CHAPTER 1

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Background

Throughout the history of Islam, 20th century has an outstanding significance for two great events, which never occurred before, among them, the fall of Khilafat in Turkey and the rise of European powers and their domination in the fields of arms, natural sciences, and technology. Because, till the fall of Khilafat, Islamic powers dominate the world in these fields and it was the first occasion in the whole Muslim history that the Khilafat was abolished totally. These two events shaken the whole Muslim world but with these worse catastrophes the most important aspect which impulse Islam with fresh endeavor is that, most of the reformist movements emerged during this period. In India due to the fall of Mughal rule and transformation of ruling power from the hands of Muslims to others, Indian Muslim society filled with chaos and pessimism. At this critical moment, many Muslim intellectuals and reformist movements were emerged to fill the void and to revive the Islamic faith in India. Among those famous movements was Khilafat movement, Deoband movement, Ahl-e-Hadith, Jamat-e-Islami, Tableeghi Jamat, Aligarh movement, movement of Nadwatul Ulama, etc.
Among the great personalities during this period were Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Maulana Muhammad Ali Johar, Maulana Qasim Nanutavi, Maulana Muhammad Ilyas Kandhlawi, Maulana Shibli Nomani, Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanwi, Maulana Husain Ahmad Madani, Maulana Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi etc. Among these great Islamic luminaries, Maulana Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi (Ali Miyan) has an outstanding position, not only in India but also in the Islamic world particularly in the Arab world. Maulana Ali Miyan was a great socio-religious reformer of the 20th century. His reformist ideas well accepted not only by the Muslims, even non-Muslims admired his personality. He was a versatile genius and a prolific writer. It is true to say that Maulana Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi was a great scholar, world-renowned thinker, Sufi reformer, profound theologian, high ranked educationist, as well as farsighted historian. He was entitled as “Mufakkir-e-Islam”.2 His words and writings revive the faith in the hearts of the millions of the Muslims. He authored around 50 books. Which are wide extended, focused, thought provoking and covered almost all aspects of Islamic sciences and Muslim history and culture. Most of his works have been translated in several languages.

The title of this doctoral project is “A Critical Study of Maulana Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi’s Islamic Thought”. Even though,
some works are available on Maulana Ali Miyan, but no critical work, has so far done on Maulana Abul Hasan Nadwi’s Islamic Thought. The books, monographs, magazines, reviews, research papers, seminar proceedings, lectures on Ali Miyan and with the help of contemporary scholars and works of Ali Miyan this research work is persuaded. He was a great Islamic intellectual of 20\textsuperscript{th} century, and had clear-cut approach on every aspect of Islamic discipline. However, he was a Hanafite Alim (Scholar), received his education from Madrasah, but was too liberal in his attitude to others. We cannot declare him as a rigid traditional scholar. He always keen to seek possibilities to convene with others on common grounds leaving the controversies behind. In every aspect, his approach was balanced and flexible. He considered Islam as a blessing for humankind and a positive and creative factor in human history. It is the only way of guidance for humankind in the modern age.\textsuperscript{3} All disturbances of the current period are due to the leaving the Islamic teachings and adopting the un-Islamic ways of life. It is an innovative work and a fresh addition in the field of Islamic thought. It will help in exploring the possibilities of seeking the pluralistic Islamic attitude of Islam, which is a great requisite of modern era.
Research Techniques

Chapter first deals with the general introduction of the project. We have discussed our aims and objects of research and purpose of the study and the significance of the topic. Then we have discussed the research techniques. In the end, we have discussed the major sources of the work in detail.

The second chapter is on Maulana Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi’s life achievements. This chapter highlights his early education and family background and circumstances. A sincere attempt has been made in this chapter to introduce his ancestors and family members with their academic and reformist contributions. However, what presented here about his ancestors is too little and it calls for separate volumes.

The main body of the thesis, started from the third chapter. An attempt has been made on describing his education of the Qur’an and different aspects of his thought regarding Qur’an and its interpretation (Tafsir). However, he does not write a complete Tafsir of the Qur’an but variously he interpreted some chapters like Surah-al-Kahaf and some other verses. In these commentaries, he elaborated his own ideas with his unique way of interpretation. We have tried, as far as possible to present his ideas with quotations from the original text. The whole material
of this chapter arranged in such a way as to get a complete picture of his Qur’anic thought. In later chapters, his thought regarding Hadith (Prophetic Traditions), Tasawwuf (Sufi thought or Islamic spiritual education), Fiqh (Islamic Jurisprudence) etc, analyzed in the same manner.

In the chapters, seventh and eighth, we have tried to discuss his missionary and political ideas and activities as well as his attitude towards the western civilization. However, he condemns the western civilization but not discard it totally. What he opposed is the “totally materialistic approach” of the West. To him it is the greatest evil of the Western Society, which tends to engulf the whole World. However, he appreciated the technological advancement of the West, and severely criticized, Muslims to their ignorance in the fields of Science and Research. In the last chapter, we have analyzed some of his important works and tried to explore and present a complete figure of Ali Miyan’s Islamic thought. At the end of every chapter, we have given critical remarks.

Magazines and reviews published from the different Islamic Institutes particularly from the Nadwatul Ulama provided very useful information on this topic. Finally, we have made a few concluding remarks on the whole project and on the question of its significance and relevance to the Modern Age. This
dissertation, divided into nine chapters with a concluding remarks and with rather an elaborated bibliography. This study being the first of its kind and this is my original research work and a critical study.

Sources of the work

Our struggle regarding realistically chapterising this study has been the most painstaking and time consuming one, because of the fact that the most of the works of Maulana Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi were devoid of any chapter-wise breakup according to our topic. His ideas found scattered in his various books and articles. However, libraries and resourceful scholars were the main sources of our information. It gives us a great satisfaction to mention that we have tried our level best to collect data from all possible sources. Here we are introducing some of the most consulted sources, which provided us authentic information related to the topic. The foremost among them is Ali Miyan’s autobiography titled Carvan-e-Zindagi. It is a detailed life account of Ali Miyan, which provides information of almost every aspect of Ali Miyan’s life and thought. Ali Miyan’s motivation for writing his autobiography is not merely to recount memorable milestones in his life but to provide an all-encompassing spectrum of his activities that delineates his intellectual growth and development, the historical incidents in his life. The book
provides the reader an opportunity to examine Ali Miyan’s role in the said events, in which Ali Miyan was an active participant. Furthermore, his autobiography makes copious reference to his prolific writings to highlight his contribution to contemporary Islamic thought. The Carvan-e-Zindagi also attempts to explore Ali Miyan’s vision and thought regarding Islam and humanity as well as what was his attitude for the renaissance of Islam in the modern age. The book is very interesting and informative, because Ali Miyan does not confined only to the events, related to him personally but he mentioned the social and political state of affairs of his era. Since both the freedom of India and the partition of India, occurred during his lifetime, therefore he has covered all of these happenings according to his own view. His concentration lies in not only the political scenario but also the remarkable events such as, the starting of reformist movements and institutions like Jamat-e-Islami, Tableeghi Jamat, Ikhwanul Muslimeen, Uniterialn movement of Muhammad bin Abdul Wahab, Madrasah Darul-ulum Deoband and Madrasah Nadwatul Ulama etc. Beside all of this, he has also illustrated short life sketches of famous contemporary personalities and his own experience with them, like Maulana Ahmad Ali Lahori, Allama Iqbal, Maulana Ilyas Kandhlawi, Maulana Abdul Qadir Raipuri etc. Rightly, we can say this autobiography has included many little biographies of famous Muslim personalities. Besides
all this he has illustrated his memorable journeys to other countries like Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Syria, Great Britain, USA, Rangoon, Kuwait, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Lebanon, Turkey and Spain etc. Simultaneously, he discusses in brief the history, religious and social conditions of Muslims in these countries and his personal impression of them. For example, when he visited Spain, the country in which the Muslims had ruled for over eight centuries, he visited all famous historical monuments of Muslims and exposed his emotions in the book.

The second most significant work which help us in exploring Ali Miyan’s thought is his famous book ‘Islam and the world’ which is an English version of “Maza Khasir al-Alam bil inhitatil Muslimeen” (Arabic). In this book, Ali Miyan tried to cover a brief account of the rise and fall of Muslims and it’s consequences on the humankind. Ali Miyan eloquently expressed his thought and ideas to readers in such a bold manner that the reader can comprehend his Islamic thought thoroughly. In the beginning of the book, Ali Miyan cherished the Muslims of the Arabia and their rise to power, their enthusiasm towards Islam, their contribution towards human civilization and their zeal for the promotion of Islam. After the glorious period of Islam, author highlights the decadence of Muslim power because of their luxurious life and they lost original fervor to Islam, due to
which later Muslim rulers became the victim of their enemies and downfall came to existence. In the end Ali Miyan provoked Muslims particularly Arabs to admit their responsibility of the guidance of humankind towards the true path of Islam.

The third most valuable work of Ali Miyan, which provided precious information related to the topic is *Tareekh-e-Dawat-o-Azeemat*, in English *Saviors of Islamic spirit*. It is another voluminous work of Ali Miyan. Originally, it is a collection of lectures delivered by Maulana Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi, at Lucknow, under the title "*Tareekh-e-Dawat-o-Azeemat*”. As it is obvious from the title, this work consists of the biographies of few towering personalities of Islamic history who were regarded as "Revivalists of Islam in their ages". During the long span of thirteen hundred years of its existence, Islam underwent different phases. Sometimes it emerged as a strongest political and intellectual power and sometimes it became too weak to think of its recovery. According to Ali Miyan reformers, leaders and scholars produced by Islam during its sovereignty were of no more higher caliber than those born in its age of decadence. The book outlines that, there have been a continuous chain of great revivalist personalities throughout Islamic history. Whenever, the religion of Allah attacked either, from within or from outside, Allah sends men of the hour equipped with the right
kind of scholarship and spiritual strength to correct the wrongs of
the age and show the way. Therefore, in this book he presented
the continuous history of the revival of Islam through the
biographies of these great revivalists. Because, in history we find
only the events with Kings and Emperors or biographical
accounts of certain eminent luminaries, but no account has been
found, of the revivalist personalities and movements of Muslims
and speculative achievements of those great servants who have
left an indelible mark on Islamic world. These champions have
bravely fought against the forces of corruption and bidah
(innovations), defended the original Islamic precepts and
teachings, and rejuvenated the true spirit of Islam along with
making valuable contributions to the intellectual and academic
treasures. The book present an account of these continuous
efforts, made during the past thirteen hundred years, for
reawakening the Muslims. It highlights the name of those
eminent servants, who rose to the defense of Islam in order to
arrest the onslaught of the evil forces and who gave rise to
various movements for the purpose of upholding Islamic morals
and values and finally their efforts made it possible for Islam to
survive to this day. Most of them identified as Mujaddids
(revivalists). Also, some important personalities mentioned in
this book which cannot be called as Mujaddids but who have
worked for the renovation and regeneration of the Islamic faith
and practice, and the subsequent generations of Muslims have ever remain indebted to them.

The fourth work of Ali Miyan, which assisted us in understanding his Islamic thought, is *Moarka-e-Iman-o-Maddiyat*. Originally, it is a detailed interpretation of *Surah-al-Kahaf*. The *Surah* demonstrates an unending struggle between the two Ideologies or concepts diametrically opposed to each other. One is *Materialism* and other is *Faith*. To Ali Miyan, at first, it seems that the people of faith will be defeated and materialistic people will win but the people of faith ultimately succeed in their objective. While the materialistics defeated at last. Therefore, the true believers in every age, like the companions of cave, given preference to their faith, righteous behavior and propinquity to Allah over worldly gains and material beliefs. This is the moral lesson inherent in this *Surah*.

The fifth book of Ali Miyan which was mostly consulted is ‘Nai dunya Amrica me saaf saf Baten’. This is among one of the famous works of Maulana Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi. Originally, it is a collection of Maulana Ali Miyan’s lectures in USA. The English version of this book is entitled “From the depth of heart in America”. A number of Muslims from India, Pakistan and Arab countries had gathered to hear these sermons. Ali Miyan’s main advice to Muslims of USA was on, how to preserve their faith in such a
materialistic culture as America. In one sermon, he stated, “Brothers and sisters, you are not here merely to earn and spend. This any community can do. You are here to earn according to your need, but you must also know your status and should present before the Americans a new design of life. You should give the Azan which may stir their minds and offer Namaz (Salat), so that they may see and ponder over it”.

In another place he states, “Today only the Muslims can give a message, but where are they? Has any Muslim country or community the courage to tell the Americans that “in the remembrance of Allah, only do the hearts find rest” Muslims no longer believe in themselves. How can they convey the message of divine unity to others, which they themselves have lost faith in the power and efficiency of Namaz, in the truth and veracity of the Kalima, in the control and authority of Allah over gain and loss, and in the pre-ordination of good and evil, and made the Americans providers of their daily bread? How can they tell them ‘there is no giver of sustenance, except Allah’.  

He further said, “First try to produce Faith within yourselves, perform Namaz and spend some time everyday in meditation, produce the warmth that has been destroyed by the smoke of factories, refresh your soul, set right the aim of your life, read the Qur’an daily, study the life of the Prophet (pbuh) and seek
light from it, and then convey the message of the religion of nature to the Americans”. 8

Maulana Ali Miyan addressed not only Muslims; but also gave speeches in five leading American universities, Columbia, Harvard, Detroit, South California and Utah. He also gave Friday sermons in the prayer hall of the United Nations Headquarter and Jama Masjids of Detroit and Toronto. In these gatherings, he spoke frankly to the public and conveyed the message of Islam plainly to the Americans.

The other book, which proved a major source of the work, is Daur-al-Hadith fi Taqween al-Majtama Al-Islami (Role of Hadith in the promotion of Islamic climate and attitude). 9 As obvious from the title, the lecture delivered for highlighting the importance of Hadith in daily life of a Muslim. Its role in the development of great Muslim personalities and revivalist movements, as well as its contribution in generating the Islamic mood and religious temper in common Muslims. At last, he unveiled the conspiracies of raising doubts in the minds of common Muslims regarding the authenticity of Hadith. Ali Miyan severely condemned these conspiracies and termed it as an act of the enemies of Islam. Ali Miyan said, “I have tried to keep before the mental attitude and psychology of the modern educated class whose outlook and understanding have been molded by the
writings of orientalists. It often asks, what is the practical utility of Ahadith? Why Ahadith deemed essential for everyday life of the Muslims? What would be the harm and what vacuum would create in the life of the individual Muslim and the community, at large if Ahadith, were given up altogether”. This is a brief introduction of the subject matter of the book. The book outlines a clear-cut figure of the thought of Ali Miyan related to hadith and hadith literature.

Books of other’s

There are several works commenced on Maulana Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi on different aspects of his personality. Among them were books, treatises, articles, special issues of Journals and Magazines etc. It will be too lengthy if we will discuss all of them here. However, we are discussing some most important among them. The foremost is Sawaneh Mufakkir-e-Islam written by Maulana Bilal Hasan Nadwi. It is a concise biography of Maulana Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi. We can say it as a short version of Carvan-e-Zindagi, however in some aspects it is more informative than Carvan-e-Zindagi, because it provides additional information of the events and occurrences of the last stages of Ali Miyan’s life. Because Carvan-e-Zindagi was completed many years before the death of Ali Miyan, so it is devoid the accounts of the last stages of Ali Miyan’s life. Sawaneh Mufakkir-e-Islam also contains some
testimonies of the great scholars and nobles in favour of Ali Miyan, which were not mentioned in Carvan-e-Zindagi.

The book *Khanwada-e-Alamullahi*, is another one which greatly helpful to our work. It was written by, Late Maulana Muhammad Saani Hasani. It contains precious information related to historical background of the ancestors of Ali Miyan. It contains short biographies of notable ancestors of Ali Miyan from Hazrat Hasan (maternal grandson of Prophet Muhammad) to present day members of the family.

The other most important source is the special issue of the Journal, Fragrance of East in January 2000, just after the death of Ali Miyan. It contains various articles, research papers and tributes of the great scholars, political leaders and contemporaries of Ali Miyan. Many eminent scholars contribute in that Journal and highlighted different aspects of Ali Miyan’s personality and their experiences with Ali Miyan, in scholarly manner.

Beside above-mentioned books, we consulted several other books of Maulana Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi and other authors. We will mention all of them in the Bibliography.

Now we are naming some family members and contemporaries of Maulana Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi, which
provide useful information to our work. Among them, the foremost one is Maulana Bilal Hasani Nadwi, who is the nephew of Maulana Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi. He is an eminent scholar and close observer of the life of Ali Miyan. He also wrote a biography of Maulana Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi titled Sawaneh Mufakkir-e-Islam, which we discussed earlier. He and other family members provided us a lot of valuable information orally and literature related to our topic on our returning from Takiya, District Raibareilly (hometown of Maulana Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi). The library of Madrasah at Takiya was our remarkable destination, which have a precious treasure of the historical accounts of the memorable events of the family of Ali Miyan and incredible manuscripts. Therefore, we have collected a bulk of literature related to our topic from the library. The other major source of the work is Madrasah Nadwatul Ulama and its rich library. There are many contemporaries and students of Maulana Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi, which are working in the Madrasah and well informed about the life and thought of Maulana Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi. Among them, the foremost is Maulana Munawwar Sultan Nadwi who provided a lot of information and literature related to our topic. Even he cooperated in exploring the important literature related to our topic from the library and other departments of the Madrasah, which was a difficult task for us without a guide. The other helpful persons were Maulana
Saeedur Rahman Azmi, Maulana Abdullah Hasani, Maulana Rabey Hasani, Mr. Anees Chishti etc. All of them provided incredible information to our topic, which is not available in books. The other major sources of the work are Maulana Azad Library and the Library of the Department of Islamic Studies of Aligarh Muslim University.

We also consulted internet, which provide significant data related to our topic. Below we are enlisting some of these URLs.

**URL’s**

12. http://nadwi.net.in/e/maraje.htm
25. http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com/article/pr/t125/e1686?_hi=0&_pos=11
30. http://www.flippid.com/item/1000189125/Guidance_from_the_Holy_Qur_an_Sayyid_Abu_1_Hasan_Ali_Nadwi


34. http://boardreader.com/thread/Shaykh_Abul_Hasan_info_needed_82jnXmdo.html


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Notes and References:

1. Uthmani caliphate was abolished in Turky in 1914.


5. These lectures delivered upon a visit to USA in 1977 on the invitation of “Muslim Students Association” (M.S.A).


8. Ibid., pp. 18-19.


11. Maulana Munawwar Sultan Nadwi is a disciple of Ali Miyan and currently as teacher in Nadwatul Ulama.