

Muhammad Shibli Nomani (1857–1914); His Educational Thought's and Career

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to explore the educational thoughts and career of one of the most underrated Muslim educationalist of the colonial period, Shibli Nomani (1857-1914). The paper aims to narrate the story of *Darul Musannefin Shibli Academy* founded by none other than Shibli Nomani himself. Institutionally *Darul Musannefin Shibli Academy* established in 1914 is a research center in its own right that produced a school of historiography for Islamic Oriental Studies. Despite Shibli Nomani contributions to the cause of Muslim education and his service for his community, he is a neglected figure in modern Indian history. When it comes to the educationalists of modern India, names like Rabindranath Tagore, Mahatma Gandhi, Syed Ahmed Khan, Madan Mohan Malaviya and Zakir Hussain immediately comes in our mind. However, among these names not all were educationalist per se, and when it comes to Muslim educationalist, in particular, the figure of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan overshadow all. Thus, the paper attempt to explore what attitude Shibli Nomani acquired towards Muslim education, his views on Muslim education and the fulfillment of his dream project, *Darul Musannefin Shibli Academy*. The rationale of the paper is to bring out Shibli Nomani from the state of oblivion.

Key Words : Muslim Education, Shibli Nomani, *Darul Musannefin Shibli Academy*

INTRODUCTION

History of education, which comprises educationalists and their thoughts on education, is still a relatively less research area in India. Even the limited research on the history of education in modern India confined their studies to the educational institutions and educational thinkers of the metropolis. A good number of works can be a trace on educational institutions and educational thinkers of Delhi, Calcutta, Bombay, Madras, Allahabad, Benares, Patna, Lahore, etc. But, as far as the educational institutions and educational thinkers of

the peripheral cities are concerned, very little research has been done on them so far. Educational institutions and thinkers of small cities and towns like Azamgarh, Gazipur, Muzzafarpur, Meerut, Gorakhpur, etc. are still waiting for the quality scholarly research.

There must have been educational ventures undertaken at the peripheries also. And educationalists from the periphery must have for meda formal and informal association with the framed educationalists of the metropolis center of education. Whereas, there should have the space for the educationalists at the center to avail of the educational enterprises at the periphery.¹

1. There is a small bazar named, Chiryakot in Azamgarh, fifty kilometers south of Varanasi. In 19th century, Chiryakot was the center of rationalist and eclectic school of Ulema. The study included Mu'tazilite theology, the early Arabic, development of Hellenistic science and philosophy, as well as languages such as Sanskrit and Hebrew. Throughout the 19th century Islamic scholars from the length and breadth of the sub-continent visit Chiryakot. For details see, Mawlana Habibur Rahman Qasmi, *Tazkirab-Ulema-i-Azamgarh*, Jamia Islamia Benaras, 1976.

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Taking the view that education is a 'cultural universal' and there always exists multiple centers of education and knowledge production, this framework provides the perspective for researching educational institutions and thinkers located at the periphery. Shibli Nomani and research endeavors at the institution of his dream, Darul Mussannefin, Shibli Academy could be explored in the above context.

Colonialism has changed the things for once and for all. However, this change never had been an unchanging monolith. Colonialism always had a shift, contradictions, and movements across time and on variations in state practices across space.² Now for the first time in Indian history, education becomes a political affair. Under colonialism, there appeared a political agenda of education that in turn led to plans for the educational structure and curriculum that also demanded cultural redefinitions.³ Macaulay minute widely viewed as a triumph of Anglicist who won the game, but orientalist had also not lost the game either. The old oriental institutions like Calcutta Madrasa and Benares Sanskrit College survived with some minor changes in their governmental patronage. However, it was in the post-1857 period that in need of reconstruction of social edifice brutally shaken by the mutiny suppression and other socio-political changes that the public sphere among the Muslims community regarding education began to emerge.

The historiography of Muslim education in India is largely dominated by the figure named Sir Syed Ahmed Khan who strongly advocated for the western education for Muslims. However, in the nineteenth century, there were many traditional Muslim educational institutions in north India. To mention few are, Darul Uloom Deoband and Nadvatul Ulama in Lucknow, National High School in Azamgarh, Madrasa Hanfiyah in Jaunpur, Madrasa Chasm-Rahat in Ghazipur and MadrasatulIslah in

Saraimir. Most of these traditional centers of Islamic learning were considered "conservative" institution in the historiography of Muslim education. It is noteworthy to mention here that among the institutions mentioned above, National High School at Azamgarh, Nadvatul Ulama at Lucknow and MadrasatulIslah at Saraimir were established by Shibli Nomani in 1882, 1894, and 1912 respectively. These institutions got relatively less or no space in the historiography of Muslim education in modern India.⁴ It is not wrong to say that the personality of Syed Ahmed Khan and his Aligarh College have dominated the scholarly landscape of Muslim education for a long time. Syed Ahmed Khan, in particular, has over shadowed the life and educational career of many of his contemporary's Muslim educationalist in the mainstream historical writing and Shibli Nomani is just the one among the many who did not get the scholarly attention, the figure of his repute indeed deserves.

Shibli Nomani holds a position of his own as a Muslim educationalist. In spite of born, bought up and spending most of the time in Azamgarh, a small town in United Province, he formed collegial ties with many reputed Muslim educationalists of the then time. Most importantly, he was much aware of the developments in education taking place elsewhere in the world. He started his educational career as a close associate of Syed Ahmed Khan at Aligarh, then work with the Nadvatul Ulama at Lucknow and finally settled in his native town of Azamgarh where he founded two institutions for Muslim education. Shibli was a widely traveled man, so throughout his life, he was in touch with some of the renowned Muslim educationalist of the world and exchange with them ideas on education. Educational ideas in the colonial period were shaped not in isolation. In the case of Shibli Nomani also, we can discern a kind of collegial network of educationalists, working in association with each other.⁵ Importantly enough, colonialism produced forms

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2. See, Preface, in Sarkar Sumit, *Modern India 1885-1947*, Permanent Black, New Delhi, 2014.
 3. Minault Gailt and Lelyveld David, *The Campaign for a Muslim University, 1898- 1920*, University of Texas and University of Minnesota, 1974.
 4. Historiography, here refers to the School of History Writings like Oxford, Cambridge, Aligarh, Allahabad, or JNU. However, at the periphery some remarkable works on these institutions in general and ShibliNomani in particular have been done in Urdu. Like, Darul Musannefin (Adobe of Writers), Shibli Academy Azamgarh, which in itself is a school of history writing, has published many books on ShibliNomani and Muslim education in Urdu. This institution, founded in 1914, having a honor of publishing one of the oldest monthly Urdu journal of South Asia, named, MAARIF, since 1916. Other important local Muslim school of history writing was Jamia Islamia, Benaras and Allahabad.
 5. To know more about the network, See, Institutions and Networks, in Beteille Andre, *Universities at the Crossroads*, pp-116, OUP, 2010.

of community-based on religious, social, and educational organizations that in turn lead to the development of new as well as revival of old educational system in colonial India.

So, the larger question that is going to be addressed in this research paper is where to locate Shibli Nomani as a Muslim educationalist. The question should be answered in the exploration of Shibli biographical sketch and his educational career, which we will see next.⁶

A Biographical Account of Shibli Nomani:

Muhammad Shibli Nomani was born in a distinguished family at Bindwal, a village about fifteen kilometers north-west of Azamgarh city.⁷ His ancestor of the fourteenth generation is known to have been a Ba'is Rajput by the name of Sheoraj Singh of village Dharsen, which is close to Bindwal. Sheoraj Singh on embracing Islam was named Sirajuddin. Munshi Waris Ali was the grandfather of Shibli Nomani worked as mukhtars in Azamgarh Collectorate. His father name was Sheikh Habibullah, who was a lawyer by profession, practiced at the Allahabad, then the capital of Northwest Frontier Province. Nomani father also had landed property and carried on trade in sugar and indigo plantation. He also played an active role in suppression of the revolt of 1857 in Azamgarh. As such, his family was beneficiary and a collaborator of colonial rule. Sheikh Habibullah was fond of Arabic and Persian literature as well.⁸

Sheikh Habibullah had four sons and a daughter

from his first wife, Begum Hamida. Muhamaad Shibli was the eldest son, followed by Mahdi Hasan, Muhamaad Ishaque, and Muhamaad Junaid.⁹ It is worth here to maintain that, Sheikh Habibullah was influenced by the personality of Syed Ahmed Khan. His meeting with him during his visit to Benares and Ghazipur had a great impact on him. Interestingly all the three brothers of Shibli were sent to Aligarh for English education, but Shibli being an elder get off from English education and acquired a traditional Islamic education. The reason for this may be ascribed to the fact that by the time Shibli started education Aligarh still not became the center of western education for Muslims. His brother's further went to London, England for higher education and on return became highly successful in their professions. Muhamaad Ishaque became a lawyer at Allahabad High Court. Mehdi Hasan became a Hafiz. Muhammad Junaid became a munsif and later promoted to the rank of Sub-judge at Kanpur. Whereas, Shibli Nomani was educated at traditional madrasas. He received his early education from Hakim Abdullah Jairajpuri and Mawlvi Shrukrullah Sabrehdi.¹⁰ After that, Maulvi Faizullah of Maunath Bhanjan, a disciple of Sakhawat Ali, taught Shibli at an Arabic madrasah in Azamgarh which had been started by some of the elites of the town. He then went to Madrasah Hanfiyah at Jaunpur for higher learning from Mawlvi Hidaytullah Khan Rampuri. At Jaunpur, he came under the influence of one of the most intellectual Muslim scholars of the traditionalist school, Mawlana Faruq

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6. There is one acclaimed biography of ShibliNomani, *Hayat-i-Shibli* (1963) written in Urdu by one of his disciple, Sayyed Sulaiman Nadwi. Other important work on the life of ShibliNomani is, *Shibli Namah* in Urdu by Nasir Maktabah, Lucknow. There is one autobiographical account of ShibliNomani in English also. See, Javed Ali Khan, *Muhammad ShibliNomani: Life and Contributions*.
 7. Mawlana Iqbal Ahmad Suhail in *Al-Islah*, Saraimir, Azamgarh, in a series of article between 1936-37 with the title of *Sirat-i-Shibli*, places the date of Shibli's birth on 12 Ziqidah 1274 Hijri. Muhammad Tahir after examination of *Sirat-i-Shibli*, *Sahifa Zarin* (edited by Prag Narain, Nawa IKishor Press, Lucknow, 1902), and the *Azamgarh Gazette*, places the date of Shibli's birth on Wednesday the 3rd June 1857. See Muhammad Tahir, '*Allama Shibli Nomani Ki Tarikh-i-Waladat*', *Naya Daur*, June 1983, pp. 19-21.
 8. ShibliNomani, the biographical sketches in the Darul Musannefin, Shibli Academy website.
 9. ShibliNomani father also had a mystic bent of mind. His admiration for medieval Sufism led him to name his son's Shibli and Junaid, on the name of famous Muslim saints of Baghdad of medieval times.
 10. Hakim Abdullah Jairajpuri, was the distinguished scholar of Urani medicine and science. He was disciple of renowned physician of the 19th century, Hakim Mahmud bin Sadiq Sharif. On the other hand, Sabrehdi was also the distinguished Islamic scholar of Azamgarh, having his education at Madarsah Hanfiyah, Jaunpur. He was very affectionate book lover having a personal library, which however, was plundered during the revolt of 1857. For further details about him, see Maarif, (ed) Sayyid Sabahuddin Abdur Rahman, Shibli Academy, Azamgarh, August, 1984,

Chiryakoti.¹¹ It was Chiryakoti, whose educational ideas of Mutazalite theology had a great imprint on Shibli minds. It was under his supervision, Shibli got higher Islamic learning at Madrasa Chashma-i-Rahmat at Ghazipur.¹² It was Chiryakoti, who added the suffix Nomani to Shibli name, suggesting his strong inclination towards Hanaficreed to which Shibli also completely identified himself later in his life. Later on, for further studies, Shibli went to Deoband, Oriental College at Lahore, and Saharanpur, where he studied hadis and Islamic Sciences from the renowned scholar Mawlana Ahmad Ali Saharanpuri.¹³ Shibli also went to Makkah for Hajj and there where he devoted his time to further his studies in Islamic theology, literature, philosophy, history, and Sufism from different scholars in Arabia.¹⁴ It appears that though Shibli not able to get English education but he traveled extensively to acquire Islamic leanings from distinct places. He studied *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence), *usul* (Islamic principles), *hadis* (tradition about the saying and actions of Prophet Muhammad), *munazra* (religious debates), *maqualt* (rational science), *manqulat* (sciences of hadis), and Astronomy.

Shibli Nomani Educational Career and Thoughts on Education:

Educational thought is something which never remains the same as it keeps evolving with time. Shibli Nomani was no exception in this regard as his thoughts on Muslim education evolved from time to time, and it

had much to do with his educational careers which he had at different educational institutions in India. Most importantly, his educational thoughts shaped by the network of educationalists; the advisory ties in which a variety of educational ideas were discussed and exchanged. Changing socio-political milieu under the colonial rule led to many paradigm developments within the local-traditional educational institutions itself. These developments can be held responsible for the modernization of education in South Asia. The modernity that comes with colonization provided a situation for the reformation of Muslim education and the debate which followed involved Shibli Nomani as an active participant.¹⁵

Thus, Shibli Nomani educational ideas were based on the assessment of the situation of the Muslims and deep analysis of the problems his community was facing in those days. Besides, he had firsthand experiences of modern and traditional systems of Muslim education due to his close association with M.A.O. College (Aligarh), Nadwatul Ulama (Lucknow), National College (Azamgarh), MadrasatulIslah (Sarai Mir, Azamgarh), and educational service in the princely state of Hyderabad. Although, he joined the M.A.O. College at Aligarh, and had warm respect for Syed Ahmad Khan but at the same time, he was not in accord with many of his educational thoughts. Soon after joining Aligarh College, Shibli Nomani registered some ideological differences with Syed Ahmad Khan. He did not align with Syed Ahmed Khan on the

11. S.S. Nadvi, *Hayat-i-Shibli*, Publisher: Darul Musannefin Shibli Academy, 2010.

He studied Islamic science, logic, and philosophy. His fame spread far and wide as distinguished scholar of various Islamic sciences such as Manqulat, Maqulat, Azin-Heyatand Mathematics. He was unsympathetic to the Aligarh movement because he believed in the continuance of traditional kalam- Islamic Scholasticism. For more details about Faruq Chiryakoti see, Altaf Husain Hali, Sayyid Shah Nazir Hashmi Ghazipur, *Aligarh Monthly*, 3 (1905); Rahman Ali, *Tazkirah-Ulama-i-Hind* (translation from Persian to Urdu by Muhammad Ayub Qadri), Pakistan Historical Society, Karachi, 1961: Al-Maarif, 'Maulana Muhammad Faruq Chiryakoti Awr Unka Nazriyah-i-Ulum Awr Taalim', Lahore, 1969.

12. Mawlana Rahatullah Firangi Mhali started this madrasa. Chasm-i-Rahmat served as a center for the safeguard and spread of Islamic learning in eastern India during a period of religious and political turmoil.

13. He was considered the great contemporary scholar of Hadis in India. After receiving education in India, he went to Makkah where he studied under Mawlana Shah Muhamaad Ishaque. He taught for some time in Calcutta, but came back and started teaching students in his house. See *Hayat-i-Shibli*.

14. See, *Hayaat-e-Shibli* by Maulana Syed Sulaiman Nadvi.

15. A network of international Muslims educationalist seems to have appeared by the end of the nineteenth century. T.W. Arnold, Sayyid Tahir, Mawlana Ali Pasha (1824-1893), Sheikh Muhammad Abduh (1848-1905), Sheikh Hamzah Fathullah (1849-1918), Sayyid Reza Misri (1865-1925), of England, Aden, Cairo, Istanbul, Jerusalem, and Damascus and Syed Ahmad Khan, Chirayakoti, ShibliNomani, Samiullah Khan (1834-1908), Syed Mahmud (1850-1903), Altaf Hussain Hali (1837-1914), Muhammad Iqbal from India were involved in dialogues with each other.

mode and curriculum of education imparted to Muslims. Though both had the similar objective of the emancipation of Muslim of the sub-continent and of making them prepare to face the situation comes with the colonization and modernization, but their approaches to the reformation of Muslim education were quite different.¹⁶ While Syed Ahmad Khan opined all remedy in the western English education, whereas Shibli Nomani advocated for a kind of education for Muslims, which though embedded in traditional learning should be based on modern interpretation of the Islamic texts.

Moreover, as Syed Ahmad Khan, educational objectives concerned more about the acquisition of government jobs by the elite Muslim community that brings his educational thoughts to the utilitarian principles. On the other hand, Shibli Nomani concern progress of his community through education which should be compatible with traditional Islamic learning. However, it does not put him in a category of conservatives like Shah Waliullah (1703-1783), Firangi Maha Lucknow, and Deoband. Shibli opined that education is not only an individual need of every Muslim; it is also very closely connected with the betterment and development of their collective life. Therefore, neither traditional education is enough for them, nor merely modern education can solve the problems of their religious and socio-cultural life. What Muslims required, Shibli Nomani thought, was the establishment of a comprehensive system of education which may help the integration of traditional and modern education. He was also of the view that the products of the Madrasahs and modern institutions should work at their own level for the benefit of the Muslim community and that the gap between them must be narrowed down through the regular interaction and cooperation with each other in the works of common welfare.¹⁷

Like most of the contemporary revivalists, Shibli Nomani despite being skeptical about western education employed the western framework or model in his various educational programs. He was keen to adopt scientific and rational forms of knowledge which in his view was the demand of the time. So, in making education

responsive to the demand of the time and more beneficial for the products of the Madrasahs, he throughout his lifetime tried to make a consistency between modern western education and traditional Islamic learning. His differences with Syed Ahmad Khan were basically lying on this ground. Syed Ahmad Khan was quite unsympathetic towards the oriental learning's, whereas Shibli Nomani during his visit to Constantinople, Cairo, and Baghdad had written many letters to Syed Ahmad Khan, where he shows his deep concern to procure rare manuscripts and books on Islamic sciences for the Aligarh library to which Syed Ahmad Khan was not enthusiastic. One of the associates of Syed Ahmad Khan written a piece of paper, *Musaddas-i-Hali* where he alleged Shibli's views on education as conservative and obscurantist. To counterpoise this allegation, Shibli wrote another piece of paper with the titled, *Musaddas-i-Awali*. This paper greatly exhibits Shibli's educational thought.

More reflection of his educational thoughts can be gauged when he joined *Nadwat-al-Ulama*, Lucknow after his disillusionment at Aligarh. At Lucknow, he tried to develop a hybrid education for Muslims and also it was here he planned for the reformation of old madrasahs. He with Maulvi Mamluk Ali, who was once the teacher of Delhi College, envisioned a madrasa having decent landscape, hostels, and a library with books on all sciences in Arabic. He further suggested that government grants-in-aid should be sought for running the madrasahs and rejected the fears that the spread of English education would harm the study of Islamic sciences.¹⁸ He also introduced the study of English, Hindi, and even Sanskrit in Nadwa. Ironically, Shibli's educational thoughts which were considered conservative at Aligarh became radical at Nadwat. He faced huge opposition of the ulemas stationed there and eventually have to quit.

Shibli's educational thoughts found further expression in the preparation of syllabi of madrasahs in the princely state of Bhopal.¹⁹ He was invited by the Madrasa Alia (Calcutta), Osmania Madrasa (Hyderabad), and Dacca Madrasa for advice on Muslim educational reforms. In 1910, he attended Government Oriental Conference held

16. For more detail see, Bu Kusu Khuda. S, B.C.L. Oxns., *The Nineteenth Century and The Muslims of India*, 1935, South Asian Digital Archive.

17. See *Maarif (Urdu)*, Nov- Dec 2014 Vol- 194(5-6), Shibli Numbers, Drul Musannefin Shibli Academy, Azamgarh.

18. *Rudad-I-Nadwa*, Bans Bariely, 1984.

19. He was invited by *Nazarat-al-Maarif*, the educational committee of Bhopal State, on recommendation by the Begum of Bhopal.

at Shimla where he proposed the study of oriental subjects including modern disciplines like archaeology, cataloging, promotion of vernacular languages, and integration of Oriental and Occidental thoughts. He to remove the antipathy of Muslims towards the English language formed a committee called Majis-i-Ilm-i-Kalam.²⁰

Shibli in his hometown Azamgarh established National High School in 1883. It later came to be called George Middle School. This school developed into stages and now reached a position of Post-Graduate College.²¹ However, the most remarkable feature of this institution is the use of the word "National" by Shibli Nomani. The word national per se reflects much about the farsightedness of Shibli Nomani. After all, that was the time when nationalism, as an idea was still at the nascent stage of its development in South Asia and most of the educationists of the then time, were keen on the foundation of educational institutions on communal lines ironically even for imparting modern secular education. The Aligarh Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College which later developed into Aligarh Muslim University, Central Hindu School of Annie Beasant, Malviya's Benares Hindu University, Osmania University, and Jamia Milia Islamia were to mention few educational institutions whose respective founders were highly enthusiastic about using the word, 'Hindu' or 'Muslim' in the name of their respective institution.²² To be sure, the campaign to establish educational institutions on communal lines was one early site in South Asia of the confluence of education with politics. In this scenario, Shibli Nomani, as an educationalist, seems to understand the importance of national education at this early age of nationalist politics. It is worth here to point out that, Shibli's National High

School was founded three years before the foundation of the Indian National Congress and probably it was one of the earliest educational institutions in Asia to incorporate the word 'national' in its name.

Shibli further reflection of national education can discern from his proposal for an Islamic University, published in a famous Urdu Journal of the time; Zamindar dated 15th April 1913. Shibli writes, "*In my opinion, establishment of a University at Mecca which can impart high quality religious and modern education is of prime importance. It is an established fact the education is a key element of power of a nation. The nation can only survive if they have complete high quality religious, modern education and well verse with modern technology.*"²³ Maulana AbulKalam Azad, as a young editor of *Al-Hilal* on 30th April 1913 published his comments on Shibli Nomani proposal for an Islamic University. He appreciated the idea of Shibli Nomani and endorsed the proposal. But he suggested that instead of establishing a new University, it would be easy and convenient to promote *Madrasah Saulatiyah* into a University. *Madrasah Saulatiyah* was established in 1874 by Indian Islamic scholar named Maulana Rahmatullah Keranvi at Mecca. The above statement of Shibli gives some reflection of his ideas on how education can contribute to the building of a nation.

As a historian, Shibli wrote many books and articles on Islamic education and science, 29 where following the rationalist approach of the late nineteenth century, he demonstrates the contribution of Islamic culture, administration and sciences to the world.²⁴ For example, in an article *Terajim*, Shibli highlights the contribution of Arab Muslims of the middle ages, not only in the

20. This committee include Muhammad Iqbal (poet and Barrister), Mawlvi Hamiduddin (Professor of Arabic, Allahabad University), Mawlvi Abdul Qadir Bhagalpuri.

21. Now this institution is called Shibli National College, and having a reputation of biggest minority college in North India after Aligarh Muslim University.

22. To understand communal development in educational of this period, see, Theodore Morison, 'A Mahomedan University', *The National Review*, XXXII (I 898-99). He argued that there should be Hindu, Muslim and Parsi universities in India, since such institutions would combat the irreligion prevalent amongst western- educated Indians, and would be likely to attract private Indian philanthropy. T. Morison, *History of the M A-O College, Aligarh* (Allahabad, I903), pp. 30-3. However, as a member of the legislative council, Morison offered no opposition to the Universities Act of I904, which embodied the recommendations of Curzon's Universities Commission.

23. See, *Maarif* issue of November 2013, for reading Shibli Numani whole proposal for an Islamic University.

24. At Aligarh he was influenced by the writings of Western writers like Carlyle, Vanlidof, Ranke, and Hegal. K. A. Nizami regards him as the first philosopher-historian who endeavored to introduce scientific methods in Urdu historical writings. He further writes that Shibli attempted to weild Arabic, Iranian, and Western historiographical ideology into one compact blend. See, K.A. Nizami, *Maulana Shibli Ba Haysiyat Muwarrikh*, *Maarif*, Azamgarh, 1986.

preservation of ancient sciences of West and East, but also how they developed, improved, and perfected it by their own intellect and thus contributed in the production of new knowledge. He historically traces how different languages such as Sanskrit, Persian, Latin, etc., were learned by Muslims, and then they translated the knowledge and wisdom contained in these languages into Arabic and Persian. He argues that because of the contributions of Muslims in the middle ages, Greek philosophy, logic, mathematics, geometry, physics, medicine, mathematics, etc., received new treatment and development. However, one of the most significant contributions of Shibli to Islamic scholarship was his composition of the biography of Muhammad, the Prophet of Islam. He collected much material on the life of Muhammad and wrote the first two volumes with the title, *Sirat-un-Nabi*.²⁵ After his death, his disciple, Syed Sulaiman Nadvi made use of this material and wrote the other five volumes.²⁶

As mentioned above, Shibli advocated for reforming the madrasas. He envisioned madrasas where Muslim should study traditional Islamic leanings in the light of present demands and should also study the developments in Europe. He further emphasized to read the works of Roger, Gallileo, Bacon, Kepler, and Newton to inculcate scientific temperament in the Muslims.²⁷ He thought of imparting the knowledge of western sciences per the tenets of Islam. Perhaps, he was the earliest Indian to study the intellectual relationship between India and Arab.

Without taking into consideration the story of Darul Musannefin (Adobe of Readers) also known as Shibli Academy, the educational career of Shibli Nomani would be incomplete. Shibli, being an erudite scholar with a great sense of history, knew very well that civilizations progress in continuity. He also understood the challenges of minorities in a pluralistic society. He envisioned Darul Musannefin as an institution that could produce a chain

of scholars who could be well-grounded in their history and ancient sciences, have an aptitude for modern research methods, and open to new ideas. He believed that these scholars would serve as ‘think tank’ and their research and writings will guide Muslims to meet modern challenges and live with dignity as a productive member of a pluralistic society. Darul Musannefin in a way is one of the earliest ‘research center’ for Islamic studies in India.²⁸ This institution comes in existence on 21st November 1914, just three days after the death of Shibli Nomani. Shibli, however, does not want only to preserve the lost heritage of medieval Muslim scholars. He was equally eager to produce new knowledge in the light of the present situation. Therefore, he envisioned Darul Musannefin as a kind of research center where scholars can assemble and produce new knowledge by using the old Islamic work on theology, jurisprudence, science, astronomy, mathematics, and history. Darul Musannefin, publishes a monthly journal named, *Maarif* since 1916 to publish their researches. Since then Maarif continued to be published and now the journal is in its 104th year. Darul Musannefin has contributed some fine piece of research works on Islamic science, medicine, medieval Indian history and culture, and oriental studies. The official website of the academy mentions its objectives as follows:

- To nurture and sustain a body of scholarly authors.
- To provide a congenial environment for scholars to create, compile and translate literary works of high scholastic and historical value.
- To undertake printing and publication of the literary works of the Academy.²⁹

Darul Musaneef insituated on a beautiful campus possess more than one lakhs of books and some rare collection of Arabic, Persian, and Urdu manuscripts. Distinguished figures like Jawaharlal Nehru, Zakir Hussain, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Humayun Kabir,

25. As a historian, he wrote a biography of Al-Ghazali and Sawanih Mawlana Rum, both of whom were the major figures of Islamic scholasticism in medieval ages. He also wrote a biography of Prophet Muhammad and second Caliph, Umar Fruq, by the name of *Sirat-al-Nabi*, and *Al-Firaq*, respectively. For more details on ShibliNomani as an historian, see, Javed Ali Khan, *Muhammad Shibli Numani*, Life and Contribution, page 78-118.

26. www.shibliacademy.org/Allama_Shibli_Nomani, Profile of ShibliNomani on shibliacademy.org website, Published 11 March 2009, Retrieved 2 Jan 2017

27. Read a poem entitles, *tamasha-i-ibrat*, by ShibliNomani, where he talks about this in brief.

28. For more information on Darul Musannefin, see, Darul Musannefin, *Ek Parichay* and Shibli himself published an outline of such institution in *Al- Hilal* (February 11, 1914).

29. <http://shibliacademy.org/>

Fakhruddin Ali Ahmad, Rafi Ahmad Kidwai, and B. Gopala Reddy were the lifetime members of the Darul Musanefin.footnote

Conclusion:

Shibli Nomani educational thoughts not formed in isolation. His travel to distinct places and interactions with the Muslims educationalist of the then time had greatly determined his thoughts on Muslim education. He was never a conservative in his approach, and at the same time, also felt the compulsion of designing the educational framework and curriculum for the Muslims, which should not go so far from the tenets of Islam.

Thus, it was this type of education which Shibli Nomani, endeavored to give in reformed madrasas. In this connection, he made an earnest plea that the Madrasah education should be reoriented and necessary changes should be effected in the syllabi. For this, he proposed a type of education for Muslims, which instill in them a sense of national pride through the works of history. However, his works were based on modern methods and did not promote obscurantism in the community in the name of national pride. He was largely guided by the need to make traditional Islamic education compatible with modern philosophical and scientific thoughts. In ultimate analysis, Shibli Nomani, throughout his life struggles to cultivate a distinct 'national character' among fellow Muslims through the modern rational education, while keeping them grounded in Islam. As that was the time, when reformist of all types, either it was social, religious, or educational always felt the compulsion of building modernity having roots in their imagined "national ideal". In the realm of education too, Muslim educationalists search for "national education" led them to look back at their Arab origin. Similarly, Hindu educationalists traced their golden past of education in Vedas and Upanishads and envisioned a 'national

education' which incorporate ancient wisdom with modern science and technology.³⁰

Shibli Nomani as an educationist can be located somewhere between Shah Walliwullah and Syed Ahmed Khan. This brings Shibli Nomani educational thoughts relatively closer to the educational thoughts of Muhammad Iqbal.³¹ Both, Shibli Nomani and Muhammad Iqbal in linking education and the development of national character, advocated for a holistic approach towards education; one which reflected borrowings both from the traditional Muslim concept of *adab* and Western Romantic notions on education. The word *adab* is a broad term that essentially refers to discipline and training, signifying good breeding and refinement. It can be defined as correct knowledge and behavior imbibed during the learning by which a person is educated, guided, and formed into a good Muslim. Like the concept of *adab*, Romantic notions of education stressed a holistic approach towards education; an educational ideal which encapsulated culture, intellect, sensibilities, and action.³² A colonized response to colonial educational system broadly characterized into the following four category-traditionalists, reformist, revivalists, and revivalist.³³ However, their boundaries very often overlap or intrude each other. In the ultimate analysis, Shibli Nomani can be considered in the category of progressive revivalist.

It can be concluded that Shibli Nomani was one of the most influential Muslim educationalists of colonial India, who was as active as Syed Ahmad Khan in the second half of the nineteenth century and first decade of the twentieth century. Christian W. Troll, a contemporary scholar of Islamic Studies writes following words about Shibli Nomani, "*Shibli displays much greater awareness than Syed Ahmad Khan with regard to specific difference between rational and supra-rational modes of knowing*".³⁴ But due to his location at periphery in comparison to Syed Ahmad Khan, he was

30. See, Jones Kenieth, *Socio-Religious Reform Movement in British India*. Cambridge University Press, 1999.

31. Iqbal was greatly influenced by the personality of Thomas Arnold and Shibli Numani. He lamented that Aligarh had failed to cultivate a higher 'national ideal' in its students and warned against the 'extravagant and unreasoning idolatry of [British] civilization' and equally critical of the traditional Islamic religious education. See, Iqbal Singh Sevea, *SCHOOLING THE MUSLIM NATION: MUHAMMAD IQBAL AND DEBATES OVER MUSLIM EDUCATION IN COLONIAL INDIA*, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore, Sage Publication, 2011.

32. Metcalf, Barbara, *Islamic Revival in British India: Deoband, 1860 -1900*.1982. pp.2-4.

33. For details on this see David Kopf, *The Brahma Samaj and the Shaping of the Modern Indian Mind*, Atlantic Publishers & Distributor, 1979.

34. Christian W. Troll, *Reason and Revelation in the Theology of Mawlana Shibli Numani*, Islam and Modern Age, New Delhi, 1982, pp. 20-22.

marginalized in the writing of history of Muslim education. He hardly finds any mention in grand narrative of modern history. Therefore an effort should be made to write a local history in concurrence with the global developments, so that, those at the peripheries should also get their due credit. Such history may lead to both, strengthening of the national discourse and deconstruction of the national discourse.

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