Socio-Cultural Aspects in the Writings of Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi With Special Reference to Ma Dha Khasira al-Aalam Bi-inhitatil Muslimeen

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Abstract- Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi (1914-1999) was one of the greatest literary figures in Arabic and an eminent leader of Muslim community of India. He was a pristine blend of a number of qualities and characteristics which are seldom found in one single person. He was the most popular writer in Arabic in 20th century India who had contributed 176 books composed mainly on Islamic history and literature to the domain of Arabic literature and was held in high esteem by the entire world of Islam. He was, among all other identities, a great preacher of Islam and an international messenger of brotherhood, humanity and peace. His writings represent his depth in knowledge and his firm believe in the need to creating a just society where everyone can enjoy freedom and respect. He preferred using the easy language and simple and elaborative style in both his writings and speeches.

Key words: Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi, Islamic history, literature, humanity, brotherhood, freedom, just society.

Sayyid Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi (1914-1999) was a multi-faceted personality. He was a world renowned Islamic thinker, a staunch advocate for peace, a great litterateur and a great fighter for human rights across the globe. During the twentieth century, Muslim India has produced great Islamic theologians, interpreters of the Qur'an, scholars of Hadith, Islamic Jurists, historians, propagators of the faith, social reformers and educationists, but there is no other Islamic scholar but Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi whose concerns covered the entire spectrum of the collective existence of the Muslim Indians as a living community in the national and international context, who for decades, enjoyed universal respect, and who was accepted by the non-Muslims, at the highest level, as the legitimate spokesman for the concerns and aspirations of the entire community.

Sayyid Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi, popularly known as Ali Miyan, was born in a village named Takya Kalan of Rae Barely district of Uttar Pradesh in a family which has a great history of warriors, writers, Sufis and reformers. Like most Muslim scholars, Ali Miyan received his primary education at home and in his village mosque. His father Dr. Abdul Hai was his teacher and guide. He later graduated from Nadwatul Ulama, Lucknow and Darul Uloom Deoband. He studied tafsir under Maulana Ahmad ali Lahori and soon acquired mastery over the sciences of tafsir, hadith and figih. Apart from Urdu he was well versed in Persian and Arabic. Besides literary and theological studies, he developed keen interest in Islamic history and also learnt English in order to keep himself abreast of contemporary thought. He taught Arabic literature and tafsir at the Nadwatul Ulama for ten years.

From the very beginning Ali Miyan set for him two primary goals to achieve. He, on one hand, stressed the need to reform Muslim society at large particularly their social, religious and educational systems and to revive the glorious past of the Muslims all over the world. On the other hand, he worked diligently to make Arabic a living and vibrant language in India. According to him Arabic must not only be cherished and developed in India for its religious importance but also because it is a living language of the world and can cater to all kinds of needs of its learners and speakers and also because it has a very rich heritage.

Ali Miyan's socio-religious reformative works began at home first at the grass root level. He joined hand with some of the best known Indian scholars, thinkers, writers and reformers such as Muhammad Ilyas, the founder of Tabligi Jamat, Abul Ala Maududi, the founder of Jamat-e-Islami, Sayyid Sulaiman Nadwi, and got greatly influenced by Dr. Muhammad Iqbal and Maulana Abul Kalam Azad. One of the major characteristics of Nadwi was that wherever he went and whomsoever he worked he never deviated from his goal and never forsook his moderate thinking.

Ali Miyan was a member of many societies and Islamic centres around the world including the Mecca-based Muslim world League, Islamic university of Medina and Muslim world Conference. He was the chairman of the board of trustees of the Oxford Islamic Centre and chairman of many Islamic institutions and societies in India. The lectures he delivered at Indian, Arab and Western universities have been highly appreciated as original contribution to the study of Islam and on Islam's relevance to the modern age.
To promote communal harmony, Ali Miyan became one of the founders of Society for Communal Harmony. He also established a movement Payam-e-Insaniyyat to preach the gospel of universal love and brotherhood. He continued this mission to the end of his life.

The great political battles of the Muslim community during the last decades of the 20th century were fought under Ali Miyan's guidance. In the last decades of his life, he served as the final arbiter on any intra-communal differences, even if he did not play any active role in resolving them. He counselled commitment with patience and wisdom, movement within the framework of democracy and rule of law, and dignity and not rhetoric in utterances.

Ali Miyan stood for social reform, religious revival and political awakening but not for Islamic revolution. He saw clearly that the destiny of Muslim Indians was intertwined with that of the Indian people as a whole and that, in the age of democratic pluralism, an Islamic revolution or the restoration of Islamic power was out of the realm of possibility but it was possible for the Muslim Indians to lead an Islamic life and at the same time participate in managing the affairs of the country and contribute to its progress and development. This was the basis of his efforts to reduce the distance between the Muslims and the Hindus, to demolish the wall of distrust between them and to create bonds of understanding and cooperation in rebuilding relations on the terms of common moral values of the society which he saw as being engulfed by dark forces of hatred and violence. Ali Miyan was one of the few Indians in the 20th century who wandered ceaselessly, not only within the country but in the Arab-Islamic world and the West, in a constant search. It seems to me for reconciliation between Islam and the West, between rival ideologies in the Arab-Islamic world, between India and Pakistan and between the Hindu and Muslim Indians. Cautious in taking positions, he always looked beyond the turbulence of the time, through the flames of the current controversy. He also established correspondence on a regular basis with a host of rulers, princes and scholars across the globe attracting their attention to the contemporary problems and the need to find the amicable and lasting solution to them. Indian politicians frequently visited him for seeking his advice on national issues.

He acted as the bridge between the government and the national parties, on one hand, and Muslim community, on the other. He was considered to be close to Gandhi family. Though he did not directly involve himself in the Babar Masjid Movement, he guided it at all critical points and participated in negotiations with the governments as well as Hindu representatives. He was of the opinion that the issue should be brought out from the platform of politics and be settled down through mutual understanding between the two communities. Ali Miyan won a number of awards for his contribution to Arabic and Islamic causes. Prominent among them are the Faisal International Award in 1980, the Muslim Personality of the Year award presented by the government of Dubai in 1998 and Sultan Brunei Award by Oxford Islamic Centre in 1999. He never accepted the monetary part of these awards. He at once donated them among scholars and charitable institutions.

He was the very anti-thesis of the media image of the fire-eating, narrow-minded Mullah. Orthodox as he was, he was far from being conservative in his approach. He stood for social reform, religious revival and political awakening but not for Islamic revolution. His love for the motherland knew no bounds. He stood for mutual respect for peaceful coexistence, for human values, for establishing a social ambience based on tolerance and harmony in India and in the world at large.

He understood the spirit of the age. He appreciated the role of democracy and nationalism. With his deep insight into the Qur'an and his understanding of the personality of the holy prophet, he understood the implications of a multi-religious world. He commanded universal respect for his moderation, learning and integrity, for his influence in the Muslim community and for his outreach in the Islamic world.

Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi was a die hard advocate of Arabic language and literature and championed the cause of Arabic in India. According to him Arabic must not only be cherished and developed in India for its religious importance but also because it is a living language which has the capacity to serve the mankind as any other important languages of the world and can cater to all kinds of needs of its learners and speakers and also because it has a very rich heritage.

He was deeply sad for the pains and sufferings of the Muslim nation. He was keen to say the words of truth everywhere. He lived a life full of research, work, call for Allah, counseling and struggle for the right.

Ali Miyan authored 176 books of different sizes in Arabic alone on Islam, culture and the Arabic language and literature. He wrote in a very modern language and applied lucid style for his writings. The maximum number of his books have been published in the Arab world along with the prefaces written by the prominent Arab writers. He was undoubtedly the greatest Arabic writer India has produced in recent times and one of the best known faces across the world in the field of Islamic Arabic literature. A good number of his books have been rendered into French, Turkish, English, Bhasha Indonesia, Tamil, Bengali, Persian and some other languages. A host of his books have been included in the syllabi of Arabic and Islamic institutes of the Arab world. His most famous work Islam and the World has been published dozens of times from various Arab States. It has been widely read and quoted among scholars and researchers. Some of his other celebrated works are Idha Habbat Rihul leman (when the wind of faith blew) al-Arkan al-araba ‘a (the four basic elements) al-Islam wa al-gharb (Islam and the west) Ila al-Islam min Jadid( towards the call of Islam again) al-Sirat al-Nabawiyyah (biography of the prophet) Qasasun Nabiyin lil Atfal (Prophets’ stories for the little hearts) al-Tariq ila al-Madinah al-Munawwarah (the road to Medina) and al-Islam wa Atharuhu fl al-Hadarat wa Fadluhulu al-Insantiyyah (Islam and its influences on civilizations and mercy toward Humanity). Former Saudi king Faisal bin Abdul Aziz considered Ali Miyan as the first among the religious scholars of his times. Dr. Anwar al-Jundi, a distinguished Egyptian writer, pin points Ali Miyan's importance thus: "The biggest achievement of Abul Hasan is that he endeavoured to awaken the Arabs and made them..."
realize their real position and responsibility, and reminded them that it was only Islam which could give them glory and respect as it had given them in the past”.

The book entitled Ma- Dha khasira al Aalam Bi-inhithatil Muslimeen is the most celebrated work produced by Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi. It was first published in Cairo in 1950 for the Academy of Research, Translation and Publication in Egypt. It was a great success immediately with the critics and the general reading public alike in all the Arabic speaking countries and has been published or reprinted several times. It has also been rendered into various other languages of the world. The book shows the author's wide socio-historical knowledge, ability to identify the societal problems, the ways to solve them and his mastery over Arabic language and literary skills. It does not attract the attention of Muslim scholars and Arabic lovers only but also got popularity among all those scholars who are interested in world civilization and the comparative study of all major religions, He was anxious to present to us an account of the continuous struggle of cultural reawakening and revival in the last around fifteen hundred years of Islam. In his own words. In fact there is no gap in the intellectual history of Islam, it is only in the representation of the history of its people, which needs urgently to be filled.”

The work is divided into five chapters. First of all, the author has presented a short but precise description of the conditions of the world just before the advent of Islam. He carefully studied the history of the major religions like Judaism, Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism and Zoroastrianism. Besides, he has thrown light on the history of Islam since its inception up to the 20 century and has mentioned the reasons which led the Muslims to occupy the leading position in the world and provide guidance to the mankind for almost all aspects of life. He also pointed out the causes and factors for the downfall of the Muslims. The author has strived hard to prove that the decline of Islamic civilization not only damaged the cause of the Muslims but also affected the world civilization since the Muslims gave the promise of turning humanity into a single divinely guided society and were known for their intellectual supremacy in art, discovery, and physical sciences among others which ultimately paved the ground for European Renaissance. According to Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi, the Islamic teaching can offer a sure panacea for all human ills and evils. He, nevertheless, talks about the need for collective cooperation of all to find the solution to the problems of the contemporary world.

In his melancholy progress from God- forgetfulness to self-forgetting man had lost his moorings. Having been vanquished in the battle between spiritualism and materialism, they had shut themselves up in the monasteries or gone into wilderness. The Romans and the Persians who enjoyed the monopoly of leadership in the West and the East, respectively, had sunk to a state of complete moral depravity. They wallowed in the invertebrate vices of their corrupt and decaying civilizations. Their empires had become store-houses of confusion and mischief. The governing classes, drunk with power, indulged in reckless debauchery and sensuality. The middle classes as their wont, took the greatest pride in aping the modes and manners of the rich. As for the common people, they lived in grinding poverty. They filled their bellies like lower creatures and toiled and sweated like cattle so that others might live in voluptuous luxury. Not unoften would they solace themselves with narcotics and cheap entertainments or fall blind folded upon carnal pleasures whenever the curse of their lives afforded them a breathing moment. Great religions became playthings in the hands of debased ecclesiastics who corrupted and twisted them altogether from truth. The monastries or gone into wilde.

The holy Qura'an depicts this world wide darkness and chaos in this following thought-provoking words. “Disintegration had appeared on the land and the sea because of (the meed) that the hands of men had earned, that (God) might give a taste of some of their deeds in order that they might turn back from evil” (al-Quran: xxxx:41)

Prophet Muhammad, born in Mecca in 570 A.D. was a beloved orphan, a devoted husband, an affectionate father and a sincere friend. He was also a successful businessman, a far-sighted reformer, a brave warrior, a skillful gentleman, an efficient administrator, an impartial judge, a great statesman and what not. In all these roles he played his part with exemplary ability, honesty and integrity.

The prophet broke the fetters of ignorance and superstition and invited men to a servitude that released them from every other form of bondage. He restored to them the legitimate comforts of life from which they had deprived themselves under false ethical and spiritual notions. 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 and learning and faith and culture in the world. Within a short span of time the desert of Arabia threw up mighty personalities whose names illumine the pages of history to this day.

The mighty revolution wrought by the prophet among the Arabs which through them produced a new and lasting impression upon all the nations of the globe, was unique in all respects. It was a most extraordinary event in human history, yet there was nothing about it that could not be explained rationally.
Never before, indeed had a more harmonious body of men appeared on the stage of history. It was equipped with every requisite of success in both the worlds. It made out the blue-prints of a culture and a dominion which, within a remarkably short time rose to hold sway over three large continents. It was a veritable mine of talent which sent forth what seemed to be an endless stream of men of qualities and ability including wise rulers, honest administrators, impartial judges, prayerful leaders, pious army commanders and God-fearing scientists.

The emergence of the Muslims marked a turning point in human history. They immediately arrested the progress of mankind towards its doom and made it safe the moral and material hazards and calamities that were threatening to engulf it. Under their guidance humanity made a well-balanced advance towards its true goal, the various capabilities of man were called splendidly into play and an environment was created in which it was made possible for him to advance to the highest goal of progress in the shortest and the surest way.

It can safely be claimed that after the dawn of Islam no cultural or religious system is the world can honestly deny its indebtedness to Islam and the Muslims.

The Muslims, with their intellectual supremacy in art, practical discoveries and physical sciences prepared the ground for the Renaissance and opened the flood gates of treasures of knowledge.

There is not a single department of European revival which is not indebted to Islamic thought. The three great Arab contributions which helped to bring the western society out of the dark middle ages were the introduction of the inductive method in science of observation, collection of facts and formulation of hypothesis and secondly a general rationalistic view of life and the universe, thirdly, the introduction of mystic love in poetry and literature. Robert Briffault says, "Science is the most momentous contribution of Arab civilization to the modern world......It was not science only which brought Europe back to life. Other and manifold influences from the civilization of Islam communicated its first glow to European life" (The making of Humanity, P.202)

The mainsprings of Muslim learning and science were the teachings of the prophet Muhammad (SM) who emphasized the search for knowledge to harness the forces of nature for ameliorating the lot of suffering humanity. The prophet said "Teach science: whoever teaches it fears God; whoever desires it adores God; whoever speaks of it praises God; whoever diffuses it distributes alms; whoever possesses it becomes an object of veneration and respect. Science preserves us from error and from sin; it illuminates the road to paradise; it is our protector in travel, our confidence in the desert, our companion in solitude....." (Influence of Islam on world civilization, P.4)

Islam alone, of all religions, embraces life in all its aspects. It is not a mere spiritual creed, but it is on the other hand, a practical system of life that fully appreciates all the genuine needs of mankind and tries to realize them. It does not regard man's earthly existence as a gloomy dale of sorrows or a punishment for some original or inherent sin. At the same time, it does not look upon this life as a fleeting opportunity for material satisfaction or a place for senseless delight. Islam proclaims life to be divine gift so that man may attain nearness into God and attain perfection by making full use of the responsibilities of his body and spirit. Under the influence of Islam the lives of men, their minds and their morals were revolutionized.

The book under study has justly established the greatness of Islam showing the effect of rise and fall of the Muslims on the peace and stability of the world. The author left no stone unturned to prove that Islam had always been relevant to human society and would remain so in future. He has shown how, when it had the opportunity, Islam liberated the soul of man from superstitions and banalities, emancipated him from the evils of slavery and degradation and lifted him out of the slough of filth and disease. Islam saved human society from degradation, and blessed life by giving it faith in the future. It can safely be claimed that after the dawn of Islam no cultural or religious system is the world can honestly deny its indebtedness to Islam and the Muslims.

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What the Muslims need doing by way of bringing about a regeneration of the Islamic world is not to reform Islam but to reform themselves by creating that inner awakening, that permanent consciousness and that sense of responsibility in all their thoughts and actions which distinguished the lives of the companions of the prophet of Islam.

The plan of Islam is an eternal plan. It will remain valid for all time to come. By virtue of their religion, the Muslims are the moral guardians of mankind and they will return to their duty when they will awake from sleep. The secret of the Muslims' strength lies in their faith in the divine recompense and reward in the after life. The major tasks before the Muslim leaders and thinkers today is to rekindle the flame of faith in the hearts of Muslims. They should do in this respect all that the early preachers of Islam did, and at the same time avail themselves fully of all the opportunities the modern age has put into their hands.
This is the way in which an Islamic revival can be brought about. This is the way in which the Muslims can spread the light of Islam to lands far away and save mankind from the stark ruin that is staring it in the face.

In this book the author has struggled hard to put forward the facts with clarity and precision. The book gained popularity not only for its historical and socio-cultural importance but also for its beautiful style. The author has proved his mastery over language in it. His style is characterized by an undulating and melodious prose. His expressions seem to roll off and follow one another in quick succession to give a strong rhythmic effect. He has used easy language and simple and elaborative style. He has used most of the times long sentences, repeated words or sentences and even paragraphs to convey the same meaning.

From literary point of view the book can be compared to 'Al-Ayyam' of Dr. Taha Husain since we notice that the author has employed a style which seems to be talking directly to the reader with clarity in language and importance to society at large.

To sum up the findings of my research study it can be stated that Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi was a great litterateur, a great preacher of Islam and an international messenger of brotherhood, humanity and peace, who firmly believed in Islamic teachings and ethos and tried to find solution to all problems the mankind faced basically in the Qur'an and Hadith. He eagerly wanted the Muslims to regain their lost position of pride and compete with the rest of the world in every field and guide the mankind towards the permanent success, peace and prosperity. He was fluent and eloquent and wrote in a lovely style and employed eloquent sentences. He was a die hard advocate of Arabic language and literature and championed the cause of Arabic in India. His master piece Ma-dha Khasir is a great contribution to the domain of Arabic literature from literary, socio-historical and cultural point of view.

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