

Maulana Wahiduddin Khan: The Ideologue of Peace and Spirituality

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ABSTRACT

Maulana Wahiduddin Khan (1925-2021) was a noted Indian Islamic scholar, scholastic theologian, philosopher and peace activist. He had authored over 200 books on Islam, including *Mazhab aur Jadeed Challenge*, *Prophet of Revolution*, *Tazkeerul Quran*, *Islam the Creator of Modern age*, *Prophetic Wisdom*, *Islam Rediscovered*, *Jihad*, *Peace and Inter-Community Relations in Islam* and *The Ideology of Peace*. He received many national and international awards in recognition of his contribution to world peace including the 'Demiurgus Peace International Award'; the 'National Amity Award', 'Padma Bhushan' and Padma Vibhushan (2021). He was also awarded the title of 'Ambassador of Peace' by the International Federation for World Peace, Korea. In 2015, he was conferred with 'Sayyidina Imam al-Hassan ibn Ali Memorial Peace Award' by the 'Forum for Promoting Peace in Muslim Societies' in Abu Dhabi (UAE), in recognition of his contribution to world peace particularly promoting peace in Muslim societies.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Maulana Wahiduddin Khan (1925-2021) was one of the leading Indian Islamic scholars of modern times, recognized worldwide for his scholarship and his commitment to the cause of Islamic revival and reform. Later in life he had grown into a multifaceted personality with deep knowledge of science and western philosophy in addition to Islamic sciences. His strong conviction, exemplary perseverance and clarity of vision are unparalleled in contemporary Islamic thought.

Maulana Wahiduddin Khan developed his own understanding of Islam and its place in the modern world. Although the Muslims of India are his primary focus, and the development of his thought must be located in the specific Indian context, Maulana seeks to address the Muslim Ummah as a whole. Maulana appeared on the intellectual scene of subcontinent in post-partition era. The history of Islamic

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reformist thought in the latter half of twentieth and early 21st century can't be complete without a comprehensive account of Maulana's ideas and endeavors.

His prominent senior contemporaries included Allama Sir Mohammad Iqbal, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Maulana Abul Aala Mawdudi, and Abul Hassan Ali Nadvi. Though a sizeable literature has been produced on the life, works and ideologies of these stalwarts, little is available in written form about Maulana's reformist and revivalist efforts barring a few polemics. His modernist approach and rediscovery of Islam from its original sources has not been taken well by his contemporaries and many have criticized him. The criticism has to be balanced by recognizing his contributions as a revivalist and reformist particularly his ideas of Peace, Dawah and Akhirat orientation as essential teachings of Islam. Some literature on the life and thought of Maulana Wahiduddin Khan though scanty exists in English and Arabic languages and it was in fact through these languages that he got introduced to outer world.

In this backdrop it is imperative to take an objective look at the thought and mission of Maulana Wahiduddin Khan in present times, to highlight his real contributions to modern Islamic thought.

Maulana Wahiduddin Khan has written on varied topics. In fact, there is hardly any aspect of Islam on which he has not written something; from theology to science, Islamic sciences to contemporary issues and modern legal issues in Islam to ethical and moral teachings of Islam; each has found a mention in Maulana's writings. The present work is an attempt to classify and summarize his 'Islamic Thought' expressed in over 200 books on different aspects of Islam.

Since Maulana has authored over 200 volumes on the subject of 'Islam in the Modern world', the present write-up deals with major themes in his writings, elucidation of some of his selected works and exploration of his real contributions to the contemporary Islamic thought. The fields of his special interest including particularly the scientific theology, world peace, Dawah, Spirituality and a change of paradigm from emotional reactions to reasoned response have been focused upon.

1.2 Islamic Thought in India in Early 20th Century

Coming to terms with new challenges has always been a matter of serious concern in all ages for Muslim scholars; and over the centuries they have responded positively to their fullest capability in their respective ages.

The Divine messages throughout the centuries came to reform human understanding, and Messengers were sent as “Muslihun” [reformers], those who bring good, reconcile human beings with the divine, and reform their societies for the better.¹

The latter half of twentieth century witnessed reformers like Mawlana Sayyid Abul-Ala Mawdudi (1903-1979) and Maulana Sayyid Abul Hassan Ali Nadwi (1913-1999) popularly known as Ali Miyan Nadwi. Both of them were personally pious and prolific writers who, through their writings provided ideological foundations to the contemporary Islamic revivalist thought. They formulated specific responses to the challenges facing Muslim Ummah in general and Indian Muslims in particular. Their contributions in defending Islam against onslaught of western materialistic civilization and the ideologies like Marxism and Communism are laudable. Though revival and reform were the common goals for both of them; they differed in their approaches. Another significant revivalist, reformist and modernist voice of the post-independence India, often overlooked is that of Maulana Wahiduddin Khan (1925-2021), who developed an independent understanding of Islam, capable of solving a host of contemporary problems facing Muslim Ummah.

Mawlana Sayyid Abul Ala Mawdudi considered it essential to reinstate Islam as a political system. It is here that Mawlana Ali Miyan Nadwi and Maulana Wahiduddin Khan parted ways with Maulana Mawdudi. Both of them stress on individual reform to bring about durable and sustainable social changes. According to Nadwi, “The Prophets used to transform men from inside, they emphasized the change in attitudes and perspective of men rather than change of system (Nizam).”²

It may be of interest to note that despite difference in methodology almost all the Muslim scholars in 20th century remain united in rejecting communism and Marxism as a sociopolitical ideology.

1.3 Early Life and Education

The sociopolitical environ in post-partition India was deteriorating when Maulana Wahiduddin Khan appeared on the Muslim intellectual scene. Maulana, born and brought up in a serene rural atmosphere of rural India, got his early education under Farahi-Islahi school of thought and acquired modern knowledge of English, science and history on his own. He was thus not inclined to a particular tradition and was free to contemplate on the situation and formulate his own response suited to the

Indian conditions in particular and practicable for Muslim ummah in general. It is in this backdrop that his philosophy and religious thought needs to be studied and evaluated as he often boldly claims that 'he is not an extension of any particular ideology or ideologue'.³

After Madrasa education, he realized its inadequacy to face the modern world. In search of truth, Maulana Wahiduddin Khan was first attracted to Maulana Mawdudi's forceful and logical presentation of Islamic literature before the world in a systemic manner and its positive impact on Indian youth but Jama'at e Islami's political solution to problems of Indian Muslims, disappointed Maulana Wahiduddin Khan. He now found some solace in Tablighi Jama'at a reformation movement of Indian Muslims that stressed on Akhirat oriented life showing little concern for temporal issues. Soon, Maulana realized that their formulation suits a particular stratum of Muslim society having no fodder for intellectual growth and logical thinking. It is here, that Maulana Wahiduddin Khan started his independent original thinking which led him to the present stature and eminence.

When he turns to Quran for guidance, his gaze is fixed on his favorite and oft quoted Hudaibya Pact; contemplates its universal relevance and he finds the solution for Indian Muslims living in a pluralistic society.

As rightly analyzed by Yoginder Sikand:

"Maulana Wahiduddin Khan has developed his own, in some respects, unique, understanding of Islam and its place in the modern world. He suggests Indian Muslims how to create a balance between their conflicting loyalties to the state, on the one hand, and to their religion, on the other. Although the Muslims of India are Maulana's primary focus, and the development of his own thought must be located in the specific Indian context, He seeks to address the Muslim ummah as a whole."⁴

Al-Risala forms the back bone of Maulana's thought and mission. Small one-page articles of Maulana in simple lucid persuasive and epiphany style fortified with scientific references and vivid presentation are sufficient to tie down readers. An uninterrupted stream of such lessons over last forty years from Maulana's pen have definitely impressed and guided young Indian minds and have spilled over beyond borders. It may be important to note that most of the books by Maulana are in fact collection of Maulana's articles relevant to a particular subject, already published in different issues of Al-Risala.

Major Themes in Maulana's Thought:

Scientific Theology, Peace and Dawah, Islam in the Contemporary world, Revival and Reform in Islam, Islamic Studies: Need for Ijtihad, Indian Muslims: Need for Reform, Woman in Islam, Spirituality and Philosophy of Life.

Maulana Wahiduddin Khan's interest particularly lay in Science and Islam, and his first detailed book on a particular subject was "Mazhab aur Jadid Challenge" published in 1966, translated into English as God Arises and into Arabic as Al-Islam Yatahada that is included in syllabi of many gulf universities. Acclaimed as Maulana's one of the best books it not only explained the compatibility of science and religion but it also dispels and clarifies the doubts in western educated minds particularly the question of God as Creator of Universe; who manages the delicate and calculated balance between heavenly bodies and finally will bring an end to the cosmos as predicted in all divine revelations.

He places Islamic Dawah as the supreme responsibility of every Muslim which of course, needs a peaceful environment. According to Maulana the responsibility of creation of a peaceful environment thus lies on Muslims as dais of Islam and they should go extra mile in establishing peace and making bridges with other communities and nations. He is a strong advocate of world peace and interfaith dialogue. In this connection he has travelled extensively in India and around the globe involving with different world peace organizations and religious groups.

Maulana is particularly critical of such ideologies as Marxism, socialism, communism, and materialism, and have written several books on these subjects. He is equally critical of Muslims for not taking to modern education, science, and technology that has left them far behind the world nations while they were supposed to be the world leaders in this world and the hereafter. Whereas he is critical of the Godless materialistic, philosophy of the West; he is equally appreciative of their advancement in fields of research, science and technology. He impresses upon Muslims not only to benefit from scientific achievements but to be a part of research teams. Maulana Wahiduddin Khan's writings are concerned to present Islam as a comprehensive world view and the only ideology that can fill the vacuum of future world.

Another area of his scholarly achievements is exegesis of holy Quran titled Tazkeerul Quran distinguished from other exegetic literature by its particular

reminder and warning aspect of Quranic teachings as the name itself implies. It focuses itself on the creation plan of God that needs to be conveyed to each and every individual on earth irrespective of outcome or impact-only as a responsibility of a member of Muslim ummah of the last Holy Prophet ﷺ. The exegesis deliberately avoids legal aspect of Quranic teachings.

Maulana has penned down several books on Islamic studies i.e. Tafseer, Seerah, Hadith, Kalam, fiqh and tasawwuf and particularly on Islam in contemporary world, condemning the Muslim practice of clinging to the past and not giving due place to exercise of ijtiḥād; that only can solve most of their problems. On the issue of ijtiḥād, he stresses for reinterpretation primary texts and re-application of Quranic principles to find answers to modern challenges. Having come to the conclusion that the need of the hour was to present Islamic teachings in the style and language of the present day, Maulana has written over 200 books on Islam. 5

A Significant work of Maulana Wahiduddin Khan regarding the Ideology of Peace: 'Prophet of Peace'

It is one of the important books by Maulana on the theme of Islam and peace in the modern world. The book first published by Penguin Books, India in 2009; consists of 29 small chapters on subjects relating to Islam, peace, Ijtiḥād, and terrorism.

The "Prophet of Peace" deals with the main events associated with life of Holy Prophet relating to Jihad, Ijtiḥād, the concept and ethics of war and the dealings with other religious communities. Maulana further argues that it is lack of exercise of Ijtiḥād that has led the dynamism of Islam into stagnant ritualism.

Maulana, drawing lessons from the Quran and the Sunnah of Holy Prophet of Islam ﷺ, proves that 'in Islam, peace is the rule and war only a rare exception'. He demonstrates that Islam allows only defensive wars and that denial of justice is no justification for aggression. Maulana believes that armed struggle against Muslim rulers in the name of jihad is unjustified and the act of suicide bombing is un-Islamic.

Quoting extensively from Quran and Hadith, Maulana illustrates the Islamic view of modernity, democracy, secularism, freedom of speech and the relevance and scope of the Islamic values in the modern age. Maulana clarifies that Islam as revealed in the Quran is not anti-modernity nor does it advocate violence. He recommends that ideology of violence, prevalent around the globe, cannot be countered by guns and bombs but only with the alternative ideology of peace.

The political interpretation of Islam in recent past has hijacked the basic peaceful ideology of Islam and taken to extremism that has in fact nothing to do with Islam.

The misplaced priorities with Muslim thinkers and ideologues, according to Maulana have led the Muslim Ummah to present mess. The foremost duty of Muslims was to spread the message of God but they are engaged in non-missionary activities with missionary spirit.

According to Maulana, there is presently an ideological vacuum in the world that can only be filled by Islam; and the Muslims having lost their political empire can still avail the opportunity and build a 'Dawah Empire'. The Maulana believes that Muslims should come out of the shell of past and channelize their energies in fields like education, science and technology, industry and above all the Dawah work for which this ummah was in fact raised.

Further he advises Muslims not to treat western nations as their enemies. Rather, they should acknowledge the contributions of west to humanity in the form of advancements in the fields of knowledge, science and technology, social sciences and modern political values like, democracy, secularism and human rights. Still if they have any differences these should be met at intellectual level and not through violence.

Though Maulana has written extensively on subject of Peace and Islam and there are, half a dozen more books on same subject; the 'Prophet of Peace' is unique in the sense that it summarizes Maulana's ideology on many more related topics like, sectarianism, modernity, blasphemy and eschatology. Overall the book is a summary of Maulana's ideology of Peace and Dawah.

1.4 Views of Maulana on Important Issues: Peace, Harmony and Coexistence

Maulana considers Jihad as a peaceful ideological struggle and explains the same in his preface to Tazkirul Quran as:

Those who are introduced to the Quran only through media, generally have the impression that the Quran is a book of jihad, and jihad to them is an attempt to achieve one's goal by means of violence. Anyone who reads the Quran for himself is soon relieved of this misunderstanding and will easily appreciate that its message has nothing to do with violence.

The Quran; in fact, promulgates peace throughout its textual messages. It is true that jihad is one of the teachings of Quran. But Jihad taken in its correct sense is the name of peaceful struggle; rather than any kind of violent action. Obviously, the Quran is not a weapon but a book which gives us an introduction to the divine ideology of peaceful struggle.⁶

Islam is a religion of peace in the fullest sense of the word. Quran calls its way 'the path of peace'⁷; it describes reconciliation as the best policy,⁸ and states that God abhors any disturbance of the peace.⁹ It is no exaggeration to say that Islam and violence are contradictory terms. The fact that violence is not sustainable in the present world is sufficient indication that violence as a principle is quite alien to the scheme of things in Islam. Islam claims to be an eternal religion and as such could never afford to uphold a principle which couldn't stand the test of time. Islamic terrorism as such is a contradiction in terms much like pacifist terrorism. Islam is a religion of peace in the fullest sense of the word.¹⁰

The word Jihad in terms of war or war tactics forms one of the major obligatory duties on Muslim ummah with precedence in the early period of Islam and unequivocal predictions of its lasting value till the Day of Judgment. It also finds favor with traditional ulama and political ideologues, many of whom exploit it for political gains rather than upholding and propagating the word of Allah.

Muhammad Hamidullah explains the truth about war in Islam: 'The life of Prophet Muhammad provides references to only three kinds of wars; defensive, punitive and preventive'.¹¹ Maulana contends that Islam is a non-violent religion; violence or armed struggle is only an exception to this rule. Maulana points out a subtle distinction and clarifies that ultimate aim of Islam is to spread the word of God and not the establishment of political empire as being attempted unsuccessfully throughout the world for couple of centuries.

Maulana Wahiduddin Khan takes the term jihad in literal meaning of struggle for spreading the divine message to the remotest corner of the world. He argues that it is just possible to achieve this goal utilizing the modern advancements in the field of science and technology.

Muslims all over the world are said to be engaged in violence whether active or passive. According to Maulana, just thinking in extremist terms may be described as passive violence while adopting the gun culture may be described active violence.

This phenomenon pertains to Muslim practices and has nothing to do with Islamic teachings. Jihad literally means 'utmost struggle'.¹² The true interpretation of this word is 'a peaceful struggle for the dissemination of the message of God to mankind.'¹³

On the concept of peace, tolerance and non-violence in Islam, Maulana, Summarize his view point as:

It is no exaggeration to say that Islam and violence are contradictory to each other. The concept of Islamic violence is so unfounded that that prima facie it stands rejected. The fact that violence is not sustainable in the present world is sufficient indication that violence as a principle is quite alien to the scheme of things in Islam. Islam claims to be an eternal religion and as such, could not uphold any principle which could not stand up to the test of time. Any attempt to bracket violence with Islam amounts, therefore, to casting doubt upon the very eternity of the Islamic religion. Islamic terrorism is a contradiction in terms, much like 'pacifist' activism. And the truth of the fact is that, all the teachings of Islam are based directly or indirectly on the principle of Peace.¹⁴

Talking about suicide bombing, Maulana observes:

'Suicide is held illegal in all religions and legal systems of the world. There is a tradition of the prophet of Islam according to which one who committed suicide would have to face eternal hell. He further declares: The truth of the matter is that suicide is totally forbidden (*haram*) in Islam.'¹⁵

1.4.1 Peace

The peace spirituality and Dawah are the values that occupied a place very close to the heart of Maulana. These in fact form the very core of his religious philosophy. Peace according to Maulana is the essential law of nature encompassing the whole known universe and is imbedded in the very nature of man. According to Maulana, 'Peace is a rule and war only a rare exception in Islam.' He describes peace as the greatest good or summum bonum which is an end itself and at the same time contains all other goods and no negative results. Most people hold that freedom is the greatest good but that can't be so described. The unchecked freedom leads to anarchy, with all its attendant problems. Peace brings normalcy. That is the best thing about it, for all developments and progress can take place only in a normal atmosphere.

The 'World Peace' is one of Maulana's major concerns. He has written many volumes on the subject including: 'The True Jihad', Islam and Peace, The ideology of Peace, the Prophet of Peace: Teachings of the Prophet Muhammad, Jihad, Peace & Inter-community Relations in Islam, a Manifesto of Peace, and age of Peace etc.

Drawing on original sources of Islam, Maulana has devised a pacifist ideology of Islam for world peace. He believes that it can be achieved through individual reform by making man spiritually conscious of his status. Towards this end he established a CPS in 2001 at Delhi which undertakes various spiritual and missionary dawah activities at international level. He denounces the political interpretation of Islam that has, according to him, defamed Islam and has proved futile, counterproductive and rather a mirage for beleaguered Muslims all over the world¹⁶. Whereas the whole world puts justice as a precondition for peace, Maulana differs on the subject with valid arguments. He advocates 'Peace for Normalcy and Dawah' not for justice. E.g. the constitution of I.L.O (The International Labor Organization) affirms that: "Universal and lasting peace can be established only if it is based on social justice"

But this assumption is unrealistic according to Maulana. Peace is not desirable for the sake of justice but for the sake of normalcy. Setting justice as a precondition for peace is unnatural according to Maulana. The correct approach he suggests is first of all to establish peace on a unilateral basis. The fact is that in this world one can have only a working justice but not the ideal justice. Working justice is possible in all situations whereas ideal justice is not. Maulana concludes that peace can be achieved by the acceptance of status quo or 'qana'at' (Contentment) in Islamic terms. Through peace the opportunities open up and it is by availing these opportunities that justice can be achieved.

The peace can be attained only on a unilateral basis, without confrontation with others. But when we want to establish social justice and human rights, it becomes a bilateral issue because we have to fight other groups that we think are responsible for injustice and violation of human rights. Therefore, peace for social justice is not a practicable formula. The only workable formula is peace for normalcy. Normalcy gives us the opportunity to achieve our goal through wise planning. One example of this peace strategy is Hudaibyah treaty entered into by prophet of Islam in 628CE. This entailed the prophet having to agree to all of the conditions laid down by his opponents. That has a universal and eternal relevance.¹⁷

1.4.2 Spirituality

Maulana Wahiduddin Khan with a God given clarity of vision addresses all contemporary issues facing modern world. Materialistic life style has almost turned the common man blind to religious values and his failure to look and think beyond daily requirements. In such a scenario Maulana comes up with spirituality as a panacea for all ailments of modernity right from erosion of ethical values, immoral life style, materialistic leanings and atheistic notions. But his concept of spirituality is not something elitist property. It is open to achievement by common man unlike church and priesthood in other religions or hierarchy of Sufism among Muslims.

It is a sort of democratizing of Spirituality in contrast to conventional ways of Sufism. We can thus infer that the spirituality propounded, practiced and propagated by Maulana has its firm foundations in Quran itself, is based on Contemplations (tadabbur, tafakkur and tawassum), having nothing mysterious and is democratic in nature in contrast to ecstasy and meditation based conventional hierarchical system of Tasawwuf.¹⁸

1.5 Islam and the West

It is an undisputable fact that many political and economic policies of west are detrimental to the collective good of Muslims; but in reality, this has nothing to do with any enmity towards Islam. According to Maulana the hadith which mentions Dajjal appearing close to doomsday is doubtless correct but certainly it doesn't apply to modern western civilization.

Another hadith of the prophet predicts that close to the doomsday the message of Islam will enter every hut or mansion (Idkhal e kalima). This in fact has been made possible in the modern world, truly speaking only with the help of west. The pre-conditions for Idkhal e kalima include a system of global communication, complete religious freedom, unbounded resources, free enquiry into knowledge including religious, and all these factors are now a reality –thanks to the west. It has thus produced all the means and resources essential to the successful carrying out of Islamic dawah, all over the world. Further it is west that scientifically unraveled the nature's secrets, testifying to the veracity of the Quran: "We will show them our signs in the universe, and in their own-selves, until it becomes manifest to them that this is the truth."¹⁹

1.6 Religious Pluralism and Inter-Community Relations

Maulana is among the few Indian 'ulama to have taken seriously the issue of pluralism and inter-community relations, free from the polemics and negative stereotypes that generally characterize the response of many Muslims to people of other faiths. He insists that Muslims must come out of their paranoia or 'persecution complex' and separatist mentality²⁰ search for opportunities that exist despite the odds that seem to weigh heavily against them; they should be guided by pragmatic considerations rather than by a misplaced idealism.

According to Maulana, Muslims must turn to internal reform rather than seeking external solutions to their problems through conflict with the state or with the dominant Hindus. It in his view needs to be attempted through the path of construction rather than confrontation. Maulana writes that the Muslims of India today find themselves in a position similar to that of the Prophet and his followers in Makkah, when the nascent Muslim community was small and relatively powerless. Just as the Prophet, at this stage, concerned himself only with peaceful preaching, so too must the Muslims of India eschew all confrontation with others and, instead, seek to win them over through dialogue and peaceful propagation of Islam.²¹

What is required, then, is a contextual reading of the Qur'an and the Prophetic tradition, the Makkan model providing the basic source of inspiration for Muslims today.²²

It is only by 'proving their usefulness' to society as a whole that others would not only come to regard Muslims as valuable allies, but would also appreciate Islam as a religious option. Muslims should be able to contribute their services to society and transform themselves from the status of 'takers' to that of 'givers'.²³

Based on Prophetic Hadith 'خير الناس من ينفع الناس'²⁴ on the same subject, Maulana advises Muslims to become givers not takers as they were in the first phase of History of Islam.

One of the ironies of this era is that although the means of communication have greatly advanced, people still have difficulty in a meaningful communication and dialogue with other cultures and religions. There is a lot of misinformation and misunderstanding of the Islamic faith. It is essential that Muslims be judged in the

light of Islamic ideals; Islam should not be judged in the light of what Muslims do in the name of Islam. 25

Religious differences have always existed between people. That is why the history of dialogue is also as old as that of mankind. Drawing lessons from the life of Prophet (ﷺ) of Islam we come across the events of Hudaibya and the 'Mithaq e Madina' or the first written constitution of the world. This was the first religious conference involving religious issues involving Jews, Christians and Muslims-in modern terms-a dialogue to exchange views.

1.7 Muslims in the Contemporary World

About the predicament of contemporary Muslim world, Maulana is of the view they are in a mess of their own making. They have forgotten the lessons of history and the repeated warnings of Holy Quran. The Quran clearly mentions: "Nothing befalls man but is the earning of his own hands"²⁶ Muslims according to Maulana have forgotten their primary role of dawah as an extension of prophetic mission after Khatm a nabuwwat; and thus, lost the divine protection that is promised and preconditioned with dawa work. Quran says that if they don't perform their assigned duty Allah may bring another people in their place as is evident from many examples from world history quoted in holy Quran.²⁷

The Holy Quran further says that Allah destroys one nation at the hands of other and if that is not done the world will be full of fasad or disorder.²⁸

Maulana expresses surprise that contemporary Muslims see hands of east or west in their decline and destruction but fail to perceive the Hand of Almighty Allah as admonishment for dereliction of their pledged role of Dawah. Whereas Muslims as best people khairul ummah ²⁹ were supposed to tell the whole world (shahadah alannas) that they should struggle for an ideal world (Jannah) in the after-life; they are themselves busy with the materialistic pursuits of the present world ignoring the assigned job.³⁰

Maulana further explains that, the contemporary materialistic world is passing through a spiritual vacuum that can only be filled by Islam if presented in its purest and pristine form. Whereas the scope of Islam is increasing with each passing day-the Muslims have lost their utility and are being punished at the hand of other nations. Here he seems to be in line with the teachings of Tablighi Jama'at and the concept of the (baqaayeanfaa) by Maulana Azad.³¹ According to Maulana the

establishment of Muslim states in this world is not the primary goal of Islam, and Muslims by engaging themselves in armed struggles for such a cause are doing more harm to Islam than any real service. Muslims by doing so are only increasing their nuisance value instead of the traditional usefulness of Muslims prescribed and preached by Quran and Hadith.³² The same concept we come across in pages of Azad's book *Quran ka Qanun e Urooj o zawal* describing the principle of order and disorder in the world. The present hardships faced by Muslim world are a warning and final call by Almighty Allah, for them to take heed and return to the role of dawah if they wish to avail of His blessings in this world and the hereafter.

Maulana Wahiduddin Khan makes a clear distinction between cause of Islam and the cause of Muslims. According to Allah's Sunnah, the cause of Muslims is served naturally and automatically, once they engage themselves with serving the cause of Islam through spreading the word of God and explaining his plan of creating this world to the whole humanity. But the Muslims to everybody's surprise seek to safeguard their individual, organizational and national interests in the name of serving Islam. This paradox in essence of Islam and praxis of Muslims is preventing other nations from approaching Islam with a clear vision, necessary for accepting the higher values of essential Islam.

1.8 Priorities in Islam: Dawah First

On political decline of Muslims in the contemporary world, Maulana is of the opinion that it is all because of dereliction of their duty as dais of Islam and subsequent moral decay that they have landed in present mess. They have made political interpretations of Islam and are busy in conflicts for establishment of political states instead of Dawah work. Dawah in fact is placed as topmost priority in Maulana's scheme of thought.

Ijtihad: Reinterpretation and reapplication of Islamic Texts

Maulana Wahiduddin Khan is a strong advocate of ijtihad and refuses to accept that doors of ijtihad have been closed. He is for reinterpretation of primary Islamic texts to find answers to the new challenges. For example, he agrees with Asghar Ali Engineer and Javed Ahmed Ghamidi that the very spirit of Islam is democratic and modern values like Democracy and secularism have grown out of Islamic texts through efforts of western scholars. These realities according to Maulana, though not ideal in their present form, need to be availed of rather than frowned upon.

1.9 Pragmatism and Paradigm Shift

According to Maulana Wahiduddin Khan, religious pluralism is the reality of modern life and Muslims should learn to live in peace and maintain intercommunity relations with fellow citizens, in the larger interest of Ummah. He advocates dialogue in place of debates of the past.

In case of disagreements and conflict he suggests scientific analysis and reasoned response to the problems instead of emotional violent reactions and road activism. This is the ideology he has been propagating over past midcentury through his Al-Risala movement with encouraging results. His response to voices for application of Common Civil Code in India is a bright example of reasoned response appreciated even by stalwarts like Ali Mian Nadwi.

Maulana Wahiduddin Khan is a realist who always talks of pragmatism. Rather than struggling for political positions he stresses upon his fellow religionists to engage themselves in missionary efforts and try to build Islamic societies. He is rather for individual reform and Akhirat oriented life.

1.10 Spirituality in Islam

Spirituality is an established way of controlling the onslaught of modern materialistic ways of life in almost all religions. But the methodologies adopted often conflict with the basic teachings of religion. The spirituality propounded practiced and preached by Maulana Wahiduddin Khan is unique in the sense that it has firm foundations in Quran itself, in terms like tadabbur and taffakur.

Further there is democratization of spirituality and anyone through mind based focused study of Quran and nature can experience the divine presence; unlike a ecstasy or asceticism based hierarchical system of conventional Sufism.

1.11 Conclusion

Maulana Wahiduddin Khan was a prolific writer who has produced a sizeable body of Islamic literature in recent times. Maulana Wahiduddin Khan appeared on the Indian intellectual scene, strictly speaking, in the post-partition era. It was the experience of developments in early part of 20th century that made Wahiduddin Khan what he is today. He analyzed the causes of Muslim decline and could very well visualize the future situation. Reading inadequacies in the response of his contemporaries to modern developments; he undertook to formulate his own

response suited to new situations; based on positive thinking and scientific temperament. Through his self-study of modern subjects; he is fully convinced that the only way to rehabilitate Muslims is to provide them with the weapon of modern education.

Maulana Wahiduddin Khan, a creative thinker, a philosophical and scientific theologian and a modernist reformer was of the opinion that there is a need for Muslims to take to primary Islamic texts for guidance on response to modern challenges. That will not only revive the original Islam but will also change their outlook to modern world; he asserted.

Like Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan and Muhammad Abduh, he calls for a bold new theology or reinterpretation of Islam and acceptance not rejection of best in the west. In his revivalist efforts he wants to show that through his rediscovery, he was reclaiming the original Islam that God disclosed through His last Prophet ﷺ; not the one that evolved over the centuries of explanations and ambiguous commentaries in period of philosophical and juristic discussions. Like Sir Sayyid Ahmed Khan, and the Egyptian reformer, Muhammad Abduh he has a strong conviction about compatibility of Islam with scientific thought. He doesn't stop just here; in fact, he exhorts Muslims to exploit the modern developments of science and technology, particularly the ways of communication, in favor of Islam for its peaceful propagation to the remotest corner of the globe.

It seems pertinent to quote a summary of Maulana's own words that conclude his mission:

For last forty years (now 60), I have been serving Islam. I have always concentrated on Tawheed, the validity of Islam as the only acceptable religion, the infallibility of Quran as a book of Guidance and the Prophet of Islam as an ideal and eternal guide for the whole mankind; along with proving polytheism as an unscientific ideology. In brief my mission is to prove logically and scientifically that all man-made-isms are false and Islam is the only religion that can fill the ideological vacuum in modern world.³³

References and Endnotes

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- ⁶ The Quran, translation and commentary by Maulana Wahiduddin Khan, GoodWord Books, New Delhi, 2014, p-xiii
- ⁷ Al-Quran, 5:16
- ⁸ Al-Quran,4:128
- ⁹ Al-Quran,2:205
- ¹⁰ This aspect is prominent and palpable throughout the *Tazkirul Quran*.
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- ²² Wahiduddin Khan, Islam and Peace, p-163.
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- ²⁴ Kanzulummal Vol.8, p-201
- ²⁵ MaulanaWahiduddin Khan, The Creation Plan, p-21
- ²⁶ Al-Quran,42:30
- ²⁷ Al-Quran,35:16-17
- ²⁸ Al-Quran,2:251

²⁹ Al-Quran,2:143

³⁰ Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Quran ka Qanun e Urooj o zawal,” pp 105--08

³¹ MaulanaAbulKalam Azad, Quran kaQanun e Urooj o zawal,” pp 103-04,08

³² Al-Quran, 2:143, and Hadith ‘Kanzul ummal vol.8. p-201

³³ Al-Risala, March 1999, p-15