Islam and interfaith dialogue: The *da'wah* approach of Sayyid Abu al-Ḥasan al-Nadwī

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Abstract: Using descriptive and analytical methods, this paper explores the role and contributions of an eminent Sunnī scholar of the Indo-Pak subcontinent, Sayyid Abu al-Ḥasan 'Alī al-Nadwī (d. 1420/1999) in promoting inter-cultural and religious dialogue between Islam and other faiths in the Hindu majority society, India. The study found that Nadwi adopted an approach whichcan be termed "moderate" butit was a strategic and unique approach in promoting and propagating *da'wah* in a difficult environment he lived in. To al-Nadwī, living side by side with adherents of other religions is not only a challenge for Muslim minority as in India, but it also gives Muslims an opportunity to call others to the message of Islam. Besides, al-Nadwī, like other Sunnī scholars, was of the view that Islam is to be and can be practiced by Muslims at all levels of society regardless of the circumstances and environments in which they live in. Islam remains suitable for all situations of this spatio-temporal world. He also suggested that living religion (iqāmat al-dīn) in individual life is definitely a precondition for the success of Muslims which necessarily would lead to the improvement of their situation in the wider space in a non-Muslim majority context.

Keywords: Muslim-minority, India, interfaith dialogue, communal harmony, *Da'wah, iqāmat al-dīn*.

Introduction

Da'wah or spreading the message of Islam throughout the world is an essential duty of every individual Muslim. A Muslim under all circumstances will always be a Muslim and the responsibility of *da'wah* remains the responsibility of Muslims individually and collectively. This may be considered a theoretical framework for revisiting al-Nadwī's role in leading inter-religious dialogue within

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the Hindu majority society in India. Al-Nadwīundertook this responsibility, in the first place, to help Muslimsthrive in India and secondly, to build a harmonious relationship between Muslims and adherents of other faiths in a multi-religious, plural society of India and in so doing promote Islam.

Islam, it is recorded in history, thrived for a long time before the arrival of the colonialists and Muslims then were the "masters" and among the builders of the society. Such a situation was the result of the *Da'wah* efforts of Muslims of the past in spreading the message of Islam in the world in general, and in the Subcontinent in particular. The success of *Da'wah* of the past has made the Subcontinent as one of the significant centres of Islamic education, which has produced many intellectuals and scholars such as Shaykh Aḥmadal-Sirhindī (d.1624), Shāh Walī Allāh al-Dihlawī (d.1762), Shāh 'Abd al-'Azīz (d. 1824), Sir 'Allāmah Muḥammad Iqbāl (d.1838), ShāhIsmā'īl Shahīd (d. 1831), Maulānā 'Ubaidu' Llāh of Sindh (d.1944) and many more. Al-Nadwī through his speeches and writings, and also his involvement in various organizations locally and internationally, and finally his involvement in political sphere of India, has passionately and unceasingly been addressing the issue of Muslim *Ummah* facing local as well as global challenges. His fundamental principle was that Islam is to be practiced, applied, shared and disseminated wherever possible, in their respective environments and situations wherever there are Muslims. Abu al-Ḥasan 'Alī al-Nadwī was indeed one of the greatest exponents of Islam in the second half of the twentieth century and enjoyed significant influence that stretched from the Subcontinent to the Arab World. His exposition of Islam has been termed moderate but he believed that Islam is a blessing for mankind and has been playing a positive role in creating a sane society. He perceived Islam as a complete, comprehensive civilization which is relevant to the modern age and is a viable counterpart to the Western civilization.

Divided into four sections, this paper starts with an outline of the political and social context of the Muslim minority in India and then moves on to contextualizeal-Nadwī's call for inter-religious and inter-communal harmony in a Hindu majority society and his invitation to undertake the work of *da'wah* whenever an opportunity presents itself. The third section discusses al-Nadwī's focus on the reassertion of Muslims of India in relation to their identity, rights and equality with other sister communities especially the Hindu majority as they are part and parcel of this land. The last section of the article visits his stand on the

concept of Islamic state focusing on his prime concern of *iqāmat al-dīn* and/or *iqāmat al-dawlah* in a Muslim minority context. The paper concludes with the significance of taking al-Nadwī as an inspired *dāʿī* and the leader of the contemporary era, in facing global challenges locally and abroad.

Abu al-Ḥasan al-Nadwī: life and contributions

Syed Abu al-ḤasanʿAlī al-Ḥasanī al-Nadwī was born on November 24, 1914, A.D. in Rae Bareilly, Uttar Pradesh, India into a pious and religious family. His family produced illustrious scholars and *ṣūfī*s including Sayyid Aḥmad of Bareilly (1786–1831) and Shāh Ismāʿīl Shahīd (1779-1831 A.D.) of the eighteen century. Abu al-Ḥasan al-Nadwī received his early education at home in Takia Kalan, Rai Bareilly, Uttar Pradesh, India. His mother initiated his early training in Qurʾānic studies; he later entered formal education in Arabic, Persian and Urdu. Nadwi received most of his advanced education at the Dār al-ʿulūm of the Nadwat al-ʿulamāʾ in Lucknow. His father, Syed ʿAbdul Ḥayy (1896–1923) who was an accomplished Islamic scholar of his time, also the rector of Dār al-ʿulūm Nadwat al-ʿulamā, wrote an 8 volume Arabic encyclopaedia *Nuzhat al-khawāṭir* (biographical notices of more than 5,000 theologian and jurists of the Sub-continent). He died when al-Nadwī was nine years old. After his father's death, al-Nadwī was taken care of by his brother Sayyid Abul Ali Hasani. He studied Arabic literature at Nadwatul Ulama, Lucknow, Hadith under Sheikh Husain Ahmed Madni at Darul Uloom, Deoband and Tafseer under Maulana Ahmad Ali of Lahore. He had a keen interest in Islamic history and also learnt English which equipped him to understand the developments in contemporary thought. He taught Arabic literature and Tafsir at the Nadwatul Ulama for ten years.

Al-Nadwī wrote more than fifty books in Arabic and Urdu languages. In 1950, he *wrote Mā zakhasira al-ʿālam bi-inḥiṭāṭ al-muslimīn* (What did the world lose with the decline of Muslims?) which was translated into English as *Islam and the World* was well-received by the intelligentsia. This book accorded him a place in the literary circles of the Arab world. In it, Nadwī held Muslims largely accountable for their predicament due to their reliance on institutions borrowed from the West. Several of his works have since been translated and are accessible to speakers of Arabic, English, Turkish, Bhasha Indonesia, Persian, Tamil and some other languages. His autobiography, *Karvaan-e-zindagi*, is in 8 volumes. *Purane-chiragh*, a biography of Sayyid Aḥmad Shahīd, a biography of ʿAlīibn

Abī Ṭālib and *Tarikh-e-daawat-o-azimat* are his other contributions to Urdu literature. There are other famous writings which include: *Saviours of Islamic spirit, Appreciation and interpretation of religion in the modern age, al-Tafsīr al-siyāsī li al-islām, Muslims in India*, and *Islamic concept of Prophethood.*

He was an Honorary Member of the Academy of Arts and Letters, Damascus and Academy ofArabic Language, Amman Jordan. He served as Visiting Professor in a number of Arab Universities. He was one of the Founder Members of the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) at Makkahin 1963, and served on the Higher Council of the Islamic University, Madinah, the Executive Committee of the Federation of Islamic Universities, Rabat and as the Chairman of the Board for the Centre of Islamic Studies, Oxford University. The lectures he delivered at Indian, Arab and Western Universities have been highly appreciated as original contributions to the studyof Islam and on Islam's relevance to the modern age. He also received many awards including the Faisal International Award, the Brunei Award in 1980 and the UAE Award in 1999. He died in 1999.

Muslims in India

Muslims constituted India's largest religious minority. As at 2011, Muslims constituted about14.2per cent, 80 per centor less was Hindu, 2.3 per cent of the population were Christians, followed by Sikhs 1.7 per cent, and Buddhists being 0.7per cent (Business Standard, nd). After the failure of the Sepoy Uprising of 1857 to free India from British colonial rule, sometimes referred to as the first war of independence, the British expanded their rule and consolidated power in some provinces of East India. Encouraged by the victory of the British, Christian missionaries came to believe that India was a gift and a trust of Jesus, intensified their mission to convert the Indians (Nadwi, 1980: 89). Muslims were spiritually and morally weak, confused and suffered from inferiority complex facing the onslaught of Western culture and education. Being seen as a threat to British imperialism, Muslims have been denied employment in government services and all other gainful occupations. Although Hindus and Muslims cooperated in the Sepoy uprising, Muslims weresingled out as being solely responsible for the uprising. The British consequently became hostile towards Muslims. This situation caused alarm among leaders of the community giving rise to the emergence of many *madrasah*s and Islamic centres for education aiming to take Muslims back to their theology and traditions.

The establishment of the Islamic centres of education such as Dār al-'ulūm Deoband in 1866 in a small mosque as a primary *madrasah* in the town of Deoband, also Maẓhar al-'ulūm in Saharanpūr, Dār al-'ulūm Nadwat al-'ulamā', Dār al-'ulūm at Bhopal, and many other similar *madrasah*s have succeeded in bringing the Muslims back to their very roots, Qur'ān and the traditions of the Prophet (SAW). Modern institutions like Muslim University Aligarh, Jāmi'ah Osmānia, Hyderabad, and many other institutions were also established and were successful in producing great scholars and Muslims intellectuals. Most of these institutions until today receive students not only from India but also from other countries like Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Russia, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Asia Minor, Tibet, China, the Irelands of the Indian Ocean and Arabia (Nadwi, 1980: 91).

After the independence of India in 1947, the government declared it to be a secular state in the sense of not favouring any religion, giving equal weight to all religions and people. Muslims, however, were deprived and discriminated against in this secular state. They lagged behind the Hindu majority in education, economy and in government posts. According to available records, Muslims have been suffering from economic disadvantages since India's partition and are now among the poorest and least educated communities in the country (Sonalde Desai and Kulkarni, 2008). Relations between Hindus and Muslims also have been characterized by continuous tension and inter-communal violence since pre-independence up to the post-independence era (See Pandey, 2006). Series of anti-Muslim riots broke up in the country indicating enough signs for one to conclude that there is "unhappiness" in the relationship between Muslims and the majority community. The animosity has increased subsequently as evidenced by the demolition of the Babri mosque in 1992 and Gujerat Massacre in 2002 (Kausar, 2006). A recent study also showed that the Muslimsare seen as constituting a danger against which the Hindu body politic needs to be secured. This consequently legitimizes the use of violence against the Muslim minority and it is being facilitated and justified in the name of achieving security for the Hindu Self at individual, community, national as well as international levels (Anand, 2005).

During his time, Nadwīobserved the strained relationship between Muslims and Hindus and was disturbed by what he called a "highly testing time" for the Muslim (Nadwi, 1980: 125). Nevertheless, in his *Muslims in India,* he considered the communal tensions between Muslims and Hindus as a passing phenomenon.

These hardships and difficulties were natural and transitory in the sense that, some are heritages of the past and some are of their own making. The disturbances faced by the Muslims are bound to disappear in course of time. The Muslims need to deal with the problem in a disciplined and proper manner and under the right leadership, a leadership which is mature, balanced and realistic as well as being imaginative, courageous and honest (Nadwi, 1980: 125).To meet these challenges, Nadwīembarked upon the project of reviving, guiding, and assisting the Muslims of India through his involvement in *tablīghī-jamāʿat*. The purpose of joining the *Jamāʿat*was to help Muslims assert their Islamic identity and to spread awareness and consciousness of Islam among the masses and also of bringing them back to the Qur'ān and the Sunnah, the traditions of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW). Nadwī also believed that in the absence of Muslim political authority, the role of the *ʿulamāʾ* as Muslim leaders is very essential to the Muslim minority. Therefore, he remained appreciative of the role of Islamic *madrasah*s or seminaries in promoting Islamic knowledge and awareness to the end of his life.

In the 1970s, Nadwīstarted the Payam-e-Insaniyat (Message of Humanity) movement to bridge the gap between Hindus and Muslims. While in the tablīghī-jamāʿat the focus was on the Muslims in particular, in the *Payām-i-insāniyat* (*Risālat al-insāniyyah*), his focus was towards cooperation with other communities and of maintaining a peaceful and harmonious coexistence in a plural, multi-religious India. *Payām-i-insāniyat* was a "forum where people of different faiths could come together on the basis of brotherhood, communal harmony, tolerance, mutual respect and love for the country. It aimed at promoting peaceful relations between Muslims and others and also preventing moral declination among society regardless of religion, culture and colour (Sikand, 2004: 45; Nadwi, 1990: 145-157). Through this *Payām-i-insāniyat,* the message of Islam was also presented to others as a means and platform for inter-faith dialogues.

Between *daʿwah* and interfaith dialogue

Al-Nadwi did lay emphasis on *daʿwah* which, he observed, has been carried out by Muslims in India for a long time up to the end of British rule (Nadwi, 1980: 127). Islam has been preached and propagated throughout the land which led many to accept Islam and become good Muslims. Many among renowned Muslims of India also have come from Hindu origins and they became pious and very good Muslims. Despite such success, *da'wah* has caused resentment and

created a rift in the relationship between Muslim and Indian communities, which to al-Nadwī, was a result of "a dismal and uninspiring political tussle", which eventually divided the communities of India (Nadwī, 1980: 127). The aftermath of the Partition also, in fact, had a direct impact on *da'wah* which, to al-Nadwī, is something regrettable. At this stage, politics dictated religious landscape and it was inevitable that Hindu-Muslim conflict would exacerbate the dynamism of *da'wah*.

The growing anti-Muslim sentiment and attitude among Hindus led many Muslim scholars to be involved in interfaith dialogue to let Muslims survive in a minority context. A secular state as declared by the government of India ought to have permitted minority Muslims to practice his or her own religion without discrimination. But the reality was different. Al-Nadwī wrote:

> general impression got created in India about Islam that it is the religion of a state whose position with regard to it is that of a confirmed rival or enemy, and of a community with which bitter conflicts have taken in the past. Memories of this conflict are still fresh in the minds (Nadwī, 1980: 127).

Muslims are conceived as the enemy, the rival, and everything associated with Muslims and their culture and belief was disliked and they were the targets of suspicion. Uneasy conflict such as this of course has been the focus of special attention by leaders of the Muslim community.

The appeal of these leading scholars and intellectuals was to tackle the situation in the best possible manner. These scholars, including al-Nadwī, came up with a new way of understanding the faith which they presented as "authentic Islam". Sikand relates that this is something outside the practice of the traditional *'ulamā* and the narratives of the traditional *fiqh* because, *fiqh* has been developed in a context of Muslim political supremacy, therefore, it provides little guidance for the Muslims of contemporary India in this particular case (Siknd, 2004: 7). However, Muslims need to go out and build bridges with the people of other faiths in order to legitimize their hopes and aspirations for equality, democracy and good inter-communal relationship within a democratic and secular polity (Sikand, 2004: 6). This is what has been done by Nadwī since 1950's when he joined the *tablīghī-jamā't*. Nadwī fully supported the *jamā'at* as he thought it to be the most pragmatic strategy for Muslims in India who live as a marginalized and threatened minority, to adopt (Sikand, 2004: 39). Nadwī remained appreciative of the *jamā'at*

to the end of his life, exhorting the teachers and students of the *Nadwat al-'ulamā'* to be involved in the *jamā'at* work and activities, and he himself has written a biography of Maulānā Muḥammad Ilyās (d. 1943), its founder (Sikand, 2004: 39).

Nadwī and inter-faith dialogue

Nadwī, however, felt the need to promote inter-faith dialogue. He discovered that many Hindus have a negative and even wrong perception of Islam which not only widened the distance between Hindus and Muslims but also stood in the way of the spread of Islam (Sikand, 2004: 45). *Payām-i-insāniyat* (message of humanity) became his principle vehicle for the promotion of better relationship between Muslims and adherents of other faiths. He sees it as a responsibility of Muslims to expose themselves to others and have dialogues with them to promote better understanding and appreciation of each other in the context of Indian pluralism, and at the same time, open the avenues of *da'wah* to them. Al-Nadwī's treatment of *da'wah,* therefore, can be subsumed as going hand in hand with his focus on dialogue and peace in that specific context.

Through the platform of his *Payām-i-insāniyat,* Nadwī embarked upon the mission of inter-faith dialogue in many parts of India. In his speeches in India, al-Nadwīcalled upon the people of India to focus on their common concern about welfare of their motherland. As citizens of India, whose forefathers sacrificed their blood for the sake of Indian independence, he urged Muslims never to allow India to be destroyed by elements of communalism which will lead to the violence and destruction of the country (Nadwī, 1990: 143-144).

In a dialogue in Nagpur in 1986 with leaders of other faiths including representatives from Hindu organizations and also a number of foreign diplomats to India, Nadwīgave a clarion call to finding solutions to save the country from destruction as a result of crime and violence, enmity, racism and irresponsible acts of corrupt leaders (Nadwī, 1990: 150). To him, a society which allows injustices and aggressions to continue will, if no efforts taken, destroy the fabric of the society (Nadwī, 1990: 150). He reminded his audience that they were living in a society characterized by moral and social degradation. Nadwī's concern therefore, was to get involved in the society regardless of one's belief or colour, and to promote awareness and good values among humanity.

His appeal to humanity also was heard in Pune in 1987 where he stressed on the importance of unity among mankind, that is the unity which is based on

human brotherhood (*ukhuwwahinsāniyyah*), and also unity based on the belief in the Almighty God. Unity is an essential characteristics of a good society (Nadwī, 1990: 153). No individual should exploit others for his or her own selfish interest and everybody should be responsible for preventing any form of corruption and injustice in the society. Nadwī has employed an analogy of a ship arguing that if the ship is leaking then everyone in the ship will be drowned whether they be in the first class compartment on top of the ship or in the lowest class (Nadwī, 1990: 153). Apart from calling people for unity of humanity based on human brotherhood, Nadwī in his dialogues and published articles also tried to express the message of Islam to his society, explaining characteristics of Muslims and their beliefs in such a way as to familiarise others with Muslim nature, and, in the process he also enlightens people on the importance of Muslim Personal Law.[1] In his massage, al-Nadwī addressed all people, Muslims and non-Muslims of India, emphasising the Islamic values on human brotherhood which is based on equality (*al-musāwāt*) and common concern on matters of harmonious relationship between adherents of different religions. Nadwī in this way was doing *daʿwah* and inviting non-Muslims to Islam in a very gentle manner. Despite Muslims being stereotyped negatively as either an enemy of the society or even a terrorist, Nadwī's spirit to preach Islam in India continued.

To further cooperation with people of other faiths, Nadwīassociated *Payām-i-insāniyat* with *Ḥilf al-fuḍūl*of the pre-Islamic era. He was asking Muslims to take an oath, as was done during the time of the Prophet (SAW), to help the poor, defend the oppressed and enjoin right and forbid wrong. To Nadwī, *Ḥilf al-fuḍūl*is part of a religious duty as Islam urges people to enjoin the good and prevent evils but also an indispensable mission that Muslims have to carry outto live in peace and harmony in their motherland (Sikand, 2004: 46). He saw that Muslims of India have to work hand in hand with the people of other religions to spread true religion, promote peace and love, establish justice and crusade against all forms of oppression, strife and violations of human rights as the Muslims are appointed by God for that very purpose (Sikand, 2004: 46).

The activities of Nadwī's *Payām-i-insāniyat* consisted largely of organising public rallies lectured by Nadwī himself, also his deputy Maulānā 'Abdul Karīm Parekh of Nagpūr, and also representatives from among Muslim and Hindu leaders and of other faiths (Sikand, 2004: 46). There are many organizations who appreciated and published Nadwī's lectures in various languages on communal

harmony from Islamic perspective. Nadwī emphasised in his lectures the values that all religions had in common such as communal hatred, violence, corruption in public life, oppression of marginalized groups, materialism and others. Although *Payām-i-insāniyat* did not continue after the death of Nadwī, the spirit of this movement has survived in such organisations as the Society for Communal Harmony (CSH), consisting of Hindu and Muslim intellectuals and the Forum for Communal Understanding and Synthesis (FOCUS) (Sikand, 2004: 45).

Muslims as citizens of India

As part of the program for attaining communal harmony in the country, al-Nadwīurged the Indians not to engage in activities that aim at the systematic exclusion of Muslims from the Hindu nation state (Anand, 2005).To those who argued that Muslims in India were foreigners, Nadwī responded by bringing forward a number of arguments. It was true, he argued, that India is not the birth place of Islam. However, it was a historical fact that Muslims came to India preaching the message of Islam, and they were supremely unconcerned with worldly aims and ambitions. They were guided solely by the lofty sentiments of religious service. Nadwīobserved:

> They brought with them the Islamic message of equity and social justice in order to show to men thirsting for light and freedom in a dark and narrow world the way to break their shackles and avail themselves of the priceless bounties of nature that were lying scattered over God's wide earth. The best instances of these dedicated, high-souled preachers are offered by the lives of the devoted servants of Islam under whose benign shadow thousands of Indian society not only found shelter but also began to live as their own, beloved kinsmen (Nadwi, 1980: 7).

He named personalities such as ʿAlī al-Ḥujwerī (d. 1077), Khwājā Muʿīn al-dīn Ajmīrī (d. 1230), and few other outstanding personalities who made India famous through their religious activities. In addition, Muslims came to India as conquerors and rulers such as Maḥmūd Ghaznawī (d. 1030), and Ẓāhir al-dīn Bābur (d. 1530), among others. These men of couragelaid the foundations for an empire that prospered for hundreds of years and made India progress to the highest peak of glory and prosperity (Nadwi, 1980: 7). For whatever reasons they came in, they always treated India as their home. Their belief was that the earth

belonged to God and they can live wherever possible to promote Islam. The (Qur'ān, 24: 55) makes it abundantly clear:

> Allah has promised, to those among you who believe and work righteous deeds, that He will, of a surety, grant them in the land, inheritance (of power), as He granted it to those before them; that He will establish in authority their religion – the one which He has chosen for them; and that He will change (their state), after the fear in which they (lived), to one of security and peace: 'they will worship Me (alone) and not associate aught with Me.' If any do reject faith after this, they are rebellious and wicked.

Therefore, argued Nadwi, the Muslims regarded India as their homeland never to abandon (Nadwi, 1980: 8). They "ungrudgingly gave of their best mental, physical and spiritual resources, their most excellent natural abilities and talents in its service, thinking that their contribution to its development and prosperity would ultimately be to their own advantage" (Nadwi, 1980: 8). The attitude of Muslims towards India was also totally different from that of the British and other foreign imperialist powers that "only came to control over the land and all its resources as much as possible" (Nadwi, 1980: 8). To Nadwī, the British treated India like "a cow which came   into their hands for a few days in which they were eager to milk it as thoroughly as they could" (Nadwi, 1980: 8).He lamented that attempts were being made to wipe out the contributions of Muslims to the development of India. However, the contributions made by Maulānā Abul Kalām Āzād (d. 1958), Maulānā Ḥusain Aḥmad Madanī (d. 1957), Shaikh Aḥmad al-Shahīd (d. 1831) and others inthe struggle for Indian independence cannot be swept aside (Nadwi, 1980: 105). In fact, India attained freedom during the time of Maulānā Abul Kalām's tenure as President of the Congress (Nadwi, 1980: 123).

In his writings, however, Nadwī contended that Muslims should, under no circumstance, stop being Muslims. The comprehensiveness of *sharīʿah* provides adequate room and space for Muslims to abide by its rules and commands. Therefore, Muslims in India, although in the Hindu majority context, should remain loyal to Islam and to contribute to the development of India which is their homeland. Nadwī contended that the establishment of religion (*iqāmat al-dīn*) does not require an Islamic state. This duty can be carried out under all circumstances and at all times (Nadwi, 1982: 692). It is the responsibility of every individual Muslim to establish *dīn* by all possible, constructive means, such as propagating religious messages through literature, public discussion, dialogues, and by convincing others of the necessity of Islam to help India develop as a

viable state (Sikand, 2004: 37). Nadwīwas highly critical of those who were struggling for establishing an Islamic state in India. He differed with Sayyid Abul A'la Mawdūdī and criticised the *jamā'at Islāmī* for focusing exclusively on erecting an Islamic state rather than establishing the *dīn.*

Nadwī took an active part in All-India Muslim *Majlis al-mushāwarah* (Muslim Consultative Assembly) to address Muslim issues through political channels and to find solutions to the problems confronting Muslims emanating from Hindu nationalism. He communicated in writings with the rulers of the Indian community expressing his concerns about the future of India. These correspondences are preserved in his *fīmasīrat al-ḥayāt*. He wrote letters to the then Prime Minister India Gandhi (d.1984) appreciating certain government policies, pointing out the deficiencies in the policies and suggesting certain amendments to promote Hindu-Muslim unity (Nadwi, 1990: 63-68). He also met the then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi (d. 1990) over the issue of Muslim Personal Law which was seriously debated in India in the late 80's. In sum, to al-Nadwī's view, *iqāmat al-dīn* is necessary and always possible wherever Muslims live by establishing a good relationship with others.

Conclusion

Nadwī was a traditionalist thinker and his understanding of Islam is characterized by his doctrinal orientation and also the global vision of Islam. In his capacity as a traditionalist scholar, Nadwī sought solutions to the questions of religious extremism among Muslims of his time as well as cultural chauvinism of the majority community of India in relation to the prime sources of Islam. He urged his fellow Muslims to actively pursue knowledge in order to understand Islam and to maintain their Islamic identity in facing the growing threats of Hindu fanaticism. He was emphatic on maintaining harmonious inter-religious coexistence in India. He called upon Muslim scholars in *da'wah* activities to do their best to bring the Muslims of India back to their theological roots, to introduce Islam to others in a peaceful, consistent, and attractive manner appropriate for a society where Muslims are in a minority. Indeed, the inter-faith dialogue in a plural, multi-religious society is of paramount importance to promote harmony among the people of different religions.

End Note

1. Muslim Personal Law had been under serious debate in India following the case of Muslim woman named Shah Bano who was divorced by her husband but she then approached Civil Court and invoking section 125 of the Code of Criminal Procedure. Shah Bano sued her husband for alimony. In 1980, she demanded a review of her allowance, upon which her ex-husband appealed to the highest court of the land, the Supreme Court, arguing that he was not obliged to pay her any alimony as per the *sharī'a* which was protected by the Muslim Personal Law. This case consequently evoked a considerable debate in the Parliament of India with regard to the position of Muslim Personal Law. See Misra (2000: 1-18).

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