Contemporary Issues

in

Islamic Law

Abdul Haseeb Ansari

CONTEMPORARY ISSUES
IN
ISLAMIC LAW

Abdul Haseeb Ansari

© Abdul Haseeb Ansari

Edition: 2011

ISBN: 978-81-8387-257-7

8

Jurists and Legislators in Islam: Origin and Classification of The *'Ulama'*

Sayyid Muhammad Yunus Gilani

'Alim('aleem), 'Alim(aalim) and 'Ulama'

'Ulama' is the plural of (*'alim* or *'aleem*) but in usage (*'alim* or *'aalim*) is the accepted singular. Both these singulars are Qur'anic terms that are an attribute of Allah (swt)[3] in specific and of man in general, as Allah (swt) has bestowed knowledge to him.[4] An *'alim* (*'aleem*) is one who posses *'ilm*, knowledge, learning or science in the widest sense and in a high degree (*mubalaghah*)[5] or (2) one who possesses the inseparable attribute of *'ilm*. *'Alim*, the active participle of *'ilm* acquired the meaning of a scholar, learned in religious matters and *'ilm* came to be applied to the learning in general at a much earlier date.[6] However, this singular (*'alim*) is used in the Qur'an for Allah (s.w.t) alone[7] and nowhere does the Holy Book use it for man. Its plural *'ulama'* occurs only twice in the Qur'an and there for human beings only.[8] The Qur'anic use of this term *'ulama'* is similar to that of the scientist in our contemporary times and applies to persons who think over various problems of the universe:

> *Seest thou not that Allah sends down rain from the sky? With it We then bring out produce of various colours. And in the mountains are tracts white and red of various shades of colour and black intense in hue.*
>
> *And so amongst men and crawling creatures and cattle are they of various colours. Those truly fear Allah among His Servants (who) are*