



An Islamic Critique of Aroj Ali Matubbar's 'Satyer Sandhane': Exploring Major Apprehensions

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Abstract

Aroj Ali Matubbar was a self-taught Bangladeshi philosopher. His first book 'Shatyer Shondhane' (In Search of Truth) published in 1973. After the independence of Bangladesh, he was the first Bengali man attacking Islam using logic and science. His mother, who used to pray regularly as Aroj Ali stated, was denied to pray funeral by local imam which led him for decade to study by himself and attacked Islamic teachings. The qualitative methodology was adopted for this research. The descriptive, analytical methods were used to do this research. Currently freethinkers of Bangladesh are very active in online blog and YouTube channel for debate and discussion and they refer books of Aroj Ali Matubbar along with new scientific literature. This study shows how Aroj Ali Matubbar used his logical questions to confuse Bengali speaking Muslims. Also, the article tried to come up with possible solutions that may prevent confusing Muslim youth.

Keywords: Aroj Ali Matubbar, Bangladeshi philosopher, Logic and science, Freethinkers, Islamic teachings, Muslim youth.

Introduction

Aqidah or Belief is very essence of every religion. According to Pew research foundation, Americans who convert to Islam balance out the percentage of Americans who left Islam.¹ Recently we have been familiarized with new psychological terms like delusional disorder, narcissistic personality, Religious OCD etc. Foucault stated, "Religion may be the object of delusional belief insofar as the culture of a group no longer permits the assimilation of [certain] religious or mystical beliefs in the present context of

experience"². These terms are used to capture behaviours of religious people as well as those who leave their belief. Nasima Selim discussed about delusional disorder to discuss suicide issues due to religion. He stated:

The dictionary definition of delusion is "an idiosyncratic belief or impression that is not in accordance with a generally accepted reality" (Pearsall, Citation1999, p. 379). According to the official definition of delusions, delusion is a "false belief based on incorrect inference about external reality that is firmly sustained despite what almost everyone else believes and despite what constitutes incontrovertible and obvious proof or evidence to the contrary. The belief is not ordinarily accepted by other members of the person's culture or subculture." (American Psychiatric

¹ Mohamed, B. (2018, January 26). The share of Americans who leave Islam is offset by those who become Muslim. Pew Research Center. <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2018/01/26/the-share-of-americans-who-leave-islam-is-offset-by-those-who-become-muslim/#:~:text=A%202017%20Pew%20Research%20Center%20survey%20of%20U.S.,with%20any%20religion%2C%20according%20to%20the%202017%20survey>. Accessed on 15th July 2023

² Foucault, M. (1976). *Mental illness and psychology*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. Originally published in 1962. p. 81.

Association, Citation1994, p. 765). Folie à famille is defined as a Shared Psychotic Disorder (SPD), referring to a condition where all members of a family share the delusions (Mirabzadeh et al., Citation2007). This is an extremely rare condition, but one that has been found in many different cultures. The SPD delusional system at its core harbours essential delusions, very often persecutory and/or grandiose in nature, manifested as part of the sub-cultural contexts, for example, as religious or political beliefs (Goldman, Citation1995). Usually the dominant personality in the family first manifests the delusions, which in turn affects the other devoted members. Folie à famille may or may not be part of schizophrenia, or a primary delusional disorder, or mood disorder (Gelder, Gath, Mayou, & Cowen, Citation1996). Progression of delusional symptoms, for example, delusional perceptions or moods, to an established system usually reflects the “dramatic attempt by a family to maintain cohesiveness in the presence of a perceived hostile environment” (Gelder et al., Citation1996 cited by Mirzabadeh et al., Citation2007, p. 46).³

Before delve into any discussion, it is utmost important to mention that using psychology most of the prophets were accused of having narcissistic personality disorder. Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) was scrutinized under this personality disorder.⁴ This is not uncommon in contemporary academia to divert religious belief of people. Therefore, Muslims must act intellectually and produce intellectual work against it. Obviously, this sort of narrative indirectly and directly attack to *Aqīdah* of Muslims. Therefore, Muslims must be cautious about it.

Bangladesh is Muslim majority country. However, the mainstream system of education is secular education. As a result, Muslims are not following Islam or rarely appreciate Islam as their way of life. Everyday if we open the news of Bangladeshi newspaper, we hear the news revolves around corruption, murder, extra-marital affair, rape, conversion. However, one crucial point is avoided carefully. The case of freethinkers. They are called ‘*Muktomona*’. They are minority group in Bangladesh, yet they are among top class intellectuals leading these organization. Their main aim is to help society to break free from religion and encourage for critical thinking using science. At first glance, it may seem wonderful activities since this promote rationalism, science and free inquiry, however, it is extremely thought provoking and dangerous to some extent for the *Aqīdah* of Muslims. The narrative of questions has been changed. That’s means the way Muslims learn about their religion from their parents and teachers in school, these freethinkers use all the opposite questions to make general Muslims puzzle. They would bring such questions which seem so logical and scientific and though provoking that a general Muslim can easily fall into doubt canon regarding Islam.

This article will deal with major concerns of Aroj Ali Matubbar , because he is considered one of the earliest pioneer of freethinker movement in Bangladesh. He had no formal education but he studied by himself and dared to challenge the credibility of Islamic *Aqīdah*. He also criticized Hinduism, Christianity and Judaism, but his main attack was on Islamic *Aqīdah*. His most prolific book was

Shatyer Shondhane(In Search of Truth). He paused questions almost every core things of Islam. Any general Muslim who has lack of critical thinking skills may fall into error if they read this book. This works asks about mind-body problem that we learned from Descartes, but he attacked Islam here. Then, he talked about attributes of Allah SWT. Next, he attacked religion in general. He also uses science to attack religion. Overall, this piece of writing was to discredit Islamic *Aqīdah* and make Muslims sceptic related their *Aqīdah*. Unfortunately, his writings were just the beginning of freethinking in Bangladesh. His book was published right after 1971. Initially the book was banned during Pakistan regime, however it saw the light after independence of Bangladesh. Later, we have noticed the rise of freethinkers like Taslima Nasreen and others. In contemporary time, it is more evident when online platforms of freethinkers are active. Some freethinkers’ bloggers were brutally killed in 2014 and 2015 due to their serious attack on Islam. Blasphemous attack on Islam is still on the rise. Bangladesh Government made law due to conflict but nothing worked. These bloggers had to flee in different western countries and operate their work from there. Asif Mohiuddin one of the top secular activist who run his freethinkers’ activities through social media and YouTube. Some run from UK. They have platform for free debate and discussion where Bengali Muslims come to debate.

Obviously, many have tendency to avoid these discussions since it is related to *Aqīdah*, but the trouble starts when a Muslim faced injustice by society and asked the credibility of Muslim society and role of Muslim leaders. Most of the leaders are corrupted and justice is not upheld in Muslim countries. Freedom of expression are confined. Muslims are not allowed to criticize government and their actions. Critical thinking is not appreciated. These issues may bother in the mind of young Muslims and they tend to fall in trap in their narrative. These freethinkers attack Islam with logical way with full of authentic references and science. For example, they would use authentic source of Islam like Quranic verse and authentic verses of Quran and would ask such a question that will hinder *Aqīdah*.

This article also would try to produce some criticisms to deal with the ideas of Aroj Ali Matubbar. Overall , this research paper is the Islamic response against secular attack on Islamic *Aqīdah* during contemporary time in the context of Bangladesh and other part of the world.

Biography of Aroj Ali Matubbar

Matubbar was born into a low-income peasant family in the village of *Charbaria Lamchhari* in British India, which is now Bangladesh, some 11 kilometres outside of the city of Barisal.⁵ He was born Aroj Ali and then changed his name to Matubbar (which means "local landowner"). He only spent a brief period of time studying at the maqtab in the village, where he concentrated on Islamic studies and the Qur'an. Matubbar advocated for knowledge over superstition and wrote against religious fundamentalism. He also had a very progressive viewpoint. He wrote against orthodox theological doctrines, leading to his label as an iconoclast.

³ Nasima Selim , An extraordinary truth? The Ādam “suicide” notes from Bangladesh, *Mental Health, Religion & Culture*, 13:3, (2010) pp. 223-244, DOI: 10.1080/13674670903061230

⁴ Spidergoat. Sciforums. (n.d.). <https://www.sciforums.com/threads/muhammad-and-narcissistic-personality-disorder.33129/> Accessed on 15th July 2023

⁵ Desk, Feature. “A Self-Taught Bangladeshi Philosopher: The Asian Age Online, Bangladesh.” *The Asian Age*, March 2, 2018. <https://www.dailiasianage.com/news/110725/a-self-taught-bangladeshi-philosopher>. Accessed on 15th July 2023

He questioned Islamic inheritance law, for instance, because the recommended method of splitting inherited property did not make sense to him. A number of books that Aroj Ali published exhibit his contentious outlook on life and the universe. Matubbar was unable to enrol in classes or earn a formal institutional degree because of financial restrictions. His main source of income was subsistence farming. Matubbar passed away at Barisal, Bangladesh, on March 15, 1985, the first Chaitra of the Bengali year 1392.

He provided his eyes for transplantation after passing away. He gave his body as a donation, which Sher-e-Bangla Medical College accepted and dissected for use by medical students. After his passing in 1985, Aroj Ali Matubbar gained a reputation as one of rural Bangladesh's most prolific thinkers and an iconoclast who wasn't scared to speak out against ingrained beliefs and superstitions.

Major Issues in the Writings of Aroj Ali Matubbar

Satyer Sandhane (In Search of Truth), is considered Matubbar's debut book. The book was written in 1952 and published twenty-one years later in 1973. The book was banned to be published by Government of Pakistan before independence. In fact, Aroj Ali wrote another book attacking Islam using science; but *Satyer Sandhane* was his first book to attack Islamic teachings.

In this book *Satyer Sandhane*, he put out six claims that indicated the essence of his philosophical queries. Which are:

Proposition 1: asked eight questions about the soul.

Proposition 2: addressed God and included up to 11 questions.

Proposition 3: addressed the afterlife and included up to 7 questions.

Proposition 4: addressed religious issues and had up to 22 questions.

Proposition 5: addressed nature and included up to 10 questions.

Proposition 6: addressed the remaining issues and included up to 9 questions.

On Soul

His first proposition included eight questions that serve as an example of his methodology. the questions Who Am I (Myself), (a) Is life physical or incorporeal? (c) Are a person's mind and soul the same thing? (d) How does life interact with the body and the mind? (e) Is it possible to recognise or define life? Am I liberated? (g) If a person's body is destroyed upon death, will their spirit still possess "knowledge"? The last question is (h) How does life enter and leave the body?⁶

In this section, he tried to be sceptic about soul from materialistic perspective and if you notice he would not come to any conclusion rather he wants to ask questions and made reader sceptic about soul as if soul does not exists. That's how he attacked Islam in the first chapter of his book.

⁶ A. A Matubbar, & [Ed. A Hōsen,] (*Collections[books] of Aroj Ali Matubbar*) *Aroj Ali Matubbar Rochona Somogro* (Pathok Somabesh,1994) pp. 59-62.

On God

His second proposition included 11 questions.⁷

1. How is the nature of Allah? E.g. Allah is transcendental or he has physical form.
2. Does Allah behave like Humans? E.g. we hear, see and say.
3. Does Allah different from its creation? Here he was asking about Sufi concept of *Wahdat al-Wujūd* or *shuhūd*.
4. Does Allah follow law or not? Like *Sunnatullah*
5. Is Allah just or kind?
6. Without Allah's intention, can things happen?
7. Is there any difference between Allah and Soul since both are considered transcendent?
8. How can we observe transcendent?
9. Space, time and energy are created or uncreated?
10. Before the age of creation which age was there? (Time)
11. Does Allah Rahman?

In this section, we can observe Aroz Ali tried to challenge entire literature on Allah starting from pre-Mohammedian time and he covered Sufi literature as well related to attribute of Allah *SWT* . This is second attack on *Aqīdah* . We know the very notion of Allah is the most fundamental to Islamic teaching. Hence, if he can nail down this, the entire foundation of Islam will be gone. If you notice he also covers, the kindness of Allah. This is one of the major issues why people lose faith in religion. From the writings of Schopenhauer and Kant, we commonly know that they talk about suffering and justice. That is the main contention from ancient period in fact especially when we look at the work of Greek philosophers. Even Stoic philosophy deals with the problem of suffering referring to fate in Greek philosophy. The ancient Greek like sophists made same strategy. Socrates tried to revolt against mainstream Greek philosophers; but it did not work out well during that particular time. Socrates, Plato and Aristotle had huge influence on other later philosophers. That's why we can notice the advent of Neo-Platonism. Sophists are like pessimistic about after life and therefore, they would not care about divine ethics that we see the trend in the time of modernism. All the traditional values are gone. God is dead and insane philosophy was introduced by Nietzsche. However, it seems same philosophy came into existence among mass people in 20th century. It was only in Europe then in America then it spread through Asia. Now it is in Islamic world. If it is observed like , Muhammad Abduh, Mawdudi, Sayyid Qutub, Sayyid Nursi and others, we can realize the problem with secular world. Godless world is the main problem that promotes nihilistic worldview. Aroz Ali came to introduce confusing ideas to Bengali native speaking people to challenge Islam . 2nd chapter is the most devastating chapter for Muslim readers.

On hereafter

His 3rd proposition included 7 questions.⁸

1. What is the purpose of creating Animals?
2. Why diary for writing right and wrong?
3. Punishment for hereafter physical or metaphysical?
4. Is the grave punishment just?
5. What hereafter look like?
6. Why Quran provides similar things in Jannat like earth?

⁷ Ibid, pp. 63-70

⁸ Ibid. pp. 64-70

7. Where is hell and heaven?

In this section, Aroz Ali mainly introduced the absurdism of punishment and he asked the credibility of Islamic punishment. He also brought the issue of Eden referring to it was on Earth and came from human minds and its reality heaven and hell do not exist. Grave punishment lost importance in his view. These are full of absurdity and these are to create fear among Mass people.

On Religion

His 4th proposition included 22 questions⁹

1. Instead of changing humans why Allah talks about guidance?
2. Is fate fixed?
3. What is the sin of Adam?
4. What is Devil?
5. Why time is fixed for prayer?
6. Are unclean things being unclean to Allah as well?
7. Why direction for prayer? (like *Makka* is our *Qiblah*)
8. What is angel?
9. What is the job of angel?
10. Is it possible to move without distance?
11. Is (*Miraj*) Night travel of Prophet was real or dream?
12. Why some foods became haram?
13. How much weight one good deed?
14. Does Sin get weight?
15. Why Islam got similarity with previous religions?
16. What are the character sticks of Arab?
17. What is the significance of day?
18. What is the significance of moon?
19. What is the significance of day of decree?
20. What is Kusuf and khusuf (prayer during solar eclipses)?
21. What is the reward for killing animal?
22. Why do Muslims kiss black stone?

This section is the longest section in his book consisting 22 points. He talked about sin of Adam as absurdity and discussed about fate. Fate is written and this Allah's intention only. Hence, Allah is responsible for everything. This is like Sufi concept of fate. Aroz Ali became passive here to introduce the concept of religious fate. He also asked the credibility of night journey of Muhammad (pbuh). He made confusion to readers giving example of a American man who went to meet with Aliens.

He literally tried to prove that Muhammad was hallucinating and this was his psychological trauma. He also talked about some rituals like kissing the black stone and he tried to relate with asteroid stone that fly in our orbit. Also, he talked about solar eclipse to question that this is just science and he finds no need to be scared. We have noticed here how we Aroz Ali showed same behaviour of intellectual superiority when people think that they know the best compared to herd.

On Nature

His proposition included 8 questions¹⁰

1. Why Humans and animals got similarities?
2. What is sky?
3. Why day and night?
4. On what earth established?
5. Why earthquake?

⁹ Ibid, pp. 71-107

¹⁰ Ibid, pp. 108-118

6. Why lightening?

7. Where Sun goes in night?

8. Why season?

9. Why tide?

10. How fire without heat?

11. Did flood happen entire earth during prophet Nuh?

In this section, he starts questions indicating theory of evolution. He posed the question of Day and night as the law of nature, nothing important here. He talked about earthquake, lightening season, tide from scientific literature to undermine religious narration.

He also talked about fire to indicate prophet Ibrahim's time how come fire could not burn the Ibrahim. Also, he told different literature from religious texts saying many quoted that there were floods one time across the world. This is time of Nuh in Quran but he tried to relate with other scripture but this one was rather ambiguous.

Other matters:

He raised other issues also.¹¹

1. Is Adam first human?
2. Why Nile river dried during Moses flee?
3. What Moses saw in Sinai (light)?
4. Did Sulayman show *hikmah* or miracle?
5. Who was father of Jesus?
6. Where *Jinn* lives?
7. How is the day without Sun? (he was referring to Islamic Day of judgement)
8. What is the significance of leaving wife and Hila tradition?

In the very last section, he again asked if Adam was really first human. He tried to give the example of tide in the event of Moses running from *Firaun*. Also, he talked about if Moses really saw Allah or just lighting made by clouds and then he talked about miracle of Sulayman as absurd phenomena. He also doubted about Jesus without father. He talked about biology how X and Y chromosome works to talk about scientific superiority.

He also discussed about *Jinn* if it really exists. Then, he talked about day of judgement without new Sun or like maybe different sun will be brought. He just logically ridiculed religious narration of judgement day. Last point he finds unjustified the hila marriage and this is rape and open injustice with women. So, we can see he uses humanism and science to discredit religion, especially Islam.

Overall, if we study the work of Aroz Ali Mutabbor, we noticed he promotes free thinking to eradicate religious bigotry, on the other hand, he too felt into error by negating Islam completely. He was angry with Muslim society and he found the errors in Muslim teachings. Undoubtedly these questions are relevant, but if we see the real motivation behind the scene, then we can realize the problem. Next section would explore on this topic. Now it is important that he wrote the next book (*Onuman*) that he just gave his logical thought of different event like Freud. We know from evolutionary psychology that Freud was not right to analyse rather how genetic determinism works to shape our behaviour. When it comes to Aroz Ali Matabbor, he did same like Freud.

¹¹ Ibid, pp. 119-128

He sketched his own hypothesis and criticized Islam. His ‘*Sistri Rohosso*’ was another work where we can find how he promote scientific literature and he tend to go with it. He talked about age of universe like 14 billion year and he finds God is an absurd area to explore along the way since nature is capable to produce first cell and develop these complex planets with diversity. He talked about carbon life. Overall, his entire life was dedicated to secular science and he used the logic in order to justify his stance. There is no doubt that some of his works are excellent but this is the subtle problem that he could not deal is he completely negated Quranic teaching and message of Islam which says humans have a Lord who will give the rewards for the good actions. Aroz Ali believes in the possibility of having aliens since trillion of planets existing in this observable universe but he is not interested to confess that he has a creator. That’s is coming from his stubbornness. Therefore, we need to be careful; on this topic.

Criticism from Islamic Perspective

Islam is the way of life. Muhammad (pbuh) was sent to act upon Quran. If you notice any messenger carrying any letter in your village. His responsibility is to deliver the letter. That’s it. The Quran is very heavy message. The scariest message is there. There are two important key issues Quran has emphasized. One is creation and then guidance. Take for instance society of bees. They have strict rules and regulations in their society. It is going over millions of years. A bee or bird can be created but guidance is something that can come only from its creator. One more example is i-phone and its manual instruction book. For the first time user, they depend on the guidance given by its creator.

The above paragraph is written just to give background to refute Aroz Ali’s concerns. By now it is evident that he posed all the questions against religious beliefs. He mostly attacked Islam actually. This is important to understand the context why he is angry. In 2014, There came a Hollywood movie named “God is not Dead”¹². In the movie, the professor character was the key point to highlight here. He said that he is against God since he faced lot of injustice in his life. This is the root cause why this Professor was promoting God is dead. Obviously, the term was first coined by German philosopher Nietzsche.¹³ The problem with Aroz Ali also started with similar event. His mother died and he took a photo of her mother’s face. Local imam made fatwa and declined to pray funeral prayer of his mother. Aroz ali mentioned that his mother used to pray 5 times and perform *Tahajjud* and this was his fault to take the photo, not his mother fault.

His question was: Why his mother would get that sort of injustice because of his action of taking photo? From that day, he determined to take revenge through educating himself and fighting with pen and paper. Nasima Selim wrote an article and mentioned that how Aroz Ali was most probably facing delusional disorder due to bigotry or hypocrisy of Muslim society.¹⁴ Earlier discussion

of her article , Selim referred a family in which all committed suicide due to delusional disorder. They thought their surrounding people are corrupted. Hasan and Mumtaz Ali also started their article indicating religious hypocrisy but referring to Quran instead of referring as psychological disorder like Selim.¹⁵

Aroz Ali’s questions look logical with some flaw and he used science to negate any sort of religious beliefs promoting humanism.¹⁶ Similar pattern can be noticed in Parvez Hoodbhoy’s writing.¹⁷ Islam is not progressive religion due to its traditional representatives.¹⁸ Ibn Warraq did case study as well as he states all sort of apostasy from the time of prophet.¹⁹ However, Malik Badri tried to do Islamization in psychology and refer Muslim sadistic writers like Hoodbhoy or Aroz Ali.²⁰

Though Badri referred to Muslim Secular psychologists due to their acceptance of Freud theory blindly, his critique can be extended to all these so-called philosophers who got heavily influenced by western science and thought. Qutub perhaps was taking firm stance to encounter these sadistic seculars so called Muslims who got influenced by western thought to attack Islam.²¹

The pattern of Questions from Aroz Ali indicated how he wanted to nullify Islam through his logical and scientific questions to make Bengali Muslims confused regarding Islam. This is the contemporary problem with Aqīdah among some of Bangladeshi Muslim youths. In fact, based on the philosophy of Aroz Ali, they started freethinking movement among native speaking people.²² These freethinkers are highly talented university graduates from top public and private universities of Bangladesh. They harshly criticized each issue of Islam by using science and reasonings.²³ As a consequence, there were issues of blogger killings in Bangladesh. Blogger killings became hot potato in Bangladesh in 2024-2015.²⁴

Culture, 13:3, pp. 223-244,

(2010) DOI: [10.1080/13674670903061230](https://doi.org/10.1080/13674670903061230)

¹⁵ M. M Hasan, & M. M Ali, Tazkiyat Al-Nafs and Scientific Worldview: Contrast and Critique, (*International Journal of Advanced Research in Islamic and Humanities*, 2021).

¹⁶ A. A. Matubbor, & A. Hösen, (Collection [books]of *Aroj Ali Matubbor*) Aroj Ali Matubbor Rochona Somogro, (Pathok Somabesh, 1994).

¹⁷ Pervez Hoodbhoy, *Islam and Science: Religious orthodoxy and the battle for rationality*. (Zed Books Limited: London and New Jersey, 1991)

¹⁸ “Islam’s Arrested Development | Pervez Hoodbhoy.” *The Guardian*, November 25, 2009.

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/belief/2009/nov/25/islam-science-muslimsreligion>. Accessed on 15th July 2023

¹⁹ I. Warraq, *Leaving Islam: Apostates speak out* (Prometheus Books. 2009)

²⁰ Mālik Badrī, *The dilemma of Muslim psychologists*, (Kuala Lumpur: Islamic Book Trust, 2016).

²¹ Sayyid Qutb, and Siddiki Muhammad Mu’In al-Din, *The Islamic concept and its characteristics*, (Plainfield, IN: American Trust Publications, 2000).

²² Ii, অজিত কেশকশ্বলী, Amit, Subaltern, Khan, M. R., Kutuv, Him, P., Roy, S., & Majumder, B. (2023, May 8). সংশয় - চিন্তার মুক্তির আন্দোলন. <https://www.shongshoy.com/> accessed on 15th July 2023

²³ মুক্তমনা বাংলা ব্লগ – বিজ্ঞান, যুক্তি, মুক্তচিন্তা. (2023, June 3). <https://blog.muktomona.com/> accessed on 15th July 2023.

²⁴ BBC. (2015, August 18). *Bangladesh blogger killings: Police arrest three people*. BBC News.

¹² IMDb.com. (2014, March 21). *God’s not dead*. IMDb. <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt2528814/> accessed on 15th July 2023

¹³ F. Nietzsche, B. Williams, Ed.; J. Nauckhoff & A. Del Caro, (Trans) Nietzsche: *The Gay Science: With a Prelude in German Rhymes and an Appendix of Songs* (Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

¹⁴ Nasima Selim An extraordinary truth? The Ādam “suicide” notes from Bangladesh, *Mental Health, Religion &*

Taslina Nasreen was exiled at the beginning of free-thinking movement for her blasphemous writings.²⁵ Now they operate these secular blogs from foreign countries since many bloggers were threaten to be killed.

Overall, the blame solely can not go to Islam rather if we look at European history of Christianity. This got associated with bigotry of religious leaders and hypocrisy by the name of religion led these free thinkers to leave Islam. Islam is complete code of life with simplicity for all the people. Quran is a book of signs. Quran instructs to explore the world as if the book is just manual instruction of the world surrounding us. Quran contains abstract ideas in many cases. We have seen that many left Islam due to misunderstanding with Quranic verse or interpretation. Imagine you are exploring genetic technology and talking why genetic engineering is not in Quran?

This is absurd question at the first place because Islam says to explore the world. One abstract sentence covers everything within world around us. However, we failed to recognize this subtle difference. That's why the issue of misguidance comes into play. Let's imagine a debate session. For one motion, there are for and against arguments. Each side can produce 1000 of arguments. Hence, Quran is just a guidance and if anyone wants to give 1000 of arguments against the book, it is possible. Similarly, if anyone wants to give 1000 of arguments supporting it, it is possible also.

That means it is a matter of choice which side you wants to go. Quran clearly emphasized this and asked prophet that his duty is to deliver the message. Weather a person would follow or not, it is not the business of prophet. Only Allah holds the power of guidance related metaphysical reality. Most of the questions raised by Aroz Ali are logical but there are answers obviously. Look at the eternity of the universe, we know that Ibn Rushd and Imam Ghazali gave arguments for both sides. Hence, it is not that the answers are not possible to produce.

In fact, 100 different answers can be produced based on the questions posed by Aroz Ali, but the question is would the disbeliever accept the truth? If we read chapter of Quran like Surah Rahman. We see Quran reminds so many bounties of Allah and asked questions again and again saying which favour of your lords would you deny? Let's say we all need to deal with the question who created Allah? We know the limitation of Greek logic. They ended up with first cause or necessary being. Otherwise, they need to go for infinity. Similar case with Aroz Ali, the energy is constant. That means it would remain as it is forever. They have no answer except saying the eternity of energy similar to Greek concept of infinity of causes. Let's take another easy example from now.

Quantum mechanics were beyond comprehension and were less acceptable to Einstein in 20th century due to spooky behaviour of sub-atomic particle.²⁶ In fact, Einstein died and now this seems the

age of Quantum mechanics.²⁷ What was not possible yesterday, it is possible today. Science is changing we know that. We knew the truth at the past through science and the same truth has been false now due to new science. Hence, depending on science it is absurd to negate Quranic teaching.

Issue of Suffering and pessimism

This is another pivotal point that we need to bear in mind. We are in test as we learned from Islam. We see suffering and we become depressed and we commit suicide. Islam does not allow this. If we learn positivism, we come to know that pessimism is not the reality. Empirical evidence negates pessimism. Aroz Ali talked about different terms like Rahman (Kindness). He is not satisfied due to the suffering of people. He does not want to accept this world is a test or he says the test is not justified. He fails to take prophetic teaching in positive manner. The real life is hereafter, but Aroz Ali denied that due to his denial of afterlife he developed his nihilistic view of life. Islam is clear on this point.

Islam guarantees for hereafter and it is real event. This is something that is missing in his literature. Islam introduced the idea of patience, the struggle in the way of Allah. No passivity works in Islam. If we look at Muhammad's life, we can notice how he led his life with full of action. He used to pray and he used to work. That's all Islam teaches to Prophet. The instruction manual was implemented on prophet first. Quran ordered prophet to follow instruction first and he did it and he succeeded. Islamic empire was based on Islamic principles as a result we see the ultimate outcome. It is also claimed by Aroz Ali that Islam is brutal politically. However, if you notice in international politics, we can see what is called brutality by the name of justice. Millions of people were killed in politics in last century.

Holocaust was done. This is the result due to scientific revolution. Two atomic bombs were launched in Japan. This is pessimistic literature coming from scientific enlightenment. Therefore, blaming Islam for suffering and pessimistic view of life is completely absurd. Islam encourages how to overcome trauma. It gives hope of good deeds in Jannat. No pessimistic view in Islam rather the more difficult the test is the more good reward is waiting for human beings. All Allah asks human beings is *imaan* with patience

Issue of Evolution

Towards the end of his book he asked the question if Adam was the first man? This is obviously the question from the theory of evolution. This is still ongoing discussion and this is related to *Aqidah*. Hasan discussed that many Muslim countries are still struggling with this topic if they should teach them in school, and he came up with a solution referring to prophetic hadith of one (mistaken prediction) or two reward (right prediction) for the seeker of knowledge²⁸

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-33971810>
accessed on 15th July 2023.

²⁵ BBC. (1999, January 26). *South Asia | taslima goes back into exile*. BBC News. http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/263014.stm accessed on 15th July 2023.

²⁶ Albert Einstein, B. Podolsky, & N. Rosen, "Can Quantum-Mechanical Description of Physical Reality be Considered

Complete?" *Physical Review*, 47(10), (1935, May 15). Pp. 777–780. doi:10.1103/PhysRev.47.777.

²⁷ L. Billings, Explorers of Quantum Entanglement win 2022 Nobel prize in physics, (*Scientific American*, 2022, October 4).. <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/explorers-of-quantum-entanglement-win-2022-nobel-prize-in-physics/> accessed on 7th July 2023

²⁸ Md Maruf HASAN, *Theory of Evolution is a Scientific Fact: A Response from Mystic Literature* (**International**

Mutabbar was discussing the evolution of universe also. These are scientific explanation rather than religious explanation related how the universe came into existence. This is to discredit any notion of religious creation of universe(He later developed these thoughts and wrote in new book). So, evolution of universe and evolution of species were referred to use if Adam was the first man and if Humans got any speciality compared to other animals. This mirage is made using science to confuse Muslim youths of Bangladesh.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it can be concluded that contemporary time Islamic *Aqīdah* is under attack from various freethinkers' groups across the world. We can see how Bangladeshi freethinker like Aroj Ali Mutabbar tried to nail down Islamic *Aqīdah* using logical questions with scientific literature. He could attack the imam who denied the *Janaja* of his mother, rather he studied and attacked by pen and paper. Muslims need to develop this strategy. This is extremely important. Muslims are labelled as terrorist after 9/11 attack across the world. This is time for Muslim students to respond them in writing. That's the real intellectual battle that Mahmudul, Professor of English Department from International Islamic University Malaysia, suggested in his recent writing. He stated:

In the discussion of Islamophobia, there is a tendency to focus only on physical violence. As a result, intellectual work that incites Islamophobia is given inadequate attention.

In other words, the discussion of physical violence outweighs that of epistemic violence (or violence through knowledge). What is more, Muslims often seek to counter epistemic violence through street protests which eventually become counterproductive.

Prophet Muhammad made use of poetic genius, especially of Hassan ibn Thabit, to respond to Islamophobic poetry composed by poets hostile to Islam and Muslims.

Unfortunately, Muslims have failed to follow such strategies in countering Islamophobic discourse which breeds anti-Islam and anti-Muslim prejudice.

Muslims' responses to intellectual Islamophobic work should be in kind — intellectual work against intellectual work, literature against literature, artistic work against artistic work, and so on.

Taking to the streets, shouting and burning of books are not the right response to an intellectual or literary attack.²⁹

Hence, it is evident that Muslim Academic and writers need to be engaging through discussion and writing. Killing bloggers due to their questions are not the right way. Muslim must produce intellectual works against intellectual works. If we look at the example of Imam Ghazali and Ibn Rushed, we can see how academic world revolves. Even for Ibn Arabi he wrote his stance in

details. That was our Muslim culture in the past among intellectuals.

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