

من علمك التاريخ ؟

Who Taught You History?

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سلسلة إملاء الخاطر | Imlā al-Khāṭir Series



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جميع الحقوق محفوظة

Imlā al-Khāṭir Series

In this series, which he names *Imlā al-Khāṭir* (literally, “dictation of thoughts”), Dr. Mohammad Akram Nadwi follows in the tradition of the Ḥanbalī scholar Ibn al-Jawzī’s *Ṣayd al-Khāṭir* and shares with the world his reflections on a variety of topics ranging from theology to law, history to heart softeners, philosophy, education and more. Composed in a casual, conversational style consisting of questions followed by their brief answers (each portion predicated by *qālū/qultu*, “they said”/“I responded”), he utilizes therein the highest level of Arabic, reflecting his love of the language and his extensive expertise in Arabic grammar and rhetoric. These short but poignant reflections are part of the *balāghah* genre and tradition of Arabic literature. It should be noted that these translations, done by his senior students, serve as a guide and can never fully match the style, tone and eloquence of the original Arabic. Also note that Dr. Akram does not necessarily review each translation and is not responsible for any errors, improper word choices, or the likes, that are an inevitable part of the translation process.

Dr. Mohammad Akram Nadwi

Dr. Mohammad Akram Nadwi is a world-renowned scholar of Indian origin who has resided in England for an extensive time. After receiving in-depth training to an advanced level in the traditional Islamic disciplines at the famous Nadwat al-‘Ulamā’ seminary in Lucknow, India, and receiving a PhD in Arabic literature from Lucknow University, he became a research fellow at the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies, where he conducted research for a number of years on a variety of topics, including Ḥadīth and Sufi orders in India. He has published widely in Urdu, Persian, Arabic and English, including translations (like his work on Shāh Waliullah, *Bustan al-Muhaddithin*), editions of Arabic texts (such as a renowned critical edition of *Usul al-Shāshī* in Ḥanafī jurisprudence), and original monographs on Islamic law, female ḥadīth narrators and such figures as Abū Ḥanīfah and Sayyid Abul Ḥasan ‘Alī Nadwi. His groundbreaking work, yet to be published, is an encyclopedic 40-volume documentation of the legacy of female scholarship in the Islamic tradition. He co-founded the Al-Salam Institute in 2006 where he continues to serve as Principal and Senior Lecturer.

Introduction

In this monograph, Dr. Akram expounds on his thoughts on the discipline of history—often neglected in Islamic syllabi and curricula—while sharing some biographical material on the teacher who influenced his approach to history the most: Shaykh Abū al-‘Irfān Nadwī.

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

من علمك التاريخ ؟

بقلم: محمد أكرم الندوي

أوكتفورد

قالوا: ما لك تحثنا على دراسة التاريخ وتُحَرِّضنا عليها تحريضًا؟ قلت: إن علم التاريخ جَلَلٌ بالغ الخطورة عظيم، يعنى باستعراض العناصر الحركية والعوامل التطويرية في المجتمعات البشرية، ودراسة الأوضاع العمرانية والسياسية والاقتصادية والثقافية على اختلاف الزمان والمكان، ولا غنى لنا نحن العلماء وطلبة العلم عنه، نتعلم به السياق الذي نزل فيه الإسلام، والتغيرات التي شهدتها البلاد الإسلامية، والتحويلات التي مرت بها عامة التقاليد البشرية سياسة وثقافة وحضارة، فالتاريخ علم جسيم ذو شأن يهمننا في ديننا ودنيانا، ولا يمكننا إنكار دوره في العلوم والفنون والصناعات والآداب.

قالوا: قد عدَّ بعض الناس التاريخ من مُلَحِّ العلم التي يأوون إليها عند الترويح عن أنفسهم، فما ترى؟ قلت: ذهبوا مذهبا قبيحا وارتكبوا قولا بشعا، وهل ثمة علم لا يقصد من ورائه إلا تحقيق متعة نفسية أو توفير لذة أو قضاء

شهوة؟ كيف والعلوم كلها رياضة للعقول والأفكار واستنفاد للقوى والطاقات، لا استرخاء فيها ولا استجمام، وإنما السبيل إليها جهاد مضمّن وكفاح مرهق، والتاريخ كذلك من العلوم البشرية الاجتماعية الشريفة التي فيها إعمال النظر وجمع اللهم.

قالوا: لو لخصت لنا فائدة علم التاريخ؟ قلت: لخصها الفيلسوف الكبير أبو نصر الفارابي تلخيصا بديعا إذ قال: "إن أفجع الأمور التي يسلكها المرء في استجلاب علم السياسة وغيره من العلوم أن يتأمل أحوال الناس وأعمالهم ومتصرفاتهم؛ ما شهدها وما غاب عنها مما سمعه وتناهى إليه منها، وأن يعين النظر فيها، ويميز بين محاسنها ومساوئها، وبين النافع والضار لهم منها، ثم ليجتهد في التمسك بمحاسنها؛ لينال من منافعها مثل ما نالوا، وفي التحرز والاجتناب من مساوئها؛ ليأمن من مضارها ويسلم من غوائلها مثل ما سلموا." (رسالة في السياسة ص 52).

قالوا: ما للمدارس الإسلامية في آسيا الجنوبية لا تعنى بالتاريخ؟ قلت: وهذا من أهم ينتقد على ما يسمى بالدرس النظامي، فقد هجر كثيرا من العلوم والصناعات الهامة التي يستهجن التفریط فيها وجفأها جفأً غير حميد، ولقد حَبَرْنَا خريجي تلك المدارس مجهلون مسائل عادية وأمورا بسيطة من سيرة النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم ومغازيه وتاريخ الإسلام، وقد حكى لي شيخنا

العلامة أبو عمار زاهد الراشدي عن بعضهم أنه لم يدر عن بدر وأحد، أيهما
أول.

قالوا: دُئنا على أهم مصادر التاريخ الإسلامي: قلت: هي: القرآن الكريم،
وكتب الحديث والمغازي، وكتب الطبقات والأنساب، وكتب الجغرافية،
وكتب الرحلات والخطط، والكتب الأدبية والشعر العربي، قالوا: ما أهم
الكتب في التاريخ الإسلامي العام؟ قلت: هي تاريخ الرسل والملوك للإمام
أي جعفر محمد بن جرير الطبري (ت 310هـ)، وكتاب مروج الذهب
ومعادن الجواهر، وكتاب التنبيه والإشراف للمسعودي (ت 346هـ)،
وتاريخ الإسلام للذهبي (ت 748هـ)، والبداية والنهاية لابن كثير (ت
774هـ).

قلت: وإن كتب التاريخ كثر فيها الخلل والفساد فكونوا منها على حذر
متذكرين ما قاله العلامة ابن خلدون: "إن فحول المؤرخين في الإسلام قد
استوعبوا أخبار الأيام وجمعوها، وسطروها في صفحات الدفاتر وأودعوها،
وخلطها المتطفلون بدسائس من الباطل وهموا فيها وابتدعوها، وزخارف
من الروايات المضعفة لفقوها ووضعوها، واقتفى تلك الآثار الكثير ممن بعدهم
واتبعوها، وأدوها إلينا كما سمعوها، ولم يلاحظوا أسباب الوقائع والاحوال
ولم يراعوها، ولا رفضوا ترهات الاحاديث ولا دفعوها، فالتحقيق قليل،
وطرف التنقيح في الغالب كليل، والغلط والوهم نسيب للاخبار وخليل،

والتقليد عريق في الآدميين وسليل، والتطفل على الفنون عريض طويل، ومرعى الجهل بين الانام وخيم وبيل، والحق لا يقاوم سلطانه، والباطل يقذف بشهاب النظر شيطانه، والناقل إنما هو يملي وينقل، والبصيرة تنقد الصحيح إذا تمقل، والعلم يجلو لها صفحات القلوب ويصقل. (المقدمة 82/1).

قالوا: فما الكتاب الذي يفيدنا في فهم فلسفة التاريخ؟ قلت: هو مقدمة ابن خلدون (ت 808هـ) بلا نزاع، ثم مقالات العلامة شبلي النعماني والعلامة السيد سليمان الندوي رحمهما الله تعالى في مواضيع مختلفة من التاريخ العام، وتاريخ العلوم والثقافات، وفلسفة التاريخ.

قالوا: فما أهم الكتب في تاريخ العلوم الإسلامية؟ قلت: فجر الإسلام وضحى الإسلام وظهر الإسلام لأحمد أمين، على ماخذ فيها ومثالب لا أنشط الآن لذكرها.

قالوا: من أخذت عنه التاريخ؟ قلت: عن غير واحد، وأفضلهم لدي شيخنا أبو العرفان الندوي رحمه الله تعالى، قالوا: أفدنا ترجمته، قلت: هو الشيخ العالم الفيلسوف الكبير الأديب المؤرخ أبو العرفان الندوي بن الشيخ العالم دين محمد الجونفوري أحد الأذكياء المعدودين، أخذ عن أبيه، وحضر مجالس العالم الرباني الداعية الكبير الشيخ أبي بكر محمد شيث الجونفوري، واستفاد منه كثيرا، ودرس الفلسفة والمنطق على بعض المتخصصين في العلوم العقلية

في مدينة إله آباد، والتحق بدار العلوم بديوبند، ثم بدار العلوم لندوة العلماء، وتخرج منها، ومن شيوخه بها: العلامة السيد سليمان الندوي لازمة ملازمة طويلة واختص به اختصاصا، وقرأ كثيرا، وخاض في كتب الفلاسفة والمتكلمين، وأولع بكتابات شيخ الإسلام ابن تيمية، وحكيم الإسلام الشاه ولي الله الدهلوي.

درّس في دار العلوم لندوة العلماء مدة طويلة وعمل كذلك نائب مدير ومديرا لها، وعرف بتدريسه لكتاب حجة الله البالغة، ولعل المدة التي قضها في دار العلوم في التدريس والإدارة تبلغ خمسًا وأربعين سنة، وفاق أقرانه في آداب اللغة الأردية والفارسية والعربية، والتاريخ، والفلسفة، وعلم الكلام، ومذاهب السلف، ومقالات الفرق والديانات مع ذاكرة قوية، وحفظ لكثير من المتون والأشعار باللغات المختلفة، ووفرة المعلومات، وتوسع الثقافات، ودكاء نادر، وقدرة على الكلام في فصاحة منقطعة النظير، وكان يمثل ندوة العلماء في المجمع العلمية والندوات الكبرى، ولم يكن له نظير في الهند في الاطلاع على تاريخ العلوم الإسلامية، وطبقات العلماء، ومناهج التعليم، ونقل كتاب الثقافة الإسلامية في الهند للعلامة عبد الحي الحسيني إلى اللغة الأردية.

توفي في السابع من ربيع الثاني سنة تسع وأربعمائة وألف عن خمس وستين سنة، وكنت ممن تبع جنازته من لکنؤ إلى جوفنور حيث صلي عليه ودفن،

وشهد الجنازة جمع كبير من لکنؤ وجونفور وغيرهما من البلدان، وأثرت وفاته في تأثراً كبيراً، وكاد خوف الموت يقتلني، ولم أكد أنام في الليل إلا قليلاً.

أخذت عنه البلاغة الواضحة، وأشياء في المنطق والفلسفة، والجزء الأول من تفسير البيضاوي، وتاريخ العلوم الإسلامية، واستفدت كثيراً من مجالسه.

قالوا: ما منهجه في التدريس؟ قلت: كان يحفظ علمه عن ظهر قلبه متحكماً فيه ومنتقناً إياه إتقاناً، فلم يدرسنا المنطق والفلسفة وتاريخ العلوم الإسلامية من كتاب أو مذكرة، بل كان يملي كل ذلك إملاءً في ضبط للمعلومات والحوادث والتاريخ، وكان حسن الاستنباط والاستنتاج مع قدرة غريبة في ربط النتائج بأسبابها والكائنات بعلمها.

قالوا: هل خصك بشيء من العناية وهو بلدك؟ قلت: لا أراني خصني بشيء، وقد استفدت منه في أشياء خارج الدروس النظامية، ونقلت رسالة للشاه ولي الله الدهلوي من الفارسية إلى العربية في أصول الدراسة والتعليم، فراجعها لي، وأصلح ما فيها من الأخطاء، وقد كان اهتمامه بتلاميذه كلهم سواء، ولعل لزميلنا محمد حشمت الله الندوي صلة به أقوى فقد كان مجاوراً له في السكن، بل لعل أقربهم إليه زميلنا وصديقنا الأثير الحبيب محمد عبد

الحي الندوي، فقد كان يملئ عليه مقالاته الطويلة التي يريد تقديمها في المؤتمرات والندوات العلمية، فكان يقيدتها بخطه الحسن، ويحفظها له حفظاً.

قالوا: اذكر لنا من صلاحه وأخلاقه، قلت: لم نعب عليه إلا تهاونه بالصلاة، غفر الله له ورحمه، ولعل ذلك من تأثير الفلسفة فيه، غير أنه كان مأموناً سليم دواعي الصدر، غير حاسد ولا حاقد، وكان سمحاً دمث الخلق، محبباً إلى زملائه وإلى الطلاب، طيب السمائل.

وكان مديراً لمطبخ دار العلوم، أُولاً، عاشقاً للطعام الشهي ومستكثرًا منه، وذلك الذي أفسد صحته، وأورث فيه داء السكري ونوبات قلبية، ومع ذلك كان صاحب مجلس ودعابة ونكت ونوادير، قالوا: اذكر لنا من نوادره، قلت هي كثيرة، وأتذكر أنه كان في مجلس شيخنا أبي الحسن الندوي رحمه الله، وقدم إلى الحضور شراب لذيذ، فتناول شيخنا أبو العرفان كأسين منه، واقتصر غيره على كأس واحدة، فقال بعض الحضور غامزاً إياه: أخذ كل واحد كأساً، وأخذت اثنتين، فقال: للذكر مثل حظ الأنثيين.

Who Taught You History?

By Dr. Mohammed Akram Nadwi
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The Importance of Studying History

They asked: Why do you always encourage us to study history?

I replied:

Knowledge of history is a serious and hefty matter, and one of extreme importance. It represents the review of strategic elements and developmental factors in human societies, and the study of civilizational, political, economic and cultural conditions across time and space. No scholar or student of knowledge can afford to be oblivious to it. We learn from history, for example, the context in which Islam was revealed, the monumental changes witnessed by Islamic lands, and the political, cultural and civilizational fluctuations among human traditions. So history is no small or inconsequential discipline, for it concerns our religious and worldly affairs, and we simply cannot deny its rightful role among human sciences, disciplines and crafts.

They said: Some have designated history as being akin to salt in knowledge, which is resorted to only in order to enjoy themselves.¹ What do you say?

I replied:

They have adopted a repugnant practice and made a dreadful claim. Is there a science whose aim is only to realize mental relaxation, enjoyment or the mere fulfillment of desires? How can that be when all the sciences and disciplines in their totality represent the exercising of the mind and thought and the exertion of power and energy, with no room for laxity or relaxation?

¹ As salt is used sparingly without being overbearing, in various amounts according to varying tastes, and primarily for enjoyment purposes without representing any significant nutritional value, so too is the discipline of history according to its detractors.

These are attained only by exhausting effort and draining struggle. Similarly, history is one such noble collective human discipline which contains the task of observation and collection of important matters.

They asked: Can you summarize for us the benefit of studying history?

I replied:

The great philosopher Abū Naṣr al-Farābī summarized it in an amazing way when he said:

The most beneficial thing that a person gains from acquiring the knowledge of politics and other related disciplines, is the ability to deliberate over the states, actions and dispositions of human beings: what he sees among them and what is absent from them, from what he hears and what is brought to his knowledge; and that he should examine these closely in order to distinguish the good from the bad, the harmful from the beneficial, and endeavor to hold on to that which is good and beneficial in order to attain the same benefits, and to avoid the harms in order to protect himself from the same dangers and evils.

[Treatise on Politics, pg 52]

They asked: Why don't the Islamic schools in South Asia teach history?

I replied:

This is the most important and valid criticism of the Niẓāmī curriculum, which has left out or shunned certain important sciences and disciplines whose negligence is condemnable and blameworthy. We have surely witnessed through experience many graduates of those seminaries who have no knowledge of common and plain matters, or issues related to the life of the Prophet, peace be upon him, his battles, or even Islamic history in general. Our shaykh Abū 'Ammār Zāhid Rāshidī related to us that he has seen some graduates who could not state whether the battle of Badr or Uḥud came first.

Essential References in Islamic History

They said: Tell us about the most essential references in Islamic history.

I replied:

They are the Noble Qur'ān, the books of ḥadīth and battles (maghāzī), the books of rankings and genealogy (biographical works), geographical works, personal travelogues and chronicles, books of literature and Arabic poetry.

They asked: What are the most important books in general Islamic history?

I replied:

1. *The History of Prophets and Kings*² of Imām Abū Ja'far Muḥammad b. Jarīr Ṭabarī (d. 310/923)
2. *The Meadows of Gold and Mines of Gems*,³ and *The Book of Admonition and Revision*⁴ of Mas'ūdī (d. 346/956)
3. *The History of Islām* of Dhahabī (d. 748/1348)
4. *The Beginning and the End*⁵ of Ibn Kathīr (d. 774/1373)

I also said:

You should know that the books of history are filled with defects and corruption so be wary of them, as the erudite scholar Ibn Khaldūn noted:

The pioneering Muslim historians made exhaustive collections of historical events and wrote them down in book form. But, then, persons who had no right to occupy themselves with history introduced into those books untrue gossip which they had thought up or freely invented, as well as false, discredited reports which they had made up or embellished. Many of their successors followed in their steps and passed that information on to us as they had heard it. They did not look for, nor pay any attention to,

² In Arabic, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, this is a universal history work from the dawn of humanity until the era of the author that is considered a primary reference in history due to its early authorship.

³ In Arabic, *Murūj al-Dhahab wa Ma'ādin al-Jawhar*, this is a world history work extending from the beginning of humanity until the late 'Abbāsīd era written by the noted historian and polymath.

⁴ In Arabic, *Kitāb al-Tanbīh wa al-Ashrāf*, this is an abridgement of the previous work.

⁵ In Arabic, *al-Bidāyah wa al-Nihāyah*.

the causes of events and conditions, nor did they eliminate or reject nonsensical stories.

Little effort is being made to get at the truth. The critical eye, as a rule, is not sharp. Errors and unfounded assumptions are closely allied and familiar elements in historical information. Blind trust in tradition is an inherited trait in human beings. Occupation with the (scholarly) disciplines on the part of those who have no right is widespread. But the pasture of stupidity is unwholesome for mankind. No one can stand up against the authority of truth, and the evil of falsehood is to be fought with enlightening speculation. The reporter merely dictates and passes on (the material). It takes critical insight to sort out the hidden truth: it takes knowledge to lay truth bare and polish it so that critical insight may be applied to it.⁶

[al-Muqaddimah 1/82]

The asked: Which books help us to understand philosophy and history?

I replied:

The Muqaddimah of Ibn Khaldūn (d. 808/1406), without dispute, and then the writings of the erudite scholars Shiblī Nu'mānī and Sayyid Sulaymān Nadwī, God have mercy on them both, in various places concerning general history, history of culture and civilization and the philosophy of history.

The asked: What are the most important books on the history of the Islamic sciences?

I replied:

Fajr al-Islām, *Ḍuḥā al-Islām*, and *Zahr al-Islām* of Aḥmad Amīn,⁷ duly noting the shortcomings and defects in them, which I will not stir up here.

Biography of Shaykh Abū al-'Irfān Nadwī

⁶ Translation taken from Franz Rosenthal.

⁷ He was a brilliant Egyptian scholar and historian whose works include these three volumes on the history of Islamic culture. He died in 1373/1954.

They asked: From whom did you learn history?

I replied:

From more than one person, but the best of them in my estimation is our Shaykh Abū al-'Irfān Nadwī, may God have mercy upon him.

They asked: Benefit us with his biography.

I replied:

He is the Shaykh, scholar, great philosopher, writer, historian Abū al-'Irfān Nadwī, son of the Shaykh and scholar Dīn Muḥammad of Jawnpūr, who was one of the rare intelligent people. Shaykh Abū al-'Irfān learned from his father and attended the circles of the godly scholar and great preacher Shaykh Abūbākr Muḥammad Shīth of Jawnpūr. He benefited from the latter greatly. He also studied philosophy and logic with some of the specialists of rational sciences in the city of Allahabad. He attended the Dār al-'Ulūm seminary of Deoband and then that of Nadwat al-'Ulamā', graduating from there. His teachers here were the erudite scholar Sayyid Sulaymān Nadwī, with whom he spent prolonged time and exerted particular devotion. He was widely read and delved into nooks of philosophy and kalām (scholastic theology). He fell in love with the books of Shaykh al-Islām Ibn Taymiyyah and the doctor of Islām Shāh Walīullah of Delhi.

He taught at Dār al-'Ulūm Nadwat al-'Ulamā' for a very long time (probably about 45 years), working as its vice principal as well as principal. He was known for teaching the book Ḥujjatullāh al-Bālighah. He surpassed his peers in Urdu, Persian and Arabic literature, history, philosophy, scholastic theology (kalām), the ways of the early Muslims. He knew the views of various sects and religions with great recall. He had memorized many texts and verses in various languages. He had abundant information, awareness of various cultures, rare intelligence and the ability to speak with unrivaled eloquence. He used to represent Nadwat al-'Ulamā' in the largest academic conferences and forums. He had no rival in India in the grasp of the history of Islamic sciences, ranks of the scholars, and educational methodologies. He translated the book *Islamic Culture in India* of the erudite scholar 'Abd al-Ḥayy al-Ḥasanī into Urdu.

He died on the 7th of Rabī' al-Thānī 1409 at the age of 65. I was among those who accompanied his funeral procession from Lucknow to Jawnpūr, where he was buried. His funeral was attended by a large group of people from various parts of the land. His death greatly affected me, and the fear of death nearly killed me. I was not able to sleep at night for some time.

I learned from him clear rhetoric and some portions of logic and philosophy. I also learned from him the first volume of the tafsīr (Qur'ānic commentary) of Bayḍāwī and the history of Islamic sciences. I benefited greatly from his assemblies.

They asked: What was his methodology of teaching?

I replied:

His knowledge was in his memory and he had command and mastery over it. He never taught us logic, philosophy or the history of Islamic sciences from a book or notes. Rather, he would dictate all of that to us, with complete recall of information, events and history. He was also excellent at derivation and extraction [of lessons], with a strange ability to connect effects and occurrences with their causes and rationale.

They asked: Did he treat you in any special way while you were with him?

I replied:

I did not find him treating me in any special way. I learned from him many things outside of the classroom. I transcribed a treatise of Shāh Walīullah from Persian to Arabic on the principles of learning and education, which he reviewed with me and corrected some mistakes. He treated all of his students alike, but perhaps our colleague Muḥammad Ḥashmatullāh Nadwī had a stronger connection with him on account of being his neighbor in residence. Or perhaps the closest to him was our other colleague Muḥammad 'Abd al-Ḥayy Nadwī, to whom he would dictate his lengthy articles which he would present in various scholarly forums and conferences. 'Abd al-Ḥayy would write them in his beautiful handwriting and memorize them.

They asked: Please mention some of the virtues of his piety or character.

I replied:

I will not blame him except for his laxity with respect to prayer, may God forgive him and have mercy on him. Perhaps that was from the influence of philosophy upon him. But he was pure and protected from the motives of the hearts, without being affected by envy or jealousy. He was kind and mild-mannered, pleasant towards his companions and students, and had good qualities.

He was the director of the kitchen at Dār al-'Ulūm and loved to eat. His love for tasty foods was the cause of his health problems, including diabetes and heart attacks. Despite that, he was prone to sitting with people and telling jokes and witty anecdotes.

They asked: Tell us some of his funny moments.

I replied:

They are numerous, but I do remember once when he was sitting in the company of our Shaykh Abū al-Ḥasan 'Alī Nadwī, God have mercy upon him, when some fine drink was brought to the assembly. Our Shaykh Abū al-'Irfān took two glasses, whereas everyone else took one. When some of the attendees rebukingly asked him why, he simply replied, "To the man is a portion equal to that of two females."⁸

⁸ Taken from the Qur'ānic verse referring to the rules of inheritance [4:11].