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Freedom of Expression and Speech: An Exploration of Waḥīduddīn Khān's Views and Approach

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Abstract

In Islam, freedom of expression has a significant value and it is considered a basic human right and obligatory duty of Muslim believers. Therefore, Islam commands all Muslim men and women, rulers and public, inferior and superior to establish and maintain it properly keeping in view certain parameters and boundaries within which it must be practiced. With the rise of the new waves of freedom of expression in the western world, a number of Muslim scholars have attempted to reinterpret these parameters in order to offer a better understanding of the said issue. Employing qualitative research methodology, we analyzed the views of Mawlānā Waḥīduddīn Khān published in his books, papers, interviews and blogs. Providing a critical analysis of the writings of a well-known Islamic scholar, this paper is an attempt to understand his approach towards the subject matter at hand. This study concludes that he evaluated critically the concepts of traditional Islamic scholars and their vantage points towards liberty and freedom of expression and he is more or less near to the western approach towards freedom of expression. One may examine that there are some remarks of Khān contradictory to that of his other views concerning liberty. This study also recommends that we need a deep analysis of his views to understand his opinions regarding freedom of speech and thought.

Keywords: freedom of expression, Qur'ān, Waḥīduddīn Khān, Liberty, Secular

Introduction

With the passage of time, the waves of freedom of expression are rising around the globe and influencing scholarly thought rapidly. In this scenario, a number of Muslim scholars have tried to reinterpret the parameters of freedom of expression in order to offer a better understanding of this issue in the Islamic context. With the provision of a critical analysis of the writings of Waḥīduddīn Khān,¹ a well-known Islamic scholar, the current

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¹Mawlānā Waḥīduddīn Khān: He is famous Muslim scholar of India. He was born in 1925 in UP, 'Azam Garh India. His family took part in freedom movement of India with a nationalist Hindu leader with Mr. Mohan Das Ghandī. So he was famous as a nationalist Muslim. He got his primary

paper is an attempt to understand how his approach towards the issue is distinct one and what manner and style he adopts to deal with this growing phenomenon. Mawlānā Wahīduddīn Khān gives prime importance to the freedom of expression and considers it a basic requirement and key to human progress and development. Most of his scholarly writings give evidence regarding this fact. According to Mawlānā Wahīduddīn Khān's views, the right and freedom of expression is like a seed towards new ideas and innovations. He considers it the most important human right and it has direct relationship with intellect so any limit to freedom of thought is a limit to human power of reasoning. He argues that Islam is the first religion of the world which grants freedom of thought and expression.

As the western scholars reflect on, the freedom of expression is a basis of very social and human development. All other liberties are fruit of this key human right and liberty. It means they believe in freedom of expression and thought as a matter of faith. Mawlānā Wahīduddīn Khan considers freedom of expression as faith based activity in a religious context. In the following lines we will present his approach and thought on freedom of expression in the light of his teachings and then we shall analyze it under the mainstream Muslim scholarly views focusing the matter of similarity or closeness of Khān's stance either towards Islamic thought or Western ideas. It will also be investigated that when he differs and where he is in the same boat with the other collective views of the Muslim scholars. Henceforward, this paper will try to define the views, limits, approaches, and principles of freedom of expression adopted by Mawlānā Wahīduddīn Khan in his literary and oral work.

2. Literature Review

The literature review is carried out by taking into account the western and Islamic views. As right and freedom of expression demand analysis of various dimensions from traditional to modern concepts and contextual domains, many Muslim and Western scholars are trying to reinterpret this stance according to the need of times. Mawlānā Wahīduddīn Khān is one of the Muslim scholars whose work on this issue is very extensive. He has a number important writings addressing the subject matter where controversial remarks can be seen which are required to examine from the Islamic perspective.

Islamic education from an Islamic Seminary Madrassah al-Iṣlāh of Sirā'y Mīr, near Azam Garh in 1938. He graduated in Islamic studies in 1944. After he completed his education He researched to broaden his vision and wisdom, carried out various important researches till 1955. His interested topic of research was Islam and the modern challenges of the world. He is a full supporter of rationalism and modern values of the west. He is a writer of 200 hundred books and delivered many lectured on national and international level. Khān has received many international awards from the west and America. He established an Islamic Center at Delhi, India in 1970 and launched a Journal al-Risālāh to spread his message in Hindi, Urdu and English. He established, Global Centre for Peace and Spirituality, India, Delhi, in 2001 and acting as a founder president of it.

For example, John Stuart Mill's book known as *On Liberty*, is important contribution in this regard. According to his theory, freedom of expression has positive as well as negative dimensions but he does not believe in restriction on the freedom of expression. Work of Muhammad Hāshim Kamālī, *Freedom of Expression in Islam: An Analyses of Fitnah* and 'Abdul Ḥakīm Hassan al-Īllī, *al-Ḥurrīyyah al-Āmmah* are also valuable additions to this field. Another well-known voice in this area is Hamid Mowlana. He is an Iranian-American author and academic. He is a Professor Emeritus of International Relations in the School of International Services at American University in Washington, D.C. He has a number of excellent pieces of work but two of his best works are considerable on the issue, *Global Communication in Transition: The End of Diversity?*,² and "Theoretical perspective on Islam and Communication."³ Similarly, from Pakistan Saeed's (the first researcher of this paper) PhD⁴ dissertation entitled, "Freedom of expression in Islamic and contemporary western thought: a comparative and analytical study" is the first academic work on the issue in contemporary era. In addition, he has some important national and international published research papers on the issue since 2013 to 2020.

In addition some scholars have also tried to explore the different aspects of Khan's Thought. One of the most important work in this regard is academic work of a western scholar and theologian Jesuit Pater Christian Troll.⁵ Troll highlights the affirmations of Islam and pluralism in Khan's thinking as well as the systematic criticism raised by Khan against Maulana Mawdudi's views that Islam is primarily concerned with establishing the rule of God, i.e., an Islamic state, while according to Khan Views, Islam is principally concerned with the salvation of individuals the ultimate goal of worship.

The second more important work is of Irfan Omar a Muslim theologian also emphasizes on Mawlānā Wahiduddīn Khān's thought in relation to Mawlānā Mawdudi in a research paper published in 1999.⁶ This study targets to highlight the perception of the "other," i.e. the "Hindu," in the ideologies of the two thinkers, Mawlānā Mawdūdi and Wahiduddīn Khān. After it, this study was incorporated in Irfan's 2001 dissertation

²Hāmid Mowlānā, *Global Communication in Transition: The End of Diversity?* (London: Sage Publication, 1996).

³Hamid Mowlana, "Theatrical Perspective on Islam and Communication," *China Media Research* 3:4 (2007): 23-33.

⁴Riaz Ahmad Saeed, "Freedom of Expression in Islamic and Contemporary Western Thought: a Comparative and Analytical Study," (PhD Dissertation, University of the Punjab, 2017).

⁵Christian Troll, "The Meaning of Dīn: Recent views of three eminent Indian 'Ulamā," in *Islam in India: Studies and Commentaries*, ed. Christian Troll (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1982).

⁶Irfan Ahmad Omar, "Islam and the other: The Ideal Vision of Mawlana Wahiduddin Khan," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 36: 3/4 (1999): 423.

“Rethinking Islam: A Study of the Thought and Mission of Mawlānā Wahiduddīn Khān.”⁷ This work hereafter is the most relevant study of Khan’s thinking to date. In this study Irfan Omar points out its advantages and shortcomings in depth in order to define the way that current work advances our body of knowledge regarding Khan’s thought and role in Indian Islam. In addition, Omar introduces the thinking of Khan especially to the western academia (America and Europe) as religious figure and public Muslim non-violence spokesman. The third most relevant study was done by a Western scholar Mattias Dahlkvist, entitled, “The Politics of Islam, Nonviolence, and Peace: The Thought of Mawlānā Wahiduddīn Khān in Context” in 2019.

The analysis of Khan’s thought considers Islamic Modernism and unmarked alongside the secularism, democratic liberalism, and reform socialism of the Indian constitution. However, these thematic and discursive structures of thought are formulated by Khan with regard to a certain historical situation, and address particular political and social issues. Viewing the various connections between Khans’s thought, the ideological and religious debates, and the historical context of Indian and global society, as an analysis, this study takes on the theoretical issue of whether modern and globalized religion can be a force for the development of more democratic, peaceful and liberal societies.⁸

Hence assessment of the available literature makes it clear that Islam does not permit freedom of expression that hits the religious defamation and blasphemy of the sacred and spiritual things as scared Books, Prophets and religious rituals of any community and faith. Criticism of Islamic rituals and values is in itself a great debate and challenge towards the Muslim scholarship in contemporary era. We think it requires a separate study but Khān’s points of view are required to be judged analyzing his views only for academic purpose.

It is perceived from the above literature review the concept and views of freedom of expression from Mawlānā Wahiduddīn Khān is needed to explore with critical examination. Therefore, the core objective of this study is to explore and analyze the thought and arguments of Mawlānā Wahiduddīn Khān regarding freedom of expression, conscience and thought.

2.1. Research Methodology

This study offers critical review of Wahiduddīn Khān’s views judging them with respect to contemporary scholarship and Islamic outlook. For that purpose, the qualitative research approach has been adopted with analytical and critical research methodology. The methodological tools employed for the paper carried on to visit the data regarding various religion concerns of Khān in relation to freedom of expression segregating positive and negative aspects of his approach. We will judge his views by the application of qualitative

⁷Irfan Ahmad Omar, “Rethinking Islam: A Study of the Thought and Mission of Mawlānā Wahiduddīn Khān,” (PhD Dissertation, Temple University, 2001).

⁸Mattias Dahlkvist, *The Politics of Islam, Nonviolence, and Peace: The Thought of Mawlānā Wahiduddīn Khān in Context* (Sweden: Omea University, 2019).

research method taking into account the prevailing current context concerning freedom of expression from Western outlook and traditional Islamic views as well as modern approaches. This review projects, need of the topic and its critical appraisal dividing it into various sub-sections in order to reach the conclusion. We have to look at various Modernist and Postmodern outlook to freedom of expression for qualitative approach towards the understanding of Khān's contribution.

3. Mawlānā Waḥīduddīn Khān and Freedom of Expression

Waḥīduddīn Khān is one of the prominent scholar who worked on freedom of thought and expression in the Muslim scholars. He is so fond of freedom of speech that at some points he validates the Western point of view regarding freedom of expression as it is. Mawlānā Wahiduddīn Khān affirms that "Islam was a key contributor to the history of thought that removed persecution and ushered in the era of enlightenment. It was found that Islam is in complete consonance with the (modern) concept of freedom."⁹ Moreover, Khan is in favor of freedom of expression in all respects. He argues, "When modern scientific discoveries were made, the world shifted to secular thought where persons from every religion participated in modern issues like urban infrastructure, city planning, and modern agriculture-based irrigation. All this required complete freedom with no restrictions being posed by religion and hence clear distinction emerged between religion and worldly affairs. State took control of all non-spiritual based affairs and individuals were given freedom to practice spiritual and religion-based activities."¹⁰

He firmly, believes that freedom of expression is a core human and religious value and basis of every human and social development and intellectual growth. In the following lines efforts are made to elaborate his views and thinking about freedom of expression, thought and conciseness. We may proceed further by dividing the paper into parts in order to study some relevant aspects of Khān's views and opinions in detail.

3.1. Resistance against Duress

Religion should be free from all kind of compulsion and restrictions. Therefore, Mawlānā Waḥīduddīn Khān argues that the Holy Qur'ān describes at various places with different styles showing as a core principle that religion should be free of any external pressure and compulsion. Hence, Almighty Allah pronounces; "*Let there be no compulsion in religion: Truth stands out clear from Error: whoever rejects evil and believes in Allah hath grasped the most trustworthy.*"¹¹

Imām Ibn Kathīr interpreted this verse of the Holy Qur'ān in this way; "Do not compel anyone to embrace Islam, because Islam is simple and apparent, and its evidence and

⁹Mawlānā Wahiduddīn Khān, *Islam: Creator of the Modern Age* (New Delhi: Goodword Books, 1995), 114.

¹⁰"Interview with Mawlānā Wahiduddīn Khan," (New Delhi: June 10, 2016).

¹¹Al-Qur'ān: al-Baqarah 2:256.

confirmation are simple and easy. Consequently, there is no requirement to compel anyone to accept Islam. Relatively, whoever Allah leads to Islam unlocks his heart for it and makes clear to his intellect and he will hold Islam with confidence.”¹² With regard to Khān’s point of view the most important benefit of freedom of speech is the ability to resist illegality and prevention about his faith and religion. In this way the freedom of expression works like a resisting force against religious freedom.

3.2. Salvation from Hypocrisy

It is believed by Mawlānā Waḥīduddīn Khān, that freedom of expression and thought saves a man from hypocrisy and hypocritical activities. He frequently argues; “Human being has an ability to think and express, if any restriction to his ability can lead to hypocrisy.”¹³ He claims freedom of expression as a standard in faith and hypocrisy. Allah speaks it; “*Distracted in mind even in the midst of it, - being for neither one group nor for another whom Allah leaves straying, - never wilt thou find for him the way.*”¹⁴

A Ḥadīth of the Prophet (SAW) also indicates the signs of a hypocrite; “*There are four features made anybody who gripped them, a pure hypocrite; anyone who has one of them has an attribute of hypocrisy till he deserted it: when he speaks he cheats, when he makes a promise he acts falsely, and when he argues he diverges from the truth.*”¹⁵

After these arguments Waḥīduddīn firmly understands that the right to freedom of expression saves a person and his faith from hypocritical activities

3.3. Free Speech Relationship to the Creativity

According to Mawlānā Waḥīduddīn Khān, freedom of expression and speech is directly related to innovation and creativity. If we restrict the freedom of discussion and thought, we put limits to innovation and creativity. Freedom of expression opens new horizons for human’s physical and spiritual progress and development. He articulates likewise; “In a society where there is freedom of expression and thought, people innovate and create and where we stop freedom of discussion and thought, we see intellectual decline. So in this society the intellectual growth and evolution will stop automatically.”¹⁶

Thinking in the universe and creation of the Allah is also an important duty of human being. Allah describes the signs of believers in Qur’ān; “*Behold! In the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the alternation of night and day, - there are indeed Signs for men of understanding.*”¹⁷

¹²Hafiz Imād ud Din Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Quran al-‘Azīm* (Riyadh: Dār al-Taiba, 1999), 1:264.

¹³Moulana Wahiduddin Khan, “Islam aur Āzādī-e-Fikr-o- Khīyāl,” [Islam and Freedom of Thought, Urdu] *al-Risālah*, 237 (1996): 2-3.

¹⁴al-Nisā’ 4:143.

¹⁵Muslim bin Ḥajjāj, al-Qushayrī, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* (Riyadh: Darussalam, 2007), Ḥadīth no. 219.

¹⁶Khan, “Islam aur Āzādī-e-Fikr-o-Khiyāl,” 2.

¹⁷Āl-i-Imrān 3:190.

The Prophet (SAW) said about them who do not think in the signs of Allah's creation which are described in Qur'an, "Loss for them who recites the Qur'an but do not ponder in it."¹⁸ To conclude, Mawlānā Khān observes that these verses of the Qur'an and Ahādīth of the Prophet (SAW) prefer pondering to simple recitation.

3.4. Acceptance and Declaration of the Truth through Free Speech

According to Waḥīduddīn Khān's perception, Freedom of speech and thought is a source of declaration and acceptance of truth. He expressed his views; "According to a Ḥadīth of the Prophet (SAW) when a believer is offered a truth he accepts it."¹⁹ In this Ḥadīth, truth means commandment of truth. In other words, when he finds a truth or he is informed of a mistake, he immediately accepts it. It means, he is always in search of a truth or wisdom, he will get it from wherever he finds.²⁰ Allah voices about this feature of Muslim believers in the Qur'an;

كَانَ النَّاسُ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً فَبَعَثَ اللَّهُ النَّبِيِّينَ مُبَشِّرِينَ وَمُنذِرِينَ وَأَنْزَلَ مَعَهُمُ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ لِيَحْكُمَ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ ۖ

*Mankind was one single nation, and Allah sent Messengers with glad tidings and warnings; and with them He sent the Book in truth, to judge between people in matters wherein they differed.*²¹

The Prophet Muhammad (SAW) considers wisdom and truth is the lost asset of a believer, "The Wisdom/knowledge is the missing assets of the believer, consequently anywhere he discovers it, and he has more right to get it."²² Therefore, Mawlānā Waḥīduddīn Khān assumes from the above arguments that freedom of expression and thought enable a believer to accept and declare the truth wherever he discovers them. It also enables him to reject the false statements and wrong perceptions with the usage of his intellect.

3.5. Freedom of Expression as a Right and Duty

With reference to Khān, freedom of expression and thought are fundamental human rights. He believes, "In a Ḥadīth, it is a feature of a believer when he is granted a truth, he accepts it. When he is guided towards his personal mistake, he is ready to correct his mistake. He becomes fond of making his mistake correct."²³ The Prophet (SAW) said about

¹⁸Ṣaḥīḥ Ibn Ḥibbān, Ḥadīth no. 620.

¹⁹Khan, "Islam aur Āzādī-e-Fikr-o-Khiyāl," 3.

²⁰Ibid., 3.

²¹al-Baqarah 2:213.

²²Muhamamd bin 'Īsā Tirmadhī, *Jāmi al-Tirmadhī* (Riyadh: Darussalam, 2007), Ḥadīth no.2687.

²³Khān, "Islam aur Āzādī-e-Fikr-o-Khiyāl," 3.

fundamental rights, “Your lord (Allah) has right on your own body, He has right on you and your family has right on you so pay every right to every right holder.”²⁴

This view of Mawlānā Waḥīduddīn Khān shows that freedom of expression considered as a basic human right and sometimes it becomes an important duty for a believer. So the right way to freedom of expression and thought is to avail it with its full spirit.

3.6. Difference of Opinions as a Discourse for Human Development

According to Khān’s point of view, differences of opinions are necessary because this is an important step for the development of human intellect and its progress. This human discourse is regularly educated towards human being from Allah in His Nobel Book, The Qur’ān also guides us to this point; “(Allah) said: “Get you down, with enmity between yourselves. On earth will be your dwelling-place and your means of livelihood, for a time.”²⁵

Definitely this is true, but there is difference between disagreement and difference of opinion. Islam appraises difference of opinion because it’s based on logic and reason but depreciates the disagreement and disappointment as it creates chaos in the society. The Prophet (SAW) said, “The difference of opinion *Ikhtilāf*²⁶ in my *Ummah* is a blessing.”²⁷ Instead of it this Ḥadīth is authentic; The Prophet (SAW) stated; “Verily you differ in presence of me and after me you will differ much after me.”²⁸ Many Ahādīth²⁹ of the kind Prophet (SAW) presents prophesy the difference in future after the sacred era of the Prophet (SAW). Mawlānā Waḥīduddīn Khān said after quoting this Ḥadīth, although this Ḥadīth is not authentic and some say it as fabricated news but he makes his opinion upon it;

So we can see difference of opinions if recommended as course of human development. Consequently, for that purpose freedom of expression, it is necessary because if there is no difference of opinion occurs then there will be no stir up in mental stagnation and human beings will fail to reach the new dimension of wisdom and knowledge.³⁰

²⁴Muhammad bin Ismā‘īl Bukhārī, *Jami as Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* (Riyadh: Darussalam, 1997), Ḥadīth no. 1968.

²⁵al-A‘rāf 7:24.

²⁶Ikhtilāf: Some scholars have observation on this Ḥadīth because the Qur’ān forbids from *Mukhālafat*. We think, *Ikhtilāf* for the sake of *Ikhtilāf* is not good but to discuss and argue, for positively and good it is allowed.

²⁷Alāuddīn Al-Muttaqī, ‘*Alī, Kanz al-‘Ummāl* (Beirut: Mu’assisah al-Risālah, 1981), Ḥadīth no. 28686.

²⁸Abu Bakar Abdul Razzāq bin Himmām San’ānī, *Musannaf Abdurrazzaq* (Lahore: Mu’assasah al-Sharaf, 2005), Hadith no. 3256.

²⁹Another Hadith of the Prophet (SAW) about *Ikhtilāf* which describes second view about this issue; “You will find strict differences after me, so you are recommended to strictly follow the *Sunnah of Me and my Khulafā (Caliphs)*. (Mustadrak Hākim, Ḥadīth# 329).

³⁰Khān, “Islam aur Āzādī-e-Fikr-o-Khiyāl,” 12.

Thus, Mawlānā Waḥīddudīn Khān says frequently, “An important principle of free speech is that freedom of expression will be free from any restraints because if we limit freedom of speech the people will not express their views openly and this behavior at last becomes hypocrisy.”³¹ This statement opens a new debate that if a person speaks and criticizes openly then he is a true believer but if he does not express his views blatantly then according to Mawlānā’s views he may be a hypocrite. If so, then this claim is controversial and debatable.

3.7. Freedom of Expression as a Sincere Advice

For Khan, as a sincere advice, the free speech is a duty of every Muslim and this duty should be free from every benefit and boundaries. He said about good words and advice; “The expression of adviser contains responsibility. He thinks if he remains silent on this occasion, he will be questionable and accountable on the day of resurrection. He speaks only because it becomes his duty.”³² According to the Qur’ānic conversation on this important issue; “*Ye are the best of peoples, evolved for mankind, enjoining what is right, forbidding what is wrong, and believing in Allah.*”³³

As well as, many Āḥādīth of the beloved Prophet (SAW) consider sincere advice is an obligation for every Muslim believer. The Messenger of Allah (SAW) frequently says; “*He who among you observes somewhat awful must change it with authority; and if he has not sufficient strength to do it, then he should do it with his tongue, and if he has not enough potency to do this, then he should dislike it from his heart, and that is the slightest of belief.*”³⁴

If a Muslim does not act upon it according to his capacity, the Qur’ān (According to Surah al-Asr) considers him a loser. Therefore, Mawlānā Waḥīddudīn Khān suggests promoting the sincere advice. He affirms in his article; “Islam wants everybody to enjoy the ability of freedom and liberty to criticize and express his views without any hurdles and restraints.”³⁵ This point of view of Khan’s promotes maximum freedom of speech and criticism in the society including religion.

3.8. Freedom of Expression as a Collective (Social) Effort

Mawlānā Waḥīddudīn Khān believes that Islamic society is not a static but a dynamic society. His writings and speeches are eye witness that he promotes maximum freedom of criticism and considers it as collective effort of the society. At this issue the Qur’ān and Āḥādīth of the Prophet (SAW) guides us very much. Allah declares; “*To each is a goal to which Allah turns him; then strive together (as in a race) towards all that is good.*”

³¹Ibid., 22.

³²Khān, “Islam aur Āzādī-e-Fikr-o-Khiyāl,” 10.

³³Āle ‘Imrān 3:110.

³⁴*Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, Ḥadīth no. 186.

³⁵Khān, “Islam aur Āzādī-e-Fikr-o-Khiyāl,” 10.

Whosoever's ye are, Allah will bring you Together, For Allah Hath power over all things."³⁶

A thought provoking Ḥadīth leads us towards a virtue of goodness. The Prophet (SAW) said; *"This graciousness includes many assets, and for this there are contributions. So happy news to the one who Allah formulates a key to excellence and a lock for wickedness, and sadness to the one who Allah formulates him as an input to the wickedness and a lock for excellent."*³⁷ Factually, it's blessing of a person and it's also blessing to the society if he becomes lock for evils and key to happiness. Khan claims on the basis of this Hadith as:

This Ḥadīth of the Prophet (SAW) tells us that the Islamic society cannot become neutral in the reformation and promotion of goodness. Here he sees a need he plays his proper role to contribute in the goodness. To open the door of goodness and try to shut the door for evilness is the best quality of a true Islamic society.³⁸

But the question is that how we can establish society based on sane and reform to establish these features? He replies to this question; *"The most desirable process of this kind begins in a society due to freedom of expression and criticism. Where people, the members of society, can criticize anybody without any abasement. Therefore, it is summarized that whenever we do not create an environment of liberty, we cannot create a sane and good society."*³⁹ Therefore, he assumes that to promote goodness in the society and eradicate wickedness from the society is not that of an individual or personal job but it is a collective work. For this purpose the right to freedom of thought and expression work like a key.

3.9. Freedom of Expression and Blasphemy

Mawlānā Khān has different point of view on blasphemy and apostasy. Another important objection, he softly defends the Qadiyānīs on behalf of this argument that Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad Qādiyānī did not claim Prophet-hood and never challenged the last Prophet-hood of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW). He claimed in an article, *"Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad Qādiyānī never declared himself a Prophet of Allah. He declared himself a shadow of the Prophet. So such claim can be called a kind of madness but could not become a claim of Prophet-hood."*⁴⁰

He does not term Ghulām Aḥmad Qādiyānī and his group, disbeliever (*Kāfir*) as the other Muslim scholars do. But it is a historical fact that Mirzā Qādiyānī and his followers clearly declare him a Prophet. Mirzā Qādiyānī claimed in his book; *"I believe in my*

³⁶al-Baqarah 2:148.

³⁷Muhammad bin Yazīd Ibn Mājjah, *Sunan Ibn Mājjah* (Riyadh: Darussalam, 2008), Ḥadīth no. 244.

³⁸Khān, "Islam aur Āzādī-e-Fikr-o-Khiyāl," 37.

³⁹Ibid., 36.

⁴⁰Waḥiduddīn Khān, "Khatam-e-Nabuwwat Number," Monthly *al-Risāla* 9 (2011): 1-48.

revelation as the Qur'ān, the Torah and the Injīl were declared."⁴¹ After this clear claim of Prophet-hood by Mirzā Qādiyānī, we think either Mawlānā Khān does not know much about Qādiyānīyyat or his perception of Prophet-hood is different from mainstream Muslims. However, it is also a confusing situation for less-informative person concerning Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad Qādiyānī that he adopted step by step various claims showing different titles (more than ten appellations) for himself including the claim quoted by Mawlānā Khān that he is not exactly Prophet but he is the shadow of the Prophet (*zīlī nabī*). This is one claim out of them and very partial examination in this regard.

Mawlānā Waḥīduddīn Khān loves freedom of expression and thought that exceeds its limits. He criticizes the Muslim scholars due to responsible inclination in this regard. He opposes blasphemy laws and defends Selman Rushdī's very controversial book *The Satanic Verses* on the ground of freedom of expression. Mawlānā Khān does not consider it as blasphemy act, which deserves capital punishment. He writes in his book *Masa'la-e-Shātim-e-Rasūl*:

Under discussed topic the view of Ibn Taymīyyah on Blasphemy of the Prophet (SAW) is the obligatory penalty of death, but the arguments he presented in his book (*al-Ṣārim al-Maslūl 'Alā Shātim al-Rasūl*) in favor of his opinion are not sufficient."⁴² We think the criticism of Mawlānā Khān against a leading Muslim scholar and Mujtahid like Ibn Taimīyyah has no sense on the issue of blasphemy. Here, he argues in an interesting way; "The death penalty of blasphemer is not a problem of the blasphemy issue. Blasphemy is actually an attack on the thought and spirit of the Islam. In fact the blasphemy remains after the death of blasphemer, if the actual issue is not resolved after the death then what benefit is to kill the blasphemer."⁴³

He further says; "In fact the killing of blasphemer issue is logically incomprehensible issue. There is no clear evidence in the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth of the Prophet (SAW) for death penalty."⁴⁴

We may add that there are many evidences which support the claim that the blasphemer must be killed. The basic Islamic sources and scholars are agreed upon the death penalty of blasphemy. At that point, Allah pronounces about blasphemers in the Qur'ān;

Those who annoy Allah and His Messenger - Allah have cursed them in this World and in the Hereafter, have prepared for them a humiliating Punishment. They shall have a curse on them: whenever they are found, they shall be seized and slain- (Such was) the practice of Allah among those who lived aforetime: No change wilt thou find in the practice of Allah.⁴⁵

⁴¹Ghulām Aḥmad Qādiyānī, *Roḥānī Khazā'in* (Amritsar: Safir-e-Hind Press, 1880), 17:454; <https://www.alislam.org/urdu/rk/Ruhani-Khazain-Vol-17.pdf>.

⁴²Waḥīduddīn Khān, *Shātim-e-Rasūl ka Masa'lah* (Delhi: Good Words Books, 1997), 104.

⁴³Khān, *Shātim-e-Rasūl ka Masa'lah*, 113.

⁴⁴Ibid., 128.

⁴⁵al-Aḥzāb 33:57-61.

Many Aḥādīth of the Prophet (SAW) indicate of this capital punishment of Blasphemy of the Prophet of Islam. In this important case, Imām Bukhārī narrates a story of killing, as the Prophet (SAW) commanded the Ṣaḥābah to kill Ka‘b Ibn Ashraf:

Who will kill Ka‘b bin Ashraf. Verily, he hurt Allah and His Prophet? Muhammad bin Muslamah stood up and said, O Prophet of Allah (SAW), Do you like to kill him? He responded; Yes. (Then Muslamah went to him and said something about the Prophet (SAW) which is suitable and part of this killing plan) Ka‘b replied, “By Allah, you will get tired of him. Ibn Muslamah said, “We have followed him, so we abhor exiting him till we observe the end of his matter.” Muhammad bin Muslamah kept busy him in conversation and in this way till he got the chance to kill him.⁴⁶

A landmark judgment of Sheikh-ul-Islam Ibn Taymīyyah makes it clear. He commented upon blasphemy law in his famous book as; “The blasphemer of the Prophet (SAW) will be killed although he is a Muslim. It is agreed upon by the four Imāms of *Ahl al-Sunnah*.⁴⁷ They may differ in the interpretation and implementation of this punishment. For example, clarity of Blasphemy, enforcement of penalty through a valid court, true and valid witnesses, giving chance to repentance (*Tawbah*) etc.

According to an expert of blasphemy law advocate Muhammad Ishmael Qurayshī; “Throughout the Islamic history, it is agreed upon the tradition that the every blasphemer of the Prophet (SAW) was punished by death sentence.”⁴⁸ Mawlānā Khān also argues that there are many examples in the age of the Prophet (SAW) where He did not command to kill his blasphemer. For that purpose, as an example he quoted from *Sīrah* of the Prophet (SAW), the issue of ‘Abdullah bin Ubayy and in Ghazwah Ḥunayn, when a person blamed the Prophet (SAW) of injustice in the distribution of booty. The scholars replied to these examples: firstly, the Prophet (SAW) himself forgave them as in the example of ‘Abdullah Ibn Sarah at the time of conquest of Makkah at the request of Ḥaḍrat ‘Uthmān (RA); secondly, the Prophet (SAW) sometimes ignored them to avoid bloodshed and anarchism in society as about ‘Abdullah Ibn Ubayy, the chief of hypocrites of Madīnah; and finally, it was the divine right of the Prophet (SAW) to forgive or punish anyone. But in the present age, after the completion of the Qur’ān and the end of the *Waḥī* (Revelation), according to a reasonable number of scholars, it has become a Divine law as the accused will be dealt according to the *Sharī‘ah*.

One of the major objections on Mawlānā is that he defends the most controversial writer Selman Rushdeī on the grounds of freedom of expression and human rights and also criticizes the Muslims scholars for their aggressive approach. His point of view is totally different from the other Muslims scholars. Khān considers it as a Rushdeī’s right to

⁴⁶*Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhārī*, Ḥadīth no.3031.

⁴⁷Aḥmad bin ‘Abdu al-Ḥalīm Ibn Taymīyyah, *al-Ṣārim al-Maslūl ‘Alā al-Shātim al-Rasūl* (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb, 1978), 1:10.

⁴⁸Muhammad, Ismā‘il Qurayshī, *Muhammad: The Messenger of God and the Law of Blasphemy in Islam and the West* (Lahore: Naqūsh Publishers, 2006), 169.

freedom of expression and the protests of Muslims against him as their mistake. He writes; “The writings and letters which advocate of protest and killing of Selman Rushdeī publish in the world press mostly consist of these similar words that he condemns the sentiments of billion Muslims. These words are really opposite to the fact because more than 99% Muslim participants in this issue are Indian and Pakistani Muslims.”⁴⁹

In another writing he considers it irrelevant and irresponsible protest. He articulates; “The book of Selman Rushdeī is exactly an extra activity but the protest of the Muslims against this issue is more extra.”⁵⁰ He considers the protest against Rushdeī is principally wrong and Muslim attitude towards this protest is revolting. He comments; “The strong protest of the Muslim Leaders against Rushdeī is not a mistake but it is actually a blunder and does not forgivable at least. It is greater than Rushdeī’s crime.”⁵¹ If protest against blasphemy of the Prophet (SAW) is assumed greater crime than Rushdie blunder then what we can say after it on the views of Mawlānā Wahīduddīn Khān. Hence it can be assumed that he has little bit sympathy towards Rushdeī under the cover of freedom of speech.

He deems this age an age of freedom so everybody has a right to say and publish anything what he wants and wishes; this freedom of opinion is due to Western thought and civilization. He elaborated his views; “Although the absolute freedom does not seem compatible to Islamic thought, yet if we see it deeply then it becomes a blessing for Islam, because this great revolution opens the door of Islamic *Da‘wah* over the world. The excess of freedom will be suitable for preaching opportunities of Islam.”⁵² In relation to *Da‘wah*, he does not accept political understanding of Islam.⁵³ This protest makes stand the Muslim and the West in confrontation. He agrees with the views of the Western Journalist, Edward Mortimer, on these protests. Edward comments at Voice of India; “We locate ourselves caught up within a spiritual war, the war of ideas (freedom and Religion). It equally attacks our religion. By our Religion, I do not mean Christianity. But Christianity is no longer the religion of Britain. The religion of this country and of the free world to which it belongs exactly is liberty.”⁵⁴ These comments are a core and extreme defense of the freedom of speech by the West but Mawlānā Wahīduddīn Khān agrees with these comments. He said; “The above comments are hundred percent true because in Selman Rushdeī’s affair the Muslim protest is totally wrong.”⁵⁵

These arguments clearly show that Mawlānā Wahīduddīn Khān considered freedom of expression and speech as a tool to spread Islam. Although, he mentions some limits and

⁴⁹Khān, *Shātim-e-Rasūl kā Masa‘lah*, 32.

⁵⁰Ibid., 64.

⁵¹Khān, *Shātim-e-Rasūl kā Masa‘lah*, 33.

⁵²Ibid., 69.

⁵³Ibrahim Abu-Rabi', *The Blackwell Companion to Contemporary Islamic Thought* (Malden USA: Blackwell Publications, 2006), 77-83.

⁵⁴Edward Mortimer, “The Rushdeī Affair,” *The Times of India* (February 28, 1989), Section no. 2, A3.

⁵⁵Khān, *Shātim-e-Rasūl kā Masa‘lah*, 68.

boundaries of freedom, but these are nominal and tends towards boundless freedom of speech. He is so fond of freedom of expression that he allows bearing negative consequences and demerits to adopt and permit freedom of speech. We think this point of view is close to Western concepts of freedom of expression. In the coming passages we will try to present Waḥīduddīn Khān's limits on freedom of expression.

4. Waḥīduddīn Khān's Limits to Freedom of Expression

It is not easy to detect the limitations on freedom of thought by Mawlānā Waḥīduddīn Khān. However, at some places he suggests a kind of limits and restriction on freedom of expression. He considers it a system of slavery and injustice to put any kind of restrictions and restraints on the freedom of expression. He articulates; "Almighty Allah creates a human being free so under his nature he wants us to think and discuss freely. It is such an excellent characteristic of human nature that we cannot separate it from him anyway."⁵⁶ He is against extremism or radicalism in any field of social or practical life. He said; "Although freedom is a natural and fundamental right of everybody but the basic tenet and feature of this liberty is that its limits are fair and do not make it violence and torture."⁵⁷ Everything of this world has its limit and the same is the case of freedom of expression and thought but it is required to know what will be the limits of freedom of expression and criticism.

He said about the limits of freedom of expression and opinion; "The limits of freedom of thought and expression are that one should be in the sphere of known and confirm facts and findings. Do not give or make an opinion on the basis of hypotheses and wrong perceptions. Do not make your building of thought on fake and fictitious arguments."⁵⁸ Allah commands;

وَلَا تَقْفُ مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ بِهِ عِلْمٌ إِنَّ السَّمْعَ وَالْبَصَرَ وَالْفُؤَادَ كُلُّ أُولَئِكَ كَانَ عَنْهُ مَسْئُولًا

*"And pursue not that of which thou hast no knowledge; for every act of hearing, or of seeing or of the heart will be enquired into on the Resurrection."*⁵⁹

To research out perfectly before talking and writing on any issue it is another principle of freedom of expression in Islam and Khān also owns it in his writings. He comments; "It is the responsibility of a person if he expresses his views on an issue or personality, he should research out before his comments. He should complete his assessment before discussion. Then he speaks only when he has solid reason to speak otherwise he should keep silent."⁶⁰

It is observed, the numerous Aḥādīth of the kind Prophet Muhammad (SAW) also guides us towards this important principle of free speech. The Prophet said, "Anyone who

⁵⁶Khān, "Islam aur Āzādī-e-Fikr-o-Khiyāl," 35.

⁵⁷Ibid., 35.

⁵⁸Khān, "Islam aur Āzādī-e-Fikr-o-Khiyāl," 39.

⁵⁹al-Isrā' 17:36.

⁶⁰Khān, "Islam aur Āzādī-e-Fikr-o-Khiyāl," 39.

believes in Allah and the Last Day he should speak well or be silent."⁶¹ Khān also limits the freedom of expression with ability and preparation because according to his views, with preparation, the discussion is like propaganda and it is against pure Islamic teachings. Therefore, Khān writes about freedom of expression most likely; "The freedom of expression and discussion can be allowed to him who does preparation before speaking and discussion. He proves himself able to express. To comment and believe in overheard talks and propaganda is a sin in a Ḥadīth of the Prophet."⁶²

The Prophet (SAW) determined the limits of expression more than fourteen hundred years ago in this way, "Enough for a man to be declared a liar that he conveys anything what he hears."⁶³ The Holy Qur'ān also puts limitations on freedom of speech. Therefore, Allah commands to Muslim believers in His Noble Book; "O believes! If a wicked person comes to you with any news, ascertain the truth, lest ye harm people unwittingly and afterwards become full of repentance for what ye have done".⁶⁴

Besides, it's also an interesting thing that the freedom should be free from all kinds of barriers i.e. social, religious and legal, only minimum legal limits should be there. According to Khan Views Mawlānā Waḥīduddīn Khān is in favor of complete intellectual freedom. Many times he has argued to prove his claim. "Man has been granted total intellectual freedom in Islam. Islam with its message of freedom of expression brought a revolution to human history. Earlier in all periods of the human history, the system of absolutism prevailed in the world. Man was denied intellectual freedom and the secret of all human progress lies hidden in intellectual freedom."⁶⁵

Furthermore, he differs with international human rights instruments as he does not agree with the international UN charter of human rights UDHR. He writes the reasons in such a way: "What are the reasons behind the failures of the UDHR? The reason is that this declaration is not in consonance with the law of nature. According to which everyone enjoys freedom (including freedom of expression). This very freedom stands as a permanent hurdle in the path of establishing ideal justice in the society."⁶⁶ These are some important principles and limits of freedom of expression and thought in the view of Mawlānā Waḥīduddīn Khān. When we deeply study the thought and vision of Waḥīduddīn Khān we feel some kind of clear contradictions in his views on freedom of expression and thought. One way he suggests freedom of expression as basic human right but other way he puts merits too for authenticity.

⁶¹ *Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhārī*, Ḥadīth no. 6087

⁶² Khān, "Islam aur Āzādī-e-Fikr-o-Khiyāl," 39.

⁶³ *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, Ḥadīth no. 7.

⁶⁴ al-Ḥujurāt 49:6.

⁶⁵ <https://www.newageislam.com/islamic-ideology/maulana-wahiduddin-khan-for-new-age-islam/intellectual-freedom-in-islam/d/122230>. Date of Accesses; September 28, 2020.

⁶⁶ Waḥīduddīn Khān, "Human Rights verses Human Duties," *Spirit of Islam* 32 (2015): 29-30.

5. Critical Appraisal

We can examine various Modernist and Postmodern Muslim outlook regarding freedom of expression approaches in Muslim scholarly context which may fit to observe the position of Mawlānā Waḥīduddīn Khān in this regard. One thing that is similar in modernist and postmodern approach is that both are the consequences of modernity but their reaction was very different to each other. Modernist Islamic approach wants reconciliation with Western modernity and the postmodern approaches want conflict and contradiction with modernity. It is said that liberal Islam and liberal West may be considered as compatible. A liberal Muslim argues; “I identify liberal Islamic society as a place in which society is set free to work according to its own system. I do not say its particular principles because this is trick common to conservatives.”⁶⁷ The postmodern approach is different in relation to modernity but sometimes shows its arrogant reaction to modern values, norms and ethics. Therefore, it is stated that the Postmodernism is totally a different contemporary movement. As well as, “The followers of post modernity believe that all things may have two senses at the same time and these senses are not opposing; rather they are vital parts of truth.”⁶⁸ Basically it is shift of paradigm from values to devalue in the Western and the Muslim societies. Therefore, the Muslim scholars observe that the clear example of it is that the family system and the institution of marriage has lost its important. So, in the contemporary age, if a Western young age boy prefers illegal sexual intercourse instead of marriage, it is not drastic but gradual change of values and freedom to do as per human cravings and desires. This clarifies the limitations and scope of freedom.

Another important issue is that the postmodern thought is coming with destruction and anarchism of everything in the West. In other words, it is a serious threat to the Western world. The Postmodern feminists openly speak that, “We desire to demolish three stakes of class and cast society; the family, the property and the state.”⁶⁹ It is also perceived that “The contemporary Western world is based on philosophical doctrine, political organization and social composition on the values of liberal democracy and maximum civil liberties. These were traditionally fixed in Greece and evolved by peoples persuaded basically by Judeo-Christian morals.”⁷⁰ Basically these are the foundational sources and secular features of the Western thought and civilization. Contrary to this the Islamic thought and civilization has divine features and its primary sources the Qur’ān and Ḥadīth are directly revealed from Almighty Allah. In Accordance with this basic difference, the worldview of Islamic world is different from the modern Western world. Consequently,

⁶⁷Abdullah Lārōūī, “Western Orientalism and Liberal Islam,” *Middle East and South Asian Bulletin* 31:1(1997): 3-12.

⁶⁸Dewan Mahbub Husain, M. M. Sahriful Karīm, “Postmodernism: Issues and Problems,” *Asian Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities* 2, no 2 (2013): 173-181.

⁶⁹Barbra Crow, *Radical Feminism; A Documentary Reader* (USA: New York University Press, 2000), 492.

⁷⁰Caroline Cox, John Marks, *The West, Islam and Islamism: Is Ideological Islam Compatible with Liberal Democracy?* (London: Civitas, 2006), 2.

the majority of Western scholars like and propagate the freelance concept of freedom of expression, although practically it is not possible. Therefore, the proceedings of an international conference on free speech consider it; "Freedom of speech looks to be an appreciated model, however dynamics of liberty are continuously varying because of the geopolitical power system and now it becomes the clash of passions."⁷¹

From above discussion, it is evidently observed, the Islamic and the Western thoughts represent different worldviews thus; they adopt and use different approaches to solve every socio-political and ethical issues of the human being. Unremarkably, there are many reasonable distinctions that are located in the Islamic thought which differs from the Western concept of thinking and practicing. One of the most vital theme is freedom of expression and speech in this regard. Here, it has also been observed during the study that freedom of expression is not only a term but an imperative value in the Western thought and Islam. However, for both the Islamic and western terms, there is difference in application.

As an absolute intellectual freedom and independent expression of views concerning social, cultural, religious and political matters. How an open society can be developed, it is only possible by dint of freedom of expression.⁷² While from the Muslim thought like Wahiduddin Khān, he supported the idea of secularism and it is beneficial for the Muslims what they did not avail in past. As the first step, we have to allow freedom of speech and propagation of one faith to other.⁷³ Moreover, it is also observed, the contemporary Modernists have similar points of view on modernity and modern Western thought like Fazlur-Rehṁān, Javid Ahmad Ghamdi and Akbar S. Aḥmad. Akbar S. Aḥmad suggests the Muslims to understand the West with its context to move forward, "The Muslims must appreciate the Western values and freedom according to its true context and also accept its characteristics for socio-political development."⁷⁴ In his book he tries to present reconciliation between the Islamic and Western civilization but this may not be an absolute solution. Here, 'Ārifah Farīd rightly detects, "As an expert sociologist Akbar S Aḥmad does not deeply analyze the Islamic civilization and also does not present a practical solution of the post modernity issues but his writings are fruitful to know the Western thought."⁷⁵

⁷¹www.gmeconference.com/freedomofexpression; global politics of emotions/ Accessed on: 5/7/2020.

⁷²Craig Considine, *Islam in America: Exploring the Issues* (USA California ABC-CLIO, LLC 2019), 7.

⁷³Gerrie Ter Haar, Yoshio Tsuruoka, *Religion and Society: An Agenda for the 21st Century* (Leiden Boston: Brill Publication, 2007), 113.

⁷⁴Akbar S Ahmad, *Discovering Islam: Making Sense of Muslim History* (London: Routledge, 1992), 23.

⁷⁵'Ārifah Farīd, *Tehdhīb key Us Pār* (Karachi: Karachi University Press, 2000), 136.

Wahīduddīn Khān gives due respect to Walter Lippmann (1889-1974) and is influenced by him concerning freedom of expression.⁷⁶ Walter was born in New York, he was a writer, reporter and political commentator famous for being first to introduce the concept of Cold War. He coined the term “stereotype” in the modern psychological meaning, as well as critiquing media and democracy in newspaper and books.⁷⁷ So Khan accepted impacts from the various thoughts and civilizations.

It is also perceived from the historical link and growth of Wahīduddīn Khān sociopolitical thought that it has deeper link with early 20th century modernist Muslim thought of Indian Sub-continent. Some scholars consider it the revival of this thought. Here, a western writer and expert of Khan’s thought rightly observed:

By situating Khan’s thought in a context of historical and contemporary debate on the meaning of Islam, this study argues that he continues and develops the nineteenth century Indian Islamic Modernist tradition of presenting Islam, non-violence, and peace in relation to issues of the modern state and the minority situation of the Indian Muslims. This type of religious position became nationally prominent from the 1920s during the Indian independence movement.⁷⁸

It has become an intellectual habit of the major modernist scholars that they criticize Islamic thought without presenting any solution of it, except reconciliation and acceptance of Western model as development. Madam Maryam Jamīlah criticizes modernist approach in this way; “Our contemporary modernists who desire to strengthen Islam but they mould it to suit secularism and materialism. Definitely, they are the most efficient mediators for achieving their efforts.”⁷⁹ It is also a fact that liberal Muslim approach is launched by the West to secularize the Muslim world. Basically, this approach is not the Muslim oriented but a Western guided approach to secularize Muslim society. Professor Khurshīd Aḥmad observation makes a sense in this situation; “So-called, Muslim modernization is an understood effort to promote secularism and liberalism in the Muslim World. It tries to dictate the Western liberal values in the Muslim society. As a result, the traditional Islamic values have become weakened.”⁸⁰

Accordingly, it can be seen the rapid growth of secularism, Western lifestyle and obscene culture, in Muslim elite class day by day. Most of the Western values are not compatible with Islamic values so that being the case to effectuate conflict and clash in the Muslim societies. If the traditionalists are considered on the one extreme, the modernists

⁷⁶<https://www.cpsglobal.org/content/freedom-thought-0>, data retrieved on dated 23 July 2020.

⁷⁷https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Walter_Lippmann, data retrieved on dated 23 July 2020.

⁷⁸Mattias Dahlkvist, “The Politics of Islam, Nonviolence, and Peace: The Thought of Mawlānā Wahīduddīn Khān in Context,” 5.

⁷⁹Maryam, Jamīlah, *Islam and Modernism* (Lahore: Yusuf Khān Publishers, 1966), 13.

⁸⁰Khurshīd, *America: Aur Muslim Dunyā kī Bay Iṭminānī*, 59.

are on the other. So, we need a sober dialogue on modernity in the contemporary Muslim countries.

Here, the views of a renowned Malaysian Muslim scholar, Muhammad Hashim Kamali seems most relevant to this issue. Professor Kamali has a good deal of work on theoretical and ideological aspects of the freedom of expression, thought and conscience.

Statutory restrictions on the freedom of speech and expression are common in both the Muslim and non-Muslims legislation. The main areas of concern tend to differ from one country to another, although a broad line of distinction could be ascertained between the advanced and developing countries. Seditious that threatens state security tends to occur more frequently in developing nations, as industrialized nations generally have had a longer experience with democracy.⁸¹

To sum up the discussion, the study assumes that one of the most significant and burning issues of modern world is freedom of expression in the contemporary age. This is also assumed as a practical form of conflict between the modernist and the revivalist scholars of Islam. A group of liberal Muslim scholars in the contemporary age advocate that the unlimited freedom is necessary for intellectual development and human growth. Out of them, Waḥīduddīn is one of the most prominent figure.

6. Conclusion

It is perceived from the above discussion that Mawlānā Waḥīduddīn Khān is one of those contemporary scholars whose approach of freedom of expression is entirely different from the main stream Muslim scholars. He is one of those scholars having secular approach either in modern or postmodern era who are seen to permit criticism on the Islamic values even concerning the Holy Qur'ān and the personality of the beloved Prophet Muhammad (SAW).

Mawlānā Waḥīduddīn Khān is a representative and spokesman of the unlimited freedom of expression. Actually it is a contemporary liberal trend and approach to freedom of expression what we analyzed. This study also concludes that his controversial approach is not welcomed by majority of Muslim scholars and public do not like and own it.

This study does not find any kind of limits and restriction on freedom by Khān. He considered sanctions, restriction or limitation on freedom of expression as a kind of slavery and injustice, which is against Islamic concept because Islam allows legal, social and moral limits up on right to freedom of expression to save the society from anarchy, chaos and to ensure balance between rights and duties as well as liberties and responsibilities.

Writings of Mawlānā Waḥīduddīn Khān also show that freedom of expression is counted sometime as a right and sometimes it becomes an important duty for a believer.

⁸¹Muhammad Hāshim Kamālī, *Freedom of Expression in Islam* (Kuala Lumpur: Berīta Publishers, 1994), 181.

So the right way to freedom of expression and thought is to avail it with its full spirit. If a true believer does not express his views openly then according to Mawlānā he is a hypocrite which is not acceptable. He likes and promotes maximum freedom of speech and criticism in the society including religion showing inclination to the western thought. Therefore, he assumes that for promoting goodness and eradicating wickedness from the society, the right to freedom of thought and expression works like a key.

Somehow, when we deeply study the thought and vision of Waḥīduddīn Khān, we feel some kind of conflicts in his views on freedom of expression and thought. On the one side as a revivalist he suggests absolute freedom of expression and thought for human development and progress but on the other hand he puts restrictions on other religious values.

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