

## **Mawlana Sayyid Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi's Reorientation of Islamic History**

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Mawlana Sayyid Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi (1914 – 1999) had particular style of writing history. Essentially a religious scholar he used writing history as a tool to bring home the achievements of Islam throughout its history, highlight the role of eminent personalities and describe their accomplishment in the field of Islamic revival and renovation. History and historiography were the areas of his special interests he wrote extensively on Islamic History and on eminent figures. When he embarked upon his academic and writing career after finishing his studies, he dealt not only with India his home country but with the world of Islam, rather he addressed the entire mankind. For he was firmly persuaded of the conviction that as Islam has guided the world to the path of success and prosperity in the past, now even today only true Islam could offer the panacea for mankind troubled by host of problems and issues. He addressed first to the Arabs, out of his fervent desire that they should revert to the way of the Prophet صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ and the Qur'ân, and regain their actual status of inviting and leading mankind to truth. Accordingly he started his writing career in Arabic and focused his special attention on the Arabs. He was very popular among educated Arabs who openly acknowledged his mastery over Arabic.

He is credited with having written almost 180 books, mostly in Arabic and some in Urdu. Many of these books have since been translated into various other languages, especially in English. Mawlana Nadwi was interested in Islamic movements, and it is thus no mere coincidence that his full-length study on the jihad movement of his ancestor Sayyid Ahmad Shahid. Another of his major literary achievement was his five –volume *Tarikh-i-Da'awat-o-Azimat (Saviors of Islamic Spirit)* a historical account of revivalist movements in Islam. He also wrote several biographical

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works of leading Muslim personalities, on the contribution of Islam and Muslims to world culture. In spite of contemporary issues concerning Islam and Muslims on the whole, he also wrote books on Qur'anic studies and *sīrah* of Prophet صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ and many theological issues. Mawlana Nadwi's writings, a new genre of missionary literature, were all suffused with passionate zeal for the cause of revivalism of Islam. His adoption of writing historical works is also aimed at accentuating the role and contribution of pioneers of Islamic revivalism.

Islam already postulates an explanation of the meaning of history; the struggle to maintain the worship of Allah and His teachings against all that stands in opposition, whether it be the worship of idols or materialistic philosophy. Wilfred Cantwell Smith remarks that

*Islam historically has changed the face of the world. Historically, it has also changed the heart of the Muslims. Space, time, and God are linked, not to say fused, at least ideally, in the Islamic movement. Space and time constitute the realm that we regularly designate as 'history'; that call to prayer exemplifies that insofar as history has been Islamic history, not merely space and time but also God are involved, are held in unity, tawhid — to use one particular phrasing to designate the matter, they introduce us to the relation between time and eternity.*"<sup>1</sup>

He further explains that Islamic history has been not in two sectors, a religious and a secular. Rather, Islamic history in its totality has been what it has been because each day of history has been lived by men and women whose lives have been enacted in a context that was mundane and, less or more richly, vividly, in a spirit that was transcendent. Therefore in the Islamic worldview, God has been seen as operating through the Muslim community to render Islamic history accordingly the Muslims have set out to make history Islamic<sup>2</sup>.

In his book, *On the Sociology of Islam*, Ali Shari'ati writes:

*According to the Islamic school of thought, the philosophy of history is based on a certain kind of historical determinism. History represents an unbroken flow of events that, like man himself, is dominated by a*

*dialectical contradiction, a constant warfare between the two hostile and contradictory elements that began with the creation of humanity and has been waged at all places and at all times, and the sum total of which constitutes history.*<sup>3</sup>

Based upon the Qur'ân, it sees the entire of history as a conflict of forces: in the same way that man himself is the battle ground for the competing forces of his lowly origin, his lowly bodily nature, and the element of divine spirit contained within him. History is also battleground where *tawhid* and shirk, justice and injustice, have continually opposed each other. Therefore, there is continuous struggle throughout history between two different types of men, two different types of societies, two different types of worldview. The struggle has always been between belief and unbelief, paganism and godliness, or Islam, as last and only religion, and all other varieties of erroneous and false doctrines. To Sayyid Qutb Shahid, 'the confrontation against Islam has always been motivated by one overriding objective — the destruction of Islam and its doctrines. Some writers and scholars, he remarks, distort historical facts by imputing to the Crusades materialistic and imperialistic aims. However, modern Western imperialism is in fact 'a camouflage concealing the crusading spirit which is no longer capable of appearing in its true colors as it used to be during the Middle Ages'<sup>4</sup>. Moreover this hydra type conspiracy is considered by him to have come into being with the foundation of Islam itself. The methods used and the individuals involved may vary from age to age, but the objective has always been the annihilation of the only authentic religion ever preached to mankind. The essentialist conceptual vision unflinchingly detects and recognizes the same enemy masquerading under various disguises. Polytheists, hypocrites, the Jews, Christians, secular rulers, communist states, and capitalistic system, have all conspired one after another to undermine the foundation of Islam<sup>5</sup>.

According to Mawlana Nadwi, who also reinterpreted Islamic history and tradition to respond to the socio-historical conditions of the twentieth century, 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 had 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 form and purity<sup>6</sup>. He cherishes inherent qualities of Islam preserved in its pristine purity that resisted challenges of time, as well as, the role of reformers for their endeavor to uphold Islam against all the odds. He further explains that Islam, not only survived in the face of all these internal and external threats to its very existence, but also was able to gain victories in entirely new fields<sup>7</sup>. The conscience of its followers always refused to strike a compromise with the evil. In every age, Islam produced a man of God who attacked the innovations and deviationist tendencies with the full weight of unshakable conviction and restored the true spirit of the faith; reaffirmed the sunnah of the Holy Prophet against the heretical rites, customs and foreign influences; propounded the teachings of Islam to contradict speculative thoughts and materialistic precepts; raised the banner of revolt in the face of despots and emperors; condemned opulence, luxury and indolence of the rich and enunciated the teachings of Islam as the sole valid source of religious, moral and political advancement, they provided a new driving force, a new life to the Muslims of their time. These scholars of impeccable worth and ability possessed the priceless gift of intellectual, moral and religious capabilities and were beacons of light for their contemporaries. Each one of these was capable enough to expose the manifestations of the ignorance of his age and to bring into light the correct and unalloyed teachings of Islam before the people<sup>8</sup>.

Mawlana Nadwi asserts that, this tradition of struggle against un-Islam, the spirit to preserve and renovate the pristine teachings of the faith and the effort to infuse people with revolutionary spirit to reassert 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 and the Islamic conscience became dormant enough to accept a contaminated faith. Whenever an effort was made from any quarter whatsoever to distort the tenets of Islam, pervert or*

*falsify its teachings or it was attacked by sensualist materialism, someone invariably came forward to accept the challenge and fight it out to the grief of Islam's adversary... finally, however, it was Islam which gained ascendancy over these contending forces.*'<sup>9</sup>

To understand fully the process of *Tajdīd* and *Islah*, and looking back upon our history, determine to what extent and in what ways have the different leaders accomplished this work, there has always been demand to compile a comprehensive history of religious preaching and the revivalist movement. The absence of any work on this subject had provided chance of misconceived notion among many people that there was no continuous attempt at rejuvenating Muslim society. It was commonly held that Islam had not produced towering personalities, barring a few luminaries who were born after centuries. There was also a deliberate attempt to slur or misrepresent the continuous effort made during the past thirteen hundred years for stimulating a spirit of reawakening among the Muslims. Therefore to bring into light those eminent savants who rose to the defense of Islam in order to arrest the onslaught of evil forces, and gave birth to various movements for upholding the Islamic morals and values and, finally, whose efforts made it possible for Islam to survive to this day. In fact to fulfill this demand of having a comprehensive work in which the role of these savants of Islam in reinvigorating and resuscitating Muslim society is emphasized. Mawlana Nadwi used his pen and energy to accentuate the positive contributions of these remarkable men of Muslim history. He writes,

*Unfortunately we find either a glossary of events with kings and emperors as the central figures or biographical accounts of certain eminent luminaries in the vast treasure of Islamic literature but no account of the revivalist movement or intellectual history of the Muslim people encompassing the academic and speculative achievements of all those savants who have left on indelible mark on the world of Islam. These scholars have relentlessly fought against the forces of corruption, defended the Islamic precepts and teachings and*

*rejuvenated the spirit of Islamic revival besides making valuable contributions to the intellectual and academic treasure of their people.*"<sup>10</sup>

However, he further asserts that, "In fact there is no gap at all in the intellectual history of Islam; it is only in the presentation of the history of its people, which needs urgently to be filled in. A history of religious revival and preaching in Islam would also be an account of the intellectual and academic movements which have seen successive ebbs and flows of Islamic reawakening in the past."<sup>11</sup>

Under this compelling context Mawlana Nadwi adopted a unique style of writing history, which bear distinct historical roots and reflect an in-depth study of the subject, Islamic history in particular. May it be the penning of a biography or a thesis recounting the rise and expansion of Muslim power; or lamentations on civilizational maladjustment following the waning fortunes of Muslim; or the multi-splendorous achievements of the Muslim in India; or the obligations to pay literary tribute to the spiritual orders, Mawlana Nadwi derives an inherent satisfaction in heaping himself with the debris of history to sift the chaff from core. He took the responsibility of bringing to light the memorable chapters of Islamic history, 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 innermost feelings, given numerous accounts of the incidents they or their contemporaries had come across, quoted their teachers and mentors and recorded proceedings of the profound 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 writes. 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 cull out relevant data from these works, a complete and detailed history of Islamic missionary effort could be written to show that the effort to re-kind the fire of religious ardors 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.<sup>12</sup>*

Mawlana Nadwi's first literary endeavor and debut as a historian was his historical biography of Sayyid Ahmad Shahid written in 1938-39. Earlier he had also published an article on 'Sayyid' in reputed Arabic journal *Al-Manar* of Rashid Rida Misri during 1349-50 A.H. (A.D. 1931). The book *Seerat Sayyid Ahmad Shahid* is a memoir of the life, work and achievements of the founder of the greatest revivalist movement know to Indian history. It is the comprehensive, well researched and painstakingly portrayed, documenting the vast material existing on the subject. The author claims, "Fortunately, I have also had the advantages of having access to certain original sources, not available to others, and also the opportunity to study the Sayyid Ahamad Shahid's life and mission at close quarters. I had, therefore, been giving thought to the matter from comparatively early age and also written a monograph on the subject."<sup>13</sup>

Therefore, he utilized all existing source on the subject to produce a worthy work to understand the real worth and value of the Sayyid's Movement and the place he occupied among the luminaries of Islam. The book made an instant success and received wide acclaim, both within and abroad. Written originally in Arabic, then Urdu, the way this work was received was an indication of the popularity of Sayyid Ahmad Shahid and the urge of the people to know more about him. Political situation then prevailing in India had created an upsurge in the Muslims who were eager to re-assert their identity and to see Islam strong and powerful in the world. Naturally, the Sayyid's message of hope and faith of self-confidence and self-realization, contained in the book, was enthusiastically welcomed by them.<sup>14</sup>

Mawlana Nadwi's book and other related writings on Sayyid Ahmad Shahid, in addition, proved to be a rebuttal and cleared the many misconceptions regarding the Sayyid Ahmad and his movement disseminated by some Western writers, such as Dr. P. Hardy in *The Muslims of British India*, W.W. Hunter in *Indian Musalmans* and also by some apologetic writers. Mawlana Nadwi claims that,

*I drew attention to and protested against the biased and extremely intolerant attitude of the western writers in regard to the Sayyid and his mission. I tried to show that dearth of material was not the cause of their partisan and unwarranted observation, as it so often happens in depicting the true character and achievements of the reformers of old. For, in such cases, the writers usually exercise their whimsical speculations to present a character sketch.<sup>15</sup> But according to Mawlana Nadwi it seems that the chroniclers never wanted to ascertain true facts; they gave credence to every groundless rumors without evaluating the relative evidential value of the report reaching them. Therefore, on their part it was sheer shadow of narrow-spiritual uncharitable ness bequeathed by the crusades, which was not expected of the present age persons professing to be rationalists.<sup>16</sup>*

Mawlana Nadwi wrote several historical biographies of some outstanding personalities, who played important role in the society. As a historian, he understood the importance of extensive research to produce any meaningful work having far-reaching benefits for future generations. The biographies of two saints Mawlana Fazlur Rehman, 'Tazkirah', and that of Mawlana Muhammad Zakariya 'Biography of Zakariya' fall in the same genre of writing Islamic history through the media of biography, each book provided a valuable source of information for the reader and research scholar alike. In addition to above mentioned biographies Mawlana Nadwi also wrote the biographies of his two spiritual mentors who had influenced his life, more than anybody else. The biography of Shah Abdal Qadir Raipuri and that of Mawlana Ilyas (Founder of Tabligi Movement) is his spiritual and literary tribute to the great divines of the



era, whom he held with high reverence. Writing biographies of these spiritual personalities, he felt it an obligation to present these personalities to future generations, to make a close study of their accomplishment impartially and justly, so as to allocate them the place they deserve in the history of Islam in India. In the biography of *Hazrat Mawlana Abul Qadir Raipuri*, Mawlana Nadwi in addition to many other things related to biography, throws light on the most important political issue of the time, the partition of India and aftermath. *Mawlana Abdul Qadir* never supported the partition and concurred with *Mawlana Hussain Ahmad Madni*, *Mawlana Muhammad Zakariya* and many other *Deobandi 'ulamā'* on this particular issue. Mawlana Nadwi cherishes the role of these three personalities during the trying situations of partition for counseling Muslim especially that of U.P and adjacent areas to remain in India. As a result of their steadfastness in staying in India, Mawlana Nadwi believes Muslims in India are once again a reality<sup>17</sup>. With regard to these writings, which otherwise would have been lost, Mawlana Nadwi's writing have become indispensable.

Mawlana Nadwi's another important book on history, which deserves special mention is *Hindustani Musalman* originally lectures in Arabic and afterwards translated into Urdu and later into English as *Muslims in India*. The role of Islam and Muslims in the history of India has been deliberately distorted, first by the western writers, to serve their vested interests in India; by the socialist and secular historians blinded by ideological baggage, Hindu extremist writers because of their jaundiced views about it and as well as by the Muslim apologetic writers. As Mawlana Nadwi himself writes:

*The tragedy, however, is not confined only to ignorance what is worse and more disconcerting is that there has got created in our country a powerful tendency to blackout and reject the history and the cultural stock of a whole community, its past achievements and the glorious contribution it has made to the national fight for independence. There is afoot a campaign to present the history of our land in a manner as if the Muslim era in India was an era of foreign, imperialistic domination; it*

*was devoid of all virtue and greatness and failed miserably to produce a single noteworthy personality, a single remarkable achievement in the domains of thought and culture, a single act of unpolluted, selfless service to the country's welfare and development of which the nation could be proud, and that in the long-drawn battle for freedom against the British the Muslims were nothing more than that of a disinterested spectator, and if they did, accidentally, take part, it was not worthy of attention... Though it is entirely in opposition to what history tells."*<sup>18</sup>

To dispel misconception created by disinformation about the role of Muslim in India, Mawlana Nadwi's book may be said to be most useful publication on the subject, which has given a fitting answer to those historians who consider the period of Islamic dominations as a dark age in the history of this subcontinent. Published at the precise time in 1953, whilst Muslims in India were in desperate search for such objective writing, which would project the real image with accuracy to help ward off senseless onslaughts on their identity and existence in their very homeland. As well as because it is not possible for all to read voluminous work in Persian and even in Urdu of the old style to enquire into the manifold cultural, literacy, material, and political achievements of Muslim period in Indian history. This brief perspicuous easy to read book of Mawlana Nadwi gives detailed exposition of Muslim genius that has gone into the making of Indian history and culture. Their presence at every form of life throughout the most important period of Indian history drew out the best in them, laying the foundation of a broad-based and composite culture. The contribution of Muslims at all levels of life and society left its multi-dimensional impress on almost all human activity, including state craft and land management. He demonstrates the part played by Muslims in the progress and development of the motherland, the achievements of Muslim scholars and their contribution and role of Muslims in the freedom struggle of India. In the words of Mawlana Nadwi, "they gave India and Indian civilization a new life and a new dimension and awakened its people to a new set of moral and spiritual values. Every path of its land and every particle of its soil bear the imprint of their greatness and is a

monument of their industry, earnestness and creative genius. In every aspect of Indian life and civilization can be seen evidences of their noble aestheticism and cultural richness.”<sup>19</sup>

Mawlana Nadwi’s two voluminous books *Purane Chirage* (Old Lamps) and *Karavaan-e-Zindagi* (March of Life) are profound contribution to the history as well as Urdu literature. *Purane Chiragh* is a life sketch of contemporary personalities personally known to Mawlana Nadwi, therefore, recorded facts and information. He has preserved precisely his reflections, impressions of some important personalities who had passed away and where personally known to him. He assesses at length their respective talents and specific achievements, dedication and excellence in their respective fields. While reading three volumes of *Purnane Chiragh* one comes in direct contact with the saints, the philosophers, the poet, the writer, the editor, the pacifist, the revolutionary, the teacher, the social worker, the statesman and the administrator, keeping the reader a pace with the unbroken chain of history. Likewise *Karavaan-e- Zindagi* is his autobiography in eight volumes but as a matter of fact is more than that, a glance at the history through his eyes. These writings will not only serve as record on lives surveyed but also act as good source material for the student of the future years.

Mawlana Nadwi’s personality and vision seemed largely defined by his six-volume magnum opus, *Tarikh-i-Dawat wa Azimat*, translated into English as *Saviors of Islamic Spirit* (4 volumes). In these volumes he has extensively portrayed the intellectual and religious efforts of Islam, its social history and revivalist and reformative endeavors and has introduced in a copious way the leaders of such movements and has categorically stated in the introduction to the book that in Islam there has been a continuity of reformative movements and there were no long interregnums of suspense or inaction. The *Tarikh-e-Dawat wa Azimat* answers the key questions in Islamic history, viz, what's there in Islamic society which, despite all the vicissitudes and debacles, explains its undiminished resilience? The Islamic history is a history of *dawah* and fortitude and which keeps on refreshing and reviving itself through *tajdid*, *islah* and *jihad*.

*Tarikh-i-Dawat wa Azimat* provides an alternative view of looking at Islamic history as a history of 'ulamâ' and intellectuals instead of as a chronicle of sultans and regimes some noble and horrible. Depending upon their respective circumstances some of the 'ulamâ' took part in or even led jihad, others concentrated on winning the hearts and soul of the people. Not surprisingly Islamic society has suffered more by the decline of the 'ulamâ' than the disloyalty of its *umara*.<sup>20</sup>

Much acclaimed book of Mawlana Nadwi *Maadha Khasi-al-alamo bin-hitaal al-Muslimin* for which he received accolades throughout, especially Arab world where it was first published in 1951, with a foreword by the leading modernist writer Ahmad Amin (d. 1954). However, many who read the book, including king Abdullah I of Jordan (d. 1951), felt that Ahmad Amin's foreword lacked a fuller understanding of the book's driving theme.<sup>21</sup> The second and subsequent editions of the book carried a new foreword, this one by Sayyid Qutb (d. 1966). The book was later translated into English under the title of *Islam and the World* and into Urdu, Persian and Turkish subsequently.

What mankind has lost because of Muslim decline is the subject matter of this book. The book traces the history from antiquity especially before the advent of Islam; it also describes the conditions, the state of affairs and intellectual temper of man from the east to west and from north to south. The picture that the book presents of that age is clear-cut and delineates its features with accuracy and insight. The author has supported his statements by references to admittedly reliable authorities to provide an elaborate account of religious, social, moral and political state of that moribund period of human history, particularly on the eve of the prophethood of Muhammad صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ. According to Sayyid Qutb, "the book in its style and treatment does not however, ponder to mere sentiments or excite passions of dogmatism. The claims that it makes are sustained by solid scholarship and objective research in a manner that appeals both to the mind and the heart. The enlightened and unprejudiced mind of the author is clearly revealed by the scrupulous care and deep concern from truth with which historical events and their sequences are recorded and environmental effects and ramifications analyzed. Decisions are left to the discernment of enlightened minds and a conscience that is

sensitive to truth. Topics have been discussed, arranged and interfered in such a manner that no conclusion is ever forced on the reader".<sup>22</sup>

After describing this age as the age of ignorance (*jahilliyah*), in its salient feature, the author has outlined the part played by Islam in the reconstruction of humanity. Delineates upon the role of Islam in saving the human society from decadence and degeneration, in liberating the soul of man from superstitions and banalities, emancipated him from the evils of slavery and degradation, and liberated man from the tyranny of kings and the dominance of priests. It strikes a harmonious balance between the world of faith and the world of action, therefore Islam never proved to be barrier to progress and science. It was Islam that made earlier Muslims great but later generations deviated from the teaching of Islam resulting in the decline of Muslims fortunes. The author describes succinctly the reason for the material and spiritual decay in the Muslims and points out that the harm the Muslims sustained was by deviation from the principles of their faith and turning away from the responsibilities it entailed.

Thus according to Mawlana Nadwi, with the failure of the Muslims to sustain and discharge efficiently the great responsibility of the trusteeship of mankind which Islam enjoined upon them, Islam lost its world leadership. Paving the way for West to take the leadership of world, and that is based on sheer materialism. Therefore, ignorance, which prevailed before the coming of Islam, reigned again in the garb of Western civilization. As its title indicates, the book primarily seeks to explain the decline of Islam by offering a historical account of its rise, expansion and gradual regression. Mawlana Nadwi's depiction of 'Muslim decadence', which is seen to have taken place under the Ottomans, is followed by a grim description of 'the genealogy of western civilization,' embracing the Greek, the Romans, Christianity, materialism, the theory of evolution, nationalism and scientific progress. His verdict is unambiguous: 'Christian Europe' has become in its entire civilization 'pagan and materialistic' (*jahiliyya -madniyya*). Then he, explains the cruel and catastrophic consequences of the transfer of world-leadership from the Muslims to the western people whose appetites are purely material and who have, thereof, built up a structure of which is utterly inimical to the needs of human mind and spirit. Mawlana Nadwi in this book points out that the Muslims have

been forced to join this mad pursuit of materialism, turning into 'mere passengers' in a train driven by West. Nevertheless, he asserts, that the Muslims are essentially immune to out right 'pagan materialism', since their spiritual heritage is still 'preserved in its pristine purity'<sup>23</sup>. The book aims at, to stir the Muslims into an appreciation of Islam's glorious role in the story of human progress, and to promote in them, thereby, a desire to look into themselves, with a view to finding out how far they have been true to their duty and mission to the world. It presents Islam, as an eternal reality and a program of life, which can never, grew obsolete. However, Mawlana Nadwi has objectively delineate on the subject of Western Civilization and its impact also in his another book translated into English under the title of *Western Civilization Islam and Muslims*.

Mawlana Nadwi through this book *Mazaha Kasir-al-alamo bin-hitaal al Muslimin* reinstalls hope of revival of Islam on the seat of world leadership. In the words of Sayyid Qutb:

*The historical analysis the author (Mawlana Nadwi) compels one to believe strongly that a time has come when the present leadership should be changed and humanity brought back to the real fountains head of guidance which aims at leading man from darkness to light and from ignorance to knowledge and wisdom. The reader of the book soon realizes how very important such guidance is to the world today and what terrible loss humanity has suffered in losing it. This loss is sustained not by the Muslims only but is shared by the whole world... if by reading this book, the Muslim is filled with the shame and contribution for his criminal neglect and carelessness, he also becomes acutely aware of the tremendous potentialities that have been given to him and begins to feel an overpowering desire to regain the world leadership he lost through his own neglect and lack of appreciation of its quality.*<sup>24</sup>

Also from the methodological point of view Sayyid Qutb cherishes the Mawlana Nadwi's approach to history and remarks,

*The book is not only a refreshing example of religious and social research but of how history can be recorded and interpreted from the wider Islamic point of view. The scholars of the west have written the history of the world from their own western point of view. They could not, naturally escape from being conditioned by their upbringing, their philosophy and their national and religious prejudices. Because they forget or under rated, consciously or unconsciously, certain important values of life, the histories written by them contains many aberrations and travesties. Unless these values are understood and appreciated properly, no history of man can be recorded in its completeness nor can facts be interpreted and conclusions deduced from them, correctly... The book has kept all these considerations steadily in view and given special attention to movements and values that have conditioned and influenced man and his life. Nothing has been left out which had any effect on life”<sup>25</sup>*

Sayyid Qutb admires Mawlana Nadwi for his style and originality of writing and also for avoiding Western schema . The West came to dominate the Muslim world not only through technology, but also through its ability to capture the entire historical heritage of the Muslims and others and use it for its own purposes and has continued to dominate both history teaching and research , not only in the west but throughout the world. However, for Mawlana Nadwi, to impose the Western –cultural aberrations on one’s understanding of other civilizations is to distort.

Furthermore, Mawlana Nadwi has discussed some methodological issues while writing historical biographies. In his preface to *Saviors of Islamic Spirit*, he has explained few points, which he personally adopted in writing these volumes. He writes, “for presenting the viewpoint of any particular person or a movement started by him, his own writings or sayings have been relied upon. If these have been found inadequate, only then help has been taken from the writings or descriptions left by his friends, contemporaries and pupils. In the latter case more reliable and authentic sources have been given preference without placing undue

reliance on those writers who were nearer to him in time; trustworthy material has been used whenever it could be found, after careful verification of the facts."<sup>26</sup> Here he concurs with the E. H. Carr views that the element of interpretation enters into every fact of history. "The historian is necessarily selective. The belief in a hard core facts existing objectively and independently of interpretation of the historian is a preposterous fallacy, but one which is very hard to eradicate."<sup>27</sup> In order to avoid this distortion of facts Mawlana Nadwi emphasizes the use of authentic sources while studying a personality. He emphasized before analyzing and discussing a personality and in order to make correct assessment of the achievement of the subject concerned in its true perspective. It is necessary to cast light on the intellectual, cultural and academic temperament of the time. The scholar should be able to understand the particular contemporary situation and circumstances in which the personality under discussion has endeavored. Assessment of any character, out of its own context of time and place, according to modern concepts and values might appear to be a work of critical study but it will be injustice to the personality so evaluated.<sup>28</sup> Therefore, Mawlana Nadwi claims of having adopted realistic approach and of having elucidated the real picture of the personality and the situations under which they struggled rather than relying on same critical approach or dryly objective method to appease others.

In the words of Sayyid Qutb, "It is a remarkable example of how history should be recorded. It shows how a Muslim can take up his pen to record historical events and discuss their sequences without borrowing from the European historians and copying their style which often lacks balance, historical veracity and adequate scholarship and research."<sup>29</sup>

His writings are pointer to historical documents of the best possible effort for Islamic revival in this century. His writings are characterized by literary features. On reading his works, one notes a fine blending of history and literary style. His style is characterized by deep reflection, seriousness, poise and confidence. He combines in himself the essence of literary masterpieces. His writing and style, like his personality, exude tranquility which is a hallmark of Islamic educational institutions and monasteries. Apart from being studded with literary charm, his writings



inspire a collective approach, which reflects, once again, his all-embracing personality. He selected history as his subject of special study, in order to inspire young generation and motivate them to take up the cause of *dawah*.

## End Notes

<sup>1</sup> Wilfred Cantwell Smith, "Islamic History as a Concept" in *Or Understanding Islam Selected Studies Wilfred Cantwell Smith*, Idarah-i-Adabiyat-i-Delli, Delhi, 1981, p 5.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp12 -19.

<sup>3</sup> Ali Shariati, *On the Sociology of Islam*, trns. By Hamid Agar (Crescent Publishing Company, India, 1919, p. 97.

<sup>4</sup> Sayyid Qutb, *Ma'alim fi al-Tari*, Dar al-Shurq, Beirut and Cairo, 1981/1401, p 202.

<sup>5</sup> Sayyid Qutb, *Fi Zilal Al Quran*, rev. edn. Vol. 2, Dar al Shurq, Beerut and Cairo, 1981, pp. 924-25.

<sup>6</sup> Sayyid Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi, *Saviours Of Islamic Spirit*, Vol. I, Islamic Research and Publication Lucknow, 1986, p. 3.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 3-4.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, Preface X.

<sup>11</sup> *Idem*

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

<sup>13</sup> Sayyid Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi, *A Misunderstood Reformer*, Academy o Islamic Research and Publication, Lucknow, 1978-79, p.6.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 40.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.* p. 7.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 35.

<sup>17</sup> Mawlana Sayyid Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi, *Sawaniah Hazrat Mawlana Abdu Qadir Raipur (Urdu)*, Maktaba Islami, Lucknow, 1994, p. 144 ff.

<sup>18</sup> Mawlana Nadwi, *Muslim In India*, Islamic Research and Publicatio Lucknow, 1980, pp. 2-4.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>20</sup> M.H. Faruqi, Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi, in Impact International, reproduced b The Fragrance of East. January-June 2000, p. 130.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 136.

<sup>22</sup> Sayyid Qutb, in Foreword to Nadwi's *Islam and World*, op. cit., p. 2.

<sup>23</sup> Mawlana Nadwi, *Madha Khasira Al -'Alam Bi Inhitat Al-Muslimin*, 10th ed (Dar al - Ansar , Cairo, 1977) p, 279 -85. Or see English trans. *Islam and th World* by Asif Qidawai, (The Academy of Islamic Research Pub, Lahor Pakistan-1961), p. 181.

<sup>24</sup> Sayyid Qutb, op. cit., p. 4.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 5-6.

<sup>26</sup> Mawlana Nadwi, *Saviours of Islamic Spirit*, op. cit., p. XI.

<sup>27</sup> E .H . Carr. *What Is History?* Penguin Books, 1964 p -12.

<sup>28</sup> *Idem*

<sup>29</sup> Sayyid Qutb, op. cit., pp. 6-7.