

Modernity's Influence on Islam: Analyzing Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi's Revivalism in 20th Century India

Pengaruh Modernitas terhadap Islam: Menganalisis Revivalisme Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi di India Abad ke-20

Ahsan Raza*

¹India Arab Cultural Centre Jamia Millia Islamia, Jamia Nagar, New Delhi-110025, India

*Correspondence Author: ahsraza@jmi.ac.in

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Abstract

The twentieth century witnessed intense debates among social science intellectuals grappling with dichotomies such as East versus West, culture versus nature, and religion versus atheism. Western dominance, driven by technological advancements, challenged Islam as a beacon of humanity, demanding a reformulation of its position in response to modern needs. In India, Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi, a prominent Islamic scholar and thinker, made significant contributions through his writings, lectures, and the Payame Insaniyat movement, which sought to counter Western ideologies. This study employs a methodology combining qualitative analysis, historical contextualization, and textual interpretation to understand Nadwi's approach. The article explores Nadwi's efforts to revive Islamic principles in response to Western modernity, highlighting his emphasis on spirituality and morality in Islam, contrasting with the materialism-focused Western perspective. The study shows that Nadwi successfully offered a model to uphold Islamic values in the face of sociopolitical changes. His efforts reflect the adaptability and relevance of Islam, providing insights for future interactions between Islam and modernity.

Keywords: *Islam, Modernity, Revivalism, Intellectuals, Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi,*

Abstrak

Abad kedua puluh menyaksikan perdebatan sengit di antara para intelektual ilmu sosial yang bergulat dengan dikotomi seperti Timur versus Barat, budaya versus alam, dan agama versus ateisme. Dominasi Barat, didorong oleh kemajuan teknologi, menantang Islam sebagai mercusuar kemanusiaan, menuntut reformulasi posisinya dalam menanggapi kebutuhan modern. Di India, Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi, seorang cendekiawan dan pemikir Islam terkemuka, memberikan kontribusi yang signifikan melalui tulisan-tulisannya, ceramah, dan gerakan Payame Insaniyat, yang berusaha melawan ideologi Barat. Penelitian ini menggunakan metodologi yang menggabungkan analisis kualitatif, kontekstualisasi historis, dan interpretasi tekstual untuk memahami pendekatan Nadwi. Artikel ini mengeksplorasi upaya Nadwi untuk menghidupkan kembali prinsip-prinsip Islam sebagai tanggapan terhadap modernitas Barat, menyoroti penekanannya pada spiritualitas dan moralitas dalam Islam, kontras dengan perspektif Barat yang berfokus pada materialisme. Studi tersebut menunjukkan bahwa Nadwi berhasil menawarkan model untuk menegakkan nilai-nilai Islam dalam menghadapi perubahan sosial politik. Upayanya mencerminkan kemampuan beradaptasi dan relevansi Islam, memberikan wawasan untuk interaksi masa depan antara Islam dan modernitas.

Kata kunci: *Islam, Modernitas, Revivalisme, Intelektual, Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi*

INTRODUCTION

Ali Miyan Nadwi is a celebrated intellectual of India and remained engaged throughout his life to the Islamic and Arab World. He focused on the Islamic revivalism in a unique way based on spirituality, morality and Islamic history. He made changes in the syllabus of Nadwatul Ulama with the aim of shaping the moral characteristics of the students and enhancing their linguistics capabilities. Through his works on biographies of prophets and messengers (Siirat) he tried to inculcate some confidence into the Muslims where he felt the decadence in the moral is the major cause for the failure. His master piece Islam and world engaged the intellectuals of the time to debate and discuss the issue a fresh. His works like Tarikh e Dawat o Azimat a multi volume book on Islamic history and its journey of revivalism where the author discussed the roles of reformers of Islam throughout the Islamic ages was considered to be a great service to the cause. His expectations from the Arabs were so high that he seemed to be proposing the leadership role to them and he kept reminding them not only their strategic importance in today's world order due to its geographical location in this commercially charged atmosphere but also their surging treasury due to the petro-dollar influx.

Previous studies have extensively explored Nadwi's impact on Islamic thought, his responses to modern challenges, his interpretation of Islamic history, his contributions to Sufi thought, his principles of Da'wah, his approach to Islamic education, his advocacy for Muslim unity, his literary works, and his comparative studies on religion. Siddiqi, Mazheruddin in (1996) through his article said or examines "Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi and His Contributions to Islamic Thought" analyzes Nadwi's impact on contemporary Islamic thought and his responses to modern challenges faced by the Muslim community. Akhtar (1999) examines Nadwi's interpretation of Islamic history and his emphasis on the spiritual and moral lessons derived from historical events. Eaton (2000) discusses Nadwi's contributions to Sufi thought and his emphasis on the spiritual dimensions of Islam. Ahmed (2009) explores Nadwi's principles and methods of Da'wah, analyzing their relevance and application in contemporary contexts. Hussain, (2009) in his article examines "Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi's Educational Philosophy: Bridging Tradition and Modernity" highlights Nadwi's approach to Islamic education, focusing on his efforts to integrate traditional Islamic knowledge with modern educational practices. Khan (2012) unearths Nadwi's advocacy for Muslim unity and his views on reform within the Muslim community. Rahman (2000) analyzes Nadwi's literary works, highlighting his style and contributions to Arabic and Urdu literature. Nasr (1998) examines Nadwi's comparative studies between Islam and other religions, focusing on his approach to interfaith dialogue and understanding. Esposito (1999) explores Nadwi's perspectives on secularism, modernity, and the role of Islam in contemporary political and social contexts.

Contemporary literature continues to examine Nadwi's role in the Islamic revivalist movement, his influence on modern Islamic movements, his vision for educational reforms, his political strategies for fostering Muslim unity, and his approaches to spiritual and intellectual renewal. Ahmed (2021) discusses Nadwi's role in the Islamic revivalist movement, highlighting his strategies for addressing contemporary challenges facing the Muslim world. Siddiqui (2020) explores Nadwi's contributions to the revival of Islamic thought and practice, emphasizing his influence on modern Islamic movements. Khan's article (2019) discusses Nadwi's vision Modernity's Influence on Islam: Analyzing Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi's Revivalism in 20th Century India for educational reforms within the context of Islamic revivalism, focusing on his efforts to integrate traditional and modern educational approaches. Faruqi (2018) examines Nadwi's involvement in political aspects of the Islamic revivalist movement, analyzing his strategies for fostering Muslim unity and addressing socio-political issues. Rahman (2017) provides an in-depth analysis of Nadwi's revivalist thought, exploring his approaches to spiritual and intellectual renewal within the Muslim community. Akhtar (2016) focuses on Nadwi's contributions to Islamic education within the broader framework of his revivalist agenda, highlighting his influence on contemporary Islamic pedagogy. These works reflect ongoing

scholarly interest in Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi's contributions to Islamic revivalism, offering various perspectives on his legacy and impact on modern Islamic thought and movements.

Despite these extensive studies, there remain several unexplored areas concerning Nadwi's contributions. These include his role and influence within global Islamic movements such as the Tablighi Jamaat and Jamaat-e-Islami, his personal correspondence and unpublished works, and the socio-political impact of his revivalist thought. Additionally, more research is needed to analyze Nadwi's efforts for educational reform, his understanding of Islamic history, his critique of Western civilization, and his emphasis on spirituality against modern materialism.

The purpose of this study is to highlight Nadwi's initiatives towards educational reforms, particularly his development of syllabi for Islamic universities, and to underline his works aimed at instilling confidence in Muslim youths against the challenges posed by modern Western civilization. Set within the broader context of Islamic revivalism in the 20th and 21st centuries, this article focuses on Nadwi's educational reforms, his ideological perspective on Islam, and his criticisms of Western civilization. The primary unit of analysis is the texts authored by Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi that have been influential in propagating his ideas in the face of modernity and Western materialism. Secondary units of analysis include his life journey and his quest for spirituality.

The study aims to demonstrate that Nadwi was an intellectual who championed the cause of Islam throughout his life. His books, travelogues, lectures, articles, seminar and conference papers, Da'wah activities, and the Payame Insaniyat movement all bear witness to his efforts to counter Western ideology in the Arab and Muslim worlds. His work came at a critical time when the Islamic world was grappling with the technological and cultural supremacy of the West, which challenged the pride of Islam as the champion of humanity. The resulting debates on cultural differences, religious manifestations, and philosophical undercurrents created a chaotic condition in Muslim societies. This study unveils Nadwi's contributions and his ideological understanding of Islamic philosophy, shedding light on his role in defending and revitalizing Islamic thought during a period of significant upheaval.

METHOD

The research is structured into three segments: a brief biography of Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi's, a conceptual understanding of modernity and Islam, and an analysis of Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi's engagement with these themes through his writings. The methodology for this research involves a combination of qualitative analysis, historical contextualization, and textual interpretation. The research employs qualitative methods to analyze Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi's thoughts, writings, and activities. This involves a detailed examination of his books, travelogues, lectures, articles, seminar and conference papers, and Da'wah activities. The qualitative analysis will help to understand the underlying themes and motivations in Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi's work, as well as his strategies for addressing Western modernity and its impact on the Arab and Islamic world. The research delves into the historical backdrop of the twentieth century, marked by the dichotomy of East vs. West, culture vs. nature, religion vs. atheism, orient vs. occident, and colonial vs. colonized. This contextual analysis provides a framework to understand the challenges faced by the Muslim world during this period and the responses articulated by Ali Miyan. A significant part of the methodology involves the textual interpretation of Ali Miyan's works. The research closely studies and analyzes key texts written by Ali Miyan to extract his views on modernity, Islam, and the cultural and religious conflicts of his time. The source for this research has been divided into two parts. The primary sources for this research include: Books and writings by Ali Miyan, including travelogues and Da'wah literature. Recorded lectures and seminar/conference papers presented by Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi's, Archival materials related to the Payame Insaniyat movement and other initiatives led by Ali Miyan. Secondary sources include Scholarly articles and books that discuss Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi's work and influence, Historical texts that provide context on the socio-political climate of the twentieth century and analyzes of the East-West discourse and the impact of Western

modernity on the Muslim world. The research utilizes interdisciplinary approaches to examine how Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi's work intersects with broader debates on modernity and Islam.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Life and Education

Maulana Abul Hasan Ali Known as Ali Miyan was born on sixth Moharram 1332 (H) as in 5th December 1913 C.E in the village of Takiya Klan (B. Nadwi, 2001) or Daierah Shah Ilmullah of District Raibareli from Uttar Pradesh, India (A. Nadwi, 2000). He was named after the fourth Caliph Abul Hasan Ali and later nicknamed as Ali Miyan.

Although the Tasmiyah Khani (beginning of education) was done in native place by his uncle Maualna Azizur Rhaman at the age of four, but formally he started his early education in a maktab in Lucknow where his father was employed and living with his family. Imam of the mosque (Hafiz Muhammad Saeed) under which the Maktab (Madrassa for Primary Education) was running became his first teacher. After learning basic lessons of Urdu and Arabic, at the age of seven he completed Qur'an Majeed. Proceeding ahead Maulana Azizur Raham was given the charge to teach him Urdu and other religious learning while Maulana Mahmood Ali was appointed to educate him the Persian language and literature and other subjects (B. Nadwi, 2001).

After his father's death who died when he was just nine years old in 1923, the responsibility for further education fell on his elder brother Dr. Abdul Ali. He fulfilled the duty sincerely and passionately by appointing Shaikh Khalil Arab a well-known Arabic scholar from the Yemenite origin to teach him Arabic language and literature while he himself- with being a graduate from medical college- took the responsibility of teaching him English (A. Nadwi, 2000). With this direct touch to the originality of the Arabic language and with harnessing efforts of his uncle's especially Maulana Sayyid Talha, and Maulana Sayyid Azizur Rahman, Ali Miyan achieved a thorough understanding of Arabic language at the age of 13 only. His mastery over Arabic language was demonstrated in November 1926 in the annual convention of *Modernity's Influence on Islam: Analyzing Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi's Revivalism in 20th Century India*

Nadwat ul Ulama (a Leading Seminary in North India) where he played the role of a translator and guide to an Arab, Shaykh Sa'duddin Burrada. This attracted the attention of dignitaries of the program like, Dr. Zakir Hussain, Maulana Abu Abdullah Muhammad Surati, Hakeem Ajmal Khan, Maulana Muhammad Ali Johar, Maulana Zafar Ali Khan, Maulana Shah Sulaiman Phulwarvi, Qazi Sulaiman Mansoorpuri who all praised him (B. Nadwi, 2001).

He learnt Urdu since his childhood from his uncle Maulana Aziz ur Rahman but his stay in Raebareli provided him with the opportunity to enhance his Urdu through utilizing the both religious and literary materials available there. His uncle Syed Talha played a crucial role in that because he not only helped him to explain the difficult passages but also guided him in the selection of literary works. Thus, at the time of taking admission in Lucknow University he was well equipped with the knowledge of Urdu as a language and literature (B. Nadwi, 2001).

Then Ali Myan was admitted to Lucknow University's Department of oriental studies from where he passed Fazil-e-Adab and was declared Gold Medalist in his next attempt after failing in his first session. In 1929 he was officially admitted to Nadwat ul Ulama where he studied Jurisprudence (Fiqh), Hadith and Arabic Literature from the experts of the subjects. Maulana Shibly Jairajpuri taught him fiqh, Maulana Haider Hasan Khan guided him in Hadith learning while Shaykh Taqiuddin Hilali became his mentor in the field of Arabic language and literature as well as he taught him some lessons of Tafsir. (B. Nadwi. 2001).

Figure 1. Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi's



Sumber: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abul_Hasan_Ali_Hasani_Nadwi

Journey to Darul Uloom Deoband and Lahore

In 1930 Ali Miyan with his cousin Syed Ahmad al Hasni went to Lahore to Maulana Ahmad Ali. In his first journey he studied from him *Tafsir of Surat al Baqra* while in his second voyage to Lahore he studied *Hujjatullahe al Baligha* a marvelous book on principles of *Hadith* and *Tafsir*. After completing the course, he requested his teacher Maulana Ahmad for *bai'at* and guidance in the matter of spirituality. Maulana Ahmad sent Ali Miyan to his own teacher and guide Shaikh Hazrat Khalifa Ghulam Muhammad Bahawalpuri with his recommendation letter to Dinpur of District Khanpur (Nadwi. Abul Hasan, 2000: 128). This request was accepted by Shaikh Khalifa and Ali Miyan succeeded in doing *bai'at* from him in the year 1931.

In 1932 in search of knowledge, both religious and spiritual he travelled to Deoband where he stayed in Darul Uloom at Deoband and studied both *Hadith* and *Tafsir* from Maulana Husain Ahmad Madani. Though this outing lasted only for four months starting from August 1932 but provided him with the opportunity to learn a lot and meet the exemplary scholars of religion of the time such as Anwar Shah Kashmiri and Maulana Sajjad etc. Though he was not a formal student of Darul Uloom Deoband still he got the permission to sit in some of the classes of *Hadith*, *Tafsir* and *Fiqh* with the recommendation from Maulana Husain Ahmad Madani (Nadwi. Abul Hasan, 2000:130-132).

His voyage of learning did not stop here, he travelled to Lahore again in 1932 just after returning from Deoband to attend the special Ulama classes of Maulana Ahmad Ali which he used to organize in madras Qasimul Uloom in the month of Ramadan till Zul Qaeda for madrasa passed out for *Tafsir* learning. Here Ali Miyan passed with distinction and stood first in his class and received the degree signed by Maulana Ahmad Ali, Maulana Shabbir Uthmani, Maulana Anwar Shah Kashmiri and Maulana Madani (Nadwi. Abul Hasan, 2000: 133). He travelled again in 1934 to Lahore where he stayed under the supervision of Maulana Ahmad Madani for three months practicing both spirituality and knowledge learning process. In August 1934, upon returning from Lahore he was selected in Nadwa tul Ulama as a teacher (Nadwi. Abul Hasan, 2000: 134).

Tasawwuf:

His spiritual journey started with the closeness to Maulana Husain Ahmad Madani. This opportunity was also provided by his elder brother Dr. Abdul Ali as he was the first to do a *bai'at* from him after returning from Haj pilgrimage. Maulana Madani used to stay with them at their home during his stay in Lucknow where he would come frequently during his political endeavor in the 20s and 30s of last century. Maulana Madani influenced him spiritually and for the first time Ali Miyan tested the pleasure of spirituality and got attracted towards him as well as to spirituality.

He notes in his book *karwane Zindagi* (Translation)

Though I have seen him (Maulana Madni) in 1928 in Lucknow in all Parties Conference but during this stay -which used to occur frequently now, and moreover these were not short stays- as sometimes it would prolong for days- I got the chance to see him closely and was provided with an opportunity to serve him..... he was the first spiritual and religious personality with whom I was introduced and got influenced for the first time in my life. And with God's grace it increased in latter days..... after some time when my fortune brought him to accompany him during study with him, this test of Spirituality flourished further." (Nadwi. Abul Hasan, 2000:124-125)

Modernity and Islam

Modernity is an idea to explain the changes taking place in people's life set in motion by futuristic ideation relying on their *muscles* to build their life rather than relying on metaphysical belief system or external forces (Giddens, 1998; Jahanbegloo, 2004; Mirsepassi, 2000; Moussalli 1999; Asad, 2003).

In order to put into perspective, the idea of modernity, let us look at some of the main arguments in this regard. For Anthony Giddens (1998) modernity "refers to a shorthand term for modern society, or industrial civilization." It is "associated with the idea of, that world is open to transformation by human intervention". Modernity also refers to a "complex of economic institutions, especially industrial production and a market economy" coupled with certain political institutions such as "nation-state and mass democracy". "Largely as a result of these characteristics, modernity is vastly more dynamic than any previous type of social order. It is a society - more technically, a complex of institutions - which, unlike any preceding culture, lives in the future, rather than the past" (Giddens, 1998).

Modernity can also be looked at as a character of a given society's values and practices. This can be seen in the economic, political and social segments. Industrial production against agricultural production, mechanization of production, urbanization and the resultant migration from villages to cities, monopoly capitalism and free market economy are some of the main characteristics of a modern society in economic terms. In political sector, the society characterized by modernity will see a shift from centralized power to that of decentralization, more democratic participation in decision making a strong bureaucratic structure, and expansion of welfare policies due to public pressure. The modern society will also have a different value system (Giddens, 1998).

Theologically Islam is a religion of monotheism which came into being in 6th century A. D in the Arabian Peninsula. Islam enjoins faith in the oneness and sovereignty of Allah. As Muhammad(PBUH) was chosen by God as a last messenger to whom a holy book (Quran) was revealed. The complete acceptance of the teachings and guidance of God 'Allah' as revealed to His Messenger Muhammad is the religion of Islam. The Quran is the last revealed word of Allah and the basic source of Islamic teachings and laws. The Quran deals with the basis of creeds, morality, and history of humanity, worship, knowledge, wisdom, God-man relationship, and human relationship in all aspects. The next to Quran is Hadith which is being used as a basic source. Hadith is the teachings, sayings and actions of Prophet Mohammed (PBUT), meticulously reported and collected by his devoted companions which explained and elaborated the Quranic verses. The fundamental articles of Islamic faith can be summarized in six points. First is to believe in one God, Allah, as the supreme, almighty, eternal and infinite. Second, to believe in the Angels of Allah who are purely spiritual, who spend their whole existence in submission and worship of God. Third to believe in all the scriptures and revelations of God, they are the guiding light which the messengers received from God to show the human being the right path of the God. Fourth to believe in all the messengers of God as Muhammad is the last of them all. Fifth to believe in the last Day of Judgment- the day, this world will come

to an end and the dead will rise to stand for their final and fair trial. And sixth is to believe in the timeless knowledge of God and His power to plan and execute His plans and nothing could happen in His Kingdom against His will. His knowledge and power are in action at all times and command over His creation (Saeed 2006). As the faith is most precious think and without practice and action it is a dead end. Here these are five which were called five pillars of Islam. The declaration of faith: To bear witness that there is none worthy of worship except Allah, and that Mohammad (PBUH) is His Messenger to all human beings till the Day of Judgment. Prayers: Daily, prayers are offered five times a day as a duty towards Allah. Fasting in the month of Ramadan is compulsory for the adults. Zakkah: The literal and simple meaning of Zakkah is purity. The technical meaning of this word designates the annual amount which a Muslim must distribute among the rightful beneficiaries. Hajj (Pilgrimage to Makkah): It is to be performed once in a lifetime, if one can afford it financially and physically (Saeed, 2006).

In the above discussion the root of Islam and its basic fundamentals have been laid bare. However, over fifteen centuries it has been evolving and the text has been interpreted in different ways. This has invariably led to playing an important role in molding the cultural basis of Muslim societies. Though it is not basically a political one its tenets have been appropriated, reinterpreted in different times to suit the existing systems. The body of literature thus evolved has been called Sharia (Saeed, 2006).

However, the first casualty of modernity's onslaught was religion as it questioned religious beliefs, the world view based on it and revelation itself was termed as an absurd idea. Religious convictions and the adoption of a life based on it was called traditional and in sharp contrast to the ideas of modernity (Asad, 2003).

Exploring various elements of this epochal phenomenon and how it changed the life and its aims compel us to understand modernity's empirical manifestations, philosophical aspects, lived experience of social and individual life are important in this connection.

Modernity "as an idea, it represents a radical rupture with the past. It privileges progress, science, optimism, and universality. It critiques superstitions, blind faiths, and pessimism. It encourages us to adopt alternative ways of looking at the world, and its possibilities. Modernity is irretrievably linked to the idea of progress and science. With modernity, progress is inevitable. Human advancement will continue unabated. Hunger, ignorance, and superstition, which were the pervasive and dominant realities in the past, will slowly but surely disappear. Such is the unbounded optimism that the idea of modernity generated (Adam 1933:241-242).

Modernity was celebrated and eulogized as an emancipatory force capable of delivering humanity from bondage whether it is social, political or economic. The negative impacts of modernity were largely ignored here. Numerous wars, Holocaust, subjugation of less powerful and increased mechanization of human life and the resultant loss of faith in spiritual and humanistic elements of life were ignored. When it was applied to the Arab and Islamic world it not only faced resistance but also the ideology was challenged by many scholars and intellectuals of the time from that part of the world.

One such scholar was Ali Miyan Nadwi, having sensible heart and logical mind equipped with a quality education he sensed the negative impact of modernity on the society of Islam. He noticed the socio-political upheaval which permeated in the world of Islam due to the implementation of modernity. The advocacy of modernity, in terms of restricting the role of religion and propagation of materialism in the name of scientific and technological advancement attracted his attention the most (Nadwi. Bilal,2001).

Ali Miyan's Engagement to the subject

In this backdrop, the thought of Maulana Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi has its prominence and his unique way to respond to western modernity. Since, he has taken into account the spirit of Islam and its tradition to reignite the morals of Islamic world. Ali Miyan finds the western world

exporting their ideologies in a well attracted and shining package of modernity to the Islamic World not only problematic, but also he was surprised to see the Islamic world toeing the lines forgetting all those rich traditions they possessed. Having the profound knowledge of both Arabic and Urdu he makes both India and Arab world his field of intellectual exercise. Making Islam his main source of inspiration he indulges into explaining it for new generations powerfully. After finding Arab world at its worst decaying condition despite being at the center of Islamic civilization, he targets it vehemently. He criticizes the western world and its philosophy as being the source of chaotic condition in the Arab Islamic World but more aggressively he laments the Arab and Islamic world for being so naive to imitate the ideologies of west leaving Quran and Sunnah aside.

Finding the Malaise

He draws the fault line in the western philosophy by highlighting its dependence on material and pushing the spiritual and moral far behind in the cause of human development. He opines

The new ideal of material advancement has completely gripped the modern mind. In the present age of material progress, there is a great lack of love for learning, nor is love of religion much in evidence. The instinct of hunger has completely dominated human existence. Everywhere people now talk of problems concerning the flesh. Conversations on the problems relating to the spiritual or moral aspects of life are rarely heard in society (Nadwi, Abul Hasan 2005: 160)."

The moral and spiritual occupies the central stage in his thoughts. He believes that the western civilization has been developed on the debris of Greek and Roman civilizations (Nadwi, Abul Hasan 2005:102). "Whereas the Greek civilization was purely materialistic", (Nadwi, Abul Hasan 2005:103) and "the roman religion had never been a source of moral enthusiasm", it was in truth nothing more than a social traditional and utilitarian formula and was purely selfish". It was simply a method of obtaining prosperity, averting calamity and reading the future" (Nadwi, Abul Hasan 2005: 106). Thus the development of a philosophical understanding or more accurately a science of modern west on the base of these two (Roman and Greek) philosophies is destined to be lacking the spirituality and moral characteristics. And its subsequent result is a spiritual vacuum in the human life; ironically this vacuum has been filled by materialism (Nadwi, Abul Hasan 2005: 121) so he believes that "Materialism has so ceaselessly absorbed the attention and the will of Western people that even their spiritual activities are tinged with it." (Nadwi, Abul Hasan 2005:128).

On the other hand, Orientals had maintained a fascinating attachment to the spirituality and mysticism. They not only tended towards spirituality for the secret of eternal happiness but also it had an unqualified priority in their activities of life and their intellectual and cultural endeavors. Therefore a man from East is very much immersed into spirituality and "His asceticism, his philosophy, his metaphysics, his mysticism were all directed towards it" (Nadwi, Abul Hasan 2005: 154). this characteristic was maintained by Islam since its emergence. It focused on both material as well as spiritual which shaped its moral. "In the system of Islamic civilization there was unremitting care for spiritual as well as material prosperity. Economic development was matched with moral advancement; political expansion corresponded with spiritual development" (Nadwi, Abul Hasan 2005: 175).

The meeting of west to the Islamic world shook the sensibilities of Islam and forced Muslims to undergo changes. This process started in the previous century itself but here, in the twentieth century Ali Miyan found modern Muslims no different from the western people in their attitude towards materialism and immorality. In terms of individual he has lost faith in himself and his mental attitude is being shaped by the undercurrents of paganism. Muslim states followed the same materialistic approaches which had been the ideals of western social

and political system. In fact, in Nadwi's view they are not only imitating the west in the glorification of material wealth but the Muslims are outdoing them. He says :

The same enslavement to earthly longings is fast becoming the creed of the community, the cornerstone of whose religious faith is the idea that the real life is the life to come. These nations' love for the After-life is declining day by day. They are subordinating ethical principles to material expediency with astonishingly cheerful readiness. In some respects, Muslims are actually outdoing some Western nations in the glorification of material wealth (Nadwi, Abul Hasan 2005:190).

Ironically, the onslaught of modernity disturbed the base of Islamic characteristic which was innate to eastern people. He highlights that the modern ideologies like imperialism, capitalism and communism of west is being exported to the world over and in turn the whole world is being characterized by them. As a result, religious decadence, moral degeneration and spiritual malaise are occurring into the human society. More over the materialism which he believes is the logical consequence of the prevailing condition in Europe is the cause of concern for the people of Islam too because its popularity into the Islamic society brings it closer to the paganism by swaying them from their faiths.

M. Abu Rabi summarized aptly Ali Miyan's thoughts in these words.

Nadwi is, however, troubled by the philosophical spirit underlying the Western world. This world in his view is characterized by imperialism, capitalism, and communism—all of which are exported to the Third World. Looking deeper at the West, he postulates, one may notice the following: (1) religion has been pushed to the periphery. As a result, moral degeneration and spiritual malaise have been rampant; (2) aggressive nationalism is the norm, and has proven to be destructive to the Muslim *ummah*; and (3) religious ethics and secular power have been separated. Atheistic materialism, according to Nadwi, is the logical consequence of the conditions prevalent in Europe. Exported to the Third World, materialism has had the pernicious effect of swaying Muslims from their faith, even to the point where one notices in modern Muslim societies a perplexing alliance between Muslims and Paganism (Abu Rabi 1996: 120).

Efforts of Revivalism

Ali Miyan's struggle for reform revolves around the revival of spirituality and moral characteristics of Islam. He tries to boost morals of Muslim society by revisiting the Islamic history. This Islamic history is the only source which can play a required role to reignite the Muslim mind. He indulges in bringing into light the greats and geniuses of the Islamic world whom Islam has produced throughout its history including the era of prophet (PBUH) and four rightly guided caliphs. This revisiting of the Islamic history was done to inculcate confidence into the new Islamic generations to combat the perpetuating onslaught by the non-Islamic world. This has been noted by Prof. Mushirul Hasan in the obituary of Ali Miyan.

The fundamental malaise of modern Islam, remarked Wilfred Cantwell Smith with great insight, is a sense that something has gone wrong with Islamic history. The fundamental problem of modern Muslims is how to rehabilitate that history. This feeling, as reflected in his book, *Islam and the World*, dominated the religious and political thought of Ali Miyan (Hasan, 2000).

He believed this situation is not new to the Islam. In fact, Islam faced many such conditions in the history as well and fought it bravely and successfully. He demonstrated to the young generations their legacy's richness which is capable enough to lead them in any kind of darkness. In fact, he was of the view that Islam being true and universal religion from the creator of this universe is not meant to the Muslims only but to the whole mankind and the

responsibility falls on the Muslims to sail humanity to shores of safety. His fondness to spirituality and Sufism shapes his world view as well to which he remained attached since his adulthood to his last breath as an obedient disciple (Nadwi, Abul Hasan 2010:). And this same thing he suggests to the young generations “to fight with this new condition you will have to be prepared not only mentally and educationally but also morally and spiritually (Nadwi, Abul Hasan 2010: 147).”

Thus his reforming movement starts with the beginning of his active career since the time he was appointed in Nadwa as a teacher. Having got his elder brother, his mentor Dr. Abdul Ali as rector in the Nadwa tul Ulama in the 1940s he made changes in the syllabus at first hand with the target not only to match the need of the hours but also to inculcate the high morale value among the students. This has been noted down by M Nafeel M Zawahir in his doctoral thesis

The first nation's procedure is a mental human one that is a subject of fault, dissimilarity, variation and neglecting the spiritual, ethical and doctrinal sides. The second one's procedure is Godly, no fault or variety but stability, fitness and conformity completely with human nature through regarding all the human sides including the spiritual, ethical and doctrinal sides. This resulted in an interpretation of the sources of knowledge and its procedures, methods, ways, purposes and aims that produced a number of contradictions as well as psychological, mental and behavioral conflicts in the Muslim mind which resulted in him losing himself and leaving his role in calling to Allah, popularity and reformation of earth and message influence in nonbelieving people. He questions further, how this is achievable while he is not able to reform himself and he saw that a poor education was the reason for this. Someone without something cannot supply it. It is clear there must be an awakening or an attempt for an educational reformation. Nadwi was one of those most outstanding reformers.” (Zawahir 2008:7)

Having the need of the students of Nadwa into mind he produced his most praiseworthy works titled *Qisas al Nabiin* and *Al Qiraatur Rashidah*. Through these works he tried to shape the morals of children in common and the students of Nadwa in especial to the Islamic framework. These books not only fulfilled the need of Nadwa but also it was included into colleges of Arab Countries (Zawahir 2008: 166-168). In fact this effort of Nadwi filled a huge gap in the Arabic literature which was due in the twentieth century to inculcate the high morals among the new generations through the stories of messengers and prophets.

In 1942 he edited a marvelous literary bosok in two volumes titled *Mukhatarat* keeping the literary necessity of Nadwa in mind where they needed a book which could enrich both literature and morality of the students. The book became a huge success and it was included in the syllabus of various Arab colleges in later years as well (Nadwi, Bilal 2001: 165).

The influence of western ideas and cultures, the impact of modernity on Islam and Arab World, the prevailing confusion in the Islamic Society compelled him to address those issues head on. Keeping this challenging task into mind, he wrote first *Al Madda wal Jazra*, then he succeeded in producing his most cherished and well deserving book *Maza khasir al Alam be Inhetatil Muslimeen* in 1949 (Nadwi, Bilal 2001: 182-188).

This book underlines his political and religious thoughts and demonstrates his views properly. In this book he not only analyzed the major world religions and civilizations in comparison to Islam and Islamic civilization but also he surveyed the theoretical understanding of modernity and advocated boldly its capability to serve the cause of humanity at this critical juncture. About which Syed Qutb very aptly pointed out.

Of all the books, both ancient and modern, I have read on an understanding of Islam, this book, by Sayyed Abul Hasan 'Ali Nadwi, deserves particular attention. The teaching of Islam is essentially a teaching of leadership and world welfare. One of its most important characteristics is that it teaches its follower how 'to acquire self-confidence without conceit or egotism; it breathes into him the fervor of faith and conviction, free of self-deception and, by weaning him from all dependence on others, instills in him complete trust in God with a faith that never falters nor weakens. This faith requires the Muslim to shoulder the responsibility of humanity at large and enjoins on him the trusteeship of the entire human race (Nadwi, Abul Hasan 2005: 1).

Through this marvelous piece of writing on Islamic history, he tried to inculcate confidence into the Muslims in general and to boost the Arab imagination in particular. His efforts to meet the methodologies and scientific standards advocated by western scholars attracted the Orientalists too. He not only advocated the role of Islam and its leadership to the safety of humanity but also he criticized vehemently the modern global world based on western philosophy where he discussed, how the modern ideologies such as nationalism, secularism, capitalism, materialism hijacked the Muslim minds too, Which, in return not only alienated them from morality, tradition, spirituality and other core ethics of Islam but also created shrinks into their faith as well.

Rehabilitation of Islamic History

After noticing the pathetic condition of Muslims he makes Arab world his point of focus by reminding them their position in the history before Islam. He draws the peculiar picture of Arab before Islam and how Islam transformed them from nowhere to the world stage and created one of the richest civilizations of the world and produced the most cherished leaders the world has witnessed. So Ali Miyan very perfectly reminds them the historical fact in these words.

He (The Prophet) had made into men what until then were mere herds of dumb-driven cattle. He had aroused their innate possibilities; he had released the fountains of their real life and elevated them to be the standard-bearers of light, learning, Faith and culture in the world. Within a short span of time the desert of Arabia threw up mighty personalities whose names illuminate the pages of history to this day (Nadwi, Abul Hasan 2005: 59).

He felt the need to revisit that particular land and particular character which brought such a miraculous change into the people of Arabs to invoke the required relevance for today's time. The writer saw the alienation of Arabs from the Prophet as an Arab, so attempted to remind them his true stature and his impact into their life (Nadwi, Bilal 2001: 297). He reminds the Arabs how they surrendered themselves completely to the cause of Islam and in return it made them champions of the world.

The unruly Arabs, who were so lawless in their ways, surrendered themselves so absolutely to the guidance of the Faith that it was impossible for them to infringe the Divine Law. They accepted the Sovereignty of God in its fullest sense. In peace and in war, in joy and in sorrow, in every relationship of life, at each turn of affairs and in the minutest details of their concerns they looked to His guidance and help and carried out His commands without the slightest demur (Nadwi, Bilal 2001: 49).

To boost the confidence of Muslims he first wrote *Al Sirah al Nabawiyyah* the biography of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) which was published in 1975 which was translated by Muhammad al Hasni by the name of *Nabi e Rahmat* (Nadwi, Bilal 2001: 346-347). Then he wrote his land mark book *Tarikhe e Da'wat o Azimat* a historical book on the intellectuals, reformers, revivalists and Sufis and spiritual leaders of Islam starting from first

century *Hijra* till 15th century *Hijra* with utmost sincerity and toil. The five volumes of the book were published in 50s, 60s and 80s of the last century. The books were written to highlight the leader's and reformer's role to the service of Islam in special and to the service of humanity in general to bring the idea home for the young generations of Muslims all over the world who were standing at crossroads of modernity and tradition, that Islamic core has a lot to offer at this juncture too. Ali Miyan tried to give them a guide book to save them from inferiority complex (Nadwi, Bilal 2001: 260-263). The book "*Al Tariq ila al Madina*," (1965) addresses the same concern where he highlights the western influence in the Arabian countries as well as the increasing influence of Arab nationalism.

Here once again he proposes same role for the Arabs because he envisions the human world needs them badly at this stage to rescue it from the decline. As history bears witness of what the roles Arabs had played into the service of humanity. According to his views "the Arabs are instinctively more alive to the equality and dignity of human race than any nation of the world which they have proved time and again" (Nadwi, Abul Hasan 1967: 18). And today, the crying humanity needs their leadership more than ever for which they are destined (Nadwi, Abul Hasan 1967: 26). Their strategic positioning, the responsibility of Islamic faith and the degradation of humanity all assign them the duty of leadership of the world at this juncture of the history. he notes

Because of its characteristics, its situation, and its political importance the Arab world has the right and the necessary competence to shoulder the responsibilities of the mission of Islam. It can easily take up the leadership of the entire Muslim world, strengthen itself to look Europe in the face and, by the grace of God and the strength of its faith, acquire supremacy and lead the world once again from darkness into light, from wretchedness to grace, from destruction and ruin to peace and prosperity (Nadwi Abul Hasan 2005: 205).

CONCLUSION

Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi an erudite scholar of 20th century India, having profound knowledge of Islam tried to counter the narratives of modernity. His love for spirituality, his approach to Islamic history, his rationale understanding of Quran and Hadith makes him unique among his contemporaries. Through his writings he underlines flaws in the western philosophies who believed that these philosophies have been nurtured on the debris of Roman and Greek philosophy. He outlines that the Greek philosophy is purely based on materialism and Roman religion lacks the moral enthusiasm. These two makes a dent in the conditions of humanity in terms of pushing them away from spirituality. On contrary eastern society particularly the Islamic one is concerned about their spiritual condition which in turn shapes its moral characteristics. The morale, spiritual and less focus on material is the hall mark of Nadwi's thought. To inculcate the humanistic approach in the value systems of Muslims he revisits Islamic history where he finds a lot to offer to the Islamic world. His works on biographies of prophets and messengers first, then Islamic revivalists and reformers highlight his views of revivalism. His efforts to revise the syllabus of Nadwat ul ulama is also linked to his mission. Being birth place of Islam he puts focus on the Arab world and reminds them their history as well as their contributions as a savior of Islam and humanity. He believes that the Arab Muslims still deserves the leadership role for not only Ummah but for all human kinds, because their glorious past bears witness to their exemplary deeds. In the broader context, Nadwi's efforts reflect a critical phase in the evolution of Islamic thought, where traditional religious frameworks are actively negotiating their place in a modern context. His revivalism serves as a testament to the adaptability and resilience of Islamic traditions in the face of changing socio-political landscapes, providing a model for future engagements between Islam and modernity.

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