



THE DISTINCTIVE APPROACH OF SHAYKH MUHAMMAD SADIQ TO THE ISSUES OF RADICALIZATION AND MISUNDERSTANDING OF ISLAMIC TEACHINGS

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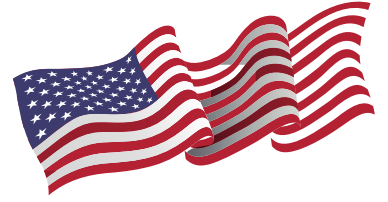
Abstract. *This article analyzes the processes of radicalization and the problems of misinterpreting Islamic teachings in a contemporary context. In particular, the distinctive approach of Shaykh Muhammad Sadiq Muhammad Yusuf is placed at the center of attention. In his works, the principles of explaining religious texts in a moderate, consistent, and life-connected manner are advanced, and this approach is viewed as an important factor in preventing radical views. The article examines questions of forming sound religious thinking in the minds of young people on the basis of Shaykh Muhammad Sadiq Muhammad Yusuf's views on religious exegesis and jurisprudence. Furthermore, it is established that an evidential, balanced, and logical approach against extremist interpretations is predominant in his method. The conclusion advanced is that this approach can serve as an effective methodological foundation in the contemporary religious-enlightenment process.*

Keywords: *radicalization, religious extremism, interpretation of Islam, Shaykh Muhammad Sadiq Muhammad Yusuf, religious thinking, moderate Islam, jurisprudence, exegesis, religious literacy, youth education, ideological immunity, religious enlightenment.*

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the issue of radicalization has become one of the serious problems on a global scale, and this process often manifests in connection with a superficial or erroneous interpretation of religious knowledge. In particular, among young people, instances of drawing hasty conclusions without a full understanding of Islamic teachings are observed. This may lead to an unbalanced formation of religious thinking.

From this perspective, the scholarly and educational legacy of Shaykh Muhammad Sadiq Muhammad Yusuf is worthy of special attention. In his works, he has endeavored to explain religious texts in a profound, consistent, and life-connected manner. In particular, his moderate approach and evidence-based commentaries emerge as an important alternative to radical interpretations.



This article analyzes the problem of radicalization and religious misunderstandings on the basis of Shaykh Muhammad Sadiq Muhammad Yusuf's views, and illuminates the contemporary significance of his approach.

MAIN BODY

When radicalization is discussed, this process is usually explained by external factors political pressure, social inequality, or the global information flow, and the like. These are, of course, important. But there is also an internal dimension to the matter. That is to say, the manner in which religious knowledge is being formed, and what kinds of ruptures are occurring in precisely this process, also play a major role. Sometimes the problem lies not outside but in comprehension itself.

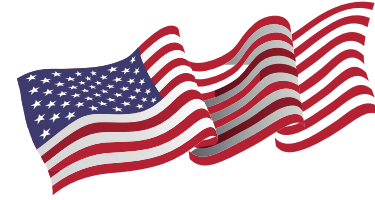
Viewed from this perspective, Shaykh Muhammad Sadiq Muhammad Yusuf's views appear considerably more balanced and profound. He regards radicalization not merely as a political or social phenomenon, but also as a problem connected to the erroneous formation of religious knowledge. One thought frequently encountered in his works is this: the fundamental problem in understanding religion is the interpretation of a text in isolation from its context.

Simply put, taking a verse or hadith out of the general system and interpreting it as a standalone ruling is one of the greatest errors. Shaykh Muhammad Sadiq criticizes this situation on multiple occasions. For instance, he writes: «In order to understand Islam fully, the Qur'an and the Sunnah must be studied as a whole, following the path explained by the scholars» (Shaykh Muhammad Sadiq, 2013:45). This thought seems very simple, but in reality, it is precisely this matter that stands at the center of the problem of radicalization.

In the Holy Qur'an too there is an allusion to this question of balance:

“وَكَذَلِكَ جَعَلْنَاكُمْ أُمَّةً وَسَطًا” i.e., “And thus We have made you a median (moderate) community.”

(Surah al-Baqarah, verse 143). This verse is often cited, but its meaning is not always deeply understood. Moderation is not merely choosing a middle path; it is refraining from excess in every matter. Shaykh Muhammad Sadiq advances precisely this principle as the fundamental method.



The interesting thing is that radical views often present themselves as «pure religion.» That is, they propose rejecting the complex jurisprudential or exegetical tradition and turning directly to the text. At first glance this seems simple and attractive. But there is great danger here. For understanding religious texts is not a simple matter of translation; it is a complex scholarly process.

Shaykh Muhammad Sadiq expresses this thought very clearly: «Not referring to the commentaries of scholars in order to understand the Qur'an and hadith leads to going astray» (Shaykh Muhammad Sadiq, 2018:112). Here he is in fact defending the importance of religious tradition. For rejecting the scholarly heritage formed over centuries opens the way to new problems.

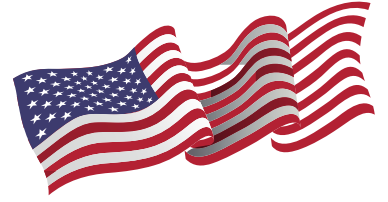
In this regard, the views of other Islamicists are also worthy of attention. For instance, Yusuf al-Qaradawi, analyzing the causes of radicalization, says: «The superficiality of religious knowledge is one of the main factors of extremism» (al-Qaradāwī, 2001:67). This view nearly coincides with the views of Shaykh Muhammad Sadiq.

But one thing must be acknowledged: the problem is not always solely one of knowledge. Sometimes a person may be psychologically predisposed toward extreme views. In such a situation, religious texts become a «means of justification» for this predisposition. That is, the text becomes not a cause but a tool.

Shaykh Muhammad Sadiq does not leave this aspect aside either. He emphasizes that in studying religion, not only scholarly but also moral preparation is important. As he writes, «knowledge without piety is of no benefit» (Shaykh Muhammad Sadiq, 2015:23). This thought seems simple, but it contains deep meaning. For knowledge alone is not sufficient; how it is used also matters.

Yet another important point is the problem of interpreting religious texts in isolation from the modern context. Some groups attempt to apply directly to today's situation verses that were revealed under historical conditions. This leads to incorrect conclusions.

For instance, the English Islamicist Wael B. Hallaq specifically emphasizes the importance of historical context in understanding jurisprudence (Hallaq, 2009:89). In his view, every ruling is connected to the social conditions of its time. Shaykh Muhammad Sadiq also takes an approach close to this view, only he expresses it in a simpler and more comprehensible manner.



Sometimes the following question arises: why do young people surrender more quickly to radical ideas? It is difficult to give a precise answer to this question. But there are probable causes. Young people often seek clear and definitive answers. Complex and multifaceted explanations may fail to satisfy them.

Radical interpretations, by contrast, are very simple, clear, and decisive. For this reason they appear attractive. Shaykh Muhammad Sadiq's approach, however, is somewhat different: he does not shy away from complexity. Rather, he endeavors to explain religious matters together with their complexity. This is not always easily accepted, but in the long run it may prove more effective.

Yet another aspect is the matter of trust in scholars. Radical views often criticize or outright reject traditional scholars. Shaykh Muhammad Sadiq, on the contrary, deems reliance on scholarly heritage necessary. The point here is not merely one of respect, but of scholarly continuity.

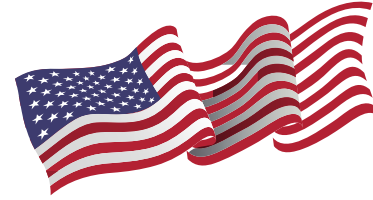
If one looks a little more deeply, the problem does not end with the general statement «there is an erroneous interpretation.» The real question is different: what does it mean to understand a religious text correctly? What criterion serves as the basis? If everyone interprets it in their own way, how do we determine which is correct and which is erroneous? It is around these questions that the approach of Shaykh Muhammad Sadiq Muhammad Yusuf can be seen to have formed.

In his works, the question of methodology occupies a special place. That is, he explains not merely the result, but also how to arrive at it. For instance, he repeatedly reminds his readers of the necessity of the science of exegesis in understanding the Qur'an. Simply put, it is not possible to interpret every verse independently, without relying on any scholarly foundation. Here «not possible» is not a prohibition but a warning about risk.

Shaykh Muhammad Sadiq writes: «In understanding the Holy Qur'an, it is necessary to follow the path of the Companions, the Successors, and the scholars» (Shaykh Muhammad Sadiq, 2018:87). This statement may seem traditional at first glance. But in reality it expresses a methodological foundation. For this approach implies understanding the text not individually but within the framework of scholarly tradition.

In the Qur'an too there is an explicit instruction about relying on knowledge:

“فَاسْأَلُوا أَهْلَ الدِّكْرِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ” i.e., “Ask the people of remembrance if you do not know.”



(Surah al-Nahl, verse 43). This verse is often received as simple advice. But it actually shows the hierarchy of religious knowledge. Not everyone must resolve everything independently. Sometimes it is more correct to ask someone who knows. Shaykh Muhammad Sadiq defends precisely this principle.

At the same time, he does not explain following tradition as an entirely passive process. That is, a person must not merely listen and accept. Rather, they must strive to understand. Here there is a subtle balance: the balance between independent thinking and reliance on scholarly tradition. When this balance is disturbed, problems begin.

Sometimes radical views deny precisely this balance. They advance the slogan of «only the Qur'an and hadith.» At first glance this seems correct. But in practice this approach leads to bypassing the sciences of exegesis, jurisprudence, and legal methodology. As a result, the text is interpreted superficially.

Shaykh Muhammad Sadiq criticizes this situation sharply. He writes: «Whoever rejects the commentaries of scholars exposes himself to error» (Shaykh Muhammad Sadiq, 2011:56). There is a certain weight to this statement, but it has not been said without reason. For rejecting the scholarly system formed throughout history gives rise to new errors.

Yet another aspect is the matter of understanding hadiths. Here too problems are frequently encountered. Some hadiths are taken out of context and interpreted as a general rule. Whereas the science of hadith has a very complex internal system: chain of transmission, text, occasion, commentary all of these must be taken into account.

Jonathan Brown also emphasizes this view: «Understanding a hadith is not merely reading the text, but comprehending its historical and scholarly context» (Brown, 2009:122). Shaykh Muhammad Sadiq uses precisely this method when commenting on hadiths in his works. He does not leave a hadith in isolation, but connects it with other evidences.

At this point, yet another question arises: how comprehensible is this methodology for young people? For today's young people want quick results. Complex explanations may fatigue them. There is a certain tension here. On one side, scholarly depth; on the other, the demand for simplicity.

Perhaps the solution lies in the middle: explaining complexity without concealing it, but in simple language. Shaykh Muhammad Sadiq's style is close to precisely



this. He endeavors to write while preserving the scholarly foundation, in simple and comprehensible language. Perhaps this is also why his works have reached a wide audience.

Yusuf al-Qaradawi, dwelling on the question of methodology, also says: «It is necessary to find balance between excessiveness and laxity» (al-Qaradāwī, 2001:91). This thought is harmonious with Shaykh Muhammad Sadiq's approach. For he too avoids extremism, but also does not support excessively liberal interpretations.

Yet another important aspect is the observance of the principles of *uṣūl al-fiqh* in issuing religious rulings. These principles are often not noticed, but they are very important. For instance, distinguishing general and specific evidences, the matter of abrogation and the abrogated, analogy and independent legal reasoning without all of these it is difficult to understand jurisprudence.

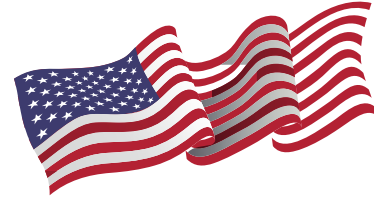
Wael B. Hallaq calls *uṣūl al-fiqh* «the logical foundation of Islamic thinking» (Hallaq, 1997:134). Shaykh Muhammad Sadiq also indirectly explains this foundation in his works. He connects every ruling with a reason and evidence. This compels the reader to think.

Sometimes the following situation also occurs: a person understands a religious text correctly, but applies it incorrectly. This too is a problem. For every ruling has its own conditions and limits. Overgeneralizing it leads to error.

Shaykh Muhammad Sadiq is cautious about this matter. He emphasizes the necessity of taking conditions into account in issuing rulings. This approach is especially important under modern conditions. For today's life is complex, and situations are varied.

Now it is necessary to look at the practical rather than the theoretical side of the matter. For any scholarly approach is ultimately evaluated by what results it yields in real life. Shaykh Muhammad Sadiq Muhammad Yusuf's views are no exception to this. The question is simple: how does his approach influence the minds of young people, and how effective is this influence in preventing radicalization?

One aspect immediately catches the eye. Shaykh Muhammad Sadiq does not leave religious knowledge at a merely theoretical level. He endeavors to connect it with daily life. For instance, his works in the «Hadith and Life» series are written precisely on the basis of this principle. Each hadith is explained with a simple, real-life situation. This transforms religious knowledge from an abstract concept into real experience.



Perhaps for this reason his works have reached a wide audience. For people accept explanations close to life more readily than complex theory. This is, of course, a simple observation. But there is a certain truth in it. If knowledge is not connected to life, it does not last long.

At the same time, Shaykh Muhammad Sadiq's approach serves to form a balanced religious view in the minds of young people. He does not rush to draw sharp conclusions. On the contrary, he encourages examining a matter from various angles. This broadens thinking.

In the Qur'an too there is a meaning that cautions against haste:

“يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِن جَاءَكُمْ فَاسِقٌ بِنَبَأٍ فَتَبَيَّنُوا” i.e., “O believers, if a transgressor brings you news, verify it.”

(Surah al-Hujurat, verse 6). This verse is not only about news; it is about a general approach. That is, it is necessary to check and analyze any information. Shaykh Muhammad Sadiq writes in precisely this spirit. He encourages the reader not to draw conclusions immediately, but to think (Shaykh Muhammad Sadiq, 2011:102).

Now, returning to the matter of immunity against radicalization. The concept of «immunity» is not used here without reason. For this process is not a one-time event. It forms gradually. And, most importantly, it must be internal. External prohibitions do not work for long.

Shaykh Muhammad Sadiq's approach is directed precisely at forming internal stability. By cultivating correct understanding in a person, he develops the ability to stand against erroneous ideas. This yields long-term results.

The American scholar John L. Esposito, writing about radicalization, says: «The most effective means against extremism is correct religious knowledge» (Esposito, 2011:168). This thought seems general, but in Shaykh Muhammad Sadiq's activity precisely this idea is visible in practice.

At this point, yet another question arises: is this approach equally effective for everyone? Perhaps not. For every person's level of reception, psychological condition, and social environment differ. Some accept quickly; others require more time.

For this reason, it is more accurate to regard Shaykh Muhammad Sadiq's approach not as the sole solution, but as an important direction. It provides a foundation, but its development also depends on other factors.



Yet another important aspect is the matter of his language and style. He presents scholarly subjects not in complex terminology, but in simple and comprehensible language. This creates great convenience for young people. For complex language often becomes a barrier.

The English researcher Tariq Ramadan, speaking about modern religious education, says: «Language is not merely a tool; it is a factor of influence» (Ramadan, 2004:121). Shaykh Muhammad Sadiq appears to have sensed this factor very well. For when reading his works, complexity is felt, but it does not exert pressure.

The Arab scholar Ibn Taymiyya also says about conveying religious knowledge correctly:

“الحق يُقبل إذا قُدِّمَ بحكمة” i.e., “Truth is accepted when presented with wisdom.” (Ibn Taymiyya, 1995:215).

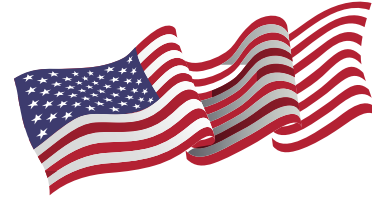
This thought is very well suited to Shaykh Muhammad Sadiq’s style. He avoids extremism but does not lose clarity. This is not easy. Perhaps for this reason his approach has proven effective.

At the same time, his activity has not been limited to books alone. Through public lectures and question-and-answer sessions, he has also widely propagated religious understanding. This has made it possible to convey knowledge not only at the level of text, but also through dialogue.

Sometimes the following thought arises: if this approach were introduced into educational programs in a more systematic manner, would the results be even stronger? Perhaps yes. For individual initiative is good, but a systemic approach may prove even more effective.

CONCLUSION

The analyses above demonstrate that radicalization is in many cases connected to an erroneous and superficial understanding of religious texts. In this respect, the approach of Shaykh Muhammad Sadiq Muhammad Yusuf is of great importance. By explaining religious knowledge in a consistent, balanced, and scholarly manner, he serves to prevent erroneous interpretations. In general, his methodology can serve as an effective tool in forming sound religious thinking and ideological immunity in the minds of young people.



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