

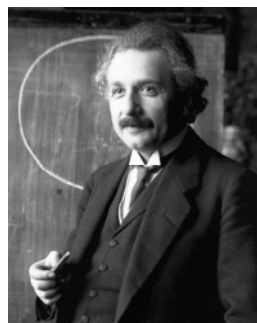
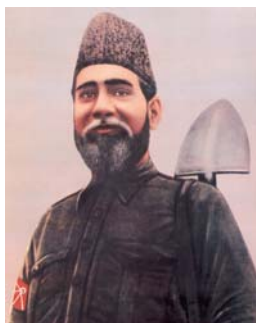
# Einstein & Other Scientists' Meetings with Allama Mashriqi

*On Allama Mashriqi's 48th Death Anniversary*

*By Nasim Yousaf*

*"Mathematics was evolved on these unnatural ideas and since they were taken, mistakenly or out of sheer flattery to the Greeks, as ideals, as a result mathematics and the allied subjects remained revolving around them and were confined within the orbit set by these ideas."<sup>1</sup>*

— Scholar and Mathematician Allama Mashriqi, 1926



Allama Mashriqi was undoubtedly a legendary political figure who brought freedom to British India. But long before his entry into politics, Mashriqi had been making history across multiple disciplines. As a student at the University of Cambridge in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Mashriqi shattered many previous academic records and was declared Foundation Scholar, Wrangler and Bachelor Scholar. As an author, Mashriqi's book *Tazkirah* (an interpretation of the Holy Quran from a scientific perspective) was nominated for the Nobel Prize in Literature. And in mathematics, Mashriqi proposed a number of groundbreaking new ideas, which were recognized by some of the most prominent scientists of the time.

As with all his endeavors, Mashriqi brought an unparalleled intellectual vigor and curiosity to his work in mathematics; he was a genius of exceptional caliber and his ideas often transcended the thinking of the time. Syed Shabbir Hussain, a veteran journalist and author/editor of many books on Mashriqi, described some of Mashriqi's innovative ideas in the field of mathematics. Hussain wrote in his book *Al-Mashriqi: The Disowned Genius* that Mashriqi "insisted that the current ideas of point, circle and straight line must be got rid of; something more natural should be found out to be able to break new ground in the field of knowledge."<sup>2</sup> Mashriqi presented his theory with evidence before the Educational Society of Mathematics in the North West Frontier Province (now Khyber-Pakhtoonkhwa, Pakistan) in 1918. Mashriqi knew that his "unbelievable revelation in this gathering [of mathematicians] had created a colossal sensation, the sound of which resounded in Europe and America."<sup>3</sup>

Based on Mashriqi's *original* ideas, he was invited to visit Europe, where he was already revered as an outstanding scholar and mathematician. During Mashriqi's visit to Europe in 1926, "top scientists,"<sup>4</sup> including Professor Albert Einstein and Dr. S.A. Voronov<sup>5</sup> (a scientist researching the aging process<sup>6</sup>), met with him. Mashriqi held "extended meetings"<sup>7</sup> with these two men on various subjects, including his book "Tazkirah" (The Royal Society of the Arts, London, called it a "Monumental Work."), his thoughts on religion and making every faith accommodating to all of mankind, the purpose of man's creation, the conquest of the universe by man as the sole purpose of creation, humans becoming creators of life, the unification of the human race, and inadequate progress in science. According to Syed Shabbir Hussain, Mashriqi told Einstein that "apart from his study of the dead matter, [Einstein should] engage in the study of life to put mankind on the new path."<sup>8</sup> Mashriqi also told Einstein, "We have come to the practical from the ideal; as a

matter of fact, we should have begun from the practical and finished with ideal.”<sup>9</sup> Syed Shabbir Hussain summarized Mashriqi’s message to Einstein and Voronov as such:

*“Giving outlines of his discussion [in Hadees-ul-Quran]...he [Mashriqi] argued how progress in the realm of science during the past thousands of years was awfully inadequate and how faultily it resulted in the birth of current mathematics and physics. The reason in his view was that these two main branches of science were based on Greek mythology which hinged on the ideas of point, circle and straight line. Point, circle and straight line appeared, no doubt, ideological and fascinating but they were non-existent in Nature. ‘Mathematics,’ he claimed, ‘was evolved on these unnatural ideas and since they were taken, mistakenly or out of sheer flattery to the Greeks, as ideals, as a result mathematics and the allied subjects remained revolving around them and were confined within the orbit set by these ideas.’ The grievous consequences of these blunders, according to Mashriqi, were that ‘from digits we moved on to geometry, from geometry to mechanics and from mechanics we went to the production of machines and engines which are all devoid of life.’ In his view, man had done a little bit of creation in this direction but the vast field of life lay unprobed.”<sup>10</sup>*

The impact of Mashriqi’s line of reasoning with Einstein and Voronov can also be seen from Mashriqi’s words in *Hadees-ul-Quran*. Mashriqi stated that “they [Einstein and Voronov] themselves were upset about this aspect of science; why in spite of having made so much progress man was still unaware of what this life and its process constituted...the reason was our worship of the Greeks; we are not the worshippers of Nature and God. Had we been worshippers of God we must by now have ourselves become creators of life.”<sup>11</sup>

Einstein and Voronov were indeed impressed with Mashriqi’s thought process and believed that his ideas were worth exploring. As Mashriqi stated, both learned men “highly appreciated my point of view and felt that if the proposition was put formally before the world community of scientists, it could cause a new revolution.”<sup>12</sup> Einstein and Voronov thus nominated Mashriqi for induction into several highly prestigious societies of Europe, including Fellow of the Geographical Society (Paris) and the Fellow of the Asiatic Society. Mashriqi, who was already inducted in 1923 as a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts (London),<sup>13</sup> was inducted as a Fellow of the Geographical Society (Paris) in 1926<sup>14</sup> as well as a Fellow of the Asiatic Society<sup>15</sup> of France. These societies were founded by some of the greatest scientific names of the time, and membership was only granted to a small number of persons of exceptional caliber. At the time, Mashriqi was likely the only man from British India to have had the honor of being inducted into such renowned societies. Mashriqi graciously acknowledged Einstein and Voronov, writing in *Hadees-ul-Quran*, “It was through Dr. Voronov and Prof Einstein that I was made Fellow of a number of international scientific bodies and it appeared that I too would bring about a revolution in the field of science.”<sup>16</sup>

Though Einstein, Voronov and other scientists wanted Mashriqi to continue his work in the sciences, Mashriqi was now faced with a choice. On the one hand, he clearly had the intellectual capacity to make significant contributions in the sciences. On the other hand, however, he also knew that the people of India were suffering under imperial rule and needed his services. After careful consideration, Mashriqi opted to work on behalf of the people to bring freedom to India, and founded a private army (the Khaksar Tehrik) in 1930.<sup>17</sup> Mashriqi expressed his feelings in *Hadees-ul-Quran*, stating “after 1926, the condition of the Indian Muslims had become awful and they had no organisation which could effectively face the Congress. I had, therefore, to divert my attention to the national life of my community...the Khaksar Movement had been started, and I did not consider it feasible to ride in two boats at one and the same time, and gave up the scientific work altogether.”<sup>18</sup>

With the fate of his fellow citizens and the freedom of British India on his mind, Mashriqi’s revolutionary work in science came to an end. Nevertheless, even in the short time that he spent in the sciences, Mashriqi was able to amass a valuable body of work. Mashriqi’s questions regarding the foundation of Mathematics and his unique perspective on science need to be further investigated by intellectuals and top scientists. Mashriqi’s opinion that the nucleus of research should be Nature is undoubtedly logical. It is interesting to ponder what he could have accomplished had he remained in science. Although this question will never be answered, he has left remnants of his work for contemporary scientists to examine.

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<sup>1</sup> Hussain, Syed Shabbir, *Al-Mashriqi: The Disowned Genius*, p. 44.

<sup>2</sup> Hussain, Syed Shabbir, *Al-Mashriqi: The Disowned Genius*, p. 43.

<sup>3</sup> Translated from Urdu. Mashriqi Allama, *Hadees-ul Quran*, p. 24.

<sup>4</sup> National Hijra Council, *The Muslims Luminaries*, p. 264.

<sup>5</sup> “S.A. Voronov, a distinguished doctor of Russian origin and the director of an experimental surgery laboratory at the Paris Physiology Station, began using baboons and Chimpanzees for transplantation of reproductive glands (testes) from simians to humans. In 1922, Voronov initiated the construction of an ape nursery in the south of France (near Mentona) which was completed by 1926. The main purpose of this primate center was to obtain testicular tissues from simians for transplantation in men for ‘rejuvenation’, but endocrinological and oncological experiments were also carried out.” (Source: Medical primatology: history, biological foundations and applications By Èman Petrovich Fridman, Ronald D. Nadler. Page 24)

<sup>6</sup> Mashriqi Allama, *Hadees-ul Quran*, p. 24.

<sup>7</sup> Mashriqi Allama, *Hadees-ul Quran*, p. 24.

<sup>8</sup> National Hijra Council, *The Muslims Luminaries*, p. 264.

<sup>9</sup> Hussain, Syed Shabbir, *Al-Mashriqi: The Disowned Genius*, p. 43.

<sup>10</sup> Hussain, Syed Shabbir, *Al-Mashriqi: The Disowned Genius*, p. 43-44.

<sup>11</sup> Hussain, Syed Shabbir, *Al-Mashriqi: The Disowned Genius*, p. 44.

<sup>12</sup> Mashriqi, Allama, *Hadees-ul-Quran*, p. 24 and *Al-Mashriqi: The Disowned Genius*, p. 44.

<sup>13</sup> Yousaf Nasim, *Pakistan’s Freedom & Allama Mashriqi*, p. 48.

<sup>14</sup> Yousaf, Nasim, *Pakistan’s Freedom & Allama Mashriqi*, p. 50; Note: Société de Géographie (<http://www.socgeo.org>) was founded in 1821.

<sup>15</sup> Yousaf, Nasim *Pakistan’s Freedom & Allama Mashriqi*, p. 50; Note: Société Asiatique was established by the well-known French orientalist in 1822.

<sup>16</sup> Hussain, Syed Shabbir, *Al-Mashriqi: The Disowned Genius*, p. 44.

<sup>17</sup> *Al-Islah* (Khaksar Tehrik weekly), December 08, 1939, Vol. 06, No. 49, p. 06; *Al-Islah*, February 15, 1946, Vol. 09, No. 06, p. 08; *Al-Islah*, February 08, 1946, Vol. 09, No. 06, p. 08.

<sup>18</sup> Hussain, Syed Shabbir, *Al-Mashriqi: The Disowned Genius*, p. 44-45.