

Seyyed Abul Hassan Ali Nadwi's Approach to Western Civilization

Muhammad Ali Zafar*

Introduction:

Seyyed Abul Hassan Ali Nadwi was one of the eminent and reputed scholars in the Muslim world. He had a multidimensional personality. He was a unique historian, a genuine sermonizer, a biographer, a popular author and scholar. One of the salient features of his writings is his authentic and thought provoking criticism of western civilization. Many Muslim scholars have depicted the picture of modern western civilization in an awe inspiring and apologetic style, but the analysis and critique of the western civilization presented by Seyyed Abul Hassan Ali is considered as one of his great maneuver.(1)

He acquired a deep insight of the western civilization by the literature of Muslim scholars like Muhammad Iqbal, Abul Ala Mududi, 'Islam at the Cross Roads' by Muhammad Asad, and from the literature of western authors, e.g. History of 'Conflict between Religion and Science', Gibbon's 'Decline and Fall of European Morals', Robert's 'The making of Humanity'², etc. Moreover, he insinuated of Western civilization by the several tours of Europe, which provided him the chance to study the West and its lifestyle intimately. He expresses his feelings about his tour of Europe in such words:

"The tour of Europe had given me the opportunity to see, at first hand, the major centers of Western Civilization about which so much had been said in the book. I also made use of the material available in the British Museum and other well-known libraries in the European countries I visited." (3)

Seyyed Abul Hassan Ali had the occasion to meet and converse with different orientalist in Europe. In one of his letters, he evinced his reflections about the western civilization that, neither I have manifested an excessive realistic portrayal, nor with prejudice, and this is the matter of fact that without personal observation it is difficult to deliver any judgment about the goodness and falsehood of this civilization.(4) It was the result of his frequent visits of Europe and America that he depicted an apt picture of the West in front of the Muslims living abroad and in the Muslim countries, and warned them regarding the merits and demerits of western civilization.

* Head of Islamic Studies Dept. Chand Bagh School Muriedke, Pakistan.

He has presented a comprehensive analysis of western culture and civilization in his several writings, the gist of his approach towards the western civilization is presented in this article.

Origin of the Western Civilization:

The western civilization is not merely the product of the modern age; it has evolved into the present state after a long journey. The roots of the western civilizations can be traced back to Greek and Roman civilization of the primitive epoch. All the ethical, cultural, and social characteristics of Greco-Roman civilizations have embedded into the current western civilization. Therefore, it's essential to study the western civilization in the light of Greco-Roman civilizations. Seyyed Abul Hassan Ali Nadwi states about it that:

“The Western nations kept cultivating the spirit, the philosophy, the sciences, the literatures, and the ideas of the Greek and Roman cultures till the nineteenth century when they put on a new grab. It is possible to be deceived by the splendor of the new attire, but the fact remains that its warp and woof was made up of the Greek and Roman materials.”(5)

The real ingredients of Greek civilization were indifferent towards transcendental values, lack of religious values, adoration of material benefits and abundant nationalism. Similarly, love for sports, festivals, indulgence in licentious activities and lack of fear about God were the prominent attributes of Greek civilization.(6)

The Roman civilization was the successor of Greek civilization. Although, the Romans had proceeded with vigor, military power, organization, expansion of the state, yet, they could not forerun the Greece in the fields of literature, philosophy, poetry, and cultural values. That's why Roman embraced Greece as an ideal in areas of intellect and culture. The role of religion had diminished in Roman nation; it was not more than a tradition, and they had decided emphatically that the deities had no concern with the practical affairs of the world. Roman Empire in its last days met with epicurean, moral degradation, and absolute corruption.⁷Abul Hassan Ali Nadwi quotes of Muhammad Asad, while showing the links of modern western civilization with Roman civilization as such:

“...the idea underlying the Roman Empire was conquest of power and the exploitation of other nations for the benefit of the mother country alone. To promote better living for a privileged group, for the Romans no violence was too harsh, no injustice too base. The famous "Roman justice" was justice for the Romans alone. It is clear that such an attitude was possible only on the basis of an entirely materialistic conception of life and civilization - a materialism certainly refined by intellectual and aesthetic taste, but none the less foreign to all spiritual

values. The Romans never in reality knew religion. Their traditional gods were a pale imitation of Greek mythology, mere colourless ghosts silently accepted for the benefit of social convention. In no way were those gods allowed to interfere with "real" life. When consulted, they had to give oracles through the medium of their priests; but they were never supposed to confer moral laws upon men..."(8)

Roman civilization injected its paganish influence into Christianity, when first Roman king 'Constantine' embraced Christianity in 305 A.D. and he ascended to the throne of Caesar with the help of Christians. Abul Hassan Ali Nadwi presents this fact in the words of 'Draper':

"Place, profit, power—these were in view of whoever now joined the conquering sect. Crowds of worldly persons, who cared nothing about its religious ideas, became its warmest supporters. Pagans at heart, their influence was soon manifested in the paganization of Christianity that forthwith ensued. The emperor, no better than they, did nothing to check their proceedings. But he did not personally conform to the ceremonial requirements of the Church until the close of his evil life, A.D. 337." (9)

This is the genealogy of western civilization that reaches back to Greek and Roman Civilizations; it was the result of both of these civilizations that modern western civilization acquired the attributes of materialism, secularism, nationalism, and amorality.

Materialistic-Sensualist Civilization:

Conflict between science and Christianity resulted in the absolute materialism of western society. The West ascended to materialism with such an enthusiasm that it rejected everything that could not be grasped by the senses. Abul Hassan Ali Nadwi expresses it in these words:

"They interpreted the material universe and its manifestation along mechanical lines and called it objective and scientific method, rejecting scornfully as to tradition whatever was based on belief in the existence of God. One by one, they repudiated everything that was not realizable in experience, or could not be weighed and measured." (10)

The West under the sheer influence of 'materialism' fanatically denied the existence of God, Religion, Unseen, Spirit, and Hereafter. The only acceptable things were perception, feelings, experience, pleasure, nationalism, patriotism, democracy, and communism.¹¹ Abul Hassan Ali describes the enforcement of 'materialism' by the West in such words:

"Incidentally, Europe got the opportunity to present its capabilities in the material form and its materialistic creed was received everywhere willingly and enthusiastically." (12)

One of the dominant features of materialistic civilization is its extravagance, pompousness, exaggeration and extremism. This extremism is manifested in their earnings, sports, leisure, expenditure, and even in their social, political, and economic views.¹³ Quran depicts this lifestyle in such words:

وَأَصْبِرْ نَفْسَكَ مَعَ الَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَ رَبَّهُمْ بِالْغَدَاةِ وَالْعَشِيِّ يُرِيدُونَ وَجْهَهُ ۖ وَلَا تَعْدُ عَيْنَاكَ عَنْهُمْ تُرِيدُ زِينَةَ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا ۖ وَلَا تُطِعْ مَنْ أَغْفَلْنَا قَلْبَهُ عَنْ ذِكْرِنَا وَاتَّبَعَ هَوَاهُ وَكَانَ أَمْرُهُ فُرُطًا—

“And keep Thy soul content with those who call on Lord morning and evening, seeking His Face; and let not Thine eyes pass them, seeking the pomp and glitter of This life; no obey any whose heart have Permitted to neglect the remembrance of us, one who follows His own whose case has gone beyond all bounds.” (14)

Indeed, it is the dilemma of a whole world that western civilization commenced and developed at a time, when the revolt against religion had become the fashion of the day. The western nations had become fed up of the religion due to the mischief of Christian Church. Therefore, they turned towards materialism for good, and they shaped their cultural and intellectual endeavors in the materialistic form. The torch bearers of this civilization are plainly contender of spirituality, and their concerns only adhere to power and selfish gains. This civilization will exhibit its climax and apex in the shape of the arrival of Dajjal (Anti Christ).(15) In the words of Seyyed Abul Hassan Ali Nadwi the matter of fact is as such:

“The logical climax of this civilization with its attendant materialism and industrial progress does not appear to be far away when its greatest champion and defender, named as Dajjal in the prophetic language, shall make his debut. He would necessarily be a God-opposing tyrant commanding all the resources of material and industrial progress, championing the cause of atheistic materialism, and seeking divine worship for the means of material prosperity as well as for those who possess these means. This would be the culminating point of this godless civilization which is being brewed in the crucible of Europe for the past few centuries.” (16)

The result of the indulgence in the matter and material comforts appeared in a way that the religion of the West has changed into “matter worship” than Christianity.(17) Abul Hassan Ali Nadwi presents this in the words of Muhammad Asad, as such, that:

“The average Occidental- be he a Democrat or a Fascist, a Capitalist or a Communist, a manual worker or an .intellectual- knows only one positive "religion", and that is the worship of material progress, the belief that there is no other goal in life than to make that very life

continually easier or, as the current expression goes, "independent of Nature". The temples of this "religion" are the gigantic factories, cinemas, chemical laboratories, dance-halls, hydro-electric works: and its priests are bankers, engineers, film stars, captains of industry, record sportsmen." (18)

The sensory organs endowed on human beings are really useful in acquiring the first hand knowledge of things. The man had taken great interest in the laws of physics discovered by the help of observation, experience and hypothesis, but there is a limit of the knowledge gained from the senses. We can measure heat and its effects through the senses but the hazards created by falsehood or cruelty can't be measured by the sensory organs. For this we require a moral code, and its parameters are entirely different from touching and feeling the fire.¹⁹ The oldest and the most popular social formation in the world is based upon perceptual experience and its cognition. A civilization based on senses will inevitably deny anything unperceivable through the senses, it will pursue the comforts, profits, selfish gains and material progress²⁰. The modern Western civilization is the best fitted example of the sensualist civilization. Seyyed Abul Hassan Ali rightly depicts the characteristics of the sensualist civilization in these words:

"Under the sensualist civilization life is enriched, made comfortable and attractive, and material resources are mobilized for inventions and improvements designed to make life easier to an extent larger than under civilizations springing from intellectual or revelatory ideologies. No other civilization can, indeed, lay a greater claim to materialistic welfare and advancement because this form of civilization is furnished with all the sinews of material progress." (21)

Quran portrays the picture of Adites, a sensualist civilization of the past, who would build up the monuments and splendid buildings merely to show their grandeur and power. The words of the Quran are as follows;

أَتَبْنُونَ بِكُلِّ رِيعٍ آيَةً تَعْبُونَ وَتَخْجِدُونَ مَصَانِعَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَخْلُدُونَ وَإِذَا بَطَشْتُمْ بَطَشْتُمْ جَبَّارِينَ -

"Do ye build a landmark on every high place to amuse yourselves? And do ye get for yourselves fine buildings In the hope of Living therein (for ever)? And when ye exert your strong hand, do ye do it like men of absolute power?" (22)

Similarly, the Quran addresses to Thumudities, as such:

أَتَتْرَكُونَ فِي مَا هَاهُنَا آمِنِينَ فِي جَنَّاتٍ وَعُيُونٍ وَزُرُوعٍ وَنَخْلٍ طَلْعُهَا هَضِيمٌ وَتَنْجُونَ مِنَ الْجِبَالِ بُيُوتًا فَارِهِينَ -

"Will ye be left secure, In (the enjoyment of) all that ye have here?- Gardens and springs, And corn-fields and date-palms with spathes near breaking (with the weight of fruit)? And ye carve houses out of (rocky) mountains with great skill." (23)

Abul Hassan Ali Nadwi is of the view that modern western civilization is the upshot of Roman sensualist-materialistic civilization. He says that;

“Its thought, philosophy, social outlook and intellectual percepts survived not only numerous revolutions and the ups-and-downs of kingdoms and empires but still animates the modern western civilization.” (24)

The Western civilization at first glance appears to be an intellectual and scientific civilization, but a deep insight reveals this fact that it is the absolute sensist and materialistic civilization. The beginning of this civilization rests upon the revolt against intellect and its achievements comprise the victory of matter over intellect, senses over spirit and experience over faith. In the seventeenth century European scientists, scholars and philosophers started their combat against intellect, and they propagated unequivocally that anything which can't be measured, experimented, weighed or counted is not acceptable. Anything that has no utility is no more moral. They emphatically denied any power save matter and motion and refuse to admit any supernatural or transcendental power in the scheme of the cosmos. The utility and pragmatic experience were approved as the foundation of social, ethical, economic, and political life. The result of this attitude was evident that pleasure and enjoyment became the ultimate goal in the human life.(25)

Absence of Religious Sense:

An Eastern always has been contemplating about the basic facts about life, death and the universe. What will be the climax of this world? If there is another life after death? If yes then what will be the nature of that life? If there is any guideline available about this life and from where that guidance could be acquired? These questions always haunted the mind and spirit of an eastern. The philosophy, metaphysics, mysticism of the East always tried to solve these questions. In short, an Eastern possessed a **religious sense** other than normal senses, and **religious sense** has its own requisites like all the other senses. There is no doubt in it, that the western had this sense prior to the Renaissance of Europe. But with the passage of time the west indulged abundantly in the matters of this mortal life and the questions pertaining to spiritual issues lost their worth. This is the basic difference in the ancient Eastern and modern Westerner that, the former had a religious sense while, the latter lost it.(26)Abul Hassan Ali Nadwi explains this fact as such:

“When a person loses any one of his senses, he loses the consciousness of all things the knowledge of which is dependent on it. One who loses sense of hearing, for example, becomes insensitive to sound and the whole world of songs and sweet melodies is dead for him. Similarly,

one who is devoid of the sense of religion is dead to all feelings and sensations that arise out of religious faith. Things like Futurity, Resurrection, Divine pleasure, and Salvation have no meaning for him.” (27)

In the annals of history messengers and apostles encountered the severest opposition by the hands of the people who had lost their religious sense. In the words of the Quran, the reply of those people was as such;

إِنْ هِيَ إِلَّا حَيَاتُنَا الدُّنْيَا نَمُوتُ وَنَحْيَا وَمَا نَحْنُ بِمَبْعُوثِينَ –

“There is nothing but Our life In This world! we shall die and we live! but we shall never be raised up again! And more like this,” (28)

قَالُوا يَا شُعَيْبُ مَا نَفَقَهُ كَثِيرًا مِمَّا تَقُولُ وَإِنَّا لَنَرَاكَ فِينَا ضَعِيفًا وَلَوْلَا رَهْطُكَ لَرَجَمْنَاكَ وَمَا أَنْتَ عَلَيْنَا بِعَزِيزٍ ﴿٢٩﴾

“They said: "O Shu'aib! much of what Thou sayest we do not understand! In fact among us we see that Thou hast no strength! were it not for Thy family, we should certainly have stoned Thee! for Thou hast among us no great position!” (29)

Now in the modern time every society does have such people who have excluded the religion from the practical matters of their life.(30) The meaning of the following verse has become clearer than ever;

خَتَمَ اللَّهُ عَلَىٰ قُلُوبِهِمْ وَعَلَىٰ سَمْعِهِمْ وَعَلَىٰ أَبْصَارِهِمْ غِشَاوَةٌ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ ﴿٣١﴾

“Allah hath set a seal on their hearts and on their hearing, and on their eyes is a veil; great is the penalty They (incur)” (31)

The substantial problem of the present epoch is the indifference and senselessness towards religion. The religion and morality did not face such conundrum in the primitive time of ignorance as it is facing in the current age of indifference, where people have no interest in Divine guidance.(32)

Europe has not renounced the religion in the literal sense, a large number of masses still claim to be Christians. They visit the Church on Sunday, celebrate the festivals and rites of Christianity with full zeal and zest. But what's wrong has happened with them is that the actual religion of Europe is nothing but materialism.(33)

The western civilization is suffering from another dilemma of confusion regarding the word ‘religion’ and ‘civilization’. They have mingled up both the words. Since, the Westerners have left to adhere the religion, therefore they use the word ‘civilization’ instead of ‘religion’. Abul Hassan Ali Nadwi expresses this idea as such;

“We know about civilization that in the changed world of today, a civilization of five hundred years or a thousand years ago is of no use, but religion is not merely the name of moral values, lifestyle, culture, and architecture. The religion deals with unseen truths, faith, and

religious doctrines. It describes the relation between the Master and the servant, and eternal divine transcendental principles to live the life”(34) Unfortunately, Europe had no light of religion during the days of its Renaissance, Christianity was unable to guide and cater the intellectual thirst of Europe. It had only some superstitions, prejudices, and certain commentaries of Christian scholars. The treasure of Christian scholars was in clash with latest scientific advances and discoveries. The Church was only interested in maintaining its material and temporal supremacy. In the result of their intellectual obscurantism, learned men in the whole Europe rose up against religion and carried out their scientific research and philosophical conjecture in complete indifference rather in opposition to religion and morality. The science got freedom from the guidance of religious and ethical code. This wrong start incurred many unwanted outcomes, European science lost its way in the laws of nature, and missed more ultimate realities of knowledge.(35)

Nationalism:

National pride and racial prejudice was the innate characteristic of Westerners. When the Christianity arrived in Europe, for a short time it embodied European nations into a single family. This integrity dissolved in the sixteenth century, when Martin Luther started the movement of the Reformation. The nationalism gained the strength with the debilitating of Christianity. After the defeat of the religious system and the growth of nationalism, the West transformed into a rival to the East. They drew a line of demarcation between Eastern and Western races, moreover it was settled down that all the nations inhabiting within this particular boundary are superior to the other nations in literature, culture and knowledge, these nations have the right to cherish and to rule the world, while the rest of the nations should be subdued. They built up the prejudice akin to the ancient Greek and Romans who considered themselves cultured in comparison to the whole world.(36)

The fruits of nationalism are same everywhere, it is not possible that a nation beliefs in nationalism, and has no ambition to invade upon other nations. Particularly, when the literature, poetry, history, philosophy, and even physical sciences are used as a mean to beef up the nationalism.(37) Hatred and fear are the inevitable ingredients of nationalism. Abul Hassan Ali Nadwi describes this theme in such words that,

“To arouse the national sentiment in a people it is necessary to provide them with something they can hate and someone they can fear.”

It is in the interest of the torchbearers of nationalism to keep alive the sentiments of abhorrence and fear. This is the cornerstone of previous and current nationalist governments. The case of Islam is entirely different in

this regard, Islam completely shuns and avoid friendship, adherence, or loyalty that is sought in the name of national or party spirit.(38)

The criterion of respect and dignity of modern nationalist governments is to expand their rule on large territories, the sources of revenue generation should be maximum, and they must hold a position in which they could impose their will on others and neighboring states.(39)Abul Hassan Ali Nadwi explains this state of affairs as such;

“In such States all the faithful citizens have a false pride in the superiority of their own culture and traditions and they develop a contempt for the cultures and traditions of all other nations, and are ready to commit the most detestable crimes and barbaric acts at the bidding of their leaders. The moral caliber of such a nation may be extremely low, its citizens may be utterly devoid of moral sense and human dignity and may not be following any moral code, yet such a nation is deemed fit to be respected as a great nation.” (40)

Absence Of Morality In Scientific Progress:

The modern age is renowned for its scientific and technological progress. Man has unveiled interesting and breath taking realities about earth, space and oceans. This epoch of human history deserves to be called the age of ‘discoveries’ and ‘inventions’, moreover, the leadership of Europe is undisputed in this field. The inventions and discoveries of the West need to be examined carefully, whether these inventions really showered blessing upon mankind or increased the sufferings of mankind. A careful analysis of the Western material advancement in the perspective of Islamic teachings reveals the fact that the Creator of all the worlds has provided to man everything that is essential for his survival. Almighty Allah has given the freedom of action to man and to use the forces of nature for his welfare. Moreover, the man is gifted with the element of research and enquiry. The man of old age would travel on his foot, gradually he started to use the animals like, horses, donkeys and bulls for this purpose. The standard of ease and comfort started to rise with the progress in the field of transportations. Today man has the fastest ways to travel on earth, in the air and ocean.(41) The Quran has rendered the means of travel through animals as a bounty:

﴿وَلَكُمْ فِيهَا جَمَالٌ حِينَ تُرِيحُونَ وَحِينَ تَسْرَحُونَ وَتَحْمِلُ أَثْقَالَكُمْ إِلَىٰ بَلَدٍ لَّمْ تَكُونُوا بِالْغَيْهِ إِلَّا بِشِقِّ الْأَنْفُسِ إِنَّ رَبَّكُمْ لَرَّءُوفٌ رَّحِيمٌ وَالْخَيْلَ وَالْبِغَالَ وَالْحَمِيرَ لِتَرْكَبُوهَا وَزِينَةً وَيَخْلُقُ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ﴾

“And cattle He has created for you (men): from them ye derive warmth, and numerous benefits, and of their (meat) ye eat. and ye have a sense of pride and beauty In them As ye drive them home In the evening, and As ye lead them forth to pasture In the morning. and They carry your

heavy loads to lands that ye could not (otherwise) reach except with souls distressed: for your Lord is indeed Most Kind, Most Merciful, and (He has created) horses, mules, and donkeys, for you to ride and use for show; and He has created (other) things of which ye have no knowledge.” (42)

To acknowledge the bounties of Allah about the transportation following prayer is taught to the believers:

لَتَسْتَوُوا عَلَىٰ ظُهُورِهِ ثُمَّ تَذْكُرُوا نِعْمَةَ رَبِّكُمْ إِذَا اسْتَوَيْتُمْ عَلَيْهِ وَتَقُولُوا سُبْحَانَ الَّذِي سَخَّرَ لَنَا هَٰذَا وَمَا كُنَّا لَهُ مُقْرِنِينَ وَإِنَّا إِلَىٰ رَبِّنَا لَمُنْقَلِبُونَ –

“In order that ye may sit firm and square on their backs, and when so seated, ye may celebrate the (kind) favour of your Lord, and say, "Glory to Him who has subjected these to Our (use), for we could never have accomplished This (by ourselves), "And to Our Lord, surely, must we turn back!" (43)

The balance of power and morality has been disturbed in Europe since the Renaissance. The material progress has made notable advancement, while on the other hand spiritual values have gone down to a large extent.(44)Abul Hassan Ali Nadwi explains this situation as such:

“This has given rise to a generation that looks almost superhuman in so far as its power over matter is concerned, but is not very much superior to the beasts when judged with reference to its own inner state. With all the means of good life at its command, it does not know how to live.”(45)

The industrial progress in the West has abundantly elevated the quantity of machines in every walk of life. Machines have replaced the manpower in all the dimensions of life. Man is inventing new machines every day and the efficiency of the machine is improving day by day. Therefore, the rule of the machine is evident on the society.(46) Seyyed Abu Hassan Ali describes this position in these words:

“The authority of America is acknowledged all over the world, its say is recognized in the politics of the whole world and no one including Islamic States have any exception in this regard. The plans designed over here, implemented in our countries and our leaders make these plans successful. Today America has enslaved the whole world but it has become slave of machines, slave of its lifestyle and slave of its living standard. The most peculiar thing in America is a man with a live and bumping heart in his chest.” (47)

The science and technology are subservient to human will, they are neither good or bad, it depends on their use. Therefore, in the case of evil produced by the modern scientific means, the user must be blamed. The western nations have a strong belief in the material well-being, power and prestige, therefore they have set them as their sole ‘objective’ in the life,

and they have been using modern scientific means as a tool to achieve this 'objective'. What's wrong has happened in the Europe now, its not difficult to understand, the 'means' to secure the 'objective' have transformed into the ends.(48) Abul Hassan Ali Nadwi describes the difference between the 'mean' and 'end' in the following words:

"... there is a vast difference between the means and the end. I have this walking stick in my hand. It gives me support when I walk; it can even be helpful in defending myself. But it can never take the place of any objective I aspire to achieve. If I can get a better stick or if I am enabled to give it up, I shall at once throw it away. There was a time when it was the only weapon possessed by man but as he learnt to manufacture better weapons he abandoned it." (49)

The western nations have been employing the modern scientific means irrespective of any spiritual or moral code, that's why the modern science and technology has converted into a curse for Europeans and generally for the whole world.(50)

Remedy For the Westernization Of Muslims:

The western civilization has dominated all the civilizations of the modern world, and there is no exception to the Islamic States and societies in this matter. The leaders and the learned men in the Muslim world are under the awe of the western civilization. Abul Hassan Ali Nadwi suggests the following steps to save the Muslims from the hazardous effects of the western civilization.

Purification of Western Educational System:

The western educational system is the gist of thousand years experience of western scholars and philosophers. This educational system carries a particular spirit in it, especially the western thought and ethics are the part and parcel of this system. Wherever it would be implemented, it would impart its indispensable effects, particularly in an Islamic State or a society, it would produce mental and religious apostasy. There is no other remedy of the current state of affairs except the reorientation of the educational system in the Muslim world with the aim to mould it according to the needs and aspirations of Muslims.(51)

Scrutiny Of the Orientalists Work:

The western scholars who have studied the Islamic history, culture and civilization devoted themselves to the research of Islamic studies, they have brought forth many distinctive manuscripts in the world of Islamic studies. In spite of all their untiring in the field of research, the job done by them is similar to the job of a drain inspector who takes note of heaps of filth in a beautiful municipality.(52) The orientalists look into the 'weaknesses' of Islamic history and Islamic studies with a microscope but

show them to the public at large with the help of a telescope.(53)Two fold responsibility lies on the shoulder of Muslim researchers and scholars, on the one hand they have to present a classical Islamic literature that should be superior to the work of orientalists, on the other hand a strict scrutiny and refutation of misconception created by the orientalists is the need of the hour.(54)

The Extent to Learn From the West:

Seyyed Abul Hassan Ali Nadwi is of the view that Muslims can't and should not reject the modern western techniques and means of life. He had the strong belief in the idea that it is possible for the Muslims to use the modern means of comfort, modern inventions and instruments without impersonation of Islamic culture.(55)

Critical Analysis:

Seyyed Abul Hassan Ali Nadwi demonstrates his viewpoint regarding the real field of acquisition from the West is to adopt the fine things of Europe that are not contrary to the spirit of Islam. However, this standpoint can be scrutinized in the views of some eminent scholars. Gai Eaton (Hassan Abdul Hakim) examines this view in such words:

“Those who have close contact with Muslims will be accustomed to hearing, with monotonous regularity, the parrot-cry: ‘We will take the good things from western civilization. We will reject the bad things’. It is strange that any Muslim should imagine this to be possible. Islam itself is an organic whole a gestalt, in which everything is interconnected and in which no single part can be considered in isolation from the rest. The Muslim above all others should understand that every culture has something of this unity and should realize that the modern civilization created in the West, even if it seems constantly to change shape as in a kaleidoscope, forms a coherent pattern in terms of cause and effect. To draw one fibre from it is to find that this is attached, by countless unseen filaments, to all the rest. The small fragment of 'good', lifted from the pattern, brings with it piece after piece of the whole structure. With the light come the shadows; and with everything positive come all the negative elements which are related to it either as cause or as effect.” (56)

He deems this viewpoint fatal for the Muslims and ushers them that the ideologies and forces of the western civilization have destroyed the Christianity and, it may prove catastrophic for Islam. Here, an interesting question comes up, whether the westerners would allow the Muslims to derive benefit from their science and technology without their consent. Mahmud Ahmad Ghazi participated as an only Muslim delegate in a conference held in Germany in 1994-1995 on the topic, “ Is Islam a threat to

western Europe”. When he presented the view of *احز ما صفا و دع ما كدر* in front of participants of the conference, they unanimously controverted this notion and made it clear to him that, West will not permit you to derive the benefit from her science, technology and civilization on such conditions, it is a complete package that you have to borrow entirely without any ‘pick and choose’.(57)

The above mentioned references denote that, the viewpoint of Seyyed Abul Hassan Ali Nadwi does not seem a substantial stance, while interacting with western civilization. However, the burden has shifted to the shoulders of genuine Muslim scholars to chalk out a clear line of action for the *Ummah* to interact with the West.

Conclusion:

The approach of Seyyed Abul Hassan Ali Nadwi towards the western civilization is based upon his acute observation of the centers of the western culture. He studied the west through the literature of western authors. He made several trips to the Europe and America to build up a concrete view about the western civilization. He has maintained his viewpoint that, the western civilization is an amalgamation of different ideologies, theories, speculations, political and economic systems. The western civilization traces its origin or lineage back to the ancient Greek and Roman civilization. The materialism and dialectical materialism is the dominant feature of the western civilization. The exaggerated indulgence in the materialism has shaped the western civilization as a sensualist civilization, and it has deprived the West of the religious sense. Modern science and technology has taken the position of a deity in the West, instead of proving the ‘means’ to facilitate the mankind for the greater objectives of life, these ‘means’ has become the ‘ends’ in the West. This mistake is not only proving fatal for the West but also for the whole world. He holds the opinion that the western civilization has reached at its climax and the maximum fruits or results which it could have borne to the mankind, it has furnished. The misery of the West manifested by the fact that the rein of life is not in the hand of man rather life has held the reins of man.⁵⁸ The family system of the West has collapsed; it has lost social and moral values, and this civilization is heading towards the decline and fall. He concludes that it will be the greatest achievement and service of mankind to guide the western civilization in the light of Islamic faith and canons. This is the need of hour that Muslims should cope with the challenges of the modern age rendered by the West, and set up their line of action in the light of Seyyed Abul Hassan Ali Nadwi’s approach to the western civilization.

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