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The Development of Islamic Thought in Post-Independent India: An Appraisal of the views of Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi on Multireligious Harmony and Muslim Identity

Perkembangan Pemikiran Islam Era Pasca Kemerdekaan India: Penilaian Pandangan Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi tentang Keharmonian Kepelbagaian Agama dan Identiti Muslim

Khalil Ahmad Siddique,* and Muhammed Mumtaz Ali**

Abstract

Post-Independent India is considered as an ethnically diverse multi-ethnic and multireligious republic. Muslims as a minority are granted constitutional rights. However, the environment of the country was communalized against Muslims. Numerous Hindu organizations disagree with Muslim minority rights especially their existence with different identity. They want to change the secular constitution of India and turn it to a Hindu state. Nevertheless, to eradicate and to put an end to this demand the contemporary Muslim scholars want to create an environment of mutual-relationship as an inevitable remedy for a peaceful co-existing between Muslims and Hindus. For this purpose, Muslims are asked to develop a healthy relationship with the people of other faiths; and they must contribute towards the development of the state; and they should convey the true message of Islam to them. This paper aims at shedding light on the role of Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi who recognized the pulse of the time and worked continuously through his writings and organizational activities for religious harmony. In this paper, our study covers Nadwi's works and activities. Nadwi's views for interreligious dialogues, communal harmony and Muslim identity will be explored and analysed. This study follows qualitative approach and depends on books, articles, online academic materials. The finding shows that Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi has enormously contributed to the development of Islamic thought in post-independent India.

Keywords: Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi, *Payame Insaniyat*, co-existence, Muslim Personal Law Board, *Muslim Majlis-e Mushawarat*.

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Abstrak

India era pasca kemerdekaan dianggap sebagai republik multi-etnik dengan kepelbagaian agama. Sebagai kumpulan minoriti, penduduk Islam diberikan hak-hak dalam perlembagaan negara. Namun begitu, situasi dalaman negara lebih menjurus kepada meminggirkan komuniti Islam. Sebahagian besar organisasi-organisasi agama Hindu menolak hak-hak Muslim minoriti ini terutamanya daripada segi hak keberadaan mereka yang wujud dengan pelbagai identiti. Tujuan mereka adalah untuk menukar perlembagaan India yang bersifat sekular kepada bentuk negara Hindu secara totok. Demi membasmi dan menghentikan desakan golongan ini, cendekiawan-cendekiawan Islam masa kini merasakan perlunya membina kerjasama dua hala sebagai satu cara penyelesaian mutlak agar keamanan dalam hubungan saling hidup bersama dapat dicapai di antara penganut-penganut Islam dan Hindu. Bagi tujuan ini, penganut Islam disarankan agar membina hubungan yang sihat dengan penganut agama lain; menyumbang kepada kemajuan negara; dan menyampaikan risalah Islam sebenar kepada mereka. Artikel ini bertujuan memberi pencerahan tentang peranan berterusan yang dilakukan oleh Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi yang sedar akan keperluan ini dan melalui penulisan dan aktiviti-aktiviti organisasi, beliau berusaha memperjuangkan keharmonian beragama. Maka pandangan Nadwi tentang dialog antara agama, (dan) keharmonian komuniti dan identiti Muslim dikenalpasti dan dianalisis. Kajian ini menggunakan kaedah kualitatif di mana sumber utamanya ialah buku, artikel, dan kajian ilmiah yang diakses secara atas talian. Dapatan kajian menunjukkan bahawa Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi telah memberikan sumbangan besar dalam perkembangan pemikiran Islam pada era pasca kemerdekaan India.

Kata kunci: Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi, *Payame Insaniyat*, hubungan saling hidup Bersama, Badan Undang-Undang Peribadi Islam, *Majlis Mesyuarat Muslim*.

Introduction

Indisputably, many perplexing reminiscences were left for Muslims in post-independent India by the legacy of the partition in 1947. Some of the major challenges for Muslims in post-independent India were the maintenance of the communal harmony and their Muslim identity.¹ No doubt, numerous Hindu organizations disagree with dispensation of Muslim minority especially their existence with different identity as constitutional right. Their objective of establishing Hindu Rashtriya (Hindu State) is completely contrary to that of the vision of forefathers of India: Nehru, Abul Kalam Azad and Gandhi to name a few.² Moreover, in the last decades of twentieth-century expansion of the Hindu fascist

¹ Safia Amir, *Muslim Nationalhood in India*, (Delhi: Kanishka Publishers, 2000), xv.

² Mohammad Nejatullah Siddiqui, *The Muslim Situation in India: Some Observation, The Muslim situation in India*. ed. Iqbal A. Ansari, (New Delhi: Sterling publishers private limited, 1989), 29-35.

groups encouraged Muslims to rethink the agendas of their community. Additionally, demolition of the Babri Mosque in 1992 followed by a number of religious violence, where Muslims faced the major loss and Hindu Rashtya champion, Bhartiya Janta Party (BJP) occupied the state power. It affected the history of the relation between Hindus and Muslims. Muslims today are facing numerous challenges as shown by Sachar Committee.³ They are associated with Muslim's identity, education, social, economic and security related domains. In response to all these, several thoughts were developed by Muslim intellectuals and scholars to deal with these challenges. Most of them believed that Muslims need to work with the people of other faiths in the country and strive to preserve democratic and secular values of the state with social justice and communal harmony. Some scholars emphasized to convey the true message of Islam to the people of other faiths. One of them is the famous *Adīb* and Muslim historian Maulana Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi (1914-1999),⁴ Who left behind the legacy of intellectual work and activities of communal harmony. He addressed the issues of communal harmony and Muslim identity. For this purpose, he established the *Payame Insaniyat* movement (Message of humanity), *Maljis-e- Mushawarat* (Muslim Consultative Assembly), and the Muslim Personal Law Board (MPLB).

³ The Government of India in the year 2005 constituted a high-level committee under Justice Rajindar Sachar for preparation of report on the Social, Economic and Educational Status of the Muslim Community of India. The committee contains experts from various disciplines sociology, economy, education, demography, public administration, programme implementation and development planning. According to report Muslim are facing various challenges almost every aspect of life. For example, Security, education, health, identity, equality, employment and economy related. see, Prime Minister's High-Level Committee Cabinet Secretariat Government of India *Social, Economic and Educational Status of the Muslim Community of India*. New Delhi: Cirrus Graphics, 2006),8-16. For more details see, Rakesh Basant, Abu saleh Shariff. *Handbook of Muslims in India*. (New Delhi: Oxford University press, 2010), M.K.A Siddiqui, *Muslims in free India*. (New Delhi: Institute of objective studies, 1998), Omer Khalidi, *Indian Muslims since independence*. (New Delhi, Vikas publishing house, 1995).

⁴ Nadwi was born on 6th Muharram/ 15th December in 1913, in a village called Takiya Kalan, Rae Bareli, in the northern part of India. The chain of his family genealogically goes back to Hazrat 'Ali bin Talib (RA) - the maternal grandson of the Prophet Muhammed (PBUH). The village Takiya Kalan mainly belonged to the family of Nadwi. His father was Hakim Maulana Abdul Ha'i Luckhnawi, a well-known author, Islamic scholar and the Rector of Nadwatul 'Ulama, Luckhnow from 1915 to 1923.

Intellectual Works of Nadwi

In the process of searching for Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi's contribution to the development of Islamic thought in post-independent India, it is discovered that from 1936 to 1999 Nadwi authored nearly 176 books, contributed various articles in national and international journals, attended countless seminars, conferences and delivered public talks. He played an active role to establish a number of organizations for several purposes. He touched different issues in his writings related to Muslims and the country. His books have been translated into different languages. He was an activist for peace and communal harmony.⁵ Nadwi has contributed extensively in all Islamic sciences. However, his works in the field of Muslim history and Arabic literature have been much appreciated by the scholars in the West and the East. In this part of the paper, some of his distinguished works in various Islamic fields will be discussed to understand his contributions. His works have been acclaimed in both history and Islamic sciences. He had expertise in the field of hadith and the Qur'an. One of his close disciples, Maulana Rab'e Hasani describes the efficiency of Nadwi as the master of three fields; one of them is Arabic literature which he used for his missionary' work and to bring awareness about Islam. He was elected as a professor of the studies of the Qur'an at Nadwah. Further, he had profound knowledge of hadith as well.⁶ Nadwi had written numerous treatises and prefaced in the field of hadith. He has also contributed to the history of compilations of hadith. One of his most significant treatises in the field of hadith is "*The Role of Hadith in the Promotion of Islamic Climate and Attitudes*". In this treatise, Nadwi had created new dimensions for understanding the hadiths.⁷

Another book of Nadwi which was much appreciated by prominent scholars of the time is *Maza khasril 'alam binhiṭaṭil Muslimīn (Islam and the World)*. He received great appreciation for this book from the Arab world as it was published first in Arabic language in Cairo in 1950. In this book, the rise and the fall of the Muslim world has been analyzed critically. Some of the Muslim rulers in the Arab world are

⁵ Farooq Quraishi, *Ali Miya*, (Lahore: Ishtiyag A Mushtaq press, 2003), 14-16.

⁶ Muhsin Usman Nadwi, *Mutala Tasnifat Mufakkire Islam*, (Delhi: Arshi Publication India, 2002), 304-305.

⁷ Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi, *The Role of Hadith in the Promotion of Islamic Climate and Attitudes*. Trns. Mohiuddin Ahmad. (Lucknow: Academy of Islamic Research and Publication, 1982).

praised for their rule and contribution to Islam, humanity, and their zeal for propagation of Islam as well. The book is considered as a master piece in analyzing the history of Muslims from beginning to the modern age. In this book, the rise of Islam, the role of Muslim rulers and their fall due to abuse of power and their extravagant life style, leaving passion for Islam behind, which caused their down fall, have been discussed critically. The author examines the civilizational decline of the Arab world, Persians, Romans and also Jews, Christians Arabs, and their ethical and moral deprecation. He also outlines the role played by Islam and Muslims to reform humanity as a whole.⁸ Discussing the Western world and its advancement in technology and natural sciences he pointed out the illnesses of the Western civilization which they face due to ignoring the ethical and spiritual values. He elucidates European imperialism and its effect on various civilizations and nations. He discusses the internal factors that caused to fall of civilizations.⁹ This book helps Muslims to remove the inferiority complex which has been created due to advancement of the Western world in science and technology.¹⁰

The center point of Nadwi's works was always Islam and the Muslim world. His dedication for the mission to guide Muslims was appreciated by the scholars of the time. One of his excellent work *Raw'ai Iqbal* in Arabic (*Nuqosh e Iqbal* in Urdu) (*Glory of Iqbal* in English) is acknowledged by the Muslim world. Muslims are provoked in the book through lessons from the poetry of Iqbal. The discussion revolves around Iqbal- the great poet and the philosopher of the East- a prominent thinker having broad knowledge of Western sciences especially its philosophy and economic system. He was hallowed with deep spiritual and internal strength, a devoted self for Islam and Ummah. According to Nadwi, his poetry incited Muslims of India to recognize themselves who had contributed enormously to the Muslim world in civilizational and academic aspects, and they are the huge portion of the Muslim Ummah. Nadwi has simplified the message of Iqbal. Nadwi argues that Iqbal's understanding of the Western and eastern philosophies made him more conscious of

⁸ Samee Ullah Bhat, "Life and works of Abul Hasan 'Ali Nadwi: An analytical study", Journal of Islamic thought, vol.6, (2016): 44.

⁹ Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi, *Insani Duniya par Musalmano ke Uroojo Zawal ka Asar*, (Karachi: Majlis Nashariyate Islam, n.d). Sayed Qutub had appreciated this book saying, "this book is significant among the old and the new literature on the topic". See page, 23.

¹⁰ Muhsin Usmani, *Mutala Tasnifate Mufakkire Islam*, (Delhi: Arshi Publisher, 2002), 201-210.

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God and Islam. His stay in Europe provided him a chance to observe and have a close understanding of the Western civilization which strengthened his faith in God. He pointed out the sicknesses of Western civilization. Another most important aspect of Iqbal's thought is his concept of *Khudi* (selfhood). He strived in finding himself and suggested to all Muslims the same way of recognizing oneself and grow their self-confidence by believing in God alone.¹¹ Nadwi deliberates that Iqbal was inspired much by the well-known Persian poet and philosopher Maulana Jalaluddin Rumi. As Rumi pointed out the illnesses and sickness of Greek philosophy which affected the Muslim world during his time, the same was the view of Iqbal who observed and studied the Western civilization and expressed his views against its atheistic and materialistic philosophy.¹²

Al Murtdha, another wonderful contribution of Nadwi in the field of *Sīrah*, biography of 'Ali, the fourth rightly guided Caliph. He wrote the book in Arabic language. It was first published in 1988 in Damascus, and later was translated into Urdu and other languages. The book contains different aspects of the life of 'Ali, his genealogical background, his migration to Madinah and his assassination. The book is a master piece specially to understand the disputes between Shi'as and Sunnis regarding 'Ali.¹³

The Biography of the Prophet Muhammed (PBUH), *Al Sirah Al Nabawiyyah* (in Urdu *Nabiyye Rahmat*) is another famous book of Nadwi which was initially published in Arabic language and later translated into Urdu. This book attained a significant value in the literature of *Sīrah*. Nadwi sheds light on the practices of different religions and various communities before the time of the Prophet Muhammed (PBUH) and expounds their cultures and customs. Further, he focusses on various aspects of the Arab world; Arabs, their culture, civilization, environment, and socio-religious system. Then, he moves to Hījaz and presents its cultural and civilizational practices, the nature of people, their interests, and other aspects of life. In addition, he also expounds the incidents happened after the prophethood of Prophet Muhammed (PBUH) systematically. The references of the book are not confined with the Qur'an and

¹¹ *Life and works of Abul Hasan...*44

¹² Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi, *Nuqush-e Iqbal*, (Karachi: *Majlis Nashariyate Islam*, n.d).

¹³ Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi, *Al Murtaadha*, (Karachi: *Majlis Nashariyate Islam*, 1991).

the Sunnah and books of *Sīrah* alone. They have been presented with rational arguments and from both Eastern and Western scholars.¹⁴

One of the momentous contributions of Nadwi is *Tarikh Dawate Azimat* the history of dawah and hardship which portrayed his scholarly personality in 20th century. Its English translation, *Saviors of the Spirit* became known. In this four volumes' book, the religious and intellectual contribution of Muslims have been discussed exhaustively. He explores the history of Islam, social conditions and various groups who conducted reform and revival over the centuries. He argued in the beginning of the book that there had not been any extensive discontinuation of the revivalist movement in Islamic history. He claims that dawah and audacity are integral part of Islamic history which used *Islah*, *Tajdid* and jihad practices for the revival of Islam and reform of Muslims. The book does not concentrate much on the history of Sultans or heads of states but provides a comprehensive discussion on Muslim intellectuals, scholars and philosophers. Nadwi significantly discloses the role of 'Ulama taking part in wars or guiding people in Jihad, some of them brought a change by reforming the hearts and the minds of the masses. He emphasizes that Muslims in the history suffered mainly due to incapacity of religious scholars than treachery of Sultans (wealthy and authoritative). The book is a magnum masterpiece in knowing the reformist and revivalist movements of the Islamic history.¹⁵

His Involvement In Organizations Communal Harmony and Payame Insaniyat Movement (Message of Humanity)

In eighteen century, the British succeeded to take over and established their rule in India. The British knew that they can continue their control in this part of the world, if they can divide Indians based on religion and caste. Thus, they started to polarize the notion of divide and rule which led to the destruction of the pluralistic environment of India. The destruction was further intensified by the partition of India in 1947 and it poisoned the Indian communities particularly the Hindus and Muslims. During the partition, Nadwi was in Makkah for hajj (pilgrimage) but he kept himself aware of the situation of motherland- India. On the day of his return to India, Gandhi was assassinated by a Hindu fanatic. The murder-

¹⁴ Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi, *Al Sirah Al Nabawiyyah, (Nabiyye Rahmat)*, (Karachi: Majlis Nashariyate Islam, 1991).

¹⁵ Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi, *Tarikh dawate azimat*, (Lucknow: Majlis Tahqiqato Nashariyate Islam, 2006).

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er of Gandhi was driven by the ideology propagated by *Rashtiya Sewak Sangh* (RSS). Nadwi was much influenced with the message of Gandhi and his pluralistic approach for all Indians irrespective of religion and caste.¹⁶ A few Indians who had blamed Muslims community for communal clashes, finally realized that it was *Rashtiya Sewak Sangh* (RSS) which spread bloodshed in this country.¹⁷

However, Nadwi worked for mutual understanding, co-operation and harmony between Hindus and Muslims. He realized that to fight against RSS strategy and the legacy of British rule there is no other way except to prepare Muslims' mind with Islamic consciousness for Hindu Muslim interreligious harmony. So, firstly as a strategy he struggled to bring religious consciousness among Muslim masses. For this, he urged the Muslim scholars (*'Ulama*) to play a crucial role to bring social and religious awareness among Muslims to improve their social condition. He argued that the *'Ulama* should strive to create sense of responsibilities in Muslims community that they should become an 'ideal citizen' and be able to contribute towards the development of the country. Nadwi believed that the necessity of the time is to establish a good relationship with the people of other faiths for maintaining the peaceful environment and communal harmony in the country. He also argued *'Ulama* and Muslims to convey the message of Islam to the people of India. He also met the Dalits' leader Dr. Bhim Rao Ambedkar to support him in his struggle against caste system which was responsible for marginalizing the lower caste people in the country and invited him to Islam along with his supporters.¹⁸

For the purpose of creating communal harmony in the country, the *Payame Insaniyat* movement was started by Nadwi. Many believed that the movement was unIslamic and will lead towards religious pluralism. In response to this, he clarified that it is not a call for *Wahdat-e-Adyan* (religious pluralism) but towards *Wahdate Insaniyat* (oneness of humanity) which he argued was an essential task of the time. He expounded that the call of Islam is not only towards monotheism, but it encourages its followers to have compassion for all human beings. Further, responding

¹⁶ Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi, *Mawjuda halat me Musalmano ke liye rahe amal*. n.d.).

¹⁷ Saud Alam Qasmi, *Maulana Sayed Abul Hasan Nadwi*, (Jaipur: Al Hidayah Publication, 2000), 319-329.

¹⁸ *Yoginder Sikand, Muslims in India since 1947*, (New York: Routledge Curzon, 2004), 41-48.

to a question on establishing of this movement, he said this movement will strengthen the environment of religious harmony.¹⁹

According to Maulana Kalbe Jawwad²⁰ the *Payame Insaniyat* movement was one of the beloved programs of Nadwi and a vehicle through which he wanted to bring peace in India. He saw it as the only alternative for Muslims to guarantee the better future in the country.²¹ Moreover, Nadwi believed that Muslims have to play the most significant role in the country due to their status of *Khair Ummah* ‘the best of nations’ based on love, tolerance, and sense of welfare of people. Nadwi argued that Muslims cannot isolate themselves and live in their world of fantasy, but they need to come in the mainstream of India and take part in the development of the country.²²

Nadwi and his colleagues of *Payame Insaniyat* movement organized conferences, interfaith dialogues, and rallies on religious harmony among the people of different faiths in India, particularly between Hindus and Muslims. The focus of the rallies and discussions in the conferences used to be based on human values which are shared by the people of all religions. He wanted to work to demolish the feeling of violence, communal animosity, egoism, materialism, dissolution, and bribery regardless of religions. Moreover, for him Islam was the solution for all issues in the country. He wanted to make people understand the distinctiveness and supremacy of Islam. He did not support the notion of reli-

¹⁹ Bilal Abdul Hai, *Tahrik Payame Insaniyat*, (Rai Bareli: Sayed Ahmad Shahid Academy, 2016), 12-14. As mentioned above, after the partition of India the atmosphere of the country was being pluralized against Muslims and hatred was created in the hearts of Hindus towards Muslims. Nadwi believed that if such environment continues, it will lead India towards an unwanted poisonous society especially for Muslims. In addition, to help people of other faiths, Nadwi started to arrange interfaith conferences in 1950 and 1951 which were attended by thousands of people from different faiths. However, after spending two decades for communal harmony tirelessly in the country, Nadwi started the movement officially from Allahabad city in 1974. Further, Nadwi had started his mission with his visits of different parts of India, he brought many people of different faiths together and arranged interfaith conferences and dialogues. He conveyed the message of peaceful co-existence, brotherhood, respect, and tolerance based on human values for a progressive India. Nevertheless, he cautioned if pluralization in the country continues, it will not be confined within one community, but will spread everywhere, and will lead towards another partition.

²⁰ A close colleague of Nadwi especially in Muslim Personal Law Board (MPLB).

²¹ Abdul Kader Choughuley, “Da’wah, peace and dialogue in the writings of Sayyid Abul Hasan ‘Ali Nadwi, 1913-1999,” (M.A dissertation, University of Johannesburg, 2008). 51-52.

²² Ibid.

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gious pluralism. He did his best to create a peaceful environment in the country so that people can progress. He wrote and talked against communal discrimination and violence. Further, he wanted all people should live together with their genuine differences. He inspired Muslims to follow Islam and encouraged them to have a positive relationship with the people of other faiths. Due to some of the programs of the movement many Hindu extremists changed their perception regarding Muslims and felt that Muslims are more concern for the country than some Hindus. The safety of the motherland was his priority.²³

Nadwi envisioned that *Payame Insaniyat* movement will deliver the message of Islam in its true sense that Islam encourages peace between its followers and the people of other faiths. He also believed that through *Payame Insaniyat* movement Muslims can fulfill their duties towards creating a peaceful and harmonious environment and improve their status as minority in India. Nadwi saw *Payame Insaniyat* movement as the manifestation of *Halful Fuzul* (Social Contract) which was directed by the Prophet Muhammed (PBUH) before his announcement of prophethood in Makkah. The fundamental objective of *Halful Fuzul* was to help poor, oppressed and marginalized people in the community irrespective of religion and race, and to encourage people towards goodness and protect them from evil practices. In the same way, Nadwi too considered the *Payame Insaniyat* movement as a platform through which Muslims can work with the people of other communities and promote Indian society based on peace, love, religious harmony and help the marginalized people. He believed that this is an integral and indispensable part of Islam and, Muslims are selected for this noble task as they are *Khair Ummah*. Nadwi strongly held the view that welfare of each community in the country depends on the welfare of other communities living in the homeland.²⁴

He thought that every citizen of India has two homes in India; one is small home where he stays in and the bigger one which is India. The interest of the bigger home depends on the small home if the small home is not at peace, safety, and security, then, it will affect the bigger house as a result of which it cannot prosper and secure peace. He further elaborated the reason why communal harmony and equality are essential for Indian community. For example, travelers in a ship should not allow any of

²³ Ibid., 52-53.

²⁴ *Muslims in India since...*, 46-47.

the travelers in the same ship to make a hole in it in order to protect all travellers from sinking and dying together.

Furthermore, he argued if Muslims can reveal their usefulness to other fellow citizens, then, they will be able to live with self-esteem and respect as minority in India. They need to prove by their engagements and activities that Islam has the sustainable solution for all problems of the country. In this way, by saving the country and making it the abode of love for its citizens and touching their hearts positively, Muslims would be able to win the hearts of all people.²⁵ Nadwi believed that Muslims need to show the treasure of love and concern for humanity regardless of religion and race. Islam, he asserted, has been the religion of *aman* (peace) and *salamti* (security). He emphasized that for Muslims, Allah has chosen India as their homeland, and they should parade their love for it. He added that it is encouraged in Islam to love their land (*hubb al watani*) in preeminent manner through which they can show their patriotism and, work with their fellow citizens against the practices that weaken the country. He asserted any kind of oppression against marginalized people in the country, corruption, and poverty etc would hinder the development of the country. Muslims must accomplish their duty of dawah as well. However, he stressed that peace cannot be attained in the country if one community imposes its culture and practices on the other community. The country should be run entirely based on secular and democratic values that will guarantee the progress. Otherwise, nothing can save the motherland, if the rule goes in the hands of Hindu extremists.²⁶ Nadwi's prediction seems to be true. Today India is facing worse communal violence and discrimination. In addition, *Payame Insaniyat*, he believed, will be the most appropriate movement which may direct Muslims in India to play their role in the development of the country together with the people of other faiths. Since Nadwi owned an envisaged personality himself, hence his dream that the *Payame Insaniyat* movement will play an unforgettable role in India's history and establish a substantial relation of communal harmony especially between Hindus and Muslims remained as a dream because the movement revolved around his personality and did not turn into a real movement. Nonetheless, it could not come true and the movement had to face its decline soon after the demise of Nadwi. However, due to *Payame Insaniyat* movement, many other movements of religious harmony also came into

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

existence. Such as Society for Communal Harmony (SCH) established by some of the academics, Forum for Communal Harmony and Synthesis (FOCUS) were founded for the same vision.²⁷

The Issue of Muslim Identity

For the maintenance of Muslim identity Nadwi wrote extensively about Islam and Muslims in India. He also initiated and worked for some other organizations that would, he thought, help Muslim to maintain their identity, the formation of *Majlise Mushawarat* (Muslim Consultative Assembly) and Muslim Personal Law Board (MPLB) were considered very important. These two organizations received a tremendous support from public and played significant role under Nadwi's leadership.

***Majlise Mushawarat* (Muslim Consultative Assembly)**

In post-independent India, Muslims were facing various challenges, especially from fanatic Hindus as the communal violence increased surprisingly and a big number of Muslims had lost their lives in communal clashes. On the other hand, government ignored constantly the issues of Muslims which encouraged Nadwi to think in line with political involvement. Otherwise, he thought, it would be a collective suicide of Muslims in the country. Nadwi had no interest in politics as he has mentioned this in his autobiography, but Muslims needed a wise leadership at that time. Moreover, the government started interfering in personal affairs of Muslims, they were afraid to lose their identity; personal laws and religious traditions were at stake due to the growing antagonism against Muslims among fanatic Hindus.²⁸ After the partition of India, a few worse communal clashes took place towards the end of 1963 and beginning of 1964, where Muslims were slaughtered brutally. The cities of Kolkata, Jamshedpur, and Ranchi were affected seriously. Allegedly, many inhuman cruelties were perpetuated against Muslims during the clashes. Nadwi realized that if these clashes continue, then, even the Muslim organization and institutions cannot be saved. Nadwi to seek the support of the influential Hindu leaders together with Maulana Manzor Naumani visited them leaders such as Jai Prakash Narayan in Delhi and Vinod Bhawe in Nagpur. Though Nadwi expected much especially with these two personalities but nothing was taken seriously by them. Finally,

²⁷ Ibid, 52-53.

²⁸ *Muslims in India since...*,46-47.

Nadwi with his colleagues particularly Maulana Manzoor Naumani and Sayed Mahmud decided to call a meeting of the leaders of various Muslim organizations and social and political leaders. He took initiative to invite them and 'Majlis e Mushawarat' was established in August 1964 in order to bring political awareness among Muslims and Dr. Sayyed Mahmud was elected the first president of the *Majlis*.²⁹

Nadwi asserted that the *Majlis* will play a crucial role in shaping the politics of the country. He realized that it is necessary to create political awareness among Muslims and uniting them as a forceful political strength. Nadwi intended to negotiate with national political authorities in order to discuss the issues of Muslims and draw their attention towards them. As mentioned in his autobiography, he wanted government and other political parties to realize that Muslims in India were mindful and aware of their discrimination and the power of their votes. Thus, no political party should take them for granted especially the Indian National Congress the then ruling party. The *Majlis*, Nadwi believed, would consolidate Muslims both politically and socially, fulfilling their status as 'Khair Ummah' (the best of nations). Consequently, people of other faiths would understand the message of Islam and position of Muslims. He thought that it will help Muslims to maintain their identity in a peaceful climate.³⁰

He wanted to convey this message to Indian political parties that without the support of Muslims no party can rule long in India. They need to solve the issues of Muslims. He drew the attention of the Indian National Congress that it should not treat Muslims as its vote bank. The leaders of the *Majlis* believed that Muslims should negotiate with political parties that it will support them if they assure to take interest in Muslim community in return. During that time the condition of the Muslim community hazard especially economic and educational situation. On the other hand, attacks of fanatic Hindus were taking places in different cities. Hence, he suggested the *Majlis* should work within the constitutional limits and help the Muslim community to put political pressure on political parties. He thought they must promise Muslims to stop the communal attacks and to protect their wealth and religious practices.³¹

²⁹ Bilal Abdul Hai, *Dawato fikr ke Aham Pahlo*, (Rai Bareli: Saayed Ahmad Shahid Academy. 2013), 266-269.

³⁰ Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi, *Karwane Zindagi*. (Lucknow: Maktaba Islam, 2005), 102-108.

³¹ *Ibid.*,

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After seeing the enthusiasm of people towards the *Majlis*, Nadwi realized that the *Majlis* has a tremendous role to play for the betterment of Muslims in India. However, the coming election of 1967 created many internal issues in the *Majlis*, and finally, Nadwi experienced impulsive death of the *Majlis*. Nevertheless, Nadwi knew that a separate Muslim political party will worsen the situation for Muslims in India having the history of Muslim league and its involvement in the partition which had inherited many unwanted drawbacks for Muslims in India. Nadwi's view was to negotiate with existing political parties to ensure that they will take interest in the issues of Muslims.³² Nevertheless, a group of people within the *Majlis* insisted that *Majlis* should take part in the election independently to prove to the Congress Party that Muslims are not its slaves. As a result, *Majlis* was divided into two groups and some supported the Congress and others opposed it in the forthcoming election. According to Nadwi, although the *Majlis* structure was still existed but its soul had flown.³³

Muslim Personal Law Board (MPLB)

After the partition of India, the process of Hinduization was re-started by the Hindutva parties and their members who were in the government. Muslims had no issue if the reformation could have been done based on democratic basis and within the framework of the constitution of India. However, Muslims in India felt threatened when they realized that the government is not taking any interest to stop the fanatic Hindus, but was abolishing the remaining Islamic cultural and civilizational identities. Moreover, the hatred towards Urdu language was quite obvious as names of railway stations, parks and other public places written in Urdu were being removed.³⁴ On the other hand, Muslims were much concern about the increasing attacks by Hindu extremists, they believed that one of the most major challenges before them was to protect their personal laws which were guaranteed in the constitution of India- Muslims are free to follow their personal laws especially issues related to marriage, divorce, and inheritance.³⁵

³² *Muslims in India since...*, 39-41.

³³ *Karwane Zindagi*, (Lucknow: Maktaba Islam, 2005), vol. 2. 102-108.

³⁴ Abdullah Abbas Nadawi, *Mere Karwan*. (Lucknow: *Majlis* Nashariyate Islam, 2001), 378.

³⁵ *Karwane Zindagi...*, Vol.2, 128.

In 1971, a war took place in between India and Pakistan. Although the war lasted only for two weeks but it caused a huge damage to Muslims in India. Muslims were seen doubtful in their patriotism, the Eastern part of Pakistan- Bangladesh became an independent state and many shameful incidents occurred which can never be forgotten by the history.³⁶ Moreover, another challenge befell before Muslims during that time was the demand of 'Uniform Civil Code' to be implemented for all Indians irrespective of religion and race. Through this they wanted to abolish the Muslim Personal Laws. The intentions of the government also were suspicious as it used to strengthen the idea by announcing it occasionally, and the idea was supported by some liberal Muslims. Abdul Hamid Dilwai was one of them who started a movement along with his followers to demolish Muslim Personal Law.³⁷ The intention of the government to eliminate the Muslim Personal law had been understood by many Muslim scholars. Hence, they started a campaign headed by Maulana Minatullah Rahmani to bring awareness about it. In this way, all Muslim organizations and movements were brought together and consequently on 27- 28 December 1972 Muslim law convention was called in Mumbai, and Muslim Personal Law Board (MPLB) was established. Qari Tayyib the then Vice Chancellor of Darul 'Ulūm of Deoband was appointed the first president and Maulana Minatullah Rahmani general secretary of the MPLB.³⁸ However, after the demise of Qari Tayyib, Nadwi was seen as the most eligible personality for the presidentship of MPLB and, finally, he took over in 1983, and remained president till the end of his life in 1999.

Shah Bano Case and *Wande Matram* Issue

The main objective of MPLB was to protect personal law of Muslims in India and to eradicate unIslamic and immoral practices adopted by Muslims. In fact, MPLB really played a significant role for the reform and development of Muslims. However, there were two issues which threatened directly the beliefs of Muslims- Shah Bano Case and obligation of reading *Wandre Matram* (a Hindu religious song) in all government schools. The verdict of Shah Bano Case stimulated the MPLB and it succeeded organizing Muslims in India by arranging the rallies and programs against the Supreme Court decision. In addition, Nadwi met

³⁶ Ibid..., 129-136.

³⁷ Ibid..., 134.

³⁸ Ibid.,

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many political leaders regarding the verdict and informed them that Muslims in India will remain in chaotic situation and would feel unsafe due to the verdict. Moreover, Nadwi believed that this verdict was politically motivated by the secularists and Hindu extremists in order to interfere in Muslim Personal Laws. He cautioned:

We Muslims can never allow anyone to impose on us any other social, cultural and personal law. We understand it as an invitation to *Dawate irtidad*, apostasy. Hence, we must oppose it as we oppose any invitation to abandoning our faith. This is our right as a citizen of this country, and the Indian constitution not only allow for this but positively supports us in our quest for the preservation of our democratic rights and freedoms³⁹

The case of Shah Bano was very important for Muslims which brought an enormous tsunami to the Muslims in India. The verdict of Supreme Court was about a divorced Muslim woman according to whom her ex-husband should be responsible for her maintenance after her '*iddat*' if husband has sufficient money and woman is not able to maintain herself. If the husband fails to do so, the magistrate will take action against him. The court would force husband to pay monthly allowance to the ex-wife. Further, if the husband still refuses to pay, then, he may be imprisoned.⁴⁰

However, Muslim scholars and some of the leaders had believed that the verdict of Shah Bano Case was direct interference into Muslim Personal Law. Nadwi commented that the decision was made based on one or two *Ayaths* of the Qur'an which were interpreted out of context. He rejected the decision of the court. It is not compulsory for a Muslim husband to take care of his divorcee, or to provide maintenance. The actual goal behind the verdict was to implement the uniform civil code.⁴¹ After this verdict, the MPLB came in the front line as a representative of Muslims in India under the leadership of Nadwi and started to mobilize Muslim masses against the verdict. He said that the verdict manifests Hinduism's values where the marriage rescinds the relation between the girl and her family.

³⁹ *Muslims in India since...*,41.

⁴⁰ Vijay pal singh, "*Shah Bano Begum and after*", Indian Constitutional Law review, January (2017): 10-18.

⁴¹ *Karwane Zindagi*, (Lucknow: Maktaba Islam, 2005), Vol. 3, 116-119.

On the other hand, according to Muslim Personal Law the girl will always go back to her father's family, if she is divorced. Thus, she will return to her house after completing her iddat and will receive the maintenance from her parental relatives who will become responsible for her expenditures. However, Muslims in India and their leaders realized the seriousness of the verdict and presented their disagreement with the verdict unitedly in democratic ways. Muslims from each and every state of India sent thousands of memorandums to the then Prime Minister of India, President of India, Home Minister and Law Minister to show their disagreement with the verdict. The Muslim scholars arranged seminars, conferences and other ways to bring the awareness and to protest against it. Muslims of India unitedly rejected the verdict.⁴² Even majority of Muslim women in India opposed the verdict, many renowned Muslim women came in front line to show their support against the verdict and to back the MPLB. Such as Najma Haiftuallah and Beghum Fakhrudin Ali Ahmad (Wife of former Vice President).⁴³

Consequently, after several meetings of the Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi, with the Muslim leaders and ensuring him the negativity of the verdict, Gandhi realized that majority of Muslims in India are upset with the verdict. He understood the sensitiveness of the time and ensured Nadwi that his government will bring Protection of Rights bill against the verdict in order to maintain the secular and democratic values of the country. Although Mr. Gandhi received some letters from Muslim lawyers and law experts in favour of the verdict but he knew that the majority of Muslims were with the MPLB, and Central government must bring the bill in the parliament to demolish the verdict of the Supreme Court.⁴⁴ After a few changes in the bill of Protection of Rights which was certainly in favour of Muslims, Congress decided to bring it to the parliament to debate and ordered its members to cast their votes in its favour. Finally, on 5th may 1986 the bill was brought to the parliament and after a long debate of eleven hours bill was passed with the majority of 372 votes in

⁴² Ibid.,

⁴³ Ibid..., 128-131.

⁴⁴ Rabe Hasani Nadwi, *Uhad saaz shakhsiyat*, (Lucknow: *Majlis* Nashariyate Islam, 2001), 227-228.

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favor.⁴⁵ This was one of the noteworthy work of the MPLB under the leadership of Nadwi which maintained the prestige of Muslims in India.⁴⁶

As it has been mentioned above that MPLB had been founded to protect the Muslim Personal Law and maintain their identity. However, the second significant contribution of MPLB under the leadership of Nadwi was the movement against *Wande Matram*. During his last days of life, another challenge emerged from the government where *Wande Matram* (A Hindu religious song) was made compulsory to sing in the morning prayers in all government and private schools. The order was seen as a direct attack on Muslim's faith ('*Aqīda*) especially *Tawhīd* (Oneness of Allah).⁴⁷ Nadwi realized that it was not restricted with the prayer but educational institutions were ordered to place the pictures of Hindu deities such as *Saraswati* in the schools, and displayed it before students before starting the classes and finishing as well, and to make them sing *Saraswati Vandana* (worshiping of the deity verbally) along with national anthem. As a result, in April and February 1998, seminars were held at Nadwatul 'Ulama of Lucknow and Aligarh Muslim University and the issue was discussed exhaustively, and Muslim perspective was elaborated. In 1998, a fatwa against *Wande Matram* was issued during a seminar of all madrasas of India. Finally, in December 1998 government canceled the order.⁴⁸

Conclusion

After several long voyages on the searching for Nadwi's contribution to the development of Islamic thought in Post-Independent India, it is found that Nadwi was one of the most influential Muslim scholars in

⁴⁵ 54 votes were against the bill. See, Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi, *Karwane Zindagi*, Vol. 3, 131-148.

⁴⁶ Abdullah Abbas Nadwi, *Mire Karwan*, (Lucknow: *Majlis Nashariyate Islam*, 2001), 381-382.

⁴⁷ The song *Wande Matram* was opposed by Muslims because it was purely against the concept of *Tawhīd*- the text was full of polytheistic beliefs. In the prayer the deity called *Bharat Mata* is praised as a god.

⁴⁸ *Mire Karwan*. 382-394. Since Nadwi was an active leader during the issue, his house at Rae Bareli was raided by the police which brought a tsunami among Indian Muslims and political leaders as well and they came forward in support Nadwi including Sonia Gandhi the then president of the Indian National Congress. Finally, the then government felt the sensitiveness of the issue and cancelled the order of *Wande Matram*. See, Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi, *Karwane Zindagi*, (Lucknow: *Majlis Nashariyate Islam*, 2001), vol 7, 204-225.

20th century. He did not only contribute intellectually but also tried to reform the Ummah through bringing the lessons from Islamic history. He wrote extensively in most of the Islamic sciences and in Islamic history. Being a successful teacher in various Islamic disciplines, he played a significant role in uniting and leading Muslims in India. He is known for his forceful and dynamic writings addressing the Muslims in the Arab world and India. Moreover, after being appointed the Rector of Nadwah, he brought notable changes in its curriculum in order to make its graduates more active in academia and society. He received various awards in India and other parts of the world including Shah Faisal Award. After partition of India, the biggest challenge before Muslims in India was communal clashes that had increased. The situation encouraged him to work with the people of other faiths on communal harmony, he occupied himself to shorten the gap between Hindus and Muslims by launching *Pyame In-saniyat* movement in India. Moreover, Nadwi proved the significance of his leadership whenever there was any threat occurred before Muslims in India. Such as the establishment of the Muslim Personal Law Board and *Majlise Mushawarat* were the response to such threats. Nadwi's contribution helped Muslims of India to maintain their personal laws and create atmosphere of peaceful co-existence. Nevertheless, the development of Islamic thought everywhere and every time needs both individuals and institutions. The lack of institutions and individuals always allow fanatic Hindus to come to forefront. Currently, in India, Islam and Muslims both are facing strong waves of Hindutva and slogan of Hindu state.

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