

## ***Review Article***

### **Sayyid Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi's contribution to history writing: An analytical study**

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**Abstract:** Sayyid Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi was a prolific writer and a great scholar of Islam during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. He taught at Nadwatul Ulama, Lucknow and wrote a number of prominent history works along with other themes of Islam. However, his main concern was history of Islam and Muslims and *da'wah*. He authored around 50 books, which are thought provoking and covered almost all aspects of Islamic sciences and Muslim history and culture. He also stood for social reform and religious revival of Muslims throughout the world. He was a defender of Islamic faith and promoter of Islamic identity through his works. His works have a depth of knowledge and good intellectual content which needs to be analyzed. This paper analyses his major works, *Insani Dunya Par Musalmanu Ke Uruj wa Zawal Ka Athar* and *Tarikh-i Dawat wa Azeemat*.

**Keywords:** Islam, Jahilliyah, Islam & the world, saviours of Islamic spirit.

#### **Introduction**

Sayyid Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi (1914-1999) was one of the most important theorists of the revivalist movement. He was a great scholar of Islam during the 20<sup>th</sup> century who taught at Nadwatul Ulama, Lucknow and wrote a number of prominent history works along with other themes of Islam. Sayyid Nadwi primarily wrote in Arabic as well as in Urdu, and authored around 50 books, which are wide extended, focused, thought provoking and covered almost all aspects of Islamic sciences and Muslim history and culture. He also contributed hundreds of seminar papers, articles, and recorded speeches. He popularized the concept of "modern Jahiliyyah." His main concern, however, was the history of Islam and Muslims and the propagation of pure faith. He is the recipient of

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1980 King Faisal Award and 1999 “Islamic Personality of Year” award from United Arab Emirate.

Sayyid Nadwi had a particular style of writing history (Nadwi, 2006: 33). Essentially a religious scholar, he wrote extensively to bring home the achievements of Islam throughout its history by highlighting the role of eminent personalities and by describing their accomplishment in the field of Islamic revival and reform. Sayyid Nadwi comments that:

From the very inception of its career on this planet, Islam has been singled out for such fatal attacks as no other religion would have been able to withstand. There have been religions, which have once conquered the then known world but they could not survive under an offensive much less serious than that Islam had to face. Unlike, others, Islam not only overcame all its adversaries but was also successful in maintaining its original purity and purity (Nadwi, 1981: I, 3).

In every age, Islam produced pious men, who attacked innovations in religion and restored the true spirit of the faith; reaffirmed the Sunnah of the Prophet (SAW) against the heretical rites, customs and foreign influences; and propounded the teachings of Islam to contradict the speculative thoughts and materialistic precepts. They condemned opulence, luxury and indolence of the rich and enunciated the teachings of Islam as the sole valid source or religious, moral and political advancement. These scholars possessed the priceless gift of intellectual, moral and religious capabilities and were beacons of light for their contemporaries. They exposed the manifestations of ignorance and brought to light the correct and unalloyed teachings of Islam before the people (Nadwi, 1981: I, 3-4).

According to Sayyid Nadwi, this tradition to preserve and revive the pristine teachings of the faith and the effort to infuse people with revolutionary spirit to re-assert the divine message are as old as Islam itself. He writes:

History bears a testimony to the fact that there has never been a spell, however brief, during the past one and a half thousand years, when the message of Islam was eclipsed or its teaching were engulfed by heresy ... or it was attacked by materialism, someone invariably came forward to accept the challenge and fight it out to be grief of Islam’s adversary . . .

finally, however, it was Islam which gained ascendancy over these contending forces (Nadwi, 1981: I, 11).

Sayyid Nadwi had a unique style of writing history, which bear distinct historical roots and reflect an in-depth study of the subject of Islamic history. He derived an inherent satisfaction in heaping himself with the debris of history. He delved into it and digs with the spirit of a research scholar, until convincing proof was forthcoming to clear the haze on views taken for granted and to report on events of history hitherto ignored by the historians at large. As he writes:

A vast treasure of information on the social, political and historical events of the bygone days is in fact to be found in the religious works, which can serve as a valuable source of history. These are the writings of the religious savants and scholars wherein they have laid bare their inner most feelings, given numerous accounts of the incidents they or their contemporaries had come across, quoted their teachers and mentors and recorded proceedings of the propounded and heartfelt reunions of their masters and fellows. There are compilations of letters and discourses from which we can gain access to the thoughts and ideas, feelings and emotions of their write-ups. There are also monographs written for the refutation of innovations and deviations or to censure the wayward sections of society. If one could extend his vision to all these writings and had time to cut out relevant data from these works, a complete and detailed history of Islamic missionary effort could be written to show that the effort the re-ignite the fire of religious ardour and dynamic energy into the followers of Islam has never ceased for a movement and the Muslims too have never remained cold or indifferent to the call (Nadwi, 1981: I, 12).

In this study, an attempt is made to analyze two of his major works considered by many to be of great service to Islam. In these works, Sayyid Nadwi not only enumerates the pitfalls and achievements of Muslims but also teaches the various forms history writing may take. These works need to be re-introduced to Muslims so that they can take part in efforts to revive Islam and Muslim civilization through writings and preachings.

### ***Insani Dunya Par Musalmanu Ke Uruj wa Zawal Ka Athar***

Sayyid Nadwi's most famous work is *Maza Khasir al-Alam Bi Inhitat al-Muslimeen* (literally translated as: What did the world lose with the decline of

Muslims?), written originally in Arabic for which he received accolades throughout, especially Arab world, where it was first published in 1951 C.E. The book contained a foreword by Ahmad Amin which, according to many writers, lacked a fuller understanding of the book's driving theme (Faruqi, 2000: 136). The second and subsequent editions of the book carried a new foreword by Saiyyid Qutb. The book was later translated into English under the title of *Islam and the World* and into Urdu as *Insani Dunya Par Musalmanu Ke Uruj wa Zawal Ka Athar*. This work analyses the rise and fall of Muslims and its impacts thereafter. The author's main contribution however, is the appreciation of Muslim rulers of the Arab world and their rise to power, their enthusiasm towards Islam, their contribution towards human civilization and their zeal for the promotion of Islam. After the glorious period of Islam, the author highlights the decadence of Muslim power because of their luxurious life and they lost original fervor to Islam, due to which later Muslim rulers became the victim of their enemies. This book is considered by Von Grunebaum, as a representative self-review of contemporary Islam.

The book is an analysis of history from the Age of Ignorance (*Jahiliyah* Period) of Arabia to the Modern age. Firstly, the author presents a picture of moral degradation of societies before the advent of Islam, their political, social, economic, and moral deterioration. He particularly discusses the societies of the Roman and Persian empires, Arabs, Christians and Jews etc. The age before Islam was an age, steeped in ignorance. Sayyid Qutub wrote in his foreword that the book presents the condition of the world before the advent of Islam and the state of affairs in the east and the west, the north, and the south ... in a concise and comprehensive manner and delineates its features with accuracy and insight" (Nadwi, 1981: 1-12).

There was not a single man and movement of reformation that exists in the whole world. Even the religious sections in various societies like priests and rabbis, have introduced unrecognized activities and rituals in their religion for the sake of their materialistic interests. In the words of Sayyid Ali Nadwi, 'the previous faiths became play things in the hands of debased ecclesiastics who corrupted and twisted them beyond recognition, so much so that if it were possible for their founders to return to physical life, they could not have to recognize them' (Nadwi, 1981: 12-133).

After discussing the pre-Islamic age of ignorance and gloom, Sayyid Nadwi elaborates the revolution of morality and prosperity, which began with the commencement of new faith. The age of darkness turned into a golden era. During the pre-Islamic age of ignorance, people used to fight with each other on small issues even on drinking water for camels. After embracing Islam, these people turned friends and adopted death before his dying thirsty companion. The people who looted passersby now turned hospitable. Women were empowered given all their due rights that the God had conferred upon them. Women who were living a life of slavery and who had no right to choose their spouse, who had no right to personal property, now given their due rights. They were provided rights and facilities to get education.

Sayyid Nadwi discusses in detail the virtues of the Salafis (first Muslim generation), their faith, self-criticism, honesty and trustworthiness, humanity, social responsibility, exceptional devotion, incredible obedience etc. These poor Arabs gradually preached the doctrine of Islam to the entire world. In the very early phase of Islam, they conveyed the message of Islam to Rustam (the commander-in-chief of Persian Empire). As Sayyid Nadwi states:

Rustam received Rabi bin Amir (RA) in a grand hall which was decorated with magnificent carpets. Rustam wore a crown and robes, which sparkled with gems, while Rabi bin Amir (RA) was very poorly attired. He was almost in rags and carrying a shield which was too small; his horse was also of a small breed, on which he rode straight towards Rustam ... The people enquired about the purpose of his visit. He said, 'We have been sent by Allah to deliver you from the worship of His slaves (men) to His own worship, and from the narrow confines of the world to the boundless world and from the oppressiveness of other religions to the fairness and justice of Islam' (Nadwi, 1981: 174).

These Arabs presented the brightest examples of courage and made great efforts to revive humanity. In the words of Sayyid Nadwi, people who had entered the fold of Islam could now exert themselves more effectively for the moral and spiritual revival of humanity. They performed the task of establishing right and prohibiting wrong with success. Even nations that did not come directly under the influence of Islam, profoundly though unconsciously, benefited by the freshness and vitality of the new creative impulses released by its effects on a large part of the world. For example, the development of Europe, which made a huge development in Natural

Sciences and technology but the initial contribution behind these developments, is that of the Arab-Muslims.

According to Sayyid Nadwi, Islam imparted a new life to Europe not merely in the field of religion. There is not a single aspect in which Europe made progress and was not indebted to Islamic thought. He quotes Robert Briffault, according to whom, "... there is not a single department of European growth in which the decisive influence of Islamic civilisation is not traceable (Nadwi, 1981: 123-124).

Not only in Natural Sciences, but on religious parameters too Islam asserted indirect influences on Europe. A movement started in Europe in the eighth century against the practice of making confessions before priests. It asserted that man should address himself directly to his creator, without the aid of any intercessor. In addition to this, a feeling of revulsion produced throughout Christendom, with the support of powerful Roman Emperor, Leo 4<sup>th</sup> against paintings and statues in churches. Emperor, Leo 3<sup>rd</sup> issued a decree in 726 A.C. prohibiting adoration of images. This new development in the very heart of Greco-Roman culture zone was undisputedly an echo of the message of Islam that reached Europe through Muslim Spain. Claudius, one of the pioneers of this movement, had actually been born and brought up in Muslim Spain. It was his custom to set fire to any image or painting that was found in his diocese, the reformation itself, in spite of all shortcomings, was inspired by Islam. These are some of the impacts and outcomes of the new civilization that founded through the influence of Islam. Not only Muslims but people of all other faiths also enjoyed the glorious, peaceful and impartial environment of Islam.

Having discussed the glorious age of Islam, Sayyid Nadwi then presents the factors and impacts of decline of Muslim rule. Due to the moral degradation and lack of intellectual vigor on the one hand and, on the other hand European imperialism, the world suddenly turned to a new phase of historic peril. Sayyid Nadwi explains the negligence of Muslims towards these progressive activities in these words:

The destiny of mankind was being recast in the West. The world was changing at a breath-taking pace. He who lost a moment in idleness, lost a great deal. The Muslims alas! Neglected not minutes but centuries, whereas the European nations realized the value of time and covered the distance of centuries in years. The Turks lagged behind so much in the field of industry that shipbuilding could not be started there before the

16<sup>th</sup> century. The printing press, health services and the defense academics introduced in Turkey only in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Towards the end of the eighteenth century a balloon was seen flying over Constantinople and the Turks thought that it is a magic trick (Nadwi, 1981: 111).

With the decline of Turks, the leadership passed from the hands of the Muslims to the non-Muslims nations of the West and their influence spread all over the world. Europe lapsed into materialism. The only goal of Europe then became materialistic progress. There are no moral values and religious visions, left in European Society. In the words of Muhammad Asad, with rare exceptions,

An average occidental be he a democrat or Fascist, capitalistic or a manual worker or an intellectual, knows only one religion, and that is the worship of material progress. They believe that there is no goal other than to make life continually easier or as the current expression goes independent of nature. The temples of this religion are the gigantic factories, cinemas, chemical laboratories, dancing halls, hydroelectric works, and its priests are bankers, engineers, film stars, captains of industries etc. The unavoidable result of this craving for power and pleasure is the creation of hostile groups armed up to the teeth, and determined to destroy one another, whenever and wherever their respective interests clash. And on the cultural side, the result is the creation of a human type whose morality is confined to the question of practical utility alone, and whose highest criterion of good and evil is material success (Asad, 2005: 35-36; Nadwi, 1986: 174).

In this materialistic civilization, everyone works for his/her selfish interests. There is no concern for the welfare of humanity as such but many promises made to work for social welfare. Sayyid Nadwi pointed out that, the real loss of humanity under the leadership of Europe is the rise of materialistic thoughts (Nadwi, 1986: 139-140).

In the end, Sayyid Nadwi advised the Muslim Ummah, particularly Arabs, to come forward with a peaceful solution to the problem. According to Sayyid Nadwi, Arabs can solve the materialistic approach of the West through dialogue and quotations from the holy books regarding life here and hereafter. "The world of Islam can still give the message of faith and life to the disillusioned humanity. The message of the Prophet (SAW), who had imparted it about 1400 years ago,

will be valid forever. It is a simple, dynamic, radiant and more majestic message than that which the world can ever hope to receive” (Nadwi, 1986: 192-193).

It is hard to disagree with Sayyid Qutb’s observation that the historical analysis provided by Sayyid Nadwi “compels one to believe strongly that a time has come when the present leadership will change and humankind will be brought back to the real fountain head of guidance, which aimed at leading man from darkness to light, and from ignorance to knowledge and wisdom. ... By reading this book, a Muslim ... becomes acutely aware of the tremendous potentialities that have been given to him, and begins to feel an overpowering design to regain the leadership he lost through his own neglect and lack of appreciation of its quality” (Nadwi, 1986: 27).

### ***Tarikh-i Dawat wa Azeemat***

Another stimulating work of Sayyid Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi is *Tarikh-i-Dawat-o-Azeemat*, (Saviours of Islamic Spirit) which is in five volumes in Urdu language. It provides an entirely different outlook on Islamic history, where center stage is held by the spiritual rulers and God-fearing luminaries and scholars who have stood against heresy of all types and have contributed much to the cause of Islam. It provides an alternative view of looking at Islamic history as a history of ‘Ulama and intellectuals, some of whom took part in or even led Jihad, others concentrating on winning the hearts and soul of the people.

In the first volume of this work, Sayyid Nadwi illustrates the reformist endeavors of the first century under the pious caliphate of Umar Bin Abdul Aziz. It was presumably the time when all the old taboos and customs of Jahiliyah Arabia have resurfaced subduing all that was preached and propagated by Prophet Muhammad (SAW), his companions. It is stated that racial jealousy, anarchy, Arab racialism, tribal pride, partisan spirit and nepotism became the hall-mark of the new aristocracy. The unruly spirit of the Arabs, which had sought asylum in the far of deserts, returned again to re-assert itself. Extravagance, pretentiousness and boastfulness replaced the virtuous deeds and the moral excellence. In these times Umar Bin Abdul Aziz (RA) ascended the throne and stressed the need to follow the Qur’an and the precepts of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW), and his companions. He ruled in the same way as that of *Khilafat-i Rashidah*. He considered himself a successor of Hadhrat Umar Bin Khattab (RA).

The second personality, after Umar Bin Abdul Aziz, discussed by Sayyid Nadwi is Hasan al-Basri. He was a *Muġaddith* (expert on Prophetic traditions), a *Muffasir* (Commentator of Qur'an), a mystic and a great scholar of erudite and prodigious knowledge. It is stated that Hasan al-Basri had been gifted with ennobling virtues and brilliant capabilities essential to make his exhortation for revival and renovation of Islam effective.

The next important personality discussed by Sayyid Nadwi is Abul Hasan al-Ash'ari who, for about forty years, was a staunch preacher and disseminator of the mutazilite school. Thereafter, he publicly repented for promoting views and doctrines of mutazilites and their beliefs. Thus, he began refuting their doctrines and lay bare their mistakes and weaknesses. Al-Ash'ari devoted himself wholeheartedly to the repudiation of the mutazilites and began propounding the tenets of the orthodox school. With his erudite and profound knowledge, he was able to overshadow the disputants and upheld the doctrines of the conformist school.

Another prominent scholar described by Sayyid Nadwi is Abu Hamid Al-Ghazzali who came at a time when the Islamic world was beset with a multitude of heresies and innovations like that of philosophy. Al-Ghazali encountered all these challenges with an iron hand and smashed them forever. To refute the influence of philosophy, al-Ghazali wrote *Tahafut al-Falasafah* (Incoherence of Philosophers). It caused a stir in the ranks of philosophers who had to suffer an irreparable loss on account of it.

However, after al-Ghazali there arose no philosopher worthy of note for one hundred years. The next two personalities discussed are Shaikh Abdul Qadir Jilani and Imam Ibn Jawzi. In the words of Sayyid Nadwi,

The discourses of Abdul Qadir had a magnetic effect which is still discernible in them. Abdul Qadir is at his best in *Futuh al-Ghaib* and *al-Fatah al-Rabbani*. In describing the love and unity of the Divine Being he appears to be inspired by higher sources... Following the footsteps of the Prophet (SAW), his successors and the illuminated saints of the old, Abdul Qadir touched on the current problems of his days, analyzed the reasons for the miseries and maladies of the people and provided answers to their doubts and deficiencies. Along with this, the tremendous sincerity and earnest zeal for the welfare of the people fired his haranguing with a frenzy of enthusiasm and magnetic effect capable of pulling the strings of the heart (Nadwi, 1986: I, 197).

According to Sayyid Nadwi, a towering personality of Baghdad who has contributed tremendously to the cause of Islam was Ibn al-Jawzi. He was one of the great orators of his time and was a staunch opponent of heretics. He was having an unleashed sword in his hand against the personages of blasphemy and heresy. In his sermons he often attacked these heretics and kept the minds of the people free from the doubts which would have taken place because of the influence of the teaching and doctrines of the misguided people. The sermons delivered by Ibn al-Jawzi were attended by the people including caliphs, kings and chiefs of the state. It is reported that his lectures and discourses were normally attended by ten to fifteen thousand persons and sometimes the number went up even to a hundred thousand. An eloquent speaker as he was, his sermons breathed an almost tragic urgency behind his message which touched the heart of his audience.

Next to Ibn al- Jawzi, Sayyid Nadwi throws light on Imadudin Zangi, Nuruddin Zangi who have left their influence over the millions of the followers of this divinely faith (Nadwi, 1986: I, 254-255). It is stated that these personages have devoted their whole life for the cause of Islam especially against those enemies of Islam who planned to dismantle the edifice of Islam with the help of their Western brethren in faith, the crusaders. These two men of great letters fought against these crusaders and saved the prestige of Islam. They strictly followed the precepts of the Prophet (SAW) and the Qur'an. They were rulers, on one hand, and saints and hermits, God-fearing and sympathetic on the other. History bears witness that when Jerusalem was won over by the Muslims from the Christians, they did not resort to foul and fault and had not massacred the local Christians of the place but had granted them amnesty.

Similarly, Salahuddin Ayubi, one of the greatest and the ablest general, also served the cause of Islam by fighting against the crusaders and drove them away from the land of Jerusalem and once again set free the Bait al-Muqaddas. When Salahuddin won Jerusalem, the heart of every Muslim was rejoiced with this triumph. A devout Muslim as he was, he was characterized by an acute sense of justice, tender heart, patience and courage (Nadwi, 1986: I, 266-272).

Talking about the legendary personality of Rome, Jalal ud-Din Rumi, Sayyid Nadwi gives an account of the circumstances and conditions prevailing in the then society and how Rumi has purified the environment through his prodigious works (Nadwi, 1986: I, 338). To Sayyid Nadwi, Rumi's fame is because of his

*Mathnawi*. It is a book of the great mystical poems which has left a long lasting and indelible influence over the thoughts, minds and the literature of the Islamic world. It would be no exaggeration to claim that there is hardly any other literary composition which has so influenced the masses for such a long time. The intellectual and literary circles have been drawing inspiration from the *Mathnawi* for the past six hundred years. In poetic merit and originality of ideas, in sublimity of thoughts and intensity of feelings, in the raptures of love and ecstasy, the *Mathnawi* is incomparable. The examples and anecdotes through which Rumi has solved many problems can still satisfy the critical minds of the intelligent youths who do not want to be driven into a common groove. Most of all, the *Mathnawi* enjoys to this day the widest popularity as a manual of guidance for those who want to be infused with a fervor of divine love, passionate devotion and spiritual enthusiasm by gaining access to the mystical subtleties of beatific visions and illuminations, and the esoteric meanings of the path, love, yearning and Union (Nadwi, 1986: I, 360).

The second volume of Sayyid Nadwi's book is devoted to one of the greatest and influential luminary who has attacked every heresy with an iron hand, Shaikh al-Islam Taqi-ud-Din Ibn Taimiyah. In his times, philosophy was considered a touchstone and pivot for examining the believer, Ibn Taimiyah refuted this and wrote *Al-rad 'Alal Mantaqiyyin*. Ibn Taymiyyah also devoted his full attention for the eradication of the influence of *Wa'adat ul-Wuj'Ed* (Unity of Being) (Nadwi, 1986: II, 68). According to Sayyid Nadwi, Ibn Taimiyah had a fancy for the exegesis of the Qur'an. He had turned over the leaves of more than a hundred commentaries and glosses of the Holy Scripture. He was endowed with a bent of mind that was devoted to reflect and mediate upon the pith and meaning of the Qur'an. In brief, Ibn Taimiyah interpreted the Qur'an and the Sunnah, established the superiority of Islam over heresy, philosophical concepts and other faiths and contributed to genuine revival of religion. Seeking to surpass his opponents, the Jews and the Christians, the philosophers and the Batanites and the mystics and the dialecticians, he mastered the methodology employed by them to attack Islam. In fact, his learning, his erudition and his intellectual attainment left his adversaries spell-bound. Ibn Taimiyah occupied himself with teaching and preaching the purer spirit of religion by pen and by hand. For instance, Ibn Taymiyyah found in the vicinity of Damascus which was held as an object of reverence by the local population. Ibn Taimiyah got the rock cut to pieces and thus put an end to the heretical practice. He always tried to prevent, by force if

necessary, all accretions and innovations in religion; for, “keeping the pristine purity of religion constituted the highest form of faith according to a pronouncement of the holy prophet of Islam” (Nadwi, 1986: II, 58).

Sayyid Nadwi said that Ibn Taimiyah wrote *Al-JawÉb as-ØaÉÉ li man baddala DĒn al-MasÉÉ* in four volumes in refutation of a treatise originating from Qubrus by a Christian monk called Paul of Antioch who attempted to argue for Christianity by both reason and revelation (Nadwi, 1986: II, 261). Ibn Taymiyyah refuted all the objections raised against Islam, adduced entirely new and satisfying arguments in support of the Prophethood of Muhammad (SAW), quoted the prophecies about him contained in the Bible and examined the varying interpretations of the Christian faith as expounded by the church fathers. He was the first among the Muslim writers who turned to the historical criticism of Christianity to show that the spiritual experiences of the early Christian community were molded by the mythological beliefs and idolatrous practices of the Romans. He says that a part of Christianity consists of the teachings of the Prophets while the rest of it is derived from the creeds and practices of the heathens. Ibn Taimiyah maintained that the inability of the Christians to fully comprehend the language and the message of the prophets, in which figurative descriptions and expressions were used, led them to accept Trinity which violates the prophetic concept of monotheism. He says that the writings of the people possessing revealed scriptures show that the prophets of yore had used the word “father” and “son” to mean God by the former and one nearer to God by the latter. Nobody has stated that any prophet ever used the word “son” for an attribute of God. In all his utterances, Jesus never portrayed himself to co-equal and co-eternal with the Divine Essence. For Jesus and other prophets, the term “holy spirit” stood for the thing or the being descending with Divine grace and strength on the prophets and the pious souls. Ibn Taimiyah also discussed the prophecies mentioned in the earlier books at a length.

Ibn Taymiyyah was critical of the heresies and innovations but was equally harsh on Shi'i sect in Islam which posed a threat to the integrity of orthodox faith. Ibn Taymiyyah's *Minhaj as-Sunnah an-Nabawiyyah fi Naqd Kalaam ash Shi'ah wal Qadariyyah*, consisting of four volumes, is considered the best rebuttals to the Shiites ever. Shi'ism, to Ibn Taimiyah, discredited Islam and made the concept of prophethood untenable. Despite its polemical nature the

Minhaj-us-Sunnah is remarkable for the sobriety of its style and the pursuit of its details and accuracy.

The third volume of the book begins with the spiritual personality of Sultan al-Mashaikh Khwaja Nizamud-Din Auliya and Shaykh Sharfuddin Yahya Muneeri. Sayyid Nadwi has discussed different aspects of Khawaja Nizam ud-Din Auliya's personality in detail. For example, Khwaja used to fast quite often but would serve dishes of different varieties and tastes to visitors and even allowed them to take home whatever they liked. The food served at the Khwaja's monastery was of the highest quality. Quite apart from the spiritual regeneration of those who paid a visit to the Khwaja, his unbounded munificence and filling of the empty stomachs speaks of his bountiful generosity to the poor and lowly. The Khwaja attached great importance to the Sunnah and always enjoined upon his companions and disciples to observe the practices of the prophet with utmost care. The Khwaja considered it essential for every spiritual guide to be thoroughly familiar with traditions and juristic laws so that they may not cause others to act against the practices of the prophet (SAW) (Nadwi, 1986: III, 125). Sayyid Nadwi has also discussed at a length about the character and missionary role played by Shaikh Sharf ud-Din Yahya Maneri in India. To Sayyid Nadwi, the major trait of Sharaf ud-Din's sublime character was the annihilation of his self in love - the reward of his austere devotional acts and religious travails - reflecting a deep-satisfying and intimate love which effaces the very existence of the lover. Every word of his letters and discourses signifies the earnest desire and passionate love of God (Nadwi, 1986: III, 205).

The fourth volume of *Tarikh-i-Dawat-o-Azimat* is devoted to Mujadid-i-Alf-Thani Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi, one of the greatest personalities of his time, who stood against the heresies and innovation. This volume, first, discusses the political, social and religious conditions of the time under Mughal rule. During this time, while people believed in *Waladat al-WujEd*, Akbar the great Emperor of Mughal dynasty started a new religion termed *Din-i-Ilahi*. With the passage of time, people's beliefs were shaken; the teachings of the Scripture were not only ignored but detested; speculations of the Greek philosophers were taken as the acme of wisdom and intellectual perfection; when mountains made out of molehills were regarded as great achievements in the circles of the educated and the pedagogues; prophetic guidance, divine Scripture, revelations and injunctions of the shariah were mocked at and reliance on them was dubbed as ignorance (Nadwi, 1986: IV, 65).

As Sayyid Nadwi informs us, all efforts of Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi aimed at reviving the thought and spirit of Islam in India. It aimed at curbing the greatest menace of the time by restoring conviction in the Prophethood of Muhammad (SAW) and reasserting the shariah. Shaikh Ahmad demonstrated the hollowness of theosophical thought based on Neo-Platonist theosophy which professed to attain the knowledge of God through spiritual ecstasy unrelated to the path shown by the prophet of Islam. The theory of *Wāḍat al-Wujūd* and the like had captured the heart and mind of Muslim masses such that their conviction in the truth of Islam was gradually shaken. The Mujaddid presented the alternative theory of *Wahdat al-Shuhud* (Oneness of appearance), as opposed to (*wahdat al-wujud*), oneness of Being and launched a vigorous attack against innovation in religion, denied the commonly accepted *Bid'at-i-ḥasanah* (pious Innovation) and revolutionized the Muslim society in a way that it completely discarded Akbar's thought. He unfolded his well-conceived plan of reform and renovation so thoughtfully that, on the one hand, a man like Aurangzeb Alamgir ascended the throne once occupied by Akbar and, on the other, Shah Waliullah and his worthy successors took upon themselves the task of bringing about a religious awakening and spiritual regeneration of the Indian Muslims through teaching and preaching of the Quran and the Sunnah. It was thus, through the efforts of the Mujaddid that India became the focal point of Islamic thought and a harbinger of its call (Nadwi, 1986: IV, 191-201).

The Fifth volume of Sayyid Nadwi's magnum opus is devoted to one of the towering personalities, Shah Waliullah, who through his writings and teachings inspired subsequent generations of Islamic scholars to carry out the task of the revival of Islam. This volume presents virtually a complete history of the reform efforts in the twelfth century A.H. which continues to vibrate at least in the Indo-Pak sub-continent, in the form of educational and religious institutions, social reforms and literary creations designed to bring about an Islamic reawakening. Sayyid Nadwi argues that Shah Waliullah's reform efforts were wide in its scope and multi-dimensional in nature. He identified the following fields:

1. Reform of the creed and call to the Qur'an.
2. Propagation of Hadith and the Sunnah and integration of Fiqh with Hadith.
3. Re-interpretation of the Islamic Shari'ah and exposition of the wisdom underlying Hadith and Sunnah.

4. Elucidation of the theory of caliphate, its basic characteristics and refutation of Shi'ite view in this regard.
5. Eradicating doubts and confusion following the decay of the Mughal Empire.
6. Admonition of different sections of the society and inviting them to reform themselves.
7. Training a select group of scholars to continue the reform work he initiated.

Shah Waliullah considered that everything connected with religion like Hadith, Fiqh, the spirit of piety later known as mysticism, sagacity in religious matters, discrimination between virtuous and vicious behaviour, civility and polity have been bequeathed to the later generations by the first four caliphs. The entire Ummah is obliged to them for their guidance. Shah Waliullah quietly endeavoring to re-establish Muslim rule in the country, restore peace and order, and to streamline the administration in a way to enable Muslims to organize their social life in accordance with the shari'ah (Nadwi, 1986: IV, 275).

### **Conclusion**

Sayyid Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi was one of the eminent scholars in the Muslim world who died in 1999. He had a multidimensional personality. He was a unique historian, a genuine sermonizer, a biographer and a popular author. His writings including those on religion bear distinctive historical roots and reflect an in-depth study of the subject. He made his debut as a historian through the gateway of biography. His *Insani Dunya Par Musalmanu Ke Uruj wa Zawal Ka Athar* critically analyses the rise and fall of Muslims and its impacts thereafter. The author's main contribution however, is the appreciation of Muslim rulers of the Arab world and their rise to power, their enthusiasm towards Islam, their contribution towards human civilization and their zeal for the promotion of Islam. After the glorious period of Islam, the author highlights the decadence of Muslim power because of their luxurious life due to which later Muslim rulers became the victim of their enemies leading to the fall of Muslim civilization. He through this book *Insani Dunya Par Musalmanu Ke Uruj wa Zawal Ka Athar* tried to re-instill hope for the revival of Islam. He introduced a new outlook in the latter publication, pinpointing the student's attention to the perennial change that was yet underway, at each step of Islamic civilization and redeemed successfully through the efforts and foresights of the Saviours. In his magnum opus *Tarikh-i Dawat wa Azimat*, running into five volumes (1954-1980), Sayyid Nadwi is at his

best whilst illustrating from the life and times of Saints, Seers, Scholars and Islamic thinkers. He proves the point that it was adherence by the sages of the ages to faith alone which helped reinstate the believers to their original status. For them, it was ever a changing scenario at each crucial phase and each time saviour, a saint, a theologian, a scholar was at hand to confront the powers and movements designed to keep their tracks blocked. From the days of Khalifah Umar Ibn Abd al-Aziz (RA) in Syria to the saints of Basra and Baghdad and events moving Imam Ibn Taimiyah (RA) into action, followed by the saintly orders in India (Hadhrat Nizamuddin Auliya, Yahya Muneeri, Mujadid Alif-i Thani), right down to the exhortation of Shah Waliullah, Islamic resurgence made itself felt whenever the Ummah, reacting to the winds of change turned to their faith for survival and relief and never did the divine will fail.

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