

Malik Ram and his Contribution to Islamic Studies

- Mohammad Irfan Shah

Abstract

India, over the course of long history, has developed into a pluralistic society sustained by peaceful coexistence of the diverse religious denominations and a multitude of cultures and ethnicities. Among other religions, Islam made a significant and considerable influence on the Indian society. The intercultural and interreligious relationships between Hindus and Muslims were established gradually with the spread of Islam in India. Hindu intellectuals developed their interests in understanding Islam and its culture and from among Muslims various scholars/mystics were also interested in understanding the Hindu religion and culture. Muslim scholars produced either translations of works of Hindu scholars or elaborated their understanding of Hinduism and its philosophy in their original works since medieval times. Similarly, Hindu scholars (since medieval era) contributed to the study of Islam, as a culture, civilization and religion. Malik Ram Baveja (1906-93) was one among various modern era Hindu scholars including Baghwan Das, Dr. Radhakrishnan, K.L. Sheshagiri, Pandit Sundar Lal, Valji Govind Ji Desai and others, who have written on the diverse aspects of Islam. He was an internationally acclaimed authority on Mirza Ghalib and a famous Urdu, Arabic and Persian scholar of India. He published more than eighty works and 200 articles in his life time predominantly in Urdu in addition to Persian, Arabic and English. Known for his monumental four-volume "Tadhkirah-e-Muasireen" for which he received Sahitya Academy Award in 1983, Malik Ram also contributed significantly to Islamic studies. Keeping in view his significant contributions to the study of Islam, the current paper will humbly highlight this aspect of his academic life while providing the content summary of his two significant works on Islamic themes i.e., "Aurat Aur Islāmī Ta'līm" and "Islāmiyāt".

Introduction

The Indian society is a pluralistic society assimilating diverse religious denominations and a multitude of ethnicities and cultures. This "complexity of Indian life", in the words of Tara Chand, "is ancient, because from the dawn of history India has been the meeting place of conflicting civilisations."¹ However, Indian society sustained with peaceful co-existence amidst the diversity and hardly succumbed to national disintegration and discord. The sense of 'understanding the religious other' and suspending inter-faith or inter-ethnic conflicts to a major extent played an important role in sustaining peaceful co-existence.

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As India had already strong commercial relations with Arabs, therefore soon after its emergence and rise in the Arabian Peninsula during 7th century C.E., Islam was introduced to India through Muslim traders and preachers. In the later stages, the emergence of Muslim rule though resulted in annexation of lands in India, yet in the spread of Islam the primary role was played by the Muslim (scholars/Sufi) preachers. Gradually and successively they spread the message of Islam to every nook and corner of the country in a peaceful manner. Their untiring efforts in circulating the divine message peacefully amid the deplorable socio-religious and political scenario of the then Indian subcontinent, lead to the stupendous growth of Muslims in India.ⁱⁱ

The process of intercultural and interreligious interactions between Hindus and Muslims developed simultaneously with spread of Islam in India. In this process both Hindu as well as Muslim intellectuals were attracted towards the either religious philosophies. The inter-religious and inter-cultural intercourse established between Hindus and Muslims most often sought expression through the ‘Mystic’ thought of Islam and Hinduism in India. Both Muslim as well as Hindu intellectuals and mystics were curious about discovering the other religion at the mystic or philosophical level. In the process of give and take Muslims as well as Hindus were influenced with the religious cultural and spiritual domains of one another. Muslim scholars produced either translations of works of Hindu scholars or elaborated their understanding of Hinduism and its philosophy in their original works since medieval times. Similarly, Hindu scholars (since then) contributed to the study of Islam, as a culture, civilization and religion.ⁱⁱⁱ

Malik Ram Baveja (1906-93) was among various modern Hindu scholars like Baghwan Das, Dr. Radhakrishnan, K.L.Sheshagiri, Pandit Sundar Lal ,Valji Govind Ji Desai and others, who have contributed to the diverse aspects of the study of Islam. He was an internationally acclaimed authority on MirzaGhalib and a famous Urdu, Arabic and Persian scholar of India. He published more than eighty works and 200 articles in his life time predominantly in Urdu in addition to Persian, Arabic and English. Known for his monumental four-volume *Tadhiraḥ-i-Mu‘āsirīn*^{iv} for which he received Sahitya Academy Award in 1983, Malik Ram also contributed significantly to Islamic studies. The current study is dedicated to highlight Malik Ram’s contribution to the domain of Islamic studies knowledge and literature.

Malik Ram (1906-1993): Bio-academic Profile

Malik Ram Baveja (1906-1993), popularly known as Malik Ram, was a renowned literary figure, an expert of Urdu, Persian and Arabic, known for his commendable study on Islam and its culture. He was not only among the famous and prolific Urdu writers and critics of his time but was also recognized internationally as an “authority” on Mirza Ghalib, the renowned Indian poet.

Born on 22 December 1906 in Phalia (a province of Punjab Pakistan), Malik Ram belonged to a learned family and received his early education at Wazirabad (a city of Punjab Pakistan). With his excellent memory he pursued his further education in Lahore and achieved his B.A. degree from D.A.V. College Lahore in 1927 and his M.A. (1930) and LLB (1933) degrees from the renowned, Government College Lahore. He started his career as a journalist (between 1931 to 1937) and served as the joint-editor and later on the editor of *Nairang-i-Khayal*, the Lahore monthly literary journal besides being simultaneously the *de facto* editor of the Lahore weekly *Arya Gazette*. He also served as an assistant editor of the Lahore daily newspaper *Bharat Mata* the between January and June 1936. In the field of journalism he received guidance from ḤakīmM. Yūsuf Khān, Yogindar Pāl and Zafarullah Khān. Among his teachers were the learned persons like Ghulām Rasūl Mehar, ‘Abdul Mājīd Sālik, Yagānah Changezī and Mahesh Prasād. After independence he came to Delhi and served India’s ministry for Commerce and Foreign Affairs and got the opportunity of visiting many foreign lands including the Middle-eastern/Arab countries like Egypt. During this period he was able to achieve knowledge and experience in manifold ways particularly of Islam, its culture and civilization.^v

Malik Ram joined the Indian Foreign Services during 1939 to 1965 and visited a number of countries in Asia and Middle-East. While on official deputation to different countries particularly the Middle-east he gained access to a variety of rare, original and significant study material of his interest in different languages. His engagements in the official work never hindered his progress and passion for higher literary pursuits and he never ceased to contribute to the fields of knowledge and literature. B. A. Zaidi maintains, that “for the greater part of his life, he remained submerged in official work and the onerous responsibilities it carried with it. But that could not wean him away from his literary pursuits and research.” He is recorded to have visited Egypt, Palestine, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Turkey, Iraq, Iran, Holland, Germany, Belgium, France, Gibraltar, Greece, Afghanistan and

Russia. Zaidi says that “wherever he went, he made it a point to see the libraries and museums and to scan their rare collections.” He had a good command on reading and writing Urdu, Arabic, Persian and Punjabi and had also learned the French language during his travels.^{vi}

In addition to other literary engagements he developed his interest in translating various texts from one to other language. He received admiration from Allama Iqbal for translating with explanatory notes ‘Abd-urRahman Bijnori’s English essays *Asrār-eKhadī* and *Ramoz-e Bekhadī* published as *Mathnawiyāt*.^{vii} Malik Ram though was a literary figure, yet his field of study was wide covering diverse aspects of knowledge and literature.^{viii}

Apart from yielding his original works, Malik Ram’s significant contribution to *Ghalibiyat* (study on Ghalib) is reflected in his painstaking task of editing and annotating Ghalib’s major works in Urdu and Persian like “*Sabd-e-Chin, Diwan-e-Ghalib, Gul-e-Ra’na* and *Khutūt-e-Ghalib*. His *Zikr-e Ghalib* (1938) won him popularity and recognition as an authority on Ghalib.^{ix}

While reviewing the award winning Malik Ram’s *Tadhkirah-i-Mu’asirīn*, the renowned Urdu poet and an authority on Iqbal, Pandit Jagan Nath Azad, says about him:

Malik Ram, an internationally-known authority on Ghalib, is a versatile man of letters. A legend in his own life-time, he has a remarkable capability to deal with many subjects. He is, at the same time, an essayist, a biographer, a memoir-writer, a literary critic, a research scholar as also an authority on Islamic literature and culture and, it is in this capacity that he has won applause on his work from eminent Muslim scholars in India and abroad including the late Maulana Abdul Majid Daryabadi (India) and the late Professor Yusuf Saleem Chishti (Pakistan) *Tadhkirah-i-Muasireen* is a work of encyclopaedic nature.^x

Though Malik Ram contributed novelty and vigour to Urdu literature specifically to the studies of Mirzā Asadullah Khān Ghālib, on whom he was an acclaimed authority, yet, the survey of his literary contribution reflects that his field of study was very wide including religious studies (especially Islam) within its ambit as well. B.A. Zaidi says, that “apart from the special position he holds in the widening circle of Ghalibian scholars, his study of Islamic [Islamic studies]. His book *Woman in Islam* has been widely acclaimed. ... His achievements in the domain of learning despites ... [his] other preoccupations have made him an institution.”^{xi}

After his retirement from the Civil Services in 1965, Malik Ram joined National Academy of Letters, the Sahitya Academy based in New Delhi. Here he was put in charge of the Urdu section and also took up the painstaking task of editing many original works of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad. Sustaining his literary vigour, Malik Ram launched his quarterly literary review *Tahreer* in 1967 and became an active member of the *Ilmi Majlis* in Delhi. It was a body of young/energetic research scholars and writers of Urdu in India. Before his death in 1993, he donated his whole library to the Jamia Hamdard University Library, Delhi, where his collection is titled as *Malik Ram Collection*.^{xii}

Malik Ram was selected as a member of the “Committee for the Promotion of Urdu” set up by the Govt. of India in 1972 under the chairmanship of I.K.Gujral (the then Union Minister of State for Works and Housing). The Committee later on produced a report known as “The Gujral Committee Report”, with 187 recommendations on various issues and problems related to Urdu language and its usage in India.^{xiii} Malik Ram, with his deep insights and research, contributed commendably to this committee.

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Important Positions

As a renowned literary and academic figure Malik Ram served at different positions in various committees or academies of educational and literary significance. During his life time he held following positions:^{xiv}

1. Fellow Royal Asiatic Society, London and Ireland, London – 1947
2. Member of Majlis-e ‘Āmwa ‘Āmilah, Jāmi‘ah Urdu Aligarh -1965
3. Pro-Vice Chancellor, Jāmi‘ah Urdu Aligarh -1977
4. Member of Majlis-e Muntazimahwa ‘Āmwa ‘Āmilah, Ghalib Academy New Delhi- 1969 till death (1993)
5. Member of Majlis-e ‘Āmwa ‘Āmilah, Unjuman-e Taraqī-e Urdu (Hind), Aligarh -1970-72
6. President of Unjuman-e Taraqī-e Urdu (Hind), New Delhi- 1982 till death (1993)
7. Member of Majlis-e ‘Āmwa ‘Āmilah, Sahitya Academy New Delhi-1973-82

8. Member Aligarh Muslim University Court, Aligarh-1986
9. Member (honorary) of the Board of Governor, Jamia Milliyya Islamiyya (Delhi)

The Ghalib Academy (New Delhi) organized the ‘All India Malik Ram Seminar’ on 19th August 1987 under the banner of Malik Ram Committee. The Academy also released books – *Armughan-e Malik*, *Malik Namah* and *Bayad-e Malik* on his 85th birthday on 31st December 1991.^{xv}

Awards/Felicitations

Malik Ram received a number of awards/felicitations for his commendable contribution to Urdu literature and language in addition to his significant academic services. Some of these are recorded below^{xvi}:

1. U.P. Govt. Award for *Gul e R'ana* (1971)
2. Sahitya Kala Parishad (Delhi): Urdu Award (1975)
3. U.P. Urdu Academy Award (Lucknow) for *Tadhkirah-i-Mu'āshirīn Vol 1* (1973), Vol.4 (1982)
4. U.P. Urdu Academy Award for *Woh Shūratain Ilāhī* (1974)
5. Ghalib Institute New Delhi, Ghalib Award (1976)
6. Mir Academy, Lucknow, Imtiyaz-e Mir Award (1977) and *Iftikhar-e Mir* Award (1981)
7. Bihar Urdu Academy Award (Patna) for *Tadhkirah e Mu'āshirīn Vol II* (1975) and for services to Urdu Literature (1984)
8. Sahitya Academy Award (New Delhi) for *Tadhkirah e Mu'āshirīn Vol 4* (1983)
9. Urdu Academy Delhi Award for *Talamiz-e Ghalib* (1984)
10. Dr. Zakir Hussain Urdu Prize for Urdu Literature and Research (1987)
11. Haryana Urdu Academy (Chandigarh) – Hali Award (1991)

Literary Contribution/Important Works of Malik Ram

Malik Ram was a prolific writer and has contributed extensively to the body of Urdu language and literature by focusing on a multitude of genres. He began his academic and literary career since his student days and published his articles/essays on diverse and crucial issues/themes in renowned journals of pre-divided India. With his deep passion for learning, Malik Ram evolved as an authoritative researcher, writer and scholar. His writings include different genres of Urdu literature like *Ghalibiyat*, literary criticism, biographies, memoirs, personalities etc., in addition to Islamic studies, history. His painstaking task of editing Maulana Azad's works is highly praised and among such works include Azad's *Tarjuman al-Qur'ān* (4 Vols.), *Ghubar-e Khātir*, *Tadhkirah* and *Khutbāt-e Azad*.^{xvii}

Malik Ram has been acclaimed internationally as the 'authority' on *Gālibiyāt* (study on Mirza Asadullah Khan Gālib, the renowned Urdu-Persian poet of India). Though he was seriously engaged with government services for a major part of his life, yet he managed to sustain his academic and literary passion with full vigour. He had a good command on Urdu, Persian, Arabic as well as English in addition to studies on Islam. A number of publications (articles, essays, books on diverse themes and genres) are to his credit. Apart from his other works, the four volume *Tadhkirah-e Mu'āsirīn* was highly applauded in the academic circles and won him many awards and felicitations including the *Sahitya Academy Award*.^{xviii} His important works include, *Dhikr-e Ghālib* (1938), *Aurat Aur Islam* (1951), *Talāmiz-e Ghālib* (1958), *Mirzā Ghālib* (1968), *Iranī Shahanshāh Kay Dhai Hazār Sāl* (1971), *Tadhkirah-e Mu'āsirīn*, 4 Vols (1972, 1976, 1978, 1982), *Woh Šūrataiñ Ilāhī* (1974), *Qadīm Dillī Kālij* (1975), *Fasāna-e Ghālib* (1977), *Hālī* (1982), *Islāmiyāt* (1984), *Guftār-e Ghālib* (1985) and many other works.^{xix}

Malik Ram's Contribution to Islamic Studies

During the late medieval and early modern period Indian sub-continent produced a number of Muslim scholars who contributed to various dimensions of Islamic studies including Qur'ān, its allied fields (*Tafsīr*, translations, *Ilmal-Tajwīd* etc), Ḥadīth (its allied fields), *Sīrah* (biography of the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ), jurisprudence, Islamic theology, philosophy, logic and other fields and sub-fields. Such scholars included, Shāh Waliyullah, Sir Syed Aḥmad Khan, Sanāullah Amritsarī, Inayatullah Mashriqī, Deputy Nazir Aḥmad, Maulvī Chirāg 'Alī, Shiblī N'umānī, 'Abdul Majīd Daryabadī, 'Abul Al Mawdūdī, 'Abul

Kalam Azād, Ashraf ‘Alī Thanwī, Mawlānā AḥmadRazā Khan, Aslam Jairajpūrī, Mukhtārūddin Aḥmad, As‘ad Gilānī, ZiauddīnIslāhī . Not only the Muslim scholars but some non-Muslim writers and intellectuals also developed their keen interests in studying and writing on Islam and its various aspects. Such Hindu scholars/writers include Maharishi DayanandSaraswati, Ganga Prasad, Baghwan Das, Dr.Radhakrishan, K.L.Sheshagiri, PanditSundarLal, ValjiGovindJi Desai, Malik Ram and others. All these intellectuals have diversely contributed to the domain of Islamic studies.

Though Malik Ram strictly adhered to his religious beliefs and ideas yet he always displayed respect and reverence towards other religions as well. He was nourished in a traditionally and religiously rich environment. Right from his childhood he came across the religious texts of not only his own religion but also Sikhism and Islam. He is reported to have learned different religious texts from the teachers at *Gurdwara/ DharamShāla* and *Imām* of the local *Masjid* (mosque). During his B.A. degree in Lahore, he learned at least eighteen chapters of the Qur’ān along with translation from his friend SayyidDilāwarBukhārī and later on read the remaining part of the Divine text on his own. On his deputation to the Middle-eastern countries, he achieved a good command on the Arabic language and extended his studies on the Qur’ān, Ḥadīth and *Tafsīr* (Exegesis). During his studies on literature and religion, he was greatly influenced with the thoughts and ideas of Mirzā Gālib, Niyāz Fatahpūrī and Abul Kalām Azād.^{xx}

Thus, the primary motivation behind Malik Ram’s keen interests and in-depth studies in religious studies especially Islam was the religiously pluralistic environment in which he was brought up. His teachers as well as the academic environment and his travels – all played a significant role in developing his deep interests in Islamic studies. Beside, his nourishment in a pluralistic society with unhindered interactions and friendly relations with the Muslims cultivated in him a sense of understanding the religious ‘other’. Love for humanity, broadmindedness, sincerity and inter-faith understanding lead him to widen his horizon of learning and research.^{xxi}

Apart from his exemplary contributions to the field of Urdu language and literature Malik Ram was highly inclined towards the study of Islam, its history and other foundational subjects like Qur’ān and *Hadīth*. Provided his good command on the source language of Islamic sciences i.e., Arabic, in addition to Persian, he keenly and critically studied the diverse aspects of Islam. During the initial phase of his career as a journalist he used to write

articles/essays on themes/topics related to different aspects of Islam. Later on these writings were collectively published as two separate volumes i.e., *Aurat Aur Islāmī Ta'ālīm (Woman and Islamic Teachings)* and *Islāmiyāt*. He has also contributed his introductions and prologues to different works on Islam including the exegesis of Mawlānā Azad, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*.^{xxii}

Aurat Aur Islāmī T'ālīm (Woman and Islamic Teachings)

With an 'Introduction' by Niyaz Fatehpuri, this work of Malik Ram (actually an edited form of his articles published in different journals from time to time) depicts the role and position of woman in Islam. This work was originally published in 1951 and later on in 1977 and 1989 from MaktabaJāmi'a Delhi. Depicting the various roles of a woman, the subject is dealt with under the five headings/chapters; (i). Daughter (ii). Wife (iii) Mother (iv). Divorcee and Widow (v). Inheritance. With these different headings, almost all the aspects of a woman's life have been discussed profoundly in light of Islamic *Weltanschauung*. While dealing with the subject, the author has derived much benefits from Mawlana Azad's *Tarjumān al-Qur'ān* and most of the verses are translated as per his translation.^{xxiii}

While relying on the basic sources of Islamic knowledge i.e., the Qur'ān and *Hadīth*, Malik Ram brings to limelight the status/position and role of woman in Islam with an objective analysis. With ample evidences from the reliable sources, this work explicitly highlights that Islam has placed a woman uniquely on a most suitable position. In a scholarly manner and with a deep understanding of the subject, Malik Ram illustrates the way Islam guarantees the rights, status and security of a woman.^{xxiv} He asserts that Islam guaranteed the rights and security to the female gender at a time when she was not considered as more than a chattel and it was only after fourteen centuries that the so called modern or western world began to speak in her favour. Islam, as an eternal blessing for the whole humankind and specifically for the downtrodden, elevated the status of woman in her every role i.e., as daughter, mother, wife or widow.

In the opening chapter/essay, Malik Ram depicts the position and role of woman as a "Daughter" in Islam. While discussing every theme in light of the evidences from the Qur'ān supported by the authentic *Hadīth*. Nullifying the reprehensible approach towards the daughters in the pre-Islamic era, where a daughter reflected as a mark of disgrace and was buried alive, he brings to limelight the blessings of Islam on woman as a daughter. By

comparing the position of ‘daughter’ before Islam and ‘under’ Islam, he clearly brings home the fact that Islam in the very initial stage showered a ‘daughter’ with the blessings of respectful living, educational and economic rights and security and emancipated her from the curse of disgrace and homicide. Malik Ram highlights that the teachings of Islam regarding the role of a woman as a daughter, wife, mother, widow, divorcee and heir guarantee respectable status to a woman with the utmost security of her honour, dignity and chastity.^{xxv}

Malik Ram has exhaustively discussed the role of a woman as a “wife” as well as a “mother” according to Islamic teachings in a commendable and scholarly way. He has almost brought to limelight every aspect of this theme under critical and analytical deliberations supporting his arguments by the relevant verses of the Qur’ān and *Ḥadīth*.^{xxvi}

Malik Ram has also discussed in an academic style the status of widow and the issues related to marriage and divorce including polygamy in addition to the status of a woman in Islam while being as an heir.^{xxvii} This work speaks of Malik Ram’s erudition in Islamic learning as he has brought the subject matter under elaborate discussion by using the original sources of Islamic knowledge i.e., the Qur’ān and *Ḥadīth* and has provided deductions (though sometimes at variance from the established views) based on his own understanding of the original texts. This work witnessed a wide circulation in the academic circles and even Mawlānā ‘Abdul Mājīd Daryābādī while reviewing this work has admired Malik Ram’s erudition and hard work.^{xxviii}

In Short, Malik Ram brings out a detailed discussion on the status, role and rights of woman in Islam focusing on her every role i.e., daughter, mother or wife. While discussing the subject matter, Malik Ram seems to defend Islam against the allegations that were levied (mostly by western orientalist) related to the issues like rights, status or position of women in Islam. With an objective approach he endeavours to bring to limelight the profundity and wisdom behind various Islamic injunctions regarding the role and status of women. Though at places he is at variance with the early scholars of Islam yet his deep insights and vigorous study makes his work a commendable contribution to the body of Islamic studies literature.

Islāmiyāt

This work, actually a collection of already published articles, of Malik Ram comprises six chapters apart from an introduction. The work includes, *Kalimah al-Tayyib (La Ilāha Illallah Muḥammad ur-Rasūlullah)*, *Al-Islām*, *Islāmī Khilāfat*, *Khulq e ‘Azīm*, *Afaṣṣah*

al-‘Arab (The Eloquent among Arabs) and *AuratMadhāhab e ‘Ālam Maiṅ* (*Status of Woman in the World Religions*). Though the topics discuss different themes yet there appears a sort of inter-connectivity and the flow of the work remains intact to a more extant.^{xxix}

This work is a creditable contribution of Malik Ram to Islamic Studies. His girth in studies on Islam can be gauged by a common reader even by reading the ‘introduction’ of this work. In the introductory pages of the work, Malik Ram relates that on some issues his deductions based on his own wide-study and understanding of the original texts differed from the earlier scholars of Islam. However, he never fails to acknowledge their unrelenting and uncountable contributions to the domain of Islamic studies.^{xxx}

The work starts with a scholarly discussion on the basic themes of Islam (*al-Tawhīd* – Monotheism – and *Al-Risālah* – Prophethood) through the explanation of the foundational expression of the Islamic belief/ *‘Aqīdah* i.e. the *Kalimah* (*La IlāhaIllallah Muḥammad urRasūlullah*). Here Malik Ram highlights that every Prophet was sent to denounce polytheism and other forms of disobedience of the Creator to lead the people on the straight path or genuine creed based on *Tawhīd*/Monotheism. He maintains, however, unfortunately “... most of the nations treated those prophets as their gods ... who [these prophets] had come to link the creation (people) with their Creator.” Thus, Malik Ram seems to be strong advocate of Monotheism (*Tawhīd*), and this is time and again reflected in this volume.^{xxxi}

Some non-Muslim writers like Ganga Prasad Upādhyāi, argue that the presence of the second part of the *Kalimah* (*Muḥammad urRasūlullah* i.e., the testifying of *Risālah* or belief in the Prophethood of all the prophets and Prophet Muhammad as the final messenger) reflects the presence of polytheism or association of the Prophet with God, thus going against the spirit of pure *Tawhīd* (Monotheism). Malik Ram with an objective analysis and in a scholarly manner rejects this notion and says that to assume such a notion reflects the “lack of contemplation” and understanding. The *Kalimah* is a verbal expression of belief in one God – Allah, and testifying the prophet hood clearly explains that not even the Prophet is worthy of worship but he is His ‘Servant, Prophet or Messenger’ who is sent to guide people on the path of Monotheism. Malik Ram says that “one who utters this *Kalimah*, he/she takes oath that he/she will not worship anyone else than Allah. He/she proclaims that none in the world is worthy of worship and even Prophet Muhammad (□) is His Prophet/Messenger and not more than that.”^{xxxii}

In the next chapter Malik Ram establishes the fact every prophet came to lead the people to the same path i.e., Islam, which is the original or genuine religion revealed on earth since the first man and Prophet – Adam. Thus, Malik Ram defines Islam as the religion revealed by God to connect the creation with the Creator. However, owing to different regional, geographical, and other circumstances the prophets (sent as torchbearers) guided people on this same creed (Islam) with different legal systems/laws befitting the conditions of their respective ages. But the sole purpose of the teachings of every prophet was to guide people on the divinely ordained path of Monotheism. Prophet Muhammad sealed the prophethood and his way of life (*Sunnah*) and the Qur’ān revealed unto him will serve as the source of guidance for times to come. Thus, anyone in any age testifying this call of the prophets is a Muslim and his/her religion is Islam. The other religious denominations (wherein the revelations were interpolated to justify polytheism and other forms of disobedience) can be considered as the ‘deviations’ from the original path as testified by the Qur’ān^{xxxiii} itself. This part of Malik Ram’s book is an effective contribution in introducing or defining “Islam”, to anyone who wants to know ‘Islam’ in a plain, clear and simple way.^{xxxiv}

This work includes another important essay i.e., the Islamic system of governance or “*Islāmī Khilāfat*” discussed in light of the period of Pious Caliphate. With a meticulous study Malik Ram lays out the principles of Islamic governance and amply brings to limelight the efficacy and profundity of this system which is an exclusively revelation based system. While highlighting the *Shura* and other principles and concepts of Islamic system of governance he argues that by comparing it with the modern day concept of democracy one can decipher the level of compatibility of democracy in Islam.^{xxxv}

The most important essay in this work is “*Khulq-e Azīm*” (the sublime/exalted character), an exhaustive study on the biography of the Prophet Muḥammad – *Sīrah*.^{xxxvi} This essay while bringing out a plethora of source material on the biography of the Prophet (ﷺ) highlights the expression of the *Khulq-e Azīm* of the Prophet in his social and political life. With ample evidences from the historical events (from *Sīrah*), Malik Ram highlights the blessed and elevated personality of the Prophet as ever loving, merciful, and forgiving with sublime/exalted standard character. This sublime character and highly refined conduct of the Prophet is highlighted through the recorded events from the Makkan period, Madina period (after migration), wars (*Ghazwāt*), treaties and conquest of Makkah (*Fath-e Makkah*).^{xxxvii}

Malik Ram depicts the exalted character of the Prophet through the practical examples from the *Sīrah* especially highlighting his mercifulness and benevolence towards his strong adversaries among the hypocrites, pagans, polytheists and Jews. Concluding this essay, Malik Ram says that the Prophet of Islam always treated his associates as well as his enemies and adversaries equally with extreme level of mercy, benevolence and compassion. Be they the pagans of Makkah (*Kuffār*), the Jews of Madinah or the hypocrites (*Munāfiqīn*), he always approached towards them with compassion, mercy and love regardless of their ill-treatment and extreme hostility towards him. “Is there any other example [of such an exalted conduct] among the kings/rulers or other prophets?” asks Malik Ram.^{xxxviii} This essay is in fact the most significant contribution of Malik Ram to the *Sīrah* literature. Malik Ram goes on to highlight the utmost level of eloquence of the words, letters, or sermons of the Prophet Muhammad and its impact and efficacy on spreading the Divine message. This part of the work “*Afaṣṣah al-‘Arab*”, is based on original texts and has been delivered in a sterling manner with an academic and scholarly approach.^{xxxix}

The concluding part of the work, though related to woman, brings out a comparative study of the status of woman in Islam and the other religions like Hinduism, Christianity, Judaism etc. Though the issues discussed here are of crucial importance yet, this essay should have been incorporated in his other work (discussed above – *Aurat Aur Islāmī T‘alīm*).^{xl} Malik Ram’s comparative study mostly revolves around the themes like marriage, divorce, polygamy and other related issues. He amply proves that Islam guarantees welfare of woman at the utmost and viable level. While comparing the status of both the genders in Islam and other religions he maintains that in Islam “a girl and a boy” i.e., both the genders “are equal.”^{xli} With sound academic approach he rejects the false allegations and misconceptions regarding polygamy in Islam. Malik Ram tries to substantiate with established facts that the scheme of Islam governing the life of a woman (their status, education, marriage, divorce, inheritance, married life, widowhood etc.) is more efficient, suitable and beneficial than any other religion.^{xlii} This part of Malik Ram’s scholarly contribution to Islamic studies is of great significance for the Muslim intellectual class.

Thus, apart from his unequivocal command in Urdu literature, Malik Ram achieved the level of an expert of Islamic studies on the basis of his exhaustive study of Islamic sources of knowledge and literature and outstanding level of research and erudition. His essays on Islam clearly reflect his impartial approach and broad mindedness on one hand and

on the other his high level of erudition and expertise expressed through his utilization of the plethora of original Islamic textual sources.

Conclusion

Though Malik Ram was an acclaimed expert and authority in Urdu language and literature especially on *Ghālibiyāt* yet with his deep insights and rigorous study on Islam and its culture, he achieved an outstanding position among the eminent non-Muslim scholars and writers in Islamic studies. He was significantly applauded in the academic circles for the painstaking task of editing or annotating the original Urdu and Persian works of Ghalib and Mawlānā Azād besides contributing significantly to the diverse genres of Urdu language and literature. He made a significant contribution to Islamic studies through his scholarly essays and articles collectively published in two works i.e., *Aurat Aur Islāmī T'ālīm and Islāmiyāt*. Both these works reflect an objective and impartial approach towards understanding the Islamic tenets and teachings. In these works Malik Ram appears as a strong advocate of Islamic *Weltanschauung* and highlights the profundity of its teachings related to different issues specifically with regards to the role and status of woman. The girth of his study on Islam can be easily gauged from the style and approach he has adopted in discussing the subject matter in these essential works. His way of delivering the statements with logical and sound proofs from the original sources speaks of his deep acumen in Islamic studies on one hand and on the other hand they prove as strong means of defence towards the allegations levied against Islam on various issues. Most of his discussions nullify various baseless allegations and partial judgements against Islam made by the Orientalists.

Though Malik Ram's writings depict his high level study and understanding of Islam from the original sources yet at places his views or statements are objectionable especially while translating some verses of the Qur'ān or deducing conclusions/findings from the original texts. He acknowledges clearly that at some places he might be at variance with the established scholarship of the field but never tries to impose his point of view as the most accurate or final word. This reflects his honesty and sincerity as a researcher and a writer.

In fact, Malik Ram's over all contribution to the body of literature and knowledge especially Islamic studies is, in fact, laudable.

Notes and References

- ⁱ Tara Chand, *Influence of Islam on Indian Culture*, The Indian Press: Allahabad, 1946, p.i.
- ⁱⁱ See, T.W.Arnold, *The Preaching of Islam*, Delhi: Low Price Publications, 2006, pp-254-293.
- ⁱⁱⁱ See, Tara Chand, *op.cit.*
- ^{iv} This 4 volume encyclopaedic work includes the biographies of Urdu poets, writers and scholars of the Indian Subcontinent who lived between 1967 to 1977.
- ^v S.A.J Zaidi, (ed.), *Malik Ram Felicitation Volume* (Presented to Malik Ram on his 65th birthday), New Delhi : Malik Ram Felicitation Committee, 1972, pp.1-4; Muḥammad Arshad, *MālikRām : ḤayātAurKarnamay*, (Ph.D Thesis), Department of Urdu, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh, 2002, pp.19-131; Gopi Chand Narang and Abdul LatifA‘zamī, *Hindustan Kay Urdu MuṣannifīnAurShu‘arā’*, Urdu Academy Delhi, 1996, p.463f; See also, MukhtaruddīnAḥmadĀrzū, *Malik Ram*, in *Nuqūsh (Shakhsiyāt Number 2)*, Lahore, October 1956, pp.1461-67.
- ^{vi} Arshad, *op.cit.*, pp.19-131; Zaidi, *op.cit.*,p.xv, 9; Narang and A‘zamī, *op.cit.*,p.463f; Ārzū, *op.cit.*
- ^{vii} Arshad, *op.cit.*, p.56
- ^{viii} Mukhtaruddin Ahmad, “Malik Ram”, in *Nuqūsh :Shakhsiyat Number*, Lahore, p.1463.
- ^{ix} Arshad, *op.cit.*
- ^x Retrieved from : <http://www.allamaiqbal.com/publications/journals/review/apr85/10.htm>.
- ^{xi} Arshad, *op.cit.*; Ārzū, *op.cit.*
- ^{xii} Arshad, *op.cit.*
- ^{xiii} The report is available at: <http://education.nic.in/cd50years/u/47/3X/toc.htm>
- ^{xiv} Arshad, *op.cit.*, p.77f.
- ^{xv} *Ibid.*
- ^{xvi} Narang and A‘zamī, *op.cit.*, p.463f; Arshad, *op.cit.*, p.77f.
- ^{xvii} Arshad, *op.cit.*, p.59ff.
- ^{xviii} Arshad, *op.cit.*, p.59ff.
- ^{xix} *Ibid.*
- ^{xx} Arshad, *op.cit.*,pp.31-34.
- ^{xxi} Arshad, *op.cit.*
- ^{xxii} Arshad, *op.cit.* , p.204ff; Malik Ram, *AuratAurIslāmī Ta‘līm*, Delhi: *MaktabahJāmi‘ah*, 1977; Malik Ram, *Islāmiyāt*, Delhi: *MaktabahJāmi‘ah*, 1984.
- ^{xxiii} Malik Ram, *AuratAurIslāmī T‘alīm*, Delhi: *MaktabahJāmi‘ah*, 1977.
- ^{xxiv} *Ibid.* Arshad, *op.cit.* , pp,208-18.
- ^{xxv} *Ibid; Ibid.*
- ^{xxvi} *Ibid.*, pp.57-147.
- ^{xxvii} *Ibid.*, pp. 147-203.
- ^{xxviii} *Ibid.*, p.4f; Arshad, *op.cit.*, p.216f
- ^{xxix} Malik Ram, *Islāmiyāt*, New Delhi: *MaktabahJāmi‘ah Limited*, 1984.
- ^{xxx} *Ibid.*, p.10; Arshad, *op.cit.*, pp.208-18.
- ^{xxxi} *Ibid.*, pp.15-22; *Ibid.*
- ^{xxxii} *Ibid.*, pp.15-21 ; *Ibid.*

^{xxxiii} *Once, all people were one faith--community. Then they differed. So God sent forth the prophets, as bearers of glad tidings and forewarners. And with them, He sent down the Heavenly Scripture with the truth, so as to judge between people about that wherein they disputed.... (Al-Qur'ān, 2:213). See also, Al-Qur'ān, Al-Yūnus10:19; 16:36; 7:158; 34:28 etc.*

^{xxxiv} *Ibid.*, pp.21-34; Arshad, *op.cit.* ., pp,208-18.

^{xxxv} *Ibid.*, pp.35-52; *Ibid.*

^{xxxvi} *Ibid.*, pp.53-115; *Ibid.*

^{xxxvii} *Ibid.*, *Ibid.*

^{xxxviii} *Ibid.*, p.115.

^{xxxix} *Ibid.*, pp.117-30

^{xl} *Ibid.*, pp. 131-184 ;*Ibid.*

^{xli} *Ibid.*, p.134f.

^{xlii} *Ibid.*; Arshad, *op.cit.* ., p.215.