

**TAHA TURABI (ED. 2009)
TURABIYAT ALLAMA
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Allama Nasirudin Raza Husain Rasheed Turabi (1908-1973) was the greatest Pakistan rhetorician and orator of the twentieth century. He was a disciple of another great orator Nawab Bahadur Yar Jung who dominated Muslim League politics for several decades. Another great Indian orator of the period Netaji Subhas Chander Bose often acknowledged Nawab Bahadur Yar Jung's preeminence in this field.

But Allama Turabi was much more than an orator. He was a scholar of fiqh, tafseer and above all kalam. He was a student of Aqai Burejardi, Ayatullah Hakeem Tabatabai, Ayutullah Khoi and Ayatullah Shariat madar and obtained ijaza from these luminaries to serve as an authentic interpreter of the Islamic intellectual tradition.

The discipline of kalam has remained comparatively neglected in the Indian tradition of Islamic learning. Thus the texts of Imam Ghazali, Imam Muhammad (of the Sahibain), Imam Ibn-i-Tayyimiyyah and Imam Ibn Khuldun are not included in the Dars-i-Nizami. It is due to this neglect of kalam by our traditional ulema that when a revival of kalam was attempted by Shibli and Iqbal kalam was submerged in an alien intellectual tradition (phenomenology in the case of Shibli and empiricism in the case of Iqbal). Islamic discourse, as developed by Shibli and Iqbal justified rupture with Islamic history and a reinterpretation of Islamic thought within the context of Enlightenment epistemological discourses. In Iran Ali Shariati (and to a lesser extent Jalal Al-e-Ahmad) followed a similar trail.

The distinguishing character of Allama Turabi's kalam is its immersion in Islamic history. Turabi is well aware of modernist discourse (he obtained an M.A in Philosophy from Allhabad in (year) but he is neither a Modernist nor a Post Modernist. He asserts the relevance of Islamic history as the sole authentic source for legitimating current Islamic theory and practice. In that specific sense he is a co-worker of the great twentieth century revivalists and traditionalists – Syed Qutb, Baba Samarqandi, Abbasi Madani, Hasan Nasrullah, Ayubullah Montazari, Maulana Maududi and Imam Khomeni (may Allah exalt their status in Paradise). Allama Turabi is a mujahid battling for Islamic supremacy in all walks of life.

Unfortunately this book contains one piece of Allama Turabi's writing (spread over only three of its 144 pages). In this piece Allama Turabi argues for the universality of Islam and defines *ijtihad* not as an attempt to accommodate Islamic practice within. Modernism but as “an attempt to derive universal principles of conceptualization and practice on the basis of the sole criteria of Islamic texts and their historical interpretation, *nass*” (P.16). He asserts that the interpretations of the *nass* present in the orthodox schools of *fiqh* are authentic and non subjective. Turabi's conception of rationality (*al-Aql*) reflects Imam Ghazali's understanding of the scope and limitations of man's rationality. Turabu writes “(Reason) is an instrument for seeking Allah's acceptance and (in that sense) reason and the sharia do not conflict and the commands (*ahkam*) of the shariah explicate the maxims of reason and (seek) the well being (*falah*) of mankind although the rational faculty lacks the capability to comprehend this correspondence”.¹ (p.17). The derivation of practical maxims in all ages thus depends exclusively on articulating the discourses of the classical Islamic knowledges – *tafseer taweel-i-hadith*, *fiqh*, *rijal* etc. In Imam Turabi's view *ijtihad* must be *taqleedi* – once again our Imam is following the definition of *ijtihad* developed by Maulana Imdad-Allah Muhajir Makki.² It must be based on *usul tafseer*, *usul al din* and *fiqh* as articulated in the classic Islamic tradition. *Ijtihad* cannot be undertaken on the basis of Enlightenment epistemology. It cannot be undertaken on the basis of the principles underlying the physical sciences, economics,

political science, psychology or jurisprudence etc. Imam Tutabi remains totally uncompromising on this issue in all his writings.

Our imam wrote twelve books. Five of them – Kanz-i-Mahkfi, Muqaddas Qanun, Takweem, Dastur and A Great Historic Document explicate the implications of the practice of taqleedi, nussusi ijtiḥad with regard to contemporary issues. Allama Tuabi's style is obscure, laden with Arabic and Farsi tarakeeb and relatively unknown intellectual and social references.³ This makes these works inaccessible to the those Muslim intellectuals who have no grounding in Islamic epistemology. One gets the impression that Turabi is in his writings addressing only a select group of ulema and not the lay Muslim intellectual.

In his speeches on the other Imam Turabi is addressing the masses. His chosen technique here is use the key reference of Iman Husain (radi Allah tala anha) to assert the universality of Islamic principles. Imam Husain (radi Allah tala anha)'s struggle is indeed a key reference and as several imams – Imam Muhammad (of the Sahibain) Imam Abul Yala, Imam Mawardi and Maulana Abdul Huq Muhaddis Dehlavi for example – have argued the continuing struggle for the establishment of Islamic government (khilfat-i-rashida) derives its ultimate legitimacy from Imam Husain's (rade Allah tala unha) epic struggle. Revolt against un Islamic rule is always legitimate and contemporary Islamic revivalist movements are Husaini in that fundamental sense.

Imam Turabi was a soldier of Husain (radi Allah-o-talla-anha)'s army because he believed in the universality of Islam and in the validity of its claim for universal hegemony. Despite his roots in Shia traditions and learning he was never the partisan of a sect. He unfurled Husain's (radi Allah ho tala anha) banner and called all Muslims to rally around. It Imam Turabi was an ambassador of Shia-Sunni unity and several articles in this book testify to this non sectarian character of our Imam's message. Rasheed Turabi was a true followers of those who gave him ijaza – Ayat ullah Borojardi, Ayatullah Tabatabai, Ayatullah Hakim, Imam Shariat Madar – none of whom was a sectarian and all of

whom stood unflinchingly for Shia-Sunni unity and for Islam's universal dominance. The Shia segment of the contemporary Islamic revolutionary movement has developed this line of thought and gone from strength to strength – specially in Iran, Labnan and Iraq⁴ – in the twentieth century.

I have said little about this book because it contains so little of Imam Turabi's own words. Imam Turabi does not need any one's praise – he has returned to his Lord who has insha Allah showered him with the blessings Imam Turabi deserves. It is the Islamic revolutionary workers who need to benefit from Turabi's precious heritage.

I have two specific requests to make to the governors of the Allama Rasheed Turabi Memorial Trust.

- Prepare an anthology on “Islamic and the Challenges of the Modern World” based on the material in Kanz Mahkfti, Muqds Qanun, Takween, Dastoor and A Great Historic Document. This anthology should be an easily accessible rewrite of passages in these books using a contemporary diction and style in (say) ten chapters. The book may be published in both Urdu and English. It should be a collaborative effort between an Alim and a lay Islamic intellectual.
- Publish a book “Arguments for Shia-Sunni Unity” on the basis of material selected from the recordings of Allama Turabi's speeches. Here rewriting will probably be minimal but careful selection, collation, thematisation and editing will be required. This book should be prepared first and published in Urdu only.

Notes

1. This is a complex passage and its comprehension requires a clear differentiation between the Ghazalian and the Kantian conceptions of rationality. In Ihya-al-Ulum-ul-Deen Imam Ghazali sees rationality as an instrument for obeying God as He says He should be obeyed. In the Critique of Pure Reason Kant sees rationality as an instrument for deriving universalisable maxims which enable an autonomous will to obey its own self. Imam Turabi (R.A) is arguing that we should understand rationality as a faculty for obeying Allah (not our own desires) and the well being of man is the obtaining of Allah's approval. The nass tells us how to obtain Allah's approval. Thus there can be no contradictions between the maxims generated through what Imam Turabi calls "a search for nussus" and the maxims of reason as understood by Imam Ghazali and Imam Turabi and not as understood by Kant and Habermass
2. In Mulfuzat (ed. Maulana Abul Hassan Qasadi; Dar-ul-Ma'arif Hyderabad (n.d).
3. This is true of almost all major twentieth century traditionalists with the notable exception of Maulana Maudude.
4. But not in Pakistan where the Shia presence in the Islamic revolutionary struggle is minimal and Allama Ibn-i-Hassan Jarchavi's works have been sadly neglected