

Sayyid Maududi's *Tajdid-o-Ihya-i-Din*: An Analytical Study

Sartaj Ahmad Sofi

Abstract

The world of the 20th Century witnessed some great scholars who had contributed extensively for the promotion of Islam and to establish it as a complete code of life. Mawdudi had secured a respectable place in it. He had shown in practical terms how Islam could be pressed into the service of the modern people and their day-to-day problems. He, with his eminent scholarship contributed many books and articles on fundamental aspects of Islam and its contemporary application in various fields. The most important writing was his widely known Tafsir, Tafhim-ul-Qur'an, which took about 30 years to complete. Besides, his legacy of reformation of Islam is still echoing in the Indian subcontinent. The present study is a humble endeavour to analyze one of his works on the subject of Islamic reformation.

An Analytical Study

Tajdid-o-Ihya-i-Din (English Translation, *A Short History of Revivalist Movement in Islam* by Al-Ash'ari) by Sayyid AbulA'laMaududi published by Markazi Maktabah Islami, Delhi(Fifth edition) is originally an essay written for Shah Waliullah Number of the *Al-Furqan*, Bareilly.Later on, it was published in a book form, first in 1940 and has run till then through a number of editions in respect to its significance. The work originally written in Urdu language, now translated in Arabic and English, for the benefit of Urdu strangers.

The under review work is considered as the foundational stone in the literary history of Islam. It is comparatively dedicated to the revivalist work of Shah Waliullah and the works of other *Mujaddids*, who have left indelible marks in the history of Islam, have been touched only to serve as necessary background. It aims at reviving a new feeling among the Muslims of the Indo-Pak subcontinent for religious reawakening and reconstruction.

Maududi succeeded in it, to a very great extent, to address the intellectual minds, but a general group of community remained unfamiliar, as the contents of the book are more technical and concise.

Sartaj Ahmad Sofi is Doctoral Candidate, Shah-i-Hawadan Institute of Islamic Studies, University of Kashmir, Srinagar

Email ID: sartaja01@gmail.com

Of course, it will help the scholars to accelerate the reformative work as Maududi only initiates it. Surely, it seems fruitful to get an idea about but is not enough to quench the thirst of scholar. Hence further work is needed to accomplish the task of the concept of rejuvenation and reformation in Islam.

Tajdid (renewal), the Prophetic concept of reform and *Mujaddid*—the active particle of it, refers to one who renews or reviews the application of Islam in the Muslim community. The author tries to cover almost the entire concept of *Tajdid* in the light of Islamic sciences, and historicity of number of revivalists and revivalist movements in a wholesome manner which is not only tangible but also attractive and appealing for one and all in the same stern.

At the very outset, in the preface of the book, Maududi seems critical in describing the technical meaning of term *Tajdid*, which according to him most of the people doesn't comprehend. He differentiates the meaning of *Tajdid* in terms of its generality and as regards its technical meaning. He believes that very few people, for instance, understand fully what *Tajdid* really is, what kind of work it implies, what are its scope and sphere, and what is total and partial *Tajdid*? According to him, the towering personalities of Islamic revivalist history viz, 'Umar bin Abdul Aziz, Imam Al-Ghazzali, IbnTaimiyyah, Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi and Shah Waliullah were only partial *Mujaddids* but people failed to comprehend the nature of achievements of these great men to realize in what particular aspect each one was a *mujaddid*, and began to consider their work as total *Tajdid*, due to their ignorance. Maududi had also criticized that due to the high sounding titles like *Hadhrat*, *Imam*, *Hujjat-ul-Islam*, *Qutb-ul-Arifeen*, *Zubdat-ul-Salikeen* etc. and the poetic language adopted to describe their achievements deceives one to examine thoroughly the works and achievements of these revered people and judge precisely the nature and extent of their services to the cause of reviving Islam. According to him it should also be remembered that *Tajdid* has been undertaken by many people in the past in every age, but a few among them have really deserved the title of *mujaddid*.

The four chapters along with appendices are discussed in this work under the following headings;

1. Conflict between Islam and Un-Islam
2. The nature of Islamic Revival (*Tajdid*)

3. Some great *Mujaddids* of Islam and their achievements
4. The achievements of Shah Waliullah of Dehli
5. Appendices

Taking the Muslim historicity into consideration, Maududi in the first pages of the work, sees the world to consist of a perennial conflict between Islam and un-Islam. The ignorance or the past existed systems of life like Atheism, Polytheism and Asceticism, is compared with Islamic system of life, and the endeavour to eradicate all these systems and laid firm foundation of Islam with its real spirit is the only work of the former (*mujaddid*) is analyzed and mentioned in detail, by Maududi, in the first chapter of the work.

Maududi had differentiated *Tajdid* from *Tajadud* (renewal from Innovation) and *Mujaddid* from *Mutajaddid*. Revival means cleansing Islam from all the un-Godly elements and presenting it and making it to flourish more or less in its original pure form while as innovation is opposite to it. He, in the 2nd chapter of the book, has compared the works of *Mujaddid* with Prophet in terms of the spirit of the teachings of Islam as;

“Though a *mujaddidis* is not a Prophet, yet in spirit he comes very close to prophethood. He is characterized by a clear mind, penetrating vision, unbiased straight thinking, special ability to see the Right Path clear of all extremes and keep balance, power to think independently of the contemporaries and centuries-old social and other prejudices, courage to fight against the evils of the time, inherent ability to lead and guide, and an un-usual competence to undertake *Ijtihad* and the work of reconstruction. Besides these great qualities, he must have acquired a thorough and comprehensive grasp of Islam, must be a perfect Muslim in thought and attitude, must have the acumen to distinguish Islam from un-Islam in the finest details, and must possess the ability to extract the truth from the welter of long-established falsehood. Without these extraordinary qualities nobody can expect to be a *mujaddid*; and these are the very qualities that characterize a prophet only on a far higher scale.”¹

¹ Maududi, Sayyid AbulA’la; *Tajdid –o-Ihya-i-Din*, English Translation (*A Short History of Revivalist Movement in Islam*) by Al-Ash’ari, Markazi Maktabah Islami, 2010, pp. 37—38.

While highlighting the achievements of some great *mujaddids*, Maududi, in the 3rd chapter of his work, places ‘Umar bin Abdul Aziz in the first rank among the *mujaddids* of his time and all times to come. He made his description as

“The first *mujadid* of Islam worked hard for two and a half years and during this brief period he was able to revolutionize life in all its various aspects. But soon the ummayyads turned against this pious man. They saw their death in the life of Islam and therefore could not possibly tolerate the work of its Revival. They conspired against him and poisoned him at the young age of 39. The work of revival initiated by him remained deficient only in one respect: he could not replace monarchy by the elective caliphate.”²

After Umar bin Abdul Aziz, he mentioned the *mujaddids* who were the four great imams to whom are ascribed the four popular schools of Islamic jurisprudence (*Fiqh*). He then describes the reformatory role of Imam Ghazzali, IbnTaimiyah and Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi very briefly.

One whole chapter has been devoted in the description of reformation by Shah Waliullah of Delhi. He, while acknowledging the personality of Shah, says :

“As far as I know the Shah Sahib was the first scholar who ever understood and appreciated the real and fine difference between the history of Islam and the history of Muslims. He, in fact, has studied the history of the Muslims from the viewpoint of the history of Islam and tried to ascertain exactly the condition of Islam among the communities embracing it at different time. This is a delicate and complicated subject which has embroiled people in the past and even at present they are not clear about it. As a matter of fact, after the passing away of Shah Waliullah there has not since appeared a leader of his caliber.... As far as I know, he is the first scholar who ever gave a bird’s-eye of the historical conflict between Islam and un-Islam.”³

Maududi suggests specific reasons of the worldly failure of some 18th and 19th century reform and revivalist movements, in the end of the book, and made mention of some remedial measures for future reformers, as per his own understanding. He had analyzed certain past

² Ibid, pp. 48—49

³ Ibid, pp. 74—75, 87—88

revivalists along with their thought and movements to bring out realities and social change with the transcendent and universal standard of the Quran and the *Sunnah* through a process of restoration and reform.

Finally, he had concluded it with appendices, where he had tried to respond to very few, among the number of queries and arguments, raised by some eminent scholars and experts of the field of reformation at different occasions.

The work, with respect to its certain issues, has been remained a matter of hot debate among the scholars of the time from the first day of its publication. Innumerable arguments and objections had been raised by expert scholars after analyzing the work. Maududi had tried to clear the objections in the revised edition of the book, but seems to have not succeeded fully in responding to the objections in the light of Islamic history and religious sciences very explicitly. Companions of Prophet (*Sahaba*) as the criteria for Truth (*Haqq*) and *Tasawwuf* as the essence of *Shari'ah*, and some other issues are being the objectionable matters for the scholars of repute to discuss on and about. As the purpose of the present study is neither to discuss these crucial issues nor to explain the views of opposites and Maududi's credence in it, but only to provide a brief review of it that is why more focus is given on the overall description of the book, leaving the controversial parts of the book aside.

Conclusion

An analytical study of Maududi's work takes us to acknowledge the very dynamic and meticulous scholarship and personality of Maududi and places him in high ranks, in the field of reformation in the Indo-Pak subcontinent, endowed with divine qualities. The topically sequential manner of contents attracts one and all, and creates a sense of spirit and interest to indulge in the depth of the theme of the study underlined.
