

Maulana Shibli's Historical Perspectives: A study of Al-Mamun and Imam Ghazali

Prof Sayeeda Begum

Research scholar,

Al-Ameen KM Fareed Institute of Islamic Studies

& Research, Hoskote. Affiliated to Tumkur University.

Key words

Aligarh university, Darul Musanifeen, Abbasid dynasty, Al Mamun, Hall of Wisdom, Islamic jurist, Abu Hanifa, Imam Malik, Imam Hambal, Imam Shafi, Imam Ghazzali

Introduction

In the backdrop of the Nineteenth century while reformation was at the peak within Hindu society begin with Raja Ram Mohan Roy and his Brahmo Samaj the same reform lacked amongst the Muslims. It was with Sir Sayyed Ahmed Khan pioneered the Aligarh Movement to uplift the emphatic state of the Muslims in India. Sir Sayyed Ahmed also served as an inspiration to several young Muslim men who associated themselves with him and the movement.

In this background the name who shined like a beacon with his own versatile intellect was Maulana Shibli Naomani. Mohammed Shibli Naumani was born in May 1857 at Bindawal a small village in Uttar Pradesh. Shibli was educated in traditional Muslim manner. He later completed his higher studies at Lahore. He got an opportunity to work Sir Sayyid Ahmed Khan at his Aligarh University and served for sixteen years. He toured extensively in the declining Ottoman Empire and gained rich experience.

Finally, Shibli Naumani returned to Aligarh and got separated from Sir Sayyid Ahmed Khan. At Azamgarh he established the National College, at Lucknow he founded the Nadwa which came to be adorned by Sayyid Sulaiman Nadvi. He created the *Darul Musannefin* to collect intellectuals to write, but all was very rational, logical argumentative and promoted scientific learning. He authored several books such as *Al Farooq*, *Al Mamun*, *Imam Ghazali*, *Sirat-al-Nabi* and many more. He passed away in 1914.

Al Mamun

The approach of Shibli on Mamun, the Abbasid dynasty ruler and his intellectual life in the company of some of the greatest luminaries of his time and their critical investigation and rational arguments and interaction among the galaxy of scholars themselves at *the Hall of wisdom* which Mamun whole heartedly patronized which benefited him and the society at large. The astrolabe that was discovered and the wide geographical and travel literature that the Saracens produced remained a very remarkable achievement of the times. The process had commenced when the Arabs met Greco-Roman thinkers in the intellectual domain and Sanskrit literature under the learned Brahmans and Iranian culture as had developed under the Sassanians.

The Abbasid period was only the pinnacle point of this development. His writing on al Mamun is exceptionally comprehensive, meaningful, based on sound reasoning and argument. His analysis of Al Mamun was incisive and attracts every reader and man of letters. Scholars like Sir Sayyid Ahmed and Sayyid Sulaiman Nadwi have a high opinion of his work on Al Mamun.

Shibli's objectives in analyzing some of great personalities of Islamic history were mainly with sole purpose of sending a message of wisdom to his contemporary generation which was ignorant and backward looking.

Shibli was equally interested in the life and work of Imam e Azam, Iman Abu Hanifa, the great legist independent and remained uninfluenced by any authority in the interpretation of the Quran and the law.

It was an extremely a difficult field and only men of extraordinary intellect and sharpness of mind known for honesty and personal integrity would venture into the field. We have only three other great men who stand comparison with him and they were Imam Malik, Imam Shaafi and Imam Hambal. Each one interpreted the Quran and the law independently with great difference. But there was no mind capable enough to question their interpretation and explanation.

During his early educational career, Shibli Naumani was highly impressed by Imam Abu Hanifa and his methods of argument and judgment. Shibli's teacher therefore, conferred on him the title NAUMANI. Until the days of Shibli no one had penned a biographical sketch of Imam Abu Hanifa and hence Shibli took courage and put forth his efforts for a biographical sketch. It appears in *Seerath-e-noman* published at Aligarh College in 1891 and first part of this work deals with the life and work of Imam Abu Hanifa.

Imam Ghazzali

Another great name which finds a place in Shibli's writings was Imam Ghazzali a hard worker in acquiring knowledge and learning as many languages as possible. It was in 1902, Shibli wrote a treatise on Imam Ghazzali, his early life, educational centers he visited in the course of his studies and the like. This work was published at Kanpur.

Al Ghazzali was gifted with sharp intellectual and the power of effective oratory. His debates were meaningful and convincing. He wrote on Greek moral philosophy and the neo platonc philosophical thought

which attracted the attention of Maulana Shibli. He debated on the issue of moral deficiencies, its causes and cures, lower aspects of a civilized human being such as anger, jealousy and compulsion in matters of religion or faith and cutthroat competition according to him were the main deficiencies which compel the human beings to make mistakes and often commit unpardonable crimes and sins.

It was Al Ghazzali who would put it as broad mindedness tolerance, humane and peaceful attitude of mind and love of humanity. If one were to cultivate these qualities of mind, there would be no enmity, jealousy and the craze to dominate the other by whatever means. In short Al Ghazzali was a genius in understanding human nature which differs from man to man and there his arguments for toleration of differences, respecting the others point of view to avoid confrontation and conflict. Very rarely such great men are gifted to serve humanity with love and compassion.

Conclusion

Maulana Shibli was a versatile personality who never missed an opportunity to acquire knowledge. His travel experience gave him the insight of Islamic History which he wanted to spread to future generation. Al Mamun is the reflection of his intellect wherein he made an analytical and comparative study of knowledge during the Abbasid dynasty and Greeco-Roman era. This further led him to sketch the biography of Abu Hanifa, which was a remarkable achievement. His other work, Imam Ghazzali and his biographical sketch also was outstanding.