the torch-bearers of His moral cause.

Now, as Ibn Taimiyya played a highly original, and unprecedented role in addressing the notorious problem of determinism and free-will. Similarly his political doctrine though at some points seemed infected with irja's tendencies and Sunni determinism, still his Islamic political theory is as refreshing, original and impressive as if it would have been conceived and postulated in our modern contemporary terms at that time when very shining illustrious figures of medieval Islam had been busy in speculative thought, moral gymnastics and mystic deliriums with logical attendant elements of moral apathy and pacifism.

Ibn Taimiyya's Sitz im leben are crucial to understand his Islamic viewpoint. When he came at the scene central Islamic empire had been disintegrated by the savage onslaught of wild Mongols. Earlier socio-political-cum- religious wars had brought to the fore an extremist Kharijite phenomenon whose ultra-democratic and extreme idealist attitude had threatened not only an integrity and unity but the very existence of the community. To counter this extremist challenge there came forward a jama, a group of people called Ahl al-Adl wal- Sunna i.e., People of the just middle position who initially did their best to redeem a balance in thought and practice of the community. However, extremity invokes extremity. So, to counter the kharijism, there emerged murijism to safeguard the unity and integrity of the community. To Kharijites every sinner was declared to be a heretic [Kafir] and excluded from Islam while over-blown optimism of Murijites was ready to condone sins of high-intensity which transpired into severing the organic link between faith and action. So it sought solidarity of the community at the expense of moral concerns. Several political hadiths were cultivated to develop the doctrines of almost unconditional obedience to political authority which urged absolute pacifism and an isolation from politics and all this they done in the light of their own experience that any law is better than lawlessness. "But once the doctrine was given out and accepted as guaranteed by the Prophetic authority, it became part of the permanent furniture of Sunni belief-the Sunnis had, forever, become the king's party, almost any king⁶⁸". Consider the case of Egyptian Sunni orthodoxy's support to Napoleon and with few exceptions orthodoxy sought loyalty to and offered services to British Imperialism in the sub-continent. This deep-set obedience even to the tyrant rule finds its seeds in Murijism. So, "combination of a deliberately cultivated political docility and a general moral passivity not only made political opportunism possible but seemed to bestow upon it a doctrinal rectitude⁶⁹".

This was a state of affairs when Ibn Taimiyya enters the arena to reorient Islam to its fundamental sources i.e., the Quran and Sunna. His political doctrine is well-kneaded in Islamic positivism and collectivism. His interpretation of the verse 33:72 is unique and upon it, is based his comprehensive understanding of Islam. The verse states that at creation man bore the burden of moral responsibility which heavens despite their heights, mountains despite their firmness and earth despite its vastness frightened and refused to bear. Man is indeed excessively unjust and foolhardy. Ibn Taimiyya's understanding of the first part of the verse is unique in a sense that the challenge of moral responsibility which entire creation refused to bear and man took on was to develop a moral socio-political order on the earth i.e., to restore moral order in individual and social life. So far so good! However, his interpretation of the latter part of the verse smacks of Sunni-theology and irja's position. "Man is excessively unjust and foolhardy" is spoken in a sense that man accepted the challenge that was much higher than his capabilities and capacities. The judgement is a praiseworthy, rather than a harsh critique of man. Man, in fact put everything on line in accepting the challenge which entire universe declined due to the severity of responsibility involved. It was, indeed, both a unique privilege and

unique obligation for man though for the most part he has taken it as a privilege. The Primordial Covenant which God struck with man (7:172-73) points to the same obligation that man will hearken and respond to his positive nature which means he will establish just moral order on the earth which will reflect equality which all people share in the eyes of God. However, Ibn Taimiyya accepts the second part of the verse as a matter of fact to address the political issues of his own social milieu. So he says since man is prone to injustice and ignorance- sometime rulers inflict tyranny on the subjects and sometime subjects rebel unjustly against the rulers so the subjects must bear the injustice and tyranny of the rulers with patience, as is the principle of the Ahl al-Sunna wal-Jamaa.

However, what distinguishes him from all medieval Islamic thinkers is that he raised the moral concerns to a central place. But as the unity of the community was shattered due to the disintegration of central empire at Baghdad, unity and solidarity of the community was no less central to Ibn Taimiyya as the Quran's stress on solidarity and unity of community is no less than its stress on monotheism and socio-economic justice. He does never condone infighting in the community, even he courageously levelled critique against the Companions and Successor who fought each other, and does not accept the popular Sunni view which says they fought each other due to their intellectual juridical error [Ijtihad]. And so far as the doctrine of the infallibility of ethical judgement is concerned the mujtahid who reaches right judgement gets double award and the one who hits wrong solution gets single award as he, at least has attempted to resolve the issue. But Ibn Taimiyya here does not use the term *ijtihad*. He here employs the term misinterpretation which instead of resulting in a reward may at best be forgiven. To him, misinterpretation may either be forgiven or may constitute a grave sin or may constitute unbelief (*kufr*). So, Ibn Taimiyya deems that participants of earlier religious political wars, indeed, committed a grave sin, however, their contribution to the cause of Islam is so great that will eclipse their errors.

Ibn Taimiyya who boldly levels just critique on Companions and Successors about their participation in early civil wars, could not sacrifice moral concerns at the altar of purposeless unity and solidarity of the community as *murijism* did. To Ibn Taimiyya moral responsibility and unity of the community stand integral to each other negation of one implies rejection of the other so both are indispensable to each other. Indeed, the community came into being on the basis of transcendental moral anchoring points, or, at best the moral values necessitated a community of shared world-view to inject the same in flesh and blood of history, so Ibn Taimiyya could not condone *Irja's* one-sided unconditional moral pacifism against the rulers. He formulated a theory of mutuality wherein the being, interests and obligations of both the rulers and the ruled are safeguarded and stressed. He held the rule to be a "trusteeship" (*amana*) to the Quran, "God commands you to deliver the trusts to those to whom they are due and that when you judge among people, judge with fairness (4:58)". The verse emphasizes meritocracy in election of public representative or caliph. So to choose and elect a less capable in presence of a more capable is violation of the "trust" that God bestowed upon peoples and equally if the ruler does not fulfil his obligation, and does not judge among people with fairness he commits violation to his duties.

Ibn Taimiyya takes the verse 4:59 as second plank of his political doctrine which states "O believers! Obey God, obey Messenger and those in authority over you. And if you dispute with each other concerning something, have recourse to [the decision of] God and the Messenger". However, given his readiness to accept all the deterministic Sunni political hadiths here Ibn Taimiyya prefers obedience to rebellion. He concurs with standard Sunni position that Muslims should obey tyrants, unless they go against Sharia. He accepts the hadith that unless a ruler forbids prayers masses are duty-bound to obey him. Why rebellion is so much discouraged in Sunni Islam while almost all prophets rebelled against the status quo? Shia Iran defied Shah of Iran and America to bring revolution without foreign support while no Sunni country could brought such change in the Muslim world. The followers of Ibn Wahab defeated Ottomans at the behest and with support of Great Britain and after the decline of Great Britain shifted loyalties to America for survival. This is because when any caged bird of immature feathers sets free gets vulnerable to cat's attack. Habitual to political docility and conformism Sunni Islam seldom succeeded in well-articulated political program, the failure is rooted in its political philosophy.

So, we see where there surfaces any issue between the ruler and the ruled Ibn Taimiyya comes with his concept of reciprocity where interests of both are safeguarded. Indeed, here in his political doctrine too he follows the principle of mean and comes with corporate solution as a great scholar of the middle position. So, though he does not support or condone rebellion, but he suggests if it happens the ruler should be lenient to the subjects if he overcomes should neither kill them nor award the severe punishments to them. However, the people who instead of the government rebel against the interests and integrity of the state and community deserve harsh punishments (5:33). It seems, however, the later rulers employed this verse by the connivance of orthodoxy as a legal injunction to crush the rebels out of existence otherwise it states general state of affairs of non-believers who for their vested interests waged war against God and His Apostle [i.e., generality of moral principles presented by prophets] and are being killed and wiped out of earth in great numbers due to their moral perversity as lust of power and wealth incite them to wage wars against each other. When earth becomes epicenter of injustice it is God's immutable law that nations and communities commit aggression against each other and finally great loss of human blood, peace and prosperity brings them to senses and course correction. The question is when rebels seized the house of third caliph Usman and were hell-bent to execute

his murder why did the Caliph did not invoke this verse for his defense when not only his life but the very integrity of the state and community was at stake?. Why did Ali not invoke this verse as a legal injunction and remedy against the rebels. He treated them as faithful brothers, returned them whatever was confiscated from them as war booty. On the other side the tone of the verse echoes the style and diction of Pharaoh the “epitome of evil” who recurrently threatens Moses and his followers that he would crucify them, slay them in great numbers and cut their hands and feet from opposite sides. Usman and Ali never categorized the attitude and protest of their arch-rivals as unbelief liable to crucifixion. It seems some ad-hoc measures like legal definition of Muslim, people of the loosing and binding, omnipotence of God at the expense of human free-will, invocation of 5:33 as legal injunction against the rebels etc., were taken against the violent and extremist phenomenon of Kharijism, but once given out on the authority of the Quran and Sunna became permanent furniture of Sunni Islam. So unconditional absolute conformism to political authority became a norm rather than exception. What fate met illustrious military commander Musa bin Nusair and Tariq Bin Zayad who extended Islam’ political domain to Spain in European continent and how was rewarded Qutayba Ibn Muslim who brought Transoxiana and parts of China under the pale of Islam, and what tragic end met Muhammad Bin Qasim who extended territory of central Islamic empire to the sub-continent? He was urged by a large army under his command to rebel against the center to build his own empire in the sub-continent still he deemed fit to be slaughtered by the caliph than to be reported as a rebel in history. How many great leaders and commanders of tremendous initiative and immense capabilities due to the unconditional obedience and absolute conformism to political authority lost their lives and potentials to create history afresh? Had Abdur Rahman al-Dakhil surrendered to Abbasid rule not only he would have been murdered without moral cause the world would never see and know about splendid Muslim rule in Spain which left indelible signs on the galaxies and brought Europe on the cusp of cognitive revolution.

Ibn Taimiyya unreservedly proclaimed that Islam does not need a central Islamic empire what is required is the spirit of mutual cooperation among Muslim states. Is it mere a legitimation of realities what emerged before his eyes or a statement of principle? Had Tariq Bin Ziyad, Qutayba bin Muslim and Muhammad Bin Qasim defied the central authority to build their own states in their respective sphere of influence how they would have been treated in the annals of Islamic history? Almost all the prophets revolted against status quos, why the Sunni Islam did not leave any stone unturned to secure conformism to the political authority at the expense of moral concerns. Its stress on Ijma of the community for the election of the caliph and to accept that caliph is deposible points to the inherent democratic impulse of Sunni political doctrine, yet it hardly ever entered the arena to make it a living reality.

However, Ibn Taimiyya, despite his allegiance to all deterministic Sunni political hadiths unlike all medieval Muslim thinkers including illustrious al-Ghazali acknowledges Islam as a social proposition emphasizes the socio-economic and political role of religion to shape the social life of the community according to the socio-economic and political moral principles of the Quran. His statements on Islam and state are unique. Iqbal is highly indebted to Ibn Taimiyya in his Islamic political thought, indeed, all caravans of modern Islam in one way or the other quench their intellectual thirst from the fountain which Ibn Taimiyya built centuries ago.

To Ibn Khaldun’s right analysis religion is the best and the strongest restraining authority which keeps the rulers in check. Iqbal’s observation of history brings him to the conclusion that “power and honesty are but rarely found together⁷⁰”. He remarks with clarity of thought “vision without power does bring moral elevation but cannot give a lasting culture. Power without vision tends to become destructive and inhuman. Both must combine for the spiritual expansion of mankind⁷¹”. Iqbal, indeed, had much regard for Ibn Taimiyya’s critical analysis and reevaluation of Islamic thought and the remedies he offered to put Islam on the right track. Ibn Taimiyya said that state in Islam is reflex of the moral ideals of the Quran; state in Islam is means to an end i.e. an instrument of attaining the goals of religion, not an end itself. So politics must not be allowed to go its own way, but must be oriented to the moral vectors of the Quran. The upshot of Ibn Taimiyya’s political doctrine is that religion and state are inseparable since when political authority is divorced from religion or religion from political authority, people’s affairs get corrupted. The notion that politics is inevitably corrupt is a safe refuge for the cowards and narrow-minded Sufi pietism; it is the best way of nearing God.

Ibn Taimiyya not only does stress on his concept of reciprocity between the ruler and the ruled but in an ultimate and final analysis he presents the Quranic conception of relentless equality between political authorities and masses. To support this theses he narrates that once Abu Muslim al-Khawlani visited Muawiya and said peace be upon you, hireling; the men in the court corrected him to say peace be upon you, ruler/prince/amir. Al-Khawlani said to Muawiya you have been hired by the owner of this herd [your subjects] to take care of them. If you treat them well; bring the mangy back to health, heal the sick and give preference to the lowest over their highest the Master of the herd will reward you and if you fail to serve the herd this way the Master of the herd will punish you.

Ibn Taimiyya treats this story in his own way to present the relationship of political leadership and the masses as a sharika i.e., shared business. Rulers are God’s deputies to safeguard the interests of masses. Rule is a “trusteeship” (amana), rulers are agents/guardians appointed by people on their behalf. If they appoint governors on them who are unable to look after their interests, who adopt nepotism, sell or buy things unfairly they violate the trust. In a shared

business partners at the end of the year share profit or loss proportionate to the capital invested and time contributed. Same applies to the matters of sociopolitical order, rulers and the ruled equally share the profit and loss. If the beneficiary of the favoritism in political affairs is a friend or relative of the ruler, the other partner i.e., masses will despise and condemn the ruler's action for being betrayed. Here, Ibn Taimiyya seems to offer a concept of implied equality between the rulers and the masses which is more approximate to the Quran than his concept of reciprocity, even though idea of reciprocity serves the purpose of the Quran more effectively than irja's or Sunni concept of almost complete obedience and unconditional conformism to political authority.

CONCLUSION

Ibn taimiyya is a unique original Islamic thinker of all medieval Muslim scholars. On variety of theological, legal and Sufi problems of his age his diagnosis is based on the ethics and optics of the Quran and the Sunna. Islam at that time had been held hostage to speculative philosophy, conjectures and mystic deliriums against its patent scientific viewpoint. Ibn Taimiyya rightly adopted the "principle of mean" a normative instrument of the Quran to pinpoint the extremities committed by theologians, law experts and Sufis and as a man of the middle he come up with solutions and remedies devised in the furnace of same "mean moral principle". He went unheeded for centuries yet he had blazed a trail for Sufi theologians and lawyers to come. He stood like a light-house to lead straying fleets to harbor. Muhammad Bin Abd al-Wahab, the most influential 18th century reformer resurrected Ibn Taimiyya suited to his needs and capacities for the task of revival and reform in Islam. He decisively fought against superstitions, cults of saint's reverence and innovations which had distorted Islam's crystal clear world-view beyond recognition. So strong was the momentum of his reform that later every reformer came to be believed as Wahabi in Islam. He rose from Najd which professor Macdonald terms as the 'cleanest spot in the decadent world of Islam' and became a precursor of nearly all the great modern movements of Muslim world. Thus, Ibn Taimiyya throbs in the veins of modern Islam.

However, Ibn Taimiyya is miserably truncated in view of fundamentalist revivalist forces, and secular modernists not only abhor but vehemently reject his political doctrine of Islam, while conservative Sufism terms him enemy of all expressions of Sufism. Even Ibn Wahab either misunderstood him, or ignored his constructs regarding reconstituted Muslim community. He rebelled against Muslim with armed struggle and castigated them as unbelievers.

But, if Muslim world as a whole or any Muslim country individually takes the plunge for serious Islamic reforms the thread would be needed to resume from where Ibn Taimiyya left it. Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi in his illustrious mystic-intellectual constructs seemed highly indebted to Ibn Taimya, with an added advantage of mystic experience and intuition and same is palpable in Shah Wali Allah with a rather unjustified endeavor to accommodate Ibn al-Arabi's monism in the moral imperative of the Quran. The first and foremost concern of the people and powers behind such undertaking must be to wean off the masses from al-Ghazali's individualism/personal pietism to the "Islamic positivism and collectivism" of Ibn Taimiyya. The dilemma of the orthodoxy and Sufism had been to address the issues on the level of intellectual elite differently than on the level of masses. There should be only one Islam both for elites and the masses as the Quran's pleas for relentless intellectual egalitarianism demand strict implementation or unity and integrity of the community would remain a distant dream. Ibn Taimiyya's language, diction, tone and tenor all depict the Quranic doctrine of intellectual egalitarianism, he rightly points that an excessive and extreme Sufism and philosophy lead one to the inanity of God and the world.

However, Ibn Taimiyya had his limits not only of intellectual capacities but of the Sitz im leben he worked in and the social milieu as well he was product of. His excessive emphasize and reliance on political obedience is questionable that is squarely based on Sunni determinism. Perhaps, it was his liking of al-Shafi who formulated the principles of law which were accepted across the board in Sunni Islam that he never brought any Hadith to the tribunal of the Quran or reason to judge its veracity. He, perhaps had no intellectual tools to differentiate between how in early Islam living Sunna of the Prophet managed the socio-economic and political life of the community as a dynamic phenomenon and what harm al-Shafi's hadith movement done to that democratic ongoing process of Sunna-Ijma-Ijtihad and severed the organic relationship between them with reversing the order by Sunna-Ijtihad- Ijma and Ijtihad which was forward looking turned into backward looking exercise to address the problems. Why did text based literalism begin to reign supreme while before solutions were sought from the entirety of the Quran and Sunna. Shafi did this to bring Hijaz, Iraq and Egypt under a uniform administrative legal structure while before Hijaz, Iraq and Egypt were running to their native traditions. When hadith movement started with full vigor political, Sufi, legal, theological, intercessional and futuristic hadiths were cultivated to prove their respective theses and interests which run contrary to the tenor and central doctrines of the Quran. Methodology of 'historicism' help us to decipher that ideas and doctrines have roots in their respective social milieu and Sitz im Leben i.e., sociological historical and psychological settings. Ibn Taimiyya had no such intellectual paraphernalia to judge or trace the development of such cultivated hadiths in historical context. Ibn Taimiyya's crystal clear mind which arrives the genuine conception of applied monotheism and its inherent obligations with an original conception of Ibada why did accept the hadith that "King is a shadow of God on the earth." Intercessional hadith were cultivated to compete with Christian doctrine of atonement, Ibn Taimiyya accepted

all hadith on the Prophet's intercession on the Last Day. Irja's hadith that one who professes that "there is no God but God" goes to paradise was developed to counter Kharijite's heretic [takfiri] campaign which had excluded great Companions from the Islam. He accepted this hadith even though Kharijism was extinct by his time. "Qadariyya are Magians of this community" was a hadith among some others cultivated by Asharites to discredit Mutazila on the basis of creedal notions rather than genuine intellectual basis. Ibn Taimiyya accepts this hadith and contradicts his own earlier statement that Mutazila are like Magians while Asharites like Meccan polytheist and former are better since they believe in commands and prohibitions and command good and forbid evils. So, Ibn Taimiyya's uncritical attitude to hadith is questionable.

Similarly, though his determinism is pretty different than Asharities and Murijites his notion of unconditional obedience and conformism to political authority stand antithetical to the Quran and conduct of the Prophet and early normative Islamic community. His terming the relationship between the ruler and the ruled as a shared business where each gets at the end of year proportionate to the capital invested and time contributed and where nepotism, corruption on the part of one damages the interests of the other is based on a highly genuine understanding of the Quran. Yet what deters him to invoke the Quran's principle of Shura to run the affairs of state and community? In a shared business if one partner inflicts harm on the other their arises the question of legal remedies why Ibn Taimiyya fails to devise legal remedies if the ruler violates the trust and inflict damage to the interests of the ruled?

However, despite these reservations this writer finds Ibn Taimiyya the most original, genuine, brave, intellectually-alert and well-tuned to the spirit of the Quran and the Prophetic model among all medieval Islamic thinkers. He faced physical punishments, imprisonments, banishments and laid his life for the cause he stood for. He really did a great service to wean-off the community from commentaries, super-commentaries, encyclopedic details and compendia of second-hand [interpreted conjectures] Islam to the original sources of Islam i.e., the Quran and the life and conduct of the Prophet.

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