

Evaluating the Life of Maulana Muhammad Ismaeel Al-Udvi, Al-Sindhi

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Abstract

Many South Asian religious scholars including Shah Waliullah (d. 1762), Shibli Nomani (d. 1914), and Muhammad Hayat al-Sindhi (d. 1750) have extensively been studied. However, one most important scholarly figure of twentieth century South Asia remains shadowy figure. One such scholar is Maulana Muhammad Ismaeel al-Udvi, al-Sindhi, who not only played very important role, if not leading, in the Khilafat Movement before the partition of India, but also played a vital role in strengthening the religio-political party of Pakistan, the Jamaat Islami after the partition. On the other hand, beside his teaching career in various religious institutions, which lasted about fifty years, al-Udvi wrote some very important works in Arabic including exegetical dictionary of the Qur'an and a treatise on the doctrine of Ijazul Qur'an (inimitability of the Qur'an), adopting new methodology and introducing new arguments in the field. Therefore, this paper attempts to present brief study of his life, works and scholarly influence in the region.

Key Words: Dars-e-Nizami, religious thought, ijtehad, taqlid, fatva, Deobandi, Bareilvi, mysticism, South Asia, ulama, jihad.

Muhammad Ismaeel b. Nabi Bux b. Gulam Hussain, al-Shikarpuri, al-Udvi (Chachar, 1981: 185) came from a family that had close contacts with the intellectual and spiritual circles of their day. (Soomro, 1998: 145).

His Family

His father, Maulana Nabi Bux (d. 1951) known as Fathuddin (victory of religion), was one of the most famous scholars of Shikarpur. He was a well-known scholar throughout Pakistan in general and throughout Sindh in particular, by his students, his spiritual and political activities

under the auspicious of Maulana Taj Mahmood Amroti (d. 1929) as well as Jamiat Ulama-e-Hind. (Alavi, 1980: 3). He was the president of Jamiat Ulama-e-Hind, district, Jacobabd. Among the students of Maulana Nabi Bux al-Udvi was Maulana Ahmad Din Khoso of Shahdadt, Maulana Allah Dad of Nari (Baluchistan) and his seven sons including Maulana Muhammad Ismaeel al-Udvi. (Chachar, 1981: 188; Kandhro, 2007: 83-84).

Al-Udvi's (Muhammad Ismaeel) grandfather faqeer Ghulam Hussain (d. 1912) is reported to have been affiliated with the mystic order of sultanul arifin, Sultan Bahoo (d.1691) (Chachar, 1981: 185; Soomro, 1998: 145), a well-known mystic saint from Punjab, Pakistan, who founded Sarwari Qadri order. (Singh, 2009: 405). Although he was not highly educated yet he was a man, characterized by the simple piety of the ordinary Muslims of that period, a piety undoubtedly based upon a considerable knowledge of the Qur'an and hadith (Prophetic traditions), which could be gained by attendance at the lectures given freely at the mosques. (Chachar, 1981: 185).

Al-Udvi's brother Maulana Abdul Ali (d. 1950) was a distinguished scholar, mystic and great preacher in Shikarpur. He was also the disciple of Taj Mahmood Amroti, a great mystic and the president of the Khilafat Committee in Sindh, during 1919-24 CE (Shams, 2004: 262). His ruling passion was to spread Islamic teachings and to abolish evils and innovations together with safeguarding Muslims from the effects of the Shudhi Movement launched by Hindus in the area. He is reported to have great influence in his public lectures freely given at the mosques. He has left no written work whatsoever behind him. (Chachar, 1981: 190-94).

His Early Education and Religious Training

Al-Udvi had the good fortune to have received his father's great care with regard to his personal training and traditional religious education since very beginning. While still a boy, al-Udvi began his studies with learning of the Qur'an by looking, reading, writing, and early Persian education under Maulana Jahan Khan Durrani (d. 1913) (Saifullah, 1957: 67-68) at his famous religious seminary established in one of the mosques in Shikarpur. After that, he travelled to Udi, a small town near Thul, Jacobabad to study further under his father Maulana Nabi

Bux al-Udvi (d. 1951), whose chain of hadith extending back to Shah Waliullah of Delhi (d. 1762), at the religious seminary founded by Din Muhammad Khan Sarki (a well-known feudal lord at the time), where he was head teacher. (Nakyana, 2002: 5).

Under his father, he studied and finished almost all the curriculum of dars-e-nizami (a syllabus for the education of the ulama taught in South Asian and Central Asian religious institutions) at a very young age of twenty-one. (Kandhro, 2007: 85). Here, he studied exegesis of the Qur'an, hadith, jurisprudence, law, logic, philosophy, dogmatic theology, Arabic grammar, syntax, rhetoric, Arabic literature, medicine, astronomy, mathematics and science of debating. (Kandhro, 2007: 85). No biographer mentions any other teacher other than Maulana Nabi Bux al-Udvi, the father of Muhammad Ismaeel al-Udvi, under whom he studied any of above-mentioned subjects at Udi. There is no reason to dispute them on this point, but this does not mean that there was no other teacher other than Maulana Nabi Bux. Keeping Chachar's narration in mind, according to which, some eighty boarders were studying at Udi at that time (Chachar, 1981: 187), it seems quite reasonable to maintain that there might be other teaching staff working under the supervision of Maulana Nabi Bux at Udi. Furthermore, some biographical accounts narrate that Maulana Nabi Bux was head teacher at Udi (Moryani, 2000: 27), which, of course, can be imagined when there is some other teaching staff at Udi. However, Maulana Nabi Bux might have taught all above-mentioned subjects to him, since he wished to take special attention for the education and training of his elder son Muhammad Ismaeel al-Udvi. As he finished his traditional religious education at Udi, his father, in accordance with a well-known tradition, arranged a graduation ceremony, wherein he invited his spiritual master, Taj Mahmood Amroti to wrap the turban round his head as a sign of being qualified to teach the same to others. According to almost all biographical accounts, this took place at Udi, when he was at the age of twenty. (Alavi, 1980: 4).

His Education at Indian Institutions of Religious Learning

When he finished his traditional religious education at Udi, his father decided to send him to the reputed and renowned institutions of India,

where he could continue his further education and expand his intellectual horizons. In these days, Deoband, Saharanpur Lacknow, Delhi and Aligarh were the seats of higher religious education, which a student joined after completing his early religious education in local religious seminaries. In fact, his stay in those parts of India became the cause of his future fame. The academic standard of those parts of India was much higher than that of Shikarpur. Moreover, there was a group of scholars and senior teachers in the field of Islamic learning. Al-Udvi studied under these eminent scholars and thereby achieved astounding success.

Al-Udvi in Aligarh

Al-Udvi is reported to have been attracted by the fame and reputation of most distinguished expert in exegesis of the Qur'an and its sciences in South Asian Indian sub-continent, Maulana Aslam Jairajpuri (d. 1955). Thus, he set out to the Muslim University Aligarh to join his classes. According to Alavi, al-Udvi sought admission and remained at the Muslim University Aligarh for six months to study the Qur'an and hadith under Jairajpuri. (Kandhro, 2007: 85).

It seems important to mention that Jairajpuri, in his teaching and thought, focused on the Qur'an as a basic and main source of Islamic teachings and system. Furthermore, he also gave very much importance to *ijtihad* (independent reasoning) as compared to *taqlid* (slavishly attachment to the adherence of ancestors). Jairajpuri allowed full freedom of thought and expression to his students; they were encouraged to engage in debates and discussions of all kinds. Al-Udvi, in his debates with other students, showed great suppleness of mind and a gift of debating. Consequently, he easily took a commanding place among the other students. (Kandhro, 2007: 85). According to Moryani, during his stay at Muslim University Aligarh, al-Udvi made a good impression not only on his fellow students but also on many other teachers at the University. (Moryani, 2000: 27).

Al-Udvi in Delhi

After six months, al-Udvi set out to Jamiah Milliyyah of Delhi, a renowned institution in religious sciences in South Asian Indian sub-continent, to excel his expertise in Arabic language and literature

under Maulana Muhammad Surti (d. 1940), a leading literary figure in the field at that time. Moreover, he proceeded to Mufti Kifayatullah al-hindi (d. 1952), the grand Mufti of South Asian Indian sub-continent and the former president of the Jamiat Ulama-e-Hind, at Madrasah Aminiyyah, to train himself in the field of fatva (legal ruling) under his potential guidance. (Kandhro, 2007: 85-86).

Al-Udvi in Lucknow and Deoband

After, staying in Delhi most probably for six months, he set out to some other leading institutions, such as Mazahirul Uloom of Saharanpur, where he studied under Maulana Khalil Ahmad of Saharanpur (d. 1927); Darul Uloom of Deoband, where he studied hadith (Science of Prophetic traditions) under Maulana Anwar Shah Kashmiri (d. 1933) and Maulana Hussain Ahmad Madani (d. 1957). He, most probably spent six months at Deoband. (Moryani, 2000: 28-30).

All of these scholars at Deoband are described as most eminent scholars of their time, remarkably distinguished in hadith and its sciences and compiled many works in this field.

It seems necessary to mention here that at Darul Uloom of Deoband, he met Shaikhul hind (leader of India) Maulana Mahmood Hasan to hand in the letter to him given to the former by his spiritual master, Amroti. There are contradictory statements, recorded by his biographers, concerning this matter as follows:

Firstly, Amroti gave a reference letter to the Shaikhul hind for the purpose of al-Udvi's higher religious education. (Alavi, 1980: 4; Moryani, 2000: 29; Chachar, 1981: 195).

Secondly, Amroti, his spiritual master and the leader of the Khilafat Movement (Minault, 1999: 65-110) during 1919-24, gave a confidential letter to him to deliver it to the Shaikhul hind in India. (Kandhro, 2007; 85). It seems extremely difficult to discuss the contents of the letter, as it has not survived down to us.

However, there is no reason to dispute on this matter, as it seems quite possible to reconcile both of the views. It is quite possible that Amroti gave a letter, through which, giving a reference for the purpose of education, he, as a leader of the Khilafat Committee of Sindh, reported to the Shaikhul hind, as leader of the Khilafat

Movement in all over India, regarding the activities of the Khilafat Movement in Sindh.

Apart from this zealous pre-occupation with seeking knowledge in Indian towns, al-Udvi used to undertake long arduous journeys to Hijaz during the pilgrimage seasons, not only to perform the pilgrimage, but also to meet the scholars to broaden his knowledge and to get access to the latest literature. Alavi narrates that he set out to Hijaz twice in a life. Among the topics of discussions with scholars may have been the Qur'an and hadith as it has been the centre for these two sciences. Alavi also records that al-Udvi benefited a lot from the library of Akif Bay, which according to him, is located at the South of Green Tomb of the Prophet in Medina. (Alavi, 1980: 7).

Al-Udvi's education under these scholars in the mosques, religious seminaries and University increased his store of knowledge, and he collected a great deal of material regarding the curriculum of dars-e-nizami especially the Qur'an and hadith.

His Appointment at the Madrasa of Garhi Hasan

After spending almost two years in this academic journey India, al-Udvi turned to Udi, Jacobabad. It was the same year that Suhrab Khan Sarki, a well-known feudal lord, who was famous for establishing religious seminaries and the patronage of the ulama, established a religious seminary at his village, Garhi Hasan. Sarki received al-Udvi, whose fame as a scholar had preceded him, with much favour; thus, he honoured al-Udvi and made much of him. By the consent of Maulana Nabi Bux, father of Muhammad Ismaeel al-Udvi, Sarki appointed him as a head teacher at this seminary at Garhi Hasan, when al-Udvi was only twenty-four. (Raz, 1980: 153). Al-Udvi continued teaching at Garhi Hasan for at least twenty years. A book on Arabic syntax, commonly known as Ghurratun Nahv (elementary syntax) most probably containing his lecture notes at Garhi Hasan, seems to be completed during this period. Maulana Ahmad al-Din of Jarar Pahor, a well-known spiritual master having great following throughout Sindh and a reputed scholar of Sindh, studied under al-Udvi at Garhi Hasan. (Kandhro, 2007: 87). During his stay at Garhi Hasan, al-Udvi is reported to have become a disciple of great mystic and spiritual master in Sindh, Maulana Taj Mahmood Amroti in Qadri order, who was his

father's spiritual master as well and who wrapped a turban round his head at graduation ceremony at Udi, as previously mentioned. (Kandhro, 2007: 87). From Amroti, al-Udvi learnt more about the theory and practice in mysticism. He even practiced rigorous ascetic and mystic exercises under his guidance, but not to the desired effect. (Kandhro, 2007: 87). As he used to criticise his brother Abdul Ali (d. 1950) who believed and practiced kashf (uncovering, disclosure) over graves of deceased people with a view that he may uncover their condition. There is no doubt, however, that the healing attraction of mystic experience, with its insistence upon a direct personal experience of God, made al-Udvi to avoid worldly political activities in later life.

Besides spiritual lessons to his disciple, al-Udvi, Amroti is reported to have a trust upon scholarly personality of al-Udvi, in the presence of many other ulama, that he get him write answers in Arabic in response to the letters and queries sent to him by various ulama around Muslim world. (Moryani, 2000: 30). This was in itself a great honour and acknowledgment of his scholarship. The importance of this in al-Udvi's life was that it symbolized his identification with a highly qualified religious scholar.

In addition, Amroti also get al-Udvi reply to questions, pertaining to Shariah, posed by ulama as well as common people of Sindh. (Moryani, 2000: 30).

Alavi reports that on the death of his spiritual master, Amroti, al-Udvi composed a qasida (elegy poem) in Arabic language, published in the newspaper, al-Wahid, which was highly appreciated by many scholars. (Alavi, 1980: 6) Adib gives more information regarding this that when Syed Sulaiman Nadvi (d. 1953) read al-Udvi's qasida in al-Wahid, he was extremely impressed by his emotions about his spiritual master and his command over Arabic language, that he wrote a condolence letter to him, which unfortunately did not survive down to us.

His Permanent Settlement in Shikarpur

According to Alavi, al-Udvi, due to the controversy on certain issues, pertaining to Shariah, with Sarki, his patron, left Garhi Hasan for Shikarpur. He first purchased some portion of agricultural land to earn

some livelihood at Khokhar village not far away from Shikarpur city. He continued his teaching and doing imamah (leading people in congregational prayers of five times) in obligatory prayers, together with mystic exercises at the mosque at Khokhar village for at least two years. There is not much more of the account, with regard to his activities at this village, to present. (Kandhro, 2007: 87).

Comparing this period of teaching with that of previous one, it seems that al-Udvi might have quite a small number of students, who learnt from him at this point. During the two years he lived at Khokhar village, it seems that he devoted all his time to imamah in congregational prayers, delivering sermon in Friday prayer, reading and writing books together with spiritual exercises such as muraqiba (meditation).

After a span of two years, al-Udvi decided to leave Khokhar village for Shikarpur city, where he could disseminate the knowledge on a broader level. It is not quite clear why he made this decision of leaving Khokhar village. It seems quite possible to suggest that his relatives and people of the Shikarpur city might have invited him to settle in his native city, Shikarpur permanently, for reasonably broader sources of dissemination of knowledge.

Al-Udvi, established a religious seminary at central mosque of Noor Shah, a well-known mosque in Shikarpur, to continue his teaching of dars-e-nizami, public lecturing as well as spiritual training of Muslim community. In order to earn some livelihood he started a pharmacy, very close to the mosque, as he did not take remunerations on teaching, lecturing and imamah.

During al-Udvi's time in Shikarpur, he divided up his time in the way best fitted to serve the needs of those around him. He devoted himself to reading the Quran, studying the traditions of the Prophet afresh, to teaching, and to prayer, so that he should not waste a single moment of his own time or that of those with him. (Alavi, 1980: 9).

The teaching at this mosque used to start after fajr (dawn) prayer and continued throughout the day except during the times of prayers and when al-Udvi needs to go to his pharmacy, which was not too far away from the mosque. It usually ends just before the maghrib prayer at the sunset. Al-Udvi used to begin his lecture with recitation of a few verses from the Qur'an followed by their interpretation; or

with the narration of a hadith followed by its elucidation and commentary, or with the presentation of a legal ruling followed by its explanation. The lectures of al-Udvi consisted of questions and answers between him and the students. Al-Udvi used to teach subject by subject, like exegesis of the Qur'an, hadith, law, jurisprudence, Arabic language and literature, to name a few, to one group of students of the same level. (Alavi, 1980: 9)

It was in this manner that education was imparted in the mosques of towns in the time of al-Udvi up to the day. Not only did al-Udvi teach men but also women at his home. It is reported that he used to teach the translation of the Qur'an, word by word, to his female students, of whom was his own daughter, who, after his father's death, continued the same up to the day. (Kandhro, 2007: 87).

This provided him with a good opportunity to spend all his time and energy in the field of teaching, lecturing and training. The last thirty years spent in Shikarpur (1941-70) can be considered as the best years of al-Udvi's life, for they yielded the most fruitful results in disseminating knowledge through teaching, lecturing and writing.

During this time, al-Udvi had a personal contact with professor syed Muhammad Saleem, (d. 2000) a well-known author, the student of Allamah Abdul Aziz Maimani (d. 1978), and devout activist of the Jamaat Islami, who was a professor in Arabic language and literature at C & S Degree College, Shikarpur in 1952. He was a distinguished scholar concerned with the reform of the ulama so that they could be effective guides to Muslim community as well as struggling for educational reform in Pakistan. He, impressed by the fame and scholarly personality of al-Udvi, invited him to study the thought of Maulana Maududi (d. 1979) and to join his party, the Jamaat Islami. Maududi's approach to Islam appealed al-Udvi, thus, he joined the Jamaat Islami, a well-organized religio-political party of Pakistan founded by Maulana Maududi in 1941, as its member during 1954. (Alavi, 1980: 14). After reading Maududi's books, al-Udvi became highly impressed by his thought. Due to his great scholarly personality, he became the leading exponent of Maududi's political thought in his days and great defender of his thought against Deobandi ulama, as he thought him a revivalist of the century. (Alavi, 1980: 14).

The reason why al-Udvi, joined the Jamaat without any hesitation, lies in the fact that he had previously been involved in the Khilafat Movement, as mentioned above, through his association with Amroti. During this period, he had become acquainted with the works and ideas of Khilafat leaders, such as Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and Ubaidullah Sindhi. From the Khilafat activists he learned about the West and about politics as well as the value of social mobilization and political propaganda. Many of the ideas of the Khilafat Movement, such as its anti-imperialism, its efforts to unite the various expressions of Islam in South Asian Indian sub-continent, its appeal to pan-Islamic sentiments, and its belief in the viability and desirability of resuscitating the institution of the caliphate, led al-Udvi to join the Jamaat, as these were echoed in its thought.

In addition, historically al-Udvi was highly influenced by reforming trend of Shah Walullah of Delhi (d. 1762) who, like Shaikh Ahmad of Sarhand (d. 1624), wrote letters to Muslim nobles and rulers to the principles of Islam, and to the safeguard of the Mughal State. Al-Udvi was also well acquainted with Shah Waliullah's efforts for the need of a universal Khilafat to defend Islam and to serve as a model for other Muslim rulers.

It seems important to mention here that Shikarpur was then under the influence of Deobandi school of thought, a school that developed in South Asian Indian sub-continent in the late nineteenth century and was distinguished by its rigid adherence to the Hanafi school of jurisprudence.

Following the anti-congress stand and harsh criticism of Maulana Maududi over Maulana Hussain Ahmad Madani (d. 1957) (Maududi, 1999) in general and traditional views of the ulama in particular, the ulama began to oppose Maududi and his party firmly.. It was for this reason that the ulama of Shikarpur, following their leadership in India, stood up to resist the growing activities of the Jamaat, particularly after al-Udvi's affiliation with it. Deobandi ulama struggled very hard to return al-Udvi back to the Jamiat Ulama Islam, an offshoot of the Deobandi School and strong religio-political party of Pakistan, which is continuity of the Jamiat Ulama-e-Hind, and to quit the Jamaat. When they failed in convincing al-Udvi to quit the Jamaat and to join the Deobandi School, they called upon Mufti

Mahmood, the then Amir of the Jamiat Ulama-e-Islam Pakistan and the father of Maulana Fazlur Rahman, the existing Amir of the Jamiat, to convince al-Udvi to quit the Jamaat. According to the reports, Mufti Mahmood debated with al-Udvi on the views of Maulana Maududi with regard to the importance and legal status of hadith. Mufti Mahmood presented Maulana Maududi to al-Udvi as being denier of the hadith on the ground that he rejects the authentic Ahadith (pl. of hadith) of even Sahih Bukhari. (Alavi, 1980: 14).

According to the reports, Mufti Mahmood failed to convince al-Udvi to quit the Jamaat and to join the Deobandi School. In the debate, al-Udvi refuted Mufti Mahmood's criticism of Maulana Maududi. (Alavi, 1980: 14)

Realizing the growing influence of al-Udvi, some of the Deobandi ulama, the names of whom are not known, started opposing, repudiating his views and did not hesitate even to use any calumny to discredit him. In this regard, they accused al-Udvi that he does not believe in sinlessness nature of the prophets (ismat-e-ambiya). In addition, they also accused that he permits eating and drinking even after dawn, at which, eating, drinking and sexual intercourse have to be stopped for fasting, to make his personality disputed particularly in the matters of Shariah. Al-Udvi refuted all the false accusations levelled against him in writing and publicized it among masses throughout Sindh. (Udvi, n.d).

According to the reports, when Maulana Maududi visited Sukkur, al-Udvi met him and shared his views with him on certain issues of Shariah, of which was his opinion about impermissibility of hunting animals with a gun. As a result, Maulana is reported to have changed his opinion about permissibility of hunting with a gun. In addition to the teaching at Noor Shah Mosque, he used to deliver general lectures at various mosques, big and small, of Shikarpur, where ordinary Muslims, simple villagers and farmers used to assemble and join his lecture. Moreover, he used to deliver sermon at Friday prayer at central mosque of Baitul Mukarram, where after every Friday prayer, quite a considerable number of people sit around him and ask him questions pertaining to their religious and social life. This gave him the opportunity to display his virtuosity.

He used to reply with a deep scholarly spirit to many of the questions raised by the people. Not all of his answers have been transmitted properly and completely down to us given to the people, except a few as follows:

It is narrated that to the question regarding the legal position of photo he answered- disagreeing with the rest of the ulama of South Asia Indian sub-continent- that it is permissible and it is like a reflection of a mirror. (Channa, 2002).

Replying to another question regarding the conflict between Hazrat Ali RA (d. 661), one of the four rightly guided caliphs of Islam and Hazrat Muaviyah RA (d. 680), founder of the Umayyad Dynasty, he answered that the latter was wrong and the former was right in their stands. (Jafri, 2004). Besides this, al-Udvi used to reply in writing to the queries, pertaining Shariah sent to him through the post. (Suhryani, n.d).

Through this social service i.e. teaching and lecturing, he tried to fight and eradicate illiteracy from Muslim community. This also shows his deep concern for the spread of education and dissemination of knowledge.

Al-Udvi lived a long active life. During this period, he spent all his energies and tapped all sources to serve the religion in which he believed. He devoted entire life to the service of knowledge, which he loved from the depth of his heart. He was, to a considerable extent, successful in the field of his activities. When he reached the seventy-third year of his life, he felt that death was approaching soon. He, therefore, read *la ilaha illallahu Muhammadur rasoolullah* (there is no god except Allah, Muhammad is the messenger of Allah) many a times and said *Allahu Akbar* (God is the Greatest). On the 29th Ramazan, 1391/29th of November 1970, he breathed his last in Shikarpur, and was buried in his ancestral graveyard in Shikarpur, beside the tomb of his father Maulana Nabi Bux al-Udvi. In his will, he requested that one of the following three persons may perform his funeral prayer:

1. Maulana Sher Muhammad, his younger brother
2. Maulana Jan Muhammad Bhutto (d. 1982) the than Amir of Jamaat Islami Sindh.
3. Maulana Mazharuddin Soomro (d. 1995), one of his students.

Maulana Sher Muhammad, his younger brother withdrew in favour of Maulana Jan Muhammad Bhutto and requested him to proceed for funereal prayer of al-Udvi and he did that. (Alavi, 1980: 16; Nakyana, 2002: 18).

His Academic Stature

Al-Udvi is reported to have attained the highest rank among his contemporaries. His thorough knowledge and profound scholarship brought him fame and popularity that Dr. Umar b. Muhammad Daoodpoto (d. 1958), profound literary figure, the student of Allamah Abdul Aziz Maimani, and the then director of public instruction in Sindh, paid him much respect. It is for this reason that Daoodpoto offered him to live in Karachi to disseminate his knowledge, or to accept a research post in the University of Sindh, Jamshoro. No wonder, as being a pious and inclined to those scholars who refrained from co-operating or from accepting official posts, he declined this offer. (Adib, 2004: 21) As regards his scholarship, Chachar narrates that not only in Sindh but also in Indian sub-continent no one from amongst ulama more learned than al-Udvi. (Chachar, 1981: 190). Similarly, Maulana Ali Muhammad Kakepoto (d. 1967), who was a teacher of Allamah Iqbal (d. 1938), a well-known great poet of South Asian Indian sub-continent, used to say that I am before al-Udvi like a student. (Adib, 2004: 21). His colleagues and contemporary scholars acknowledged his academic superiority and paid him the compliments given to only a few. Allamah Ghulam Mustafa Qasmi (d. 2003), former Chairman of Sindhi Adabi Board, Jamshoro, Director of Shah Waliullah Academy, Hyderabad and a well-known author, relates: 'al-Udvi was the best scholar'. (Kandhro, 2007: 96-97).

Likewise, Qasmi, in a sanad of hadith (chain of transmission), has included al-Udvi in the chain of illustrious scholars of Islam extending back from Deobandi ulama to Allamah Abdul Hakeem of Sialkot (d. 1656). In addition, Professor Syed Muhammad Saleem gives another sanad of al-Udvi which extending back to Shah Waliullah of Delhi. (Nakyana, 2002: 5-6).

Similarly, Maulana Qari Nisar Ahmad (b. 1937), one his famous student, is reported to have said: 'al-Udvi was the best scholar in transmitted sciences (al-uloomun naqliyyah) and Maulana Kakepoto was in rational sciences (al-uloom al-aqliyyah)'. (Nakyana, 2002: 5-6).

To take another example, Professor Syed Muhammad Saleem (d. 2000), remarked: 'al-Udvi was not an ordinary aalim rather he was an Allamah (superlative degree of aalim)'. (Nakyana, 2002: 5-6).

When al-Udvi permanently settled down in Shikarpur, Maulana Qari Fath Muhammad Panipati, despite the fact that he was a blind and a great scholar in *ilmul qiraah*, i.e. science of seven readings of the Qur'an, used to come to his home on foot to solve his problems in the field of *al-qiraah* and to clarify his concepts. (Alavi, 1980: 12-13).

Al-Udvi's colleagues and contemporaries not only admitted his superiority over themselves, but also referred to him whenever some difficulty arose. Thus, Alavi reports that the former president of Pakistan General Ayoob Khan (d. 1974) wished, for unknown reasons, to celebrate Eidul Fitr (annual festive celebrated at the end of holy month of Ramadhan), on certain day, without sighting of the moon. Following this wish, the Deputy Collector of Shikarpur summoned the ulama of Shikarpur including, Maulana Hakeem Fazlullah Soomro, Maulana Abdul Fattah Khoso, Maulana Pir Fazl Ahmad Sarhandi (d. 1987), to announce the decision made by the President. All the ulama said that they could not express their view until al-Udvi gives his opinion about it. When al-Udvi came, and courageously announced that no one could celebrate the Eid until the moon is sighted. (Alavi, 1980: 9).

Similarly, it is narrated that one of the school teachers named Allah Dino of Thul, Jacobabad, brought a fatva of Maulana Rasheed Ahmad of Gangoh (d. 1905), a renowned Deobandi scholar and co-founder of Darul Uloom Deoband, concerning a crow that it is *halal* (lawful), to the ulama of Shikarpur particularly Maulana Abdul Karim Chishti of Shikarpur. Allah Dino wanted their signature on the fatva so that he may serve them a crow to eat if it is *halal*. Maulana Chishti and other scholars of Shikarpur referred this matter to al-Udvi, stating that whatever he would say, will be acceptable to all of us. After looking into the matter, al-Udvi said to Allah Dino: 'provide an argument either from the Quran or from the hadith; I am an aalim, I have to follow Quran and Hadith. For *halal* and *haram* (unlawful), we need an argument from the Qur'an or hadith'. (Alavi, 1980: 9).

These reports reveal that he was the most eminent scholar of his time. It also implies that his colleagues and contemporary scholars admitted his superiority over themselves.

Al-Udvi was so confident of his wide and thorough knowledge that he claimed to have known all the ahadith of the Prophet. (Alavi, 1980: 9). Undoubtedly, his claim about his deep knowledge was far from being a boast. It seems rather an expression of his self-confidence. In addition, he is also reported to have criticized over Hakeem Tirmizi's book 'Kitabun Navadir' by saying that there is no single strong and sahih (sound) hadith in the whole book. (Alavi, 1980: 7).

His Personality and Character

The biographical accounts of al-Udvi portray him as a handsome man. He was tall and slender with an attractive face and a pleasing voice. He was a man of impressive personality, respected for his straightforwardness and revered for his piety. Although a man of meagre resources, gaining no remuneration from his teaching, he was generous with his friends as well as with the poor. The biographical accounts describe him as giving medicine to the poor at his pharmacy at low charges or, at some occasions, free of charge. (Kandhro, 2007: 87).

Furthermore, it is narrated that every evening he would go to his room and spend some time praying, by name, for those who had sought help from him or who had treated him well. He never went to sleep without such a prayer. He believed in the efficacy of his prayers in relieving the material difficulties of his suppliants.

His biographers mention his other personal characteristics. It is reported that he did perform tahajjud (mid-night optional prayer as mentioned in the Qur'an see. 17:79 and 73: 1-6; 20) prayer regularly and engaged in doing zikr (remembrance of Allah through reading certain invocations and supplications) until fajr (dawn) prayer. From early childhood, al-Udvi seems to have displayed a sharp intelligence and a good memory. (Alavi, 1980: 9). He had memorized a great deal of hadith collection as he is reported to have said, as previously mentioned, that, by the grace of Allah, there would hardly be a single hadith which this faqeer (he generally calls him as faqeer means needy) does not know.

Although the study of the Qur'an was al-Udvi's main concern, his biographers state that he was acquainted with other branches of

Islamic learning as previously mentioned. The biographers also tend to depict him as a scholar whose knowledge was encyclopaedic as his 'Safwatul Irfan' and 'Noorul Iqan' bear witness to al-Udvi's scholarly ability. (Nakyana, 2002: 17).

The biographical accounts also depict him a great debater in writing rather in speech as he conducted verbal debates with deniers of hadith and with Bareilvi ulama with great skill. (Kandhro, 2007: 93). The Saaqatu Azaabillah alaath Mushrikeena billah, Ayyaman Madoodaat ji jadeed Tahqiqa jo Radd and Risalah Dar Tahreef Aayatus Salah are written in the form of a debate between him and his opponents.

His Religious Thought

The available sources and information give no clear indication to which religious sect al-Udvi belonged. Nor al-Udvi mentioned or attributed him to any of the sects that have Indian sub-continent origin such as, Deobandi, Bareilvi and Ahl-e-hadith (people of hadith). In fact, his personality seems to be far beyond such sectarian tendencies. This is why, no biographer has mentioned of al-Udvi's sectarian affiliation. However, it seems possible to estimate a most likely answer to this question. Taking his education and religious training as a whole there is no doubt that the overwhelming majority of his teachers as well as population of Sindh in general and of Shikarpur in particular were Hanafis. But, this does not mean that al-Udvi was a blind follower of this school, rather it appears that he was a man whose conclusions were based on the Qur'an and hadith. Like Shah Waliullah al-Udvi appears to be inclined to 'jurisprudential eclecticism' (choosing among different schools of Jurisprudence for legal interpretations, as opposed to taqlid to any one school) as Barbara Metcalf puts it. (Metcalf, 1982: 38). Al-Udvi is reported to have performed rafaal yadain - raising hands while rising from ruku (bowing) and going into sajdah (prostration) postures, as Shafi and other schools do - in the prayer, although in private not in public, as mentioned with regard to Shah Waliullah of Delhi. Furthermore, al-Udvi's readings of al-Ghazali (d. 1111) and Ibn Taimiyyah (d. 1328) had also influenced his intellect and thought. Two figures who had influenced al-Udvi and whose names are known throughout the Muslim World in the late

nineteenth century were Egyptian scholars such as Abdhu (d. 1905) and his student Rasheed Radha (d. 1935), through the regular reading of their Tafseerul Manar. (Alavi, 1980: 12).

In this intellectual context, al-Udvi, as previously mentioned, was influenced by the political thought of Maulana Maududi, during 1952, when he came into contact with professor Syed Muhammad Saleem (d. 2000). Certainly, he was sympathetic and great defender of the Jamaat Islami, as mentioned earlier. However, al-Udvi, practically, did not engage in politics and in the organization of the Jamaat, although he was its member. Thus, he may not have been equally accomplished as a political activist, as he was a scholar and mystic personality.

Bearing this historical intellectual background of al-Udvi in mind, it appears that he could be more closely identified with scriptural orthodoxy, which has been popular current throughout Indo-Pak Muslim history.

In combining within him the roles of scholar and mystic, al-Udvi seems to stress on the need of jihad, which, according to him, is both a struggle against the enemies of the faith and a higher struggle against one's instincts. Al-Udvi seems to be more concerned with internal political and moral decline than he was with the external threats. For this reason, he was a non-radical and may be considered as an orthodox theologian. It is for this reason that he is reported to have stressed on the internal purification than external training. Thus, he used to say that the hadith concerning jihad-e-akbar (greater jihad) i.e. jihad bin nafs is textually (dirayatan) sound although it is weak by transmission (rivayatan). (Qari Nisar).

Conclusion

From what has been said above, it is clear that al-Udvi, having been a keen student from his early childhood, devoted him to study. He was fortunate in having spent his student days in Sindh and then outside Sindh in India, which at that time was flooded with distinguished scholars in various fields of learning. He attained a high level in the academic sphere. He was not only recognized as an important scholar by the people of his time, but was also accepted an authority in fiqh, fatva and Qur'anic studies. By virtue of his towering personality, al-

Udvi made important contribution spreading education in Sindh. On the popular side, he was able to attract many people by his simple appearance and modest way of life. On the intellectual side, he made his influence felt in the fields of Qur'an, fiqh and mysticism and occupied scholars of other schools in refuting his views and arguing against him. Moreover, he left large number of students and adherents who carried on his teachings after his death and played an important role in the Muslim life of Sindh and beyond.

It is also clear that al-Udvi 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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