Chapter IV
EDUCATIONAL APPROACH TO DA‘WAH
EDUCATIONAL APPROACH TO DA'WAH

Islamic education as per the Qur'anic vision is the process of shaping character within the Islamic worldview. The Muslim community requires exposure of the children and adults to all knowledge as a means of understanding the parameters set in the Qur'an for a constructive relationship with God, other human beings and nature.¹

The Muslims regard the Holy Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) as their primary source for knowledge and guidance.

Wan Mohd Nor Wan Daud in his book The concept of knowledge in Islam and its implication for education in a developing country, considers the spiritual objectives of Islamic education as follows to build up various qualities in mankind.

Islamic education is the only way to develop and cultivate:

a) An awareness of God's universal munificence, omnipotence in all thoughts and action.

b) An awareness of the integrated nature of Islamic Weltanschauung, the respective position and relationship of its various components with one another.

c) A consciousness of the status and destiny of human beings on earth and their relationship to God, the universe and their fellow beings;

d) An awareness of the importance and the respect for all those involved in the pursuit of knowledge, learning and teaching.

e) A commitment to be actively involved in learning, teaching and related activities as a fundamental religious obligation and virtue.

f) The power to make alert and discriminate about the Islamic ethical and axiological perspectives in conducting one's individual and collective life.

g) The willingness to comply with the known Islamic injunctions and contentment in performing altruistic works; patience and dignity in the face of trials and tribulations in pursuing the Islamic goals; the desire, responsibility and courage to seek, express and define what is true, just and humane.

h) The commitment to all that is correct, the dislike for all that is evil, unjust and hindrance of knowledge in a wise and proper manner.²
The Prophet Muhammad (SAW) had a profound love for learning. A number of prophetic sayings indicate the importance of education. The Prophet (SAW) emphasized not only on the acquisition of knowledge but also on its transmission to others. The earliest teachers of Islam were the Qur'an readers (Qurrah). During the Khalifate period, these Qur'an readers were mainly responsible for the spreading of Qur'anic teachings and Prophet’s traditions among the Arabs as well as the non-Arab Muslims. The Khalifs took special interest in appointing them in various parts of the Islamic empire to spread the teachings of Islam. The elementary education was thoroughly established in the early Umayyad period. The public in search of knowledge reported to the mosques, which besides being places of worship, also served as educational centers. During the Abbasid period, the Muslims came under the influence of the Greek literature and philosophy. It was also in this period that the Arabs became acquainted with the Indian sciences particularly Medicine, Mathematics and Astronomy. In this period the efforts towards the formalization of the educational system was intensified.

In India, with the establishment of the Muslim rule, the system of education that prevailed in parts of Central and Western Asia was introduced. The proper history of education in India begins with the reign of first Turkish Sultan Qutabuddin Aibak. During this period, hundreds of mosques were centres of both religion and learning. Since the Muslim rule began in India, due attention was given for the development of Islamic education in the empire. Some could achieve much and some less. During the period of later Mughals, the madrasa System of education was reformed by Mulla Nizamuddin of Sahalvi, U P, and this system came to be known as Dars-i-Nizamiyah. The Dars-i-Nizamiyah served the educational interest of the Muslim society for a long period but during the late 19th century many scholars felt that Dars-i-Nizamiyah was no longer fit to meet the new demands of the changing society.

With the advent of the British rule, Western education became popular among the Indians and this brought two opposite perceptions and reactions amongst the Muslim intellectual elites. One section advocated for the restoration and preservation of Islamic values and rejection of Western cultural elements. Their response to
modern education was retrogressive as they considered it as an instrument of cultural and ideological indoctrination by the Christian Missionaries of the West. In their view, the new system of education would lead to the disintegration of Muslim society in India. It would isolate the Muslims mentally from the rest of the Islamic world. The other section of the Muslim intellectual elites advocated for the adoption of Western culture as a solution to the contemporary issues and challenges.6

At this juncture, a third section of Muslim intellectuals emerged to build a link between the two streams of thought. They attempted a rapprochement between Islām and modernity and struggled for the incorporation of those trends in Western scholarship that were compatible with the commandments of Islām but were indispensable for credible scholarly pursuits. The prominent among them was Mawlana Shibli Nu'mani.

Shibli Nu'mani was the main protagonist of this section of religious elites who labored for the rapprochement between the Islāmic revivalists and modernists. This agonizing and tortuous task needed a thorough investigation and analysis of the ideological derivatives of both the movements. He realized that one of the reasons of their rejection of modern knowledge was their outdated intellectual training, which was incompatible with the new tools of research and investigation. The Muslim intellectuals of religious orientation were not adequately trained and prepared to meet the occidental challenges.7

In Shibli's analysis of Muslim situation, the Muslims were in need of transformation from dogmatic traditionalism to that of marginal modernism. The infrastructure of the traditional Muslim society needed to be restructured with the innovative spirit of Islām to meet out the contemporary challenges. For this purpose, some elements of Islām required to be projected in contemporary idioms and parameters. Shibli believed that the intellectual crisis of the religious elites was due to the lack of scientific and technological advancement with which the West used to attack the ideological structure of Islām. Muslim crash on political and economic front left for them no alternative except to cling to their past glory. The implications of scientific and technological revolution for Islāmic thought were not properly comprehended. Thus, the theological data of Islām was being subjected to
rationalistic interpretations and the authenticity of some of the data was questioned by the Western intellectuals.

Shibli pointed to the devastating effects of stubborn and retrogressive attitude of the Muslims. As a pointed reference to the devastating effects of this attitude, he illustrated his views by drawing their attention to the fate of the famous army Janinisarry in the reign of Sultan Mahmud of Ghazna. The fine army was destroyed due to the stubborn resistance of the Sheikh-ul-Islām (The religious head of Muslims) to employ European methods of army training in the pretext that copying others was a sinful act.

Shibli linked the acquisition of English language and modern knowledge with Islāmic cause. He argued with the antagonists of English education that the biased and prejudiced interpretation of Islāmic jurisprudence, penal code, slavery, polygamy, history, culture and tradition would deface the ideological structure of Islām. He drew their attention to atheistic trends in Western thought and its implications for Muslims in the following words.

The atheistic clouds from the European horizon have started moving towards our country and it is the first and greatest danger to the nation. It is not only the English educated section that is influenced by the atheistic moves, but its effects permeate quietly in the entire body of the nation. Thousands of people are nursing doubt about religion and some believe that recent researches have proved wrong some of the ingredients of the theoretical structure of Islām. They believe that the religion and science cannot co-exist. Some believe that religion is a moral code and it does not need a revelation.

Shibli reminded the Muslim theologians to rectify the wrong interpretation of the theological data of Islām. He asked them to comprehend the nature and mode of criticism by acquainting with modern knowledge and new methodologies of research and reform the theological curriculum to meet the demands of the contemporary situation.

The establishment of Nadwatul Ulama at Lucknow, was the result of the thinking of the enlightened thinkers who made every attempt to reconcile the views of the orthodox divines who stuck to the past tenaciously and the progressive ones
who would like to move with the changing time within the framework of the "basic Islamic teachings". The founders of this seminary wanted it to be the synthesis of both the Anglo-Oriental College, Aligarh and Darul-Ulum, Deoband. The main architect of this institute was Mawlana Shibli Nu'mani. Mawlana wanted Nadwa to produce such type of educated Muslims who might be well versed with the Islamic thought and learning and also be aware of the new trends and ideas that were changing the face of the world. Mawlana Shibli tirelessly worked for the development of Nadwa on these lines.\(^{12}\)

Shibli Nu'mani's educational upbringing took place at a time when the Muslims had started becoming conscious to the need for reform and change. At Aligarh, Shibli was exposed to the radiance of new learning. His passion for learning and knowledge received a new platform. Hitherto like a voracious seeker of knowledge he travelled far and wide to quench his thirst for knowledge. During his travels, he had realized the inadequacy of Muslim learning and pitiable condition of the Madrasas throughout the Islamic world. Until then no attempt was made to trace the history of Muslim learning, its pattern of education, the various schools of Islamic thought, and its contribution to the growth of science and technology and human progress in general.\(^{13}\)

**Shibli's Relation with Aligarh College and Nadwa**

After having entered in the service of Mohammedan Anglo Oriental College, Aligarh, he actively and sincerely worked for the upliftment of the college. His letters, written to Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan from Constantinople, Cairo and other places, show his deep concern to procure rare manuscripts, printed books and transcripts of Islamic studies and other sciences for the college library. Later when efforts were made to upgrade the college to the status of University in 1911, he actively participated in various proceedings, meetings and delegations organized for the purpose.\(^{14}\)

Shibli Nu'mani contributed much to the success of the Mohammedan Anglo Oriental College. He admitted the importance of Western learning but at the same time was not prepared to ignore the Oriental subjects or belittle the merit of Islamic sciences. At Aligarh, he bravely withstood the radical Western impact, which was
threatening to destroy the identity of the Muslims. By his writings, lectures and strict obedience to Islamic way of life he attracted a large number of Muslim students and thus saved the college from being drowned in the whirlpool of Western culture.

Shibli spent about sixteen years of his life in the service of the Aligarh College, but he felt that the College was not shaping itself on a correct line. The main reason for Shibli Nu‘mani’s disillusionment with the Aligarh College was the inadequate and unsatisfactory provision of religious instructions there. He was completely dissatisfied with the way the religious instruction was given in this College. It also pained him that the Arabic language was never given the importance that was its due by virtue of the College being a Muslim seat of learning. He saw that it was dominated by the students for the purpose nothing other than to get the Government jobs. Most of them were neither interested in the thought currents of the new age nor did they develop any genuine love for Islām and Islamic traditions. Therefore, he felt a need to establish such institution, which could instill into their students the spirit of classical Islām and also develop their critical mind by acquainting them with the Western ideas and new thinking. 

Nadwa

After being disillusioned at Aligarh, Shibli decided to serve the cause of Nadwat-al-Ulama, Lucknow. He worked constantly to renovate the system of traditional education and to introduce temporal sciences and technical training in Nadwa, Nadwat-ul-Ulama was constituted in 1892 and Dar-Ul-Ulūm was established in 1898. Mawlawi Sayyid Muhammad Ali Mongeri became the first Nazim of the Dar-ul-Ulūm. It sought to strike a balance between the two schools of thought, Aligarh and Deoband. The moving spirit behind Nadwa was Shibli Nu‘mani.

In 1904 he took up the editorship of the journal Al-Nadwa and served it till 1913. The journal was instrumental in revolutionizing the thought of the Indian Ulama and in broadening their outlook. As the Educational Secretary of Nadwa he promoted the teaching of modern Arabic, International Affairs and paved the way for establishing a well-equipped library. He strengthened the financial condition and laid stress on appointing teachers holding specialization in a particular field of study.
The study of English, Sanskrit, modern Arabic and Hindi was introduced. With a missionary spirit, he set up a team of students with the name of Khadim-al-Din whose members were to live a disciplined life and devote them in preaching of the principles of pristine Islam in the countryside. A supplementary organization was Anjuman-al-Mo'in whose members were to propagate the benefits of education at Nadwa in different parts of the country and also to find means to help the poor and needy boys. In fact, he wanted to make Nadwa the epicentre of all Islamic activities. In the years to follow, Nadwa was able to produce a band of scholars who were in a position to refute the unfounded allegations by the critics of Islam.\textsuperscript{17}

Shibli became so much attached to Nadwa that it became everything for him. He dedicated every minute of his life to make Nadwa a worthy institution. He wanted it to develop into a university of Islamic studies and culture whose products might be having thorough knowledge of Western ideas and new thinking. However, towards the end of his life he was discontented to see that the Nadwa did not shape itself according to his own desire due to non-cooperation of the 'Ulama Group'.\textsuperscript{18}

**Shibli at Azamgarh**

Shibli's concern for Muslim education in his hometown found expressions in 1883 when he laid the foundation of a school at Azamgarh and named it National School. He desired to see the students of this school speaking English by the time they reached Standard V. He also wished to provide the school with boarding facilities so that students could live at low expense and in an environment, which would help them inculcate Islamic moral and religious values. This school has since then developed in stages and has now reached the status of a Post-Graduate college, the biggest Muslim institution in Northern India after Aligarh Muslim University. Later after his resignation from Nadwat-al-Ulama, Shibli came back to settle at Azamgarh and laid the foundation of Dar-al-Musannefin (Shibli Academy) in 1913. This institution is among the premier institution of higher learning of Islamic, Indo-Islamic and Indian historical studies. With a similar spirit to promote the study of Qur'an and Islamic sciences, he extended a helping hand to Madrasa Islah, Saraimir, where preliminary study of Islamic sciences was already started.\textsuperscript{19} He visualized the
Saraimir institution as a Muslim counterpart of Hindu Gurukuls and a meeting point of different streams of Islamic thought. Inspite of the fact that he was a staunch follower of Hanafi school of jurisprudence he tried to resolve the differences between different sections of theologians through the oriental institute of Saraimir. For this purpose, he arranged a meeting of theologians of different schools of jurisprudence there, so that an integral and cohesive picture of Islam could be presented before the Muslims. He introduced new courses in the different areas of the theological learning. The obsolete books of jurisprudence, grammar, philosophy and logic were expunged from the curriculum. The Arabic language and literature were given central place. Shibli gave a significant place to English language in the curriculum as a part of fulfillment of the objectives of training and producing a group of theologians acquainted with modern intellectual trends through English education.20

**Shibli's Attitude towards Scientific Knowledge**

Mawlana Shibli successfully expounded that Islamic sciences and learning contributed immensely to the growth of human knowledge and if the Muslims had not devoted themselves to the study of Arts and Sciences of the preceding ages, much of Europe's achievements of which they are so proud, would have perished.

Shibli's work entitled *Musalmano Ki Guzashta Ta'alim* highlights the contributions of medieval scientists and scholars for the conservation and dissemination of human knowledge. He pointed out that Baghdad became a great seat of learning and the Muslims learned Mathematics, music, geometry, medicine, logic and natural sciences on a new scale from other communities, mostly Christians. They were the first to pay attention to the opening of translation bureau. The Umayyad and Abbasid rulers were also great patrons of learning. A large number of books on Science, Medicine, Greek philosophy and other branches of knowledge were collected from Italy, Greece, Syria, Iran and other far off places at rich price. These books, which were mostly in Latin, Syriac, and Sanskrit, were translated into Arabic and Persian. The translators were mostly Christians, but Jews, Zoroastrians
and Indians also rendered great service. The Muslims improved these translated works to such a level that the original works were soon forgotten. In fact, some of the original works are extant only in its Arabic translation.\(^{21}\)

The Muslims were, however, not blind imitators. They strove and worked to remove some of the errors of Greek thinkers and generated a renewed interest in Greek philosophy. They also offered enthusiasm to the study of social sciences, invented new scientific equipments, devised mechanical and water clocks, calculated the speed of light, designed apparatus filtration and distillation, formulated methods to test and differentiate various acids, laid the foundation of the science of Chemistry and by their numerous experiments on plants added valuable information to the study of Botany. The science of Optics made great advancement.\(^{22}\)

Their intense spirit of enquiry and research raised human knowledge to a new pedestal. Scholars and thinkers such as Imam Razi and Imam Tusi enjoyed greater reputation than the Greek thinkers. A number of early modern discoveries and invention, which are attributed to the Europeans, is actually the early works of the Arabs.

Shibli observes that the advent of Islam released and channelized the latent energies of the Arabs towards understanding of the universe. The Holy Qur'an with its unique style of presentation is a miracle in itself. It challenges human being for a writing of similar kind and calls upon its followers and readers to know and unfold the secrets of the universe. To the Arabs and Muslims at large it became a guideline for opening new outlook of knowledge and wisdom. Muslim scholars and travellers who visited distant lands opened a new era of exchange of intellectual thought and ideas.\(^{23}\)

Here Shibli chiefly pays attention to show how the Arabs acquired knowledge and wisdom of the preceding ages. This has been examined in two ways: the first relates to those sciences of which the originators were Muslims; and the second deals with those branches of knowledge which the Muslims borrowed from other communities and then improved and perfected them to such a degree that they are accredited as their originators.
The theme of Muslim resurgence or the assertion of a distinct Muslim identity was given manifestation in Shibli's writings, covering a wide range of Islamic history, religion, culture, philosophy, education, politics etc. Muslim ingenuity and scholarship of the past Islamic days were frequently referred to motivate the Muslims to march on the path of advancement. He also wanted to liberate the mind of the Westernized Muslim intellectuals from the mental slavery of the west.

**Reasons of Decline of Madrasa Education**

Shibli keenly probes why the Muslim education suffered a decline. According to him the practice of giving lectures gradually died. The studies of rational sciences were almost ignored. Students were taught to strictly adhere to any one of the four schools of Islamic thought. In course of time, it gave birth to imitative method of education. The spirit of investigation and discovery lost force. Technical skill and study of crafts failed to meet new requirements. Little attention was paid to the study of logic and philosophy and in some madrasas these subjects did not find a place in the curriculum of studies. The Abbasid Khalif, Mutazidbillah issued a royal order forbidding booksellers to sell books of philosophy. A mufti of the Ottoman Empire was asked to discontinue his lectures on Philosophy. Ibn Rushd had to disown his own writing when the Sultan of Morroco made him a captive. Political Science and History were not properly taught.

**Other Academic Reforms**

Shibli's educational thought further found expression in the preparation of syllabi of madrasas in the State of Bhopal. Sayyid Sulaiman Nadwi opines that in India this was the first attempt to reform the Arabic madrasas. The notable change made by him was that the subjects of Philosophy, logic, Theology, Hadith and Mathematics were also introduced. This was similar to the syllabi of Mohammedan Anglo Oriental College, Aligarh. Shibli was among those who were called to give their opinion for educational reforms in Madrasa Alia (Calcutta), Osmania University (Hyderabad) and Dacca University. In 1913 the Sultan of Turkey intended to establish a University in Madina whereupon, Shibli, among others, was
asked to prepare Arabic text-books. But Shibli was unable to undertake the responsibilities on account of his fast deteriorating health. Notably, through many of his writings he expounded the role of Muslim women in the history of early Islam and thereby emphasized the need for the education of women.\textsuperscript{25}

Meanwhile Shibli attended the Government Oriental Conference (1910) held at Shimla. In his address, he proposed the study of Oriental subjects including the study of Archaeology, cataloguing, promotion of vernacular languages and integration of Oriental and Occidental thought. He also called for providing incentive to students by grant of fellowship and scholarship and appointment of inspectors in madrasas. Though these suggestions were not implemented but they show the progressive attitude of Shibli. Herein emphasis was also laid on the collection on manuscripts, royal decree, paintings, calligraphic works and publication and display of Arabic and Persian literary works by holding annual exhibition.\textsuperscript{26}

Mawlana Shibli Nu’mani not only repudiated the orientalists’ misinterpretation of Islamic tenets but also expressed deep concern over the anti-Islamic campaign of the Arya Samaj Movement. Shibli’s reformist zeal was reinforced with the increasing activities of the Arya Samajists. To counter the anti-Islamic preaching of the Arya Samajists he advocated the learning of Hindi and Sanskrit languages to understand the nature of their attack on Islam and counter attack the ideological base of Hinduism. As part of his revivalist strategy, English, Hindi and Sanskrit languages were to be studied to give effective answer to the critics of Islam at home and abroad. Thus, the institutions of Nadwa, Madarasa at Saraimir and the Shibli Academy came to be regarded as the three mile-stones on the long road of Islamic revivalism.

**Integrating Compatible Western Thoughts**

Shibli was of the opinion that much of Muslim hostility to Western learning arose because of their ignorance to European languages. This was why he emphasized the learning of English and setting up of a committee known by the name of Majlis-i-Ilm-i-Kalam in order to select those of Western thought which are compatible with Islam. With similar objective he successfully persuaded Sayyid
Hasan Bilgrami to undertake the translation of the holy Qur’ān into English. A corollary effort was Shibli's reinterpretation of Islāmic scholasticism in the light of modern thinking.27

Mawlana Shibli Nu’mani felt that the critics of Islām on the basis of modern philosophy have leveled charges against Islām, which are entirely new in import and style, and would hardly met those trained in old philosophy, no matter what claim one may make about their soundness. Any criticism can be rebutted convincingly only after clearly understanding the essence of the criticism and the premises on which criticism is founded. Those subjects (modern philosophy) are in English language and therefore knowledge of English for Ulama is essential.28

Although critical of an underlying anti-Islāmic cross-current in Western Orientalism, he is among the earliest Muslim to pay tribute to Western scholarship for its painstaking investigation of the cultural and religious resources of Islām, its methodology and its effort to establish a historical and scientific perspective for the study of Islām. Guided by modern needs he strove to make Islāmic doctrine compatible with modern philosophical and scientific thought. With this end, in view he called upon the Muslims to pay attention to both religious and secular sciences, and cherished the desire to see the new generation open new horizon of learning and creative thinking. All this contributed to soften the attitude of the conservative Ulama of the nineteenth and early twentieth century. He was perhaps the earliest Indian in modern times to make a study of the Indo-Arab intellectual relations and the rich contribution made by ancient India to the growth of Arab knowledge and wisdom.

**Integrating Faith and Reason**

Mawlana Shibli advocated that the mode and message of Islāmic revelation conforms the nature, science and reason. To him Islām was a self-necessitating and self-justifying process of faith and action.29 He was enthusiastic about the scientific spirit of the West, particularly its experimental, inductive method of which he made use at different places to bolster up his arguments.30
Shibli prefaces his presentation of Islamic tenets with a brief discourse showing that Islam is the only religion that thoroughly calls upon man to use his own reason and investigative nature.\footnote{31}

The motive of his thinking was to establish a synthesis between faith and reason. He maintains that conflict and tension between science and religion did not arise in Islam as it is to be seen in Europe during the sixteenth and seventeenth century. In his *Al-Kalam* Shibli designates Islam as 'religion of nature' (*Dīn-i-Tabīa*) in which reason is allotted a paramount role in judging the truth of religious beliefs. For instance, Shibli advocates that Islam is the only religion in the world that has been established by reason and one has to accept religion on the basis of reason. This is the great difference that marks out Islam clearly from all other religions. Shibli forwards the views of medieval thinkers such as Al-Ghazali and Jalaluddin Rumi for the promotion of his rationalist modernism. He tries to rationally explain Prophethood, Spirit, Revelation, Angels, and Miracles. He believes that human reason as it is understood in the sciences is still far from having grasped the fullness of this Universal Order and its laws adequately. Shibli displays greater awareness with regard to specific difference between rational and suprarational modes of knowing. In short, shibli's understanding of the theological epistemology has its own importance.\footnote{32}

**A Man of Action**

Shibli was not satisfied with mere writing, lecturing, and attending conference, but also believed in action. He actively worked for the protection and preservation of Urdu in the *nastaliq* script. In 1912 when Burn, the Chief Secretary of the government of Uttar Pradesh initiated a move for the introduction of Urdu in *devnagri* script, Shibli, as a member of the Vernacular Scheme Committee, vehemently opposed the move, and thus, Mr. Burn's scheme of introducing Urdu in *devnagri* was foiled. The period also witnessed a general policy of British historians and administrators to write Indian history in such a manner to create discord and animosity among the Indians and also to create a feeling of inferiority complex in them. The Indian Press would very often comment on this British policy, but it was
in 1912 at Delhi that Shibli placed a resolution to this effect demanding withdrawal of objectionable books taught in schools and universities. Consequently, a number of objectionable books were withdrawn from the courses of study and the British government ordered a general scrutiny of all historical books. The academic potentiality of Shibli was recognized and the British government awarded him the distinguished title of Shams-al-Ulama. Other organizations and institutions also honoured him. He was appointed Fellow of Allahabad University and a member of its Board of Studies in 1895. He was made a member of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and India, and the first Secretary of Anjuman Taraqqi Urdu in 1903. In 1908 he was made the President of Edinburgh Muslim Society. In 1912 he was appointed a member of the Allahabad Government Vernacular Scheme Committee. He was also a valued member of various other committees — the committee on the controversy of Urdu and Hindi and the Committee for Hindu-Muslim unity convened by the government.

Reformation of Madrasas

Historical Perspective

Mawlana Shibli Nu‘mani recounts the model of an ideal madrasa from the historical point of view. According to him during the early days of Islam, principles of syntax, rhetoric and morphology were evolved for the proper understanding of the Holy Qur’an and Arabic language so that the non-Arab converts to Islam could easily understand the Qur’anic precepts. Fable writings of yonder days gave way to new themes embodying human manners and obedience, rights and duties, and proselytizing activities of Islam. In order to follow the footsteps of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) and to regulate Muslim social behaviour, different branches of Islamic sciences were initiated, such as hadith (tradition of Prophet Muhammad (SAW)), fiqah (principles of Islamic jurisprudence), qasas (instructive histories), etc. That these studies were not beyond the pale of reason and enquiry, principles of Asma-al-Rijal (critical study of the character of the transmitters of hadith), Usul-i-Isnad (figuring out all the persons involved in transmitting the tradition of Prophet
Muhammad (SAW) and the study of their character) and Ilm-i-Dirayat (principles of investigation) were formulated. All this placed the Arabs in an advantageous position in religious scriptural controversies over their rivals—the Jews and Christians. Later when Islamic thought was confronted with Greek philosophy there emerged Ilm-ul-Kalam or Islamic scholasticism. Metaphysics also received new attention. The subsequent history of Muslim education is marked for its vigour and passion.35

Shibli by his various writings endeavoured to highlight the past history of Muslim education and also to draw the Muslims out of obscurantism and educational backwardness. He was the driving force of several Muslim educational institutions wherein he tried to make education more meaningful and purposeful.

The madrasas, in the zenith of Islamic community, functioned like modern colleges and universities with well-equipped libraries, were known for their excellence. Herein students were free to choose the subjects of their liking. Lectures were delivered and after a time bound period certificates were given to the students. The practice of imparting education on private basis by eminent teachers continued simultaneously. Like the ancient Greeks, Qur'anic education in its early phase was transmitted orally, in which hundreds of teachers were involved in teaching and training.36

Shibli realized that the co-operation of the theologians and the English educated Muslims was indispensable for the success of his scheme of education. He once remarked that

"If, on the one hand, the spread of modern education amongst the Muslims was largely dependent upon the support of influential theologians, the religious movement, on the other hand, needed the support of English educated Muslims for its success.37"

Shibli's main pre-occupation was to resolve the crisis of the Muslims. For this purpose, he embarked upon extensive research and looked into Islamic intellectual resources. The quest produced biographies of Islamic reformers and thinkers. This provided him necessary input to resolve the intellectual crisis faced by the Muslim Ummah.
In the Indian sub-continent the first noticeable change in the syllabus is to be seen in *dars-i-nizamiyah* of Firangi Mahal, a distinguished centre of Islamic learning. It became a model for Indian *Madrasas* in the nineteenth century, for the first time books of Indian authors were introduced. The syllabus was prepared with a view to develop the mental faculty of the students. The books taught included philosophy and music. Jurisprudic texts, which unnecessarily gave birth to hair-splitting religious debates, were deleted from the syllabi. This largely explains why the *Ulama* of Firangi Mahal remained aloof from Shia-Sunni religious controversies.38

Dissatisfaction with the *Dars-e-Nizamiyah* started appearing in the circle of *Ulamas* from late nineteenth century. The nature of its shortcomings were indicated in broad terms and the areas which need replacement, modification or only change in teaching techniques were separately pointed out.

Shibli started his crusade against the prevalent *Nisab* with his article "*Musalamanon ki Guzishta Talim.*" The article was read at Lucknow in a meeting of the Muslim Educational Society in 1887. It was a revelation for Muslim theologians who had already started realizing shortcomings of the existing *Nisab*. The first resolution adopted in 1894 at the inaugural conference of Nadwat-ul-Ulama at Kanpur therefore, related to the need for introducing change in *Nisab*. Here again Shibli while seconding, the resolution, made a scathing attack on the prevalent system and exposed its deficiencies.39

Shibli argued that the education imparted in *Madrasas* were not strictly a religious education because in the syllabus of *Dars-e-Nizamiyah* there were more books on Greek philosophy and science than on theology. Therefore, he failed to understand why the *Ulama* were hostile towards English education. Shibli travelled far and wide for the cause of traditional education but his contact with the English system at Aligarh convinced him of the shortcomings in the traditional system.40

Shibli's criticism of the educational system was not directed against the basic premise or the aims of education as conceived by the traditional institutions. His criticism was directed only against total acceptance of syllabus, which had outlived its relevance in certain subject areas. There was therefore little scope for
disagreement. What is, however, overlooked is the need to think about the place of traditional educational institutions in the present day India.

Special care was taken to design a syllabus through which a student should acquire complete mastery over Islamic subjects. At the same time he must not shed the ethical and spiritual values cherished by Islam from himself. This will prepare him to go out and shoulder successfully selfless leadership of the community and play significant role in the propagation and spreading of religious ideas of Islam. It is made clear to every student that the aim of their education is not to prepare for a lucrative job or to accumulate degrees. It is a religious education, pure and simple, to prepare a group in the community which is always ready to revive the Sunnah of the Prophet (SAW) and uphold the name of God. The Nisab at the Dar-ul-Uloom, Nadwat-ul-Ulama has been subjected to continuous scrutiny and revision as to face the contemporary changes.

Mawlana Shibli attempted to open new educational institutions and make necessary modification in the existing syllabus of the Indian Madrasas. Shibli drew their attention to parallel situations in the Islamic past to bring about the required change in their attitude. He wanted to Islamize the modern knowledge but opposed the Westernization of the Islamic knowledge.

**Inspiration from Other Communities**

Mawlana Shibli Nu’mani did not mind borrowing European ideas and institutions if they were essential for the regeneration of Islam. Shibli was much impressed by the ascetic and simple life of Hindu preachers. These preachers were not only familiar with their theological subjects but were also conversant with modern philosophical theories. Shibli praised the Hindu educational institutions through which the Hindus were being trained to undergo hardship and deprivations for the cause of Hindu solidarity and advancement. They got the modern education through English language. Shibli drew the attention of the Muslim obscurantist’s to this development. He said that the Hindus were advancing in the field of modern education and their adherence to Hindu faith did not act as an inhibitory force in their advancement. In fact, the Hindus, who got English education, were better
equipped to project their religion in new perspective. The acquisition of English language was a source of their elevation and exaltation among the world nations. The acquisition of modern knowledge was not an impediment to their religious revivalism. As a matter of fact, it was the modern education that made a section of Hindus more cultural-conscious and consequently revivalist. Shibli appreciated the Hindu response to modern education. He pointed out the Christians' advancement in modern education and their increasing involvement in the religious activities in the Western countries. The simultaneity of the secular and missionary movements in the Western countries provided increased credibility to Shibli's co-existential arrangements in the Muslim education system.

He drew the content of thought from the Islāmic past but adopted the Western research methodology to test its authenticity of the issues. Shibli's intellectual defense mechanism was based on Islāmic revivalism. Actually, it was not an admiration of the past but was intended to reactivate the theological elements of Islām.

His biographical writings of Islāmic heroes gave a detailed account of the theological and intellectual problems of that period. For instance in Al-Ghazali, he discussed the different philosophical issues and emphasized the need for innovation in Islāmic thought. He also gave an account of the Europeans' contribution to the advancement of knowledge.43

His planning of education was based on the combination of the Western knowledge and oriental learning. This combination was indispensable for the development of that intellectual equipment which would enable a civilized Muslim to hold his own in the competitive struggle of the modern world. He visualized an educational system to propagate his hypothetical formulations regarding the rapprochement between the oriental and Western system of education.

In Sirat-un-Nabi, the celebrated biography of Prophet Muhammad (SAW), he discussed the intellectual movements of the 19th and 20th centuries and analyzed the line of thought advocated by the Westernized Muslim intellectuals for the solution of Muslim problems. The collection of material on different dimensions of Islāmic history was a colossal task. He employed Western technique of investigation to separate fact from fiction in the vast theological literature. He was one of the first
Shibli advocated forcefully for the removal of outdated books of Arabic grammar, Philosophy, logic and scholastics. He emphasized the need for functional knowledge of Arabic as it was the basic tool of investigation into the theological material of Islām. He wanted a transformation in the thought process in religious elites through a realistic theological instructional programme. He also took a daring step to introduce Hindi and Sanskrit in the curriculum so as to make familiarize the theologians with the writings of Hindu adversaries of Islām.

The type of Muslim theologians that Shibli wanted to train necessitated the establishment of an Islāmic research centre. The establishment of the Shibli Academy known as Dar-ul-Mussannafin at Azamgarh was another explicit institutional expression of his version of Islāmic revivalism. The academy was to provide research and training facilities to Muslim scholars of theology. It was visualized as a research centre of Islāmic history, Philosophy, jurisprudence and literature. Shibli was aware of the indispensability of a research horary as he faced many problems while writing biographies of heroes of Islām. He believed that the library should be a repository of Muslim cultural and theological wealth.

Through the academy, Shibli wanted to train a body of Muslim scholars to disseminate the theological knowledge on a wide spectrum and reassert the distinctiveness of Islāmic faith. Shibli wanted to form a "Solar system of Muslim Scholarship". Dar-ul-Musannafin became a publishing institution of considerable significance, keeping Islāmic orthodoxy in India in touch with atleast the fringe and the frontier of modern Western thought and methodology.

Shibli was aware of the socio-economic and politico-cultural advantages of modern education. He established an English medium school in 1883 in the city of Azamgarh well before his association with Nadwa and Saraimir institutions. Although he wanted some sort of link between his English institution in the city and that of the oriental institution in the town of Saraimir, he was not prepared to submerge the separate identity of the English School. However, this does not mean
that Shibli was against other modern institutions established by the private entrepreneurs.  

Shibli's criticism of modern system of education should be viewed with reference to his experience of the first Muslim modernist institution of Aligarh. Shibli was apprehensive of the government controlled institutions of modern learning because it curbed the initiative and independence of the students. This experience of the functioning of the Aligarh College led him to realise the necessity of establishing a Muslim controlled and managed institution. Shibli wanted the involvement of Muslims in the process of educating their children. He abhorred the idea of total dependence upon governmental measures for educational upliftment. He believed that the level of community's involvement in the expansion of education was an index of the level of its attainment of self-reliance and self-confidence. The private educational institutions were the indicators of national awareness. The intellectual achievements of the government controlled Muslim institution of Aligarh were disappointing. He did not find the originality of thought, the adventurous spirit to plunge into the unknown areas of knowledge and real freedom amongst the products of Aligarh.

Shibli's discourses on Muslim education, politics, religion, philosophy and history etc., were the different channels for the realization of his objective — the regeneration of Islam.

Shibli's evaluation of the contemporary situation and its implications for Islamic thought, his reactivization of the theological elements of Islam and his reformation of the Islamic curriculum, etc., earned him a place of unique distinction in the Muslim history. Shibli realized that the prevalent theological curriculum was obsolete and was a major hindrance in the growth of Muslim obscurantism. Shibli traced Muslim intellectual decadence to the defective system of theological system. It arrested the intellectual development of the Muslims and stifled their creative power. There had been no change in the Islamic curriculum for the last four hundred years. The contemporary developments in the field of knowledge were ignored. Any innovation was an anathema to the obscurantist theologians. They were not equipped to meet the new challenges. His attempt to restructure the theological content as well
as incorporating Sanskrit and English, and Hindi languages in the curriculum of oriental institutions gives an indication of his far sightedness and practical wisdom. It was an over all scheme to equip the theologians to face the challenges of the contemporary period more effectively. Shibli, in fact, wanted to revive the vibrant spirit of Islam.

Shibli’s zeal for restructuring the theological contents of the Islamic educational institutions, his zest for excellence in Muslim scholarship, his devotion for painstaking researches in the vast storage of theological wealth, his passion for the reassertion of distinct Muslim identity, his pursuit for co-operation amongst the protagonists of different streams of thought, his concern for Muslim apathy to the acquisition of modern knowledge, his biographies of Muslim thinkers and conquerors, his advocacy for independent Muslim educational institutions and his endeavours for the promotion of Urdu were motivated to reinvigorate the Muslims to earn a distinctive place in the Indian sub-continent as well as a place of honour in the world community. Shibli’s experiment on Muslim education may provide a clue to solve the educational crisis of the Muslim community in India and abroad as well as it may help in evolving a synthetical and integrated pattern of Muslim education in the twenty first century.

---

4. Ibid., pp.7-8.
5. Ibid., pp.13-16.
7. Ibid. p.256
Chapter Four

10 Sayyed Suliman Nadwi, Khutubat-e-Shibli, Darul Musanifeen, Azamgarh, 1965, p. 96


12 Mohammed Akhalaq Ahmad; Op’cit. p-73


14 Ibid. p. 35.


16 Ibid. pp. 158-159.


18 Mohammed Akhalaq Ahmad; Op’cit. p. 160.


22 Ibid. p. 30.

23 Ibid. p. 30.

24 Ibid. p. 34.

25 Ibid. p. 37.

26 Ibid., pp. 37-38.

27 Ibid. p. 38.


29 Mehr Afroz Murad; Intellectual Modernism of Shibli Nu’mani, Kitab Bhawan, New Delhi-2, 1996, p. 118.

30 Ibid. p. 12.

31 Ibid. p. 13.


33 Ibid. p. 39.

34 Ibid. p. 40.


36 Ibid. p. 33.

37 Ibid. p. 194.


40 Shibli Nu’mani; Bagiyat-i-Shibli, ed. by Mushtaq Husain, Delhi, 1964, p. 23.

41 Ibid. pp. 174-175.

Chapter Four

43 Ibid. pp.196-197.
45 Neyaz Ahmad Azami, Op 'cit. pp.198-199
48 Ibid. p.200.
49 Ibid. p.200.
50 Ibid. p.197.