

Evaluating the Works of Mauālnā MuḥammadIsmā'īl al-Ūdwī

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ABSTRACT

MauālnāMuḥammadIsmā'īl al-Ūdwī(1897-1970 CE) was one of the very prominent scholarly personalities of Pakistan. His life has been extensively studied and analysed in detail elsewhere. (See. IRJAH, Faculty of Arts, University of Sindh, Jāmshoro, Vol. 42, 2014). This paper mainly deals with the works of al-Ūdwī that he produced during the course of his life. This will bring forth to the reader his thought and personality through his Books on one hand and academic and intellectual history of Sindh to which he belonged and attributed on the other.

Keywords :Evaluating,Irth, Traditionalist, Modernist, Rationalism, Is mā'īl al-Ūd wī.

Al-Ūdwī's thinking and beliefs are preserved in a considerable number of works, which he wrote on various aspects of Islamic studies in Arabic, Persian, Urdu and Sindhi languages. It is reported that he composed around fifteen works and that his son MaulānāUbaydullah had all of these works in his personal library.¹

Following is a list of some of his significant writings, which have influenced Muslim writers and researchers in the course of history. They are listed according to the subject or topic with which they mainly deal.

1. ṢafwatAl-Irfān Bi MufradātAl-Qur'ān(extract of the knowledge through the words of the Qur'ān): a research work said to be the culmination of half a century of al-Ūdwī's involvement in the field, was written in Shikarpur, few years before his death. It is unpublished manuscript in two big volumes, containing 858 pages. It is scribed by the author himself in neat and readable Naskh script, which is preserved at the personal library of Professor Abdul QuddūsSūmro, his nephew, in Shikārpur². It is a work of exegetical dictionary of the Qur'ān, which is written in alphabetical order. The method implied by al-Ūdwī in his Ṣafwah could be described as follows:

Al-Ūdwī, first gives morphological and etymological analysis of the words. Then he states lexical meaning or meanings of them supported by most authentic works

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in the field such as, *Şihāḥ* of al-Jawharī (d. ca. 1003-1010), *Jamharah* of IbnDurayd (d. 933), *al-Af'āl* of al-Şaqlī (d. 1172), *Maşādir* of AbūJa'far al-Bayhaqī,(d. 1170) *al-Qāmūs* of Fayrozābādī (d. 1414), *al-Miṣbāḥ* of al-Fayyūmī (d. 1364). Finally, he cites various verses from the Qur'ān in which they are used in different meanings and contexts.³ Furthermore, he also gives references from traditions of the Holy Prophet (PBUH), His companions (Saḥabah), and their companions (Tābī'īn), (may Allah be pleased with them) Arabic poetry, linguists and the Bible to support the meanings of the words.⁴

The importance of this work is that it is the most important source, even more detailed and comprehensive than his predecessor *Işfahānī's* *Mufradat*, regarding meaning and exegesis of the Qur'ānic words for which the author has worked throughout his life. According to one report, the author has left it unfinished up to the letter “wāw” while another report tells that he has finished it up to the letter “yā”, but, unfortunately, that part did not survive down to us.⁵

Since *Şafwah* is the fourth important book in the history of exegetical dictionary of the Qur'ān⁶, it is reported that:

- i. Professor Sayyid MuḥammadSalīm (d. 2000) was influenced by al-Ūdvī's *Şafwah*, to the extent that he suggested MuḥammadIqbālNakyānā (graduated from Muḥammad b. Saud University, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, residing in Lahore, Pakistan) to do a PhD at the University of Punjab, Lahore, which he eagerly accepted. He successfully did his PhD on the edition of *Şafwah's* first volume, under the supervision of Dr.Żahūr Aḥmad Ażhar, from the above-mentioned University in 2002. In his forward on the thesis, Dr.Nakyānā asserts that the books on *Mufradāt al-Qur'ān*, *Gharīb al-Qu'rān* and *Mushkil al-Qur'ān* began to be written in the very beginning of Islamic history, among which are: *Ma'ānī al-Qur'ān* by al-Farrā', *Gharīb al-Qur'ān* by IbnQutaybah and *Mufradāt al-Qur'ān* by al-Işfahānī and in modern times *Şafwat al-Irfān bi Mufradāt al-Qur'ān* by al-Ūdwī.⁷
- ii. Recently, MaulānāAbdullāhKhosro, my teacher and a profound religious scholar and teacher at *Jāmi'ah Tafhīm al-Qur'ānSukkur*, Sindh, has accomplished the task of completing two unfinished letters, which is not yet published.
- iii. More recently, SaifullāhBuhtto (Assistant Professor, Quaid-e-Awam University,) has edited the second volume of the *Safwah* and got PhD from the Department of Basic Islamic sciences, Faculty of theology, Ankara University, Ankara, in 2015.

The influence of this work was great even during the lifetime of the author, and widespread appreciation of the 'Şafwah', made him famous within and without Pakistan as can be seen from research work in different Universities of the world. It is perhaps due to the 'Şafwah' that al-Ūdwī has been considered to be 'profound exegete of the Qur'ān' in his time.⁸

Likewise, al-Ūdwī's Şafwah has been acclaimed as 'encyclopaedia of the Qur'ān, containing language, grammar, exegesis, qirā'ah, jurisprudence, logic, rhetoric, literature, wisdom, uşūl, theology'.⁹ However, Şafwah, seems to be neglected by the fact that contemporary research institutes and publishing houses at national level have not yet published this great work in the field.

2. Nūr Al-Īqān Bi I'jāz Al-Qur'ān (light of the belief through inimitability of the Qur'ān): is another great work of al-Ūdwī on the doctrine of the I'jāz al-Qur'ān. This work was scribed by Maulānā Nūr Muḥammad al-Dahqānī, one of his students and famous scholar in Sindh. This is in two volumes containing 301 folios. The most important thing about this work is that the scribe, al-Dahqānī, read it out to the author after he finished ascribing it (technically called نسخة مقروءة (علي المصنف), and the author gave certificate of listening it, which is given at the end of the manuscript.¹⁰

The importance of this work is that it is, the first comprehensive attempt made in South Asia on the subject of the i'jāz al-Qur'ān in Arabic.¹¹ This is preserved at the library of Shah Waliullāh Oriental College, Manşūrah, Sindh, under no. C. N. 9903. The author of this paper has edited this work in Arabic which is not yet published.

3. Tafsīr Sūrah wa Al-Tīn Min Al-Tafsīr Al-Jadīdli Al-Qur'ān Al-Majīd

(a modern commentary of surah al-Tīn of the Glorious Qur'ān): is a concise and comprehensive Arabic commentary of the Qur'ānic chapter of al-Tīn, which contains 12 pages. It was first published by his students, Maulānā Shayr Muḥammad Jatoī and Maulāna Muḥammad Umar of Dīnpur, Jacobabad, at Maṭba' Abbāsī, Karachi, on 21st of Muḥarram, 1359 AH/1940 CE. The aim of al-Ūdwī in, as he mentions in the forward, this book is to: first, to save the Muslim Ummah from political decline by reminding them their past, drawing their attention to the worst present, and to guide them to the right direction. Secondly, to avoid going in to the discussion of minor issues, which are main cause of their division into sects and factions of which everyone claims that its interpretation is right. Thirdly, to avoid from the interpretation of one's own (تفسير بالرأي) in the

sense mentioned by IbnTaymiyyah, al-Ghazālī and Shah Waliullah, and refer to the interpretation of saḥābah (companions of the Holy Prophet PBUH) and tabīʿīn (successors of the companions of the Holy Prophet). Fourthly, to mention some new archaeological discoveries by archaeologists in a way that interpretation of salaf (saḥābah and tabīʿīn) may not be changed. Fifthly, to avoid from weak and unsound aḥādīth and traditions which are mentioned by some of the exegetes without their cross examination. Finally, conciseness and shortness so that it may be included in the curriculum of religious seminaries.¹²

Due to the significance of the work and benefit of local community, it was translated into Sindhi language by Maulānā Muḥammad Umar, one of his students, which is not yet published.

4. Qur'ān Jajidajo Sindhi Tarjumo

(Sindhi Translation of the meanings of the Noble Qur'ān): was a translation work of the Qur'ān into local Sindhi language, the native language of the author, which was left unfinished up to 22nd part (جزء). It is narrated that al-Ūdwī was impressed by the translation of Shah Abdul Qādir of Delhi, the son of Shāh Waliuullāh of Delhi; hence, he wished to translate the Qur'ān into Sindhi on that pattern to bring local Muslim community closer to the Holy Scripture. Alawī asserts that al-Ūdwī dictated the translation of the Qur'ān beneath its text to Maulānā Abdullah Balouch, which took almost ten years. In addition, when Maulānā Abdullāh set out to perform pilgrimage, one of his friends from Baluchistan came to his home and took the translation work away from his wife. Baloch tried very hard to find it out but he never succeeded in it. After that, al-Ūdwī started again dictating the translation to one of his students, the name of which is not known, and he left it unfinished up to 19th part (جزء). It is narrated that it was preserved with his son, Maulānā Ubaidullah, which is not extant at present.¹³

5. Chihal Ḥadīth

(Forty Prophetic Traditions): is a concise work, which includes forty aḥādīth concerning various aspects of the life of Muslim community. The date of finishing of this work is not known. In this work, Al-Udvi has first translated the aḥādīth into Sindhi language and then he explained them where they need. The aim of al-Ūdwī in this work seems to enlighten local Muslim community with the teachings and practices of the Prophet of Islam (PBUH), which is, of course, the second primary source of Islam and its beliefs and practices. This was published more than once over the course of the period. It was first published by Muḥammad Anwar Pīr zādo at Karīmī Press, Shikārpur, then it was published by

MuḥammadAzīmKutubKhānah, Shikārpur and thirdly it was published by Mehrān Academy Shikārpur, Sindh, Pakistan.¹⁴The continuing demand for this type of work may be inferred from the popularity of the book, which had reached its third edition.⁷

6. Ghayat Al Baḥth Fī Naqd Masā'il Al Irth

(In-depth critical Analysis of the issues related to the inheritance), the date of its writing is not known. It is preserved at the library of Mehran Academy, Shikārpur, Sindh, Pakistan.¹⁵ Alawī reports that its second manuscript is also preserved by al-Dahqānī.¹⁶ This is a concise Arabic work containing eighty pages. This book deals with a certain problem in inheritance raised by some scholar the name of which is not known. The problem is that the verse (2:180) concerning the will (وصية) is effective and thus not abrogated (منسوخ), hence, the will is obligatory upon a Muslim.

Al-Ūdwī faced this problem while he was in Shikārpur. It seems that a great number of people asked al-Ūdwī to give his opinion concerning this problem, which was raised by some scholar. In response to their request he, most likely, gave his opinion in Sindhī language for general benefit, as well as he composed this book in which he holds his opinion different from that of unknown scholar. Al-Ūdwī says clearly that the verse (2:180), concerning the will is abrogated supported by plenty of evidences from the Qur'an, hadith and ijma' (consensus). Al-Ūdwī, in this book, examines the work of unknown scholar, which is also not known, refuted in detail its arguments and expounded his own opinion. The significance of this book is that this influenced many scholars and people and became widely known in many cities even during al-Ūdwī's time.¹⁷ The reason why this work is included in the category of Jurisprudence rather than academic debates it does not seem, by its content and method of treatment, just a refutation rather a complete work on its own.

7. Majmū' Al-Fatāwā

(a collection of fatwās): was a collection of fatwās given by al-Ūdwī particularly during last few years of his life. Al-Ūdwī, according to Alawī, issued thousands of fatwās over the period of his whole life after becoming religious scholar and getting training from the grand mufti of the South Asian Indian sub-continent, Mufti Kifāyatullāh al-Hindī. This collection was preserved by his son, Maulānā Ubaydullāh, now preserved at the library of Mehran Academy, Shikārpur, which contains one hundred sixty one pages consisting of two hundred fatwās on various issues and problems that Muslim community faced,

including beliefs, acts of worship, customs and innovations, oaths and pledges, family law, financial transactions, food, drink and adornment.¹⁸

The significance of this work is that the fatwās issued by al-Ūdwī were not only asked by ordinary literate or illiterate Muslims, but also by the profound scholars as he was regarded grand Mufti of Shikārpur.

8. **Risālah Dar Taḥrīf Ayat Al-Ṣalāh**

(treatise concerning the interpolation made in the verse of prayer): is a concise work containing twenty seven pages. The date of its writing is not known. This is, according to Alawī, written in response to Maulānā Allah Dino, one of the deniers of legal status of hadith in Jacobābād, Sindh, who rejected five times of obligatory prayer and interpreted the verses concerning the prayer in a different way from ijma' (consensus).¹⁹ Al-Ūdwī gave a complete answer to him refuting paragraph by paragraph, all of his arguments. How influential this work was is difficult to say, however, it doubtless contributed to the defeat of the deniers of hadith as they did not succeed in convincing local Muslim community of the region.

9. **Ayyāmam Ma' dūdātjī Jadīd Taḥqīqajo Radd**

(the refutation of modern research concerning the verse of fasting (2:184)): is also a concise work containing eighteen pages. The date of its writing is not known. This is again a refutation of the ahl-e-Qur'ān (people of the Qur'ān) who maintained that the fasting of the whole month of Ramadhān is not proved from the Qur'ān. This view, according to Alawī, was advanced by Maulānā Allah Dino of Jacobābād, Sindh, as well as by Maulānā Tamannā Imādī, who rejected the legal and constitutional status of ḥadīth.²⁰ Al-Ūdwī refuted paragraph by paragraph their arguments supported by the Qur'ān ḥadīth and ijma'.

10. **Itfā' Al-Firyah Fī I'fā' Al-Liḥyah**

(removal of deception concerning keeping beard): was a concise work containing twenty eight pages, as Alawī, states²¹ which did not survive down to us. According to Alawī, it was written in response to Maulānā Abdul Khāliq of Moro, Sindh, who rejected the opinion that the beard is sunnah and it has certain prescribed length.²² Al-Ūdwī, in this work, refuted his opinion supported by various arguments from the Qur'ān, ḥadīth and ijma'. This fatwā was verified and attested by many profound scholars, such as Maulānā Nabi Bux al-Ūdwī, his father, Maulānā Muḥammad Qāsīm of Garhī Yasīn, Maulānā Ghulām Rasūl of Madadpur, Maulānā Miyān Abdul Bāqī of Hamāyūn, Maulānā Khādīm Hussayn of

Madaijī, Maulānā Abdul Hakīm of NūrMuḥammadShujrā', MaulānāMuḥammadḤussaynShāh of Miyānjo Goth and Maulānā MuḥammadAmīnullāh of Karachi. Therefore, there is reason to believe that his juristic decisions were recognized by renowned authorities of their time. It seems important to note that he must have been, academically, sound when he wrote this work.

11. Sa'iqatu AzābillāhAlā Al-MushrikīnBillah

(thunderbolt of God's torment upon those who make partners to him): written in refutation of two innovated beliefs by ahl-e-bid'at (people of innovation in religion), as al-Ūdwī terms, which are: firstly, Prophet Muḥammad(PBUH) has the knowledge of unseen in the same way as God has (علم الغيب الكلي). Secondly, Prophet Muḥammad(PBUH) listens from everywhere in the same way as God does (نداء يا رسول الله). Al-Ūdwī, holds that the people who believe in those two beliefs have gone astray, and he has refuted these two beliefs by several arguments supported by the Qur'ān, ḥadīth, jurisprudence, history and logic. This is unpublished work containing sixty three pages, which is preserved at the library of Mehran Academy Shikārpur.²³

12. Fatwā Adam Muwālāt

(fatwā concerning non-cooperation with British Rule): was a detailed fatwā written during the Khilāfat Movement to explain the importance of the institution of the caliphate, and religious stand in favour of non-cooperation with British Rule in India.²⁴ This fatwā has not survived down to us. It is presumably written in 1920 CE when the leaders of the Jam'iyatUlamā-e-Hind were actively seeking fatwās in favour of non-cooperation throughout India. It seems appropriate to assume safely that the contents of thisfatwāmay be similar to those of the extant fatwā of the Jam'iyatUlamā-e-Hind. This Fatwā states that any cooperation whatsoever with the Colonial British Rule was religiously unlawful. Cooperation included not only membership in councils, education in government schools, the practice of law, and the holding of honorary titles, but also service in the police and military and the use of goods manufactured by the infidels.²⁵ The method and style of the fatwā, most likely, had been in line with widely known pattern, which is: 'what do the ulamāof religion and mufti of sharī'ah have to say on so and so'.

13. Tuḥfat Al-Āshiqīn

(a gift of love): was a Persian poem (قصيدة) on mysticism consisting of one hundred twenty one verses, composed in 1946CE.²⁶ There is difference among his biographers on exact number of verses in the qasīdah. Moryānī states that it contained one hundred thirty one verses, whereas Alawī stated 121.²⁷ However, there seems no reason to dispute with since he gives, for instance, the titles of qasīdah, which, of course, gives good reason for the assumption that must have seen it elsewhere.²⁸ Alawī, in his article, gives some titles of the poems contained in the qasīdah, including remembrance of the saints, Love with Allah, extreme love interpreted as *ishq*, remembrance of Allah with tears, humbleness and long sadness, satisfaction of hearts, fruit of love and affection, the knowledge about Allah, the signs of true seeker, the sign of perfect *ārif*, cry of claimants of the present age, supplication to the One who answers.²⁹ It will not be out of place to mention that this book, together with al-Ūdwī's mystic personality, has much influence upon many of his students especially Maulānā Maulā Bux, Maulānā Qārī Nisār Aḥmad Mangī's mystic personalities.

14. Ḥaqīqat-e-Islam

(Essence of Islam): was a concise work written for some comparatively simple-minded and modern educated Muslims as well as non-Muslims to attract them to practice the commandments of Islam. Al-Ūdwī, in this work, described the fundamental beliefs and practices, such as *lā ilāha illallāh*, Muḥammadur Rasūlullāh, prayer, fasting, zakāt (poor-due) and pilgrimage in the light of Qur'ān, ḥadīth and logic. According to Alawī, it contained thirty pages³⁰ while Moryānī says that it contained sixty five pages.³¹ There seems a reasonable argument in accepting Alawī's opinion since he tells the size of the pages, which, of course, gives good reason for the assumption that he must have seen a copy of it elsewhere. This work has also not survived down to us.

15. GhurratunNaḥw

(Elementary Syntax): was a concise Arabic work written on *ilmunnaḥw* (Arabic syntax), when the author was a pupil under his father, Maulānā Nabī Bux al-Ūdwī, at Ūdī in the year 1339/1921, as mentioned by Alawī.³² Alawī further relates that it contained fifteen pages.³³ As this work is not extant, it is not possible to highlight its contents, methodology adopted by the author, and its significance. However, it seems safe to suggest that the author was quite capable of writing in Arabic on pure technical subjects like Arabic Grammar, while he was a student. It also reveals al-Ūdwī's expertise in the field of Islamic learning and education.

Conclusion

From the study of above-mentioned works, it is clear that al-Ūdwī is a product of his traditional education, who concentrated his energies on Islam and the local Muslim community, and his works represent part of the internal debate among Muslims. His writings reflect various elements of modern Islamic consciousness, at times demonstrating the scholarly sobriety of the traditionalist, at others the rationalism of the modernist.

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