ISLAM IN A GLOBALIZED WORLD

NEGOTIATING FAULTLINES

EDITED BY

MUSHIRUL HASAN

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Editor's Note

This volume brings together a set of interesting articles, reproduced from two of Jamia Millia Islamia's journals, on important aspects of Islam in the contemporary world. Some of the contributors are well-known; others are being heard for the first time. They are new voices which need to be heeded in academic circles. They are from Jamia, an institution which has kept alive its critical intellectual traditions.

I thank the contributors to *Islam in a Globalized World: Negotiating Faultlines* for joining our intellectual odyssey. We hope their reflections would contribute a rich source of contemporary debates in South Asia and the 'globalized world'.

I am grateful to Rakhshanda Jalil and Archana Prasad who have been supportive and encouraged the earliest forms of this somewhat experimental project. Sujata Ashwarya Cheema was exceedingly generous with her time.

I dedicate this book to Saeed Naqvi, one of India's leading interpreters of composite culture in the world of journalism.

MUSHIRUL HASAN

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Introduction

'Too Little Too Late': India's Muslims In Contemporary History*

MUSHIRUL HASAN

In 1969, the University of Edinburgh launched the 'Islamic Surveys' series. Volume Seven by Aziz Ahmad was intended to 'help to counteract the relative neglect, until recently, of the achievements of Islam in the Indo-Pakistan subcontinent'. The need was great because, as W. Montgomery Watt, General Editor of the series observed:

> South Asia is not a mere frontier of Islam, but an integral part of the Islamic world, making a distinctive contribution to the life of the whole. For many centuries it has been interacting with Hinduism by way of both attraction and repulsion, but it has not severed its links with the heartlands of Islam. More recently Indian Islam preceded the heartlands in receiving and responding to the European impact.[1]

Some years ago a friend asked me: 'Is there any recent book on Islam in South Asia?' After all, the friend added, Islam is the religion of 13.4 per cent of India's population, the third largest in the world. The fact is that we have allowed decades to pass without asking ourselves many important questions about them, not because we did not have the time

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but because we were either unconcerned or because at heart we took for granted that we had all the answers. As a result, wide areas of the Muslim traditions—like movements, institutions, liberal thought, reformers, and so on—are represented by only a handful of articles or the occasional book. Moreover, despite Islam's vibrancy in the region, India's Muslims are neither among the 'Makers of Contemporary Islam'[2] nor do they represent 'The New Voices of Islam'.[3] It matters little that Muslim scholars and thinkers have contributed substantially to the production of knowledge or that the Muslims in South Asia have expressed their finest sensibilities in the creative arts, architecture, poetry and literature. Even the traditional medieval India where such knowledge was produced—the India of the Sultans of Delhi and the Mughals—is dead and possibly beyond resurrection.

In order to address the lack of writings on India's Muslims and their emerging identities, apart from questioning analytical frameworks and epistemological assumptions, the present need is to be aware of Islam in South Asia as a living tradition—however defined—and as a dynamic force.

I take here three books which try to fill this gap. Barbara D. Metcalf studies the Deoband seminary in *Islamic Revivalism in British India* and presents an analytical platform for exploring Islamic knowledge and training in late 19th-century India. The monograph on *The Bengal Muslims 1860–1906* by Rafiuddin Ahmad depicts the evolving identities and contesting ideas of the community from a regional perspective. My own *Legacy of a Divided Nation* considers the challenges of adaptation and negotiation that Muslims faced in the times after the independence and partition of India.

Barbara Metcalf's work on the generation of ideas and education system of the Deoband school is one of the fine examples of the epistemological engagement with the

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manner in which the realm of ideas mould and at the same time represent the societies that give rise to them.[4] In the late 1970s, the relationship between codes of behaviour derived from Islam and codes of behaviour derived from other sources was discussed at two conferences in the United States.[5] Even though their concerns were far removed from people's lives, the participants paid adequate attention to educational institutions. The reasons are not far to seek. India has been the home of traditional learning since the advent of Turkish rule. During the reign of Muhammad bin Tughlaq (1325–51), Delhi alone had a thousand *madaris*. There were at least thirty in Jaunpur, and a 16th-century traveller visiting Thata, near Karachi in Pakistan, reported 400 large and small madaris. An elaborate curriculum was developed at these institutions,[6] though Aurangzeb, the last of the great Mughal emperors, reprimanded his former teacher for having taught him Arabic, grammar, and philosophy rather than subjects more practical for a future ruler of a vast empire. Syed Ahmad Khan, the founder of the M.A.O. College, held that 'the Muslim schools of the old sort were altogether useless' because their syllabus and books 'deceive and teach men to veil their meaning...to describe things wrongly and in irrelevant terms...to leave the history of the past uncertain, and to relate facts like tales and stories.' He continued: 'All these things are quite unsuited to the present age and to the spirit of the time, and thus instead of doing good they do much harm to the Muhammadans.'[7]

Traditional schools made substantial adjustments in religious thought and organization in the 19th century. A number of writers compiled the histories of such initiatives in Urdu. Much was written on Deoband's Dar al-ulum, but these well-drilled arrays of 'historians' hardly ever went beyond extolling the *ulama* and the *Dars-i Nizamia*

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as the model curriculum. It was different with Barbara Daly Metcalf's book, *Islamic Revival in British India*. She closely looked at Deoband's ulama, especially those who were engaged in a self-conscious reformulation of their religious thought—a reformulation that involved new emphases and new concerns from within the framework of their own received tradition. Her account of their rise in the 19th century and of the origins of the Dar al-ulum are particularly useful since they show that the ground for setting up of a religious seminary had already been prepared by scholars whose names have been forgotten. She unfolds their world and the ways in which they experienced colonial rule, acquaints the reader with a teacher's life, the growing up of a student thrown into a particular social milieu, and the evolution of religious ideas, and introduces their interpretation and their impact on the construction of a society modelled on the *Shariat*. Lastly, she is able to show that Islam in 19th-century India did not stagnate and that significant cultural change took place only through the adoption of Western values.

According to Metcalf, the Deoband movement illustrates that there are long and deep traditions of Islamic apoliticism and a de facto embrace of democratic and liberal traditions. Second, it demonstrates that the goals and satisfactions that come from participation in Islamic movements may well have little to do with opposition or resistance to non-Muslims or 'the West'. Last, what they offer their participants may be the fulfilment of desires for individual empowerment, transcendent meaning and moral sociality that do not engage directly with national or global political life at all.

Islamic Revival in British India is the product of meticulous scholarship and testifies to a remarkable erudition. Francis Robinson, the reviewer, wrote: 'Now we can share in the life

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and the workings of an Indian *madrasa*, the world of the 19th-century *alim* and Sufi loses some of its mystery, and the men themselves emerge as men of flesh and blood.'[8]

That we do, for Metcalf employs an empathetic view to decode the meaning-systems behind the ideas of the Deoband Mama. Instead of plainly criticizing the traditional view, Metcalf's narrative depicts the Mama as godly men, spirited, and self-sacrificing. The piety and learning of the Mama in a world torn by materialism is emphasized in her work and her idealization of the Deobandi Mama runs contrary to the widespread critique of their conduct and performance. Metcalf explains the response of the Mama to the colonial dominance of the British and the collapse of Muslim political power and discusses the ways in which they enhanced a sense of cultural continuity in a period of colonial rule. However, the implicit critique of 'enlightenment' and 'modernity' exists simultaneously with an emphasis on the traditional view which does not account for the impact of the Mama's conservative modes of thinking on gender justice and on other aspects of family life or on the processes of Deoband's negotiation with other communities and movements in the Indian context.

To ensure that the Deobandi and the Firangi Mahalis[9] alone are not seen to represent the authentic voice of Islam, Usha Sanyal produced a detailed account of Ahmad Riza Khan Barelwi and his movement.[10] Before her, C.W. Troll, a German Jesuit based in New Delhi, reflected on various Islamic trends in South Asia. His collection of essays on the *dargahs* was one of the early works on the subject.[11] Barbara Metcalf's study of the revivalist movement in Deoband, therefore, represents a body of literature which contributed to developing an understanding of the crystallization of thought and identity in centres of Islamic learning.

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Along with this increasing understanding of traditional Islamic views in the context of the Indian subcontinent, historical scholarship has helped to free, at least to some extent, the minds from sweeping generalizations and from tendentious exaggerations regarding the practice of Islam and Muslim communities in South Asia. To give an example, it has been made clear that Islam is hardly monolithic, encompassing as it does regional variations and changes over time. Indeed there are, and always have been, many Islams. The Islam of theologians remains very much with us, though the doctrine they present varies with time and place, from school to school, and from scholar to scholar. Then, there is the Islam of the subalterns, who have been alternately drawn by a 'great tradition' and a 'little tradition'. The great tradition itself is fissured by the Shia-Sunni divide.[12] Furthermore, the 'orthodoxification' of the little traditions has been going on, sometimes at a rapid pace, suggesting that the distinction between the great and little traditions is not a divinely ordained imperative. Nonetheless, the ensuing contest for the sacred as well as the secular space is an Islamic tradition, and is still very much with us. We see evidence of this in Delhi in the first half of the 19th-century, especially in the encounter with the colonial system. While the Shias believed that they inherited the Prophetic traditions, some leading Sunni ulama only grudgingly accepted them as brothers of faith. Indeed, a great deal of literary evidence for such a reaction can be found in contemporary memoirs, correspondence, novels, and poems. After 1857, in particular, Syed Ahmad Khan, Maulvi Nazir Ahmad and Maulvi Zakaullah, the pillars of what came to be known as the 'Delhi Renaissance', mirrored these trends.

Past and present polemics apart, historians and anthropologists place cultural practices in their historical as

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well as socio-economic contexts, thereby establishing that culture and its manifestation are not immutable.[13] Others argue that, in its regional and local specificity, Islam and its followers are susceptible to a variety of influences, and that they absorbed, as in Kashmir, many social and cultural practices of pre-Islamic origin. T.N. Madan, for example, has shown how in the Kashmir valley the relationship between the scriptural and the Rishi tradition is hierarchical: the latter may seem opposed to the former but is in fact encompassed by it.[14]

Studies on specific regional trends in the development of Islamic thought and practice have revealed the significance of specificities in the process of identity-formation.[15] Rafiuddin Ahmad elaborated on the regional perspective to the changes in Islam and the Muslim community which are testimony to its dynamism. Islam in Bengal took many forms and assimilated values and symbols that did not necessarily conform to Quranic precepts. Thus Rafiuddin Ahmad examined how the Muslims of Bengal made new adjustments to life.[16] At the same time, he and the historians who followed in his footsteps unfolded the complex process of Islamization and its implications on inter-community relations.[17] Although we were familiar with the big picture on Haji Shariat Allah and the 'Wahhabi' Movement,[18] Rafiuddin Ahmad highlighted how the itinerant religious preachers and mullahs sensitized the rural Muslims to their Islamic rather than their local or national identity. This was done at *baha* meetings and the rural *anjuman*. The author also pointed to the basic contradiction between the predominantly Muslim peasantry and their oppressors, the high-caste Hindu landlords and moneylenders. Based on an examination of the Bengali Muslim religious literature known as *puthis*, the book

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develops the central thesis that for the Muslim masses, the appeal of the Islamic revivalists proved a source of strength as well as weakness—it roused them to action but made them susceptible to communal propaganda.

Even if Islam had become the defining element in the lives of some individuals and groups, the internal differentiation among its followers, exacerbated in course of time by the growth of print culture and the distribution of polemical literature on theological disputes, made nonsense of the appeals to 'Muslim unity'. An average Bengali Muslim largely preferred to fashion his life on the basis of localities, traditions and relationships. For the ulama-theologian, the Shariat demarcated the boundaries of the community, but not for the Muslim peasant. Syncretic tendencies continued to feature in his life despite the reformist-revivalist movements directed against the 'Hindu' accretions. Rafiuddin Ahmad, too, argued that the objective differences between Hindus and Muslims at the mass level were themselves not strong enough to induce mutual conflict, and that it was only through a skilful manipulation of certain religious symbols and constant ideological propaganda that the latent differences could be articulated and later used as a potent instrument in the conflict between the two elite groups.[19]

Religious syncretism, in fact, posed the greatest threat to pietism and the stringent fulfilment of the injunctions of Islam in the veneration of the numerous Sufi sheikhs, syeds, and pirs.[20] As the Deccan's Sufi traditions show, there existed a long tradition of interaction between Muslims and Hindus and a great deal of variety of Sufi and other expressions of Islam. More generally, the Asaf Jahs' Deccan was the heir to a unique regional culture that, while deeply imbued with Muslim tradition, had nonetheless nurtured a distinctively

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Deccani approach to Islam and even at times transcended religious denominations altogether.[21]

In independent India the politicization of community identities draws upon historical traditions and perceptions. My own writings unfold the bewildering diversity of Muslim communities and the variety in their social and cultural traits and engage with identity and representational issues and their relevance to the rise of Muslim nationalism.[22] In *Legacy of a Divided Nation* I discussed the indeterminacy of social identity and of the importance of the secular in the history of social life of the subcontinent. I did so without glossing over the close imbrications between nationalism and a majoritarianism based on religious distinctions. The history of nationalism was explored to illustrate how the myth of Muslim unity and the resurgence of Hindutva forces gradually alienated large sections of Muslims, some of whom turned to the Pakistan movement in the mid-1940s while others felt the edge of 'difference' in the violence of the subcontinent's partition in 1947. From the preface of the book to the last paragraph, I questioned the essentialist view of Islam and took recourse to 'matter-of-fact narration' of regional and local variations in values and perceptions. I argued that, for India's largest minority, being a Muslim is just one of several competing identities for any individual; that there has never been a homogeneous 'Muslim India', whether in doctrine, custom, language or political loyalty; and that to make the most of their potential, Muslims must rally around those who hold firmly to the idea of a society committed to social justice and freedom. I concluded the preface with the following observation:

> It would be intellectually satisfying if, in some ways, this book is regarded as a personal manifesto, a statement through the history of partition and its aftermath, of the

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values which India's Muslims should cherish, of the national priorities they should promote.

Some of these arguments have been carried forward in 'Will Secular India Survive' (2004) and 'Living with Secularism' (2006).[23] Even though Satish Saberwal, co-editor, questions the optimism reflected therein, the glue that binds all these together are the debates around secularism and the challenges posed by the Hindutva forces. In this debate the battle lines are drawn, for at stake is the very survival of a pluralist society, a society that has prided itself on nurturing a substantial tradition, largely Hindu, of argument and pluralism.

Today, more and more social scientists are engaged in 'understanding' Islam and 'observing' Muslim societies within historically informed social contexts. With one-third of the world's Muslims now living as members of a minority, they are busy exploring their responses to globalization, westernization, and the impact of living in a minority.[24] To what extent does globalization cause the old traditional points of reference to disappear? To what extent does it reawaken passionate affirmations of identity that often emerge with withdrawal and self-exclusion?[25] These are important questions that touch deep-seated chords of feeling.

I started with a plea to draw Islam in South Asia into the contemporary discourses. I am glad that my colleagues at Jamia Millia Islamia, some of whom have contributed to this volume, have paid heed to my plea, and that they would carry forth the liberal and secular traditions of the likes of Zakir Husain, M. Mujeeb and S. Abid Husain. The Cambridge historian Herbert Butterfield had reminded us long ago that we should see ourselves as not quite autonomous or unconditioned, but as part of the great historical process:

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'not pioneers merely, but also passengers in the movement of things.'[26]

Yaaran-i rafta aise kya door tak gaye hain
Tuk kar ke tezgami is qafle ko jaa lo
The dead friends that you mourn are not so very far ahead;
Quicken your pace a little; overtake the raven.
—Mir Taqi Mir[27]

NOTES

* An extended version of this essay will appear in my forthcoming book *Ideas and Movements in Indian Islam: A Critical Appraisal* (tentative title).

1. Aziz Ahmad, *An Intellectual History of Islam in India*, Edinburgh, 1969, p. v.
2. John L. Esposito and John O. Voll (eds.), *Makers of Contemporary Islam*, Volume 1, New York, 2001.
3. Mehran Kamrava (ed.), *The New Voices of Islam: Reforming Politics and Modernity—A Reader*, London, 2006.
4. Barbara Daly Metcalf, *Islamic Revival in British India: Deoband 1860–1900*, Princeton, 1982. See Christopher Hill's comment that historians are interested in ideas not only because they influence societies, but also because they reveal the societies that gave rise to them, in his *World Turned Upside Down*, London, 1953 (Paperback).
5. Barbara Daly Metcalf (ed.), *Moral Conduct and Authority: The Place of Adab in South Asian Islam*, London, 1984. Katherine P. Ewing (ed.), *Shariat and Ambiguity in South Asian Islam*, Delhi, 1988.
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13. Ravina Aggarwal, *Beyond Lines of Control: Performance and Politics on the Disputed Borders of Ladakh*, London, 2004.
14. T.N. Madan, in *Biblio*, July–August 2005, p. 23.
15. See recent studies on Kashmir by Chitralekha Zutshi, *Languages of Belonging: Islam, Regional Identity and the Making of Kashmir*, 2003, New Delhi: p. 2; Mridu Rai, *Hindu Rulers, Muslim Subjects: Islam, Rights, and the History of Kashmir*, New Delhi, 2004.
16. David Gilmartin, 'Customary Law and Shariat in Punjab', in Katherine P. Ewing, *Shariat and Ambiguity*, p. 44; Rafiuddin Ahmad, 'Conflicts and Contradictions in Bengali Islam: Problems of Change and Adjustment', in Katherine P. Ewing, *Shariat and Ambiguity*, p. 115.
17. Rafiuddin Ahmad, *The Bengal Muslims 1860–1906: A Quest for Identity*, Delhi, 1981.
18. Qeyamuddin Ahmad, *The Wahhabi Movement in India*, Delhi, 1994 (first edition, 1966).
19. Rafiuddin Ahmad, *The Bengal Muslims*, p. 183.
20. Anna Suvorova, *Muslim Saints of South Asia: The eleventh to the fifteenth centuries*, London, 2006, p. 5; Arthur Buechler, *Sufi Heirs of the Prophet: The Indian Naqshbandiyya and the Rise of the Mediating Sufi Shaykh*, Columbia, 1988.
21. Nile Green, *Indian Sufism since the Seventeenth Century: Saints, Books and Empires in Mughul Deccan*, New York, 2006, p. 108.

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22. Mushirul Hasan, *Nationalism and Communal Politics in India, 1885–1930*, Delhi, 1979; *Legacy of a Divided Nation: India's Muslims Since Independence*, Delhi, 1997.
23. In Satish Saberwal & Mushirul Hasan (eds), *Assertive Religious Identities: India and Europe*, Delhi, 2006.
24. Olivier Roy, *Globalised Islam: The Search for a New Ummah*, London, 2004.
25. Tariq Ramadan, *Western Muslims and the Future of Islam*, New York, 2004, pp. 4–5.
26. Herbert Butterfield, *The Whig Interpretation of History*, London, 1967, p. 50.
27. Khurshidul Islam and Ralph Russell, *Three Mughal Poets: Mir, Sauda, Mir Hasan*, Delhi, 1998, p. 256.

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Section I

Islam and the World

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A monolithic vision of Muslim populations does not accurately represent the varied lived experiences of Muslims in history or in contemporary times. Muslim societies do not form a self-consistent, extra-territorial and trans-historical unit which may be described summarily by a small number of definitely constituted generic features transcending space, time and circumstance, features that are at once derived from, and foreclosed by, Muslim scriptures and their early historical experiences. The conflict among Muslims, as social and political actors, testifies to pluralism in Muslim societies. Muslims like everyone else hold different ideological and social orientations, very different values, and divergent views on the role of religion in public life and views of public affairs.

1

Pluralism in Muslim Societies*

AZIZ AL-AZMEH

It is a widely-held and broadly disseminated thesis that so-called 'Muslim societies' possess a rigorous generic unity and internal coherence of such importance that the question of pluralism within them, its presence, its absence, its forms—legal, social, political and otherwise—is one which may credibly be treated in a general way of broad applicability. The assumption made implicitly or explicitly is that Muslim societies form a self-consistent, extra-territorial and trans-historical unit which may be described summarily by a

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small number of definitively constituted generic features transcending space, time and circumstance, features that are at once derived from, and foreclosed by, Muslim scriptures and the early historical experience of Muslims overall.

Of course, such a thesis may be held to be sustainable if one maintains, first, that Muslim societies have preserved a continuity, homogeneity and immobility so prodigious as to set them apart from human societies at large—we find this thesis maintained not only by Muslim apologists and narcissists, but also by Orientalists and by such Islamophobes as US evangelists, Serb nationalists, and pundits of Hindutva. Second, this thesis might be held if one assumes that religion as defined by minimal dogma and expressed in traditional Muslim law as popularly understood, was and still is the ruling instance which defines the lives of Muslims everywhere; and finally, if one puts forth a third proposition, that Muslims have, as a consequence of what has just been said, always been at one regarding a number of essential matters, including the question of pluralism as defined today, and that there is an identifiable and common 'Muslim position' on pluralism. The scope of this article does not have the space to present my arguments for rejecting all the foregoing theses, not least arguments derived from the deepest possible aversion to anachronism on my part, and sustained by the realization that Muslims have clearly, like everyone else, lived in a bewildering variety of settings with very different, plural social and religious arrangements, none of which can be reduced to unity—though the ideological presumption of unity does indeed exist, and we see it gathering strength every day. My position also derives from the realization, and from the consequences of such realization, that religion as defined by medieval jurists, or by

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a naive reading of the Quran which is not that of the traditional jurists, practical men all of them, has not in any meaningful or real way been historically the primary and distinctive cement of Muslim societies.

So let me put these cautionary remarks behind me, and propose straightaway that it would not be meaningful to speak of pluralism in the historical experience of Muslim societies if we were to take the term 'pluralism' in the sense that it has come to acquire in the historical experience of the modern world as reflected in democratic political theories. Pluralism is more than simply a vicarious recognition, no matter how well-meaning, of the various pluralities that exist in all societies, linguistic, ethnic and regional, ideological, associational (including religious associations), generational, socio-economic and otherwise. Deriving ultimately from the canonical law, where it designated the holding by a single person of more than one ecclesiastical benefice or office, pluralism has come to acquire a variety of senses in the political thought of a democratic bent. Of particular salience to what I have to say is that pluralism has spanned the spectrum of possible interpretations between individualism and corporatism, in a variety of combinations and with a variety of emphases, all of which—and this is a crucial point—sought to transpose social plurality to the level of politics, and to suggest arrangements which articulate plurality with a single political order in which all duly constituted groups and all individuals are actors on an equal footing, reflected in the uniformity of legal capacity. Pluralism in this modern sense presupposes citizenship.

Clearly, this is premised upon the social and political developments of modern societies, and is generically different from antique, late antique and medieval socio-

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political arrangements, of which classical Muslim norms and socio-political arrangements formed integral part. I will come to these in a moment; but before I do so I should wish to strike yet another cautionary note, this time relative to what I termed the corporatist interpretation of pluralism as propounded today. This is one in which the term 'corporatism' is used in a highly metaphorical sense: by this I refer to the notion that some societies—and most particularly in the public mind internationally, Muslim societies—are so constituted that the only pluralistic arrangement possible for them is that of constructing a coalition of communities of blood or of birth, in which individuals participate in the political process as members of such communities of birth and of blood, as Muslims, Christians, Pathans, Tadjiks, Hazaras, Shiites, Sunnites, Kurds, Turcomans, Assyrians and so forth. Clearly, the blueprints for the creation of an Iraqi polity today, for instance, are so conceived.

Ultimately, this conception is derived from memories of Balkanization in the 19th and late 20th centuries. It is served up today in the seemingly benign terms of a multi-culturalist model of American provenance, and is one which displaces civic pluralism in favour of a communalist pluralism, destructive, in my view, of the political fabric of nation-states, and is a recipe for civil war, or what we might term 'cold civil peace'. Ideologically, this conception belongs to anti-modernist, irrationalist and romantic philosophies of society and of nation, generated mostly in Germany in the 19th century. Ideologically, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and the Society of the Muslim Brothers have extremely strong affinities with this. Such ideological positions imply a conception that particular social or national groups have certain invariant predispositions, such as the predisposition

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of Europeans for science, reason and civic pluralism, or the predisposition of Muslims for fanatical or at least unthinking attachment to their religious scriptures literally and simple-mindedly understood. Correlatively, there is also in this conception the implication that the same groups are characterized by congenital incapacities, such as the congenital incapacity of Muslims to think of political arrangements in terms of civic pluralism, and to rest forever content with an arrangement of public affairs ruled by a medieval legal system.

A few words about Iraq would well illustrate the difference I wish to draw between civic pluralism and the communalist pluralism which is today, as I suggested, of American provenance: a model of democracy, wedded to a libertarian model of multiculturalism and to economic neo-liberalism. It is this which is on offer in Iraq: the model of a nation as a community of communities rather than a civic assembly of citizens. This model is clearly at variance with Arab and European notions, traditions and experiences of a pluralist, civic democracy, at variance with democratic 'values' outside America, more attuned to the centrality of citizenship than to the communalization of individuals, and more inspired by models of French republicanism than the federalist or confederalist communalism of communities of birth and of pressure or special interest groups.

This communalist notion now being offered as exemplary is reflected in the communalist conception devised for future Iraqi polity, first in the Provisional Ruling Council (PRC), and later by the composition of the cabinet now in place, by local Iraqi and international commentary on the situation in Iraq and by the configuration to which the elections of 31 January 2005 were supposed to give institutional form. This, according to a benign reading of

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the American multiculturalist Shangri-La, fosters diversity and equality and so forth. Iraqi polity is conceived in this way as composed of an oligarchic coalition of communal—sectarian and ethnic—forces and worthies, for the most part long-resident abroad, who find their political affiliations smothered by their affiliation of blood. Thus the surreal spectacle of the Communists figuring on the Council and in the cabinet as Shiites, or secular liberals figuring as Sunnites along with the tribal chieftains, and so forth, as if the country were being politically and socially engineered along a model of internal fragmentation which will lead, at best, to a cold civil peace, at worst to civil war, after the image of Balkanization or Lebanization, which is clearly not a formula appropriate for nation-building. Such communalist pluralism results in civil wars and untold bloody calamities, as with the policies of the Muslim League in India, or the continuous wars occasioned by the creation of Israel.

This adaptation of American communalism—based on the image of a community of virtue and value, reduced in this case as in the case of American conservatism to religion—is very well expressed in the opinions of one Noah Feldman. A young professor of Law at New York University, with a smattering of Arabic, Feldman had been touted in the immediate aftermath of the occupation by the occupation authorities as a framer of the new Iraqi constitution, and continues to act as a consultant to the occupation authorities even after they thought better of this. He is the author of a book[1] which, drawing concrete consequence from American communalism (including Jewish communalism conceived in a neo-conservative mould, of which the 'left-wing' multiculturalist version is represented by Richard Walzer), speaks of a specifically 'Islamic' democracy into which the projected Iraqi body-politic should be made to fit.

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Without begging the question of whether it would be any more meaningful to speak of an 'Islamic democracy' than of Karl Marx's 'yellow logarithm' or of Jewish chemistry, the very common argument there presented is that, Iraq being a 'Muslim country', ostensibly Muslim values must be its principles of government. Thus, on analogy with Jewish principles in the Jewish State of Israel or Muslim principles in the Islamic State of Pakistan, Muslim legal principles should apply, as should 'Islamic equality' and 'Islamic liberty'. The penal code of Iraq must accommodate barbarous punishments and retrogressive social mores (including those regarding women), as these are ostensibly in accord with 'Muslim principles'. That such 'principles' are more in accord with Muslim fundamentalist reclamations than with social realities does not seem to matter, for the implicit analogy remains that of the unreflected rapture of 'American values', from which a Muslim analogy is generously drawn. Such propositions are also in accord with the polemical notions of Islam widely disseminated in the United States, and which gain particular salience as they form part of the evangelist imaginings of the End of the World in which Israel plays a crucial role[2]—imaginings well stated by the Reformation polemic against Islam, eloquently restated in the ultimate chapter of the *Life of Mohamed* by the New England Minister and erudite biblical scholar George Bush (1796–1859), a book which was first published in New York in 1832 and which went into more than a dozen editions in subsequent decades.

There is no denying the plural composition of Iraq, as of any other country, nor the fact, now harnessed to its own purposes by American policy, that in his last years Saddam Hussein did encourage the tribalization of politics, starting with his own community of blood, his sons and maternal

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cousins, and nurtured a severe social conservatism, particularly after 1991. This the US is perpetuating resolutely, along with its by now long-familiar support for Islamist political forces, now compounded by the spawning of very radical religious groups resulting from American wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. It is worth remembering that sectarianism—the transformation of religious or ethnic communities into political parties—is a new political phenomenon, that Iraqi polity like most Arab polities had been engaged for decades in a largely successful process of forming citizens, of neutralizing social groups of blood as political actors, and that Jacobin methods have historically always been an essential part of all such processes. Yet there is no truth to the proposition that Iraq had been 'ruled by Sunnis' who persecuted Kurds and Shiites. Under Saddam Hussein, all Iraqis were in equitable measure recipients of State repression, including the so-called 'Sunni triangle', which has lately been very much in the news.

A few salient facts would highlight the argument being made, that the sectarian and ethnic parameters of Iraqi polity are a very recent phenomenon, dating from the 1990s. Iraqi Arabs were not responsible for the division of Kurdish territories among Iraq, Iran, Turkey and Syria: this was the doing of the Treaty of Sevres, at a time when the Kurds lacked any national consciousness, but were a rural population, some of whose notables were well-integrated into various national policies: Iraq had for instance two Kurdish Prime Ministers under the royalist regime, and Ahmad Mukhtar Baban was for long the all-powerful Director of the Royal Court, while the second President of Turkey, Ismet Inonti, was of urban Kurdish stock. Moreover, the proportion of the Kurds in the Iraqi officer corps was greater than their proportion in the population (the first military

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coup in Iraq was led by a Kurdish officer), and the Kurds were generally well-integrated into political parties, particularly the Communist Party, the largest political party in Iraq until its destruction by the Baathists in the mid-1960s.

Shiites for their part were all-important in the Iraqi Communist Party, and the major Iraqi national and nationalist political parties had Shiite leaders: the Independence Party led by Muhammad Mahdi Kubbah, the Popular Front led by Muhammad Rida Shibili and the Liberal Party led by Saad al-Saleh. Shiites played a very important in the 1920 nationalist uprising against Britain. No political movements were constituted in Iraq on sectarian grounds before the Da'wa Party sponsored by Iran, and the present spate of political organizations set up by chanceries in Washington and London. At the social level, intermarriage was very common, and Arabic was the national language. Finally, talk of 'majority' and 'minority' in Iraq is hopelessly confused, and conditioned by present needs of political engineering. This confusion is not the least as there is no statistical base on which assertions of relative population weights are made. The last decennial census took place in 1997, but no Iraqi census questionnaire contained information on religious or sectarian affiliation. For those who estimate the Shiites to constitute a majority, there are others who estimate this not to be the case.[3] In any case, it is woefully wrong to assume that being a Muslim leads naturally to having Islamist tastes in politics: even in countries where Islamist forces were actively sponsored by the government, such as Pakistan, Algeria and Jordan, no more than some 30 per cent of the electorate voted for Islamist political groups.

This communalization of Iraq, this casting of Baghdad after the image of Salem and of Harlem, had long been in some derisory measure premeditated, not only with the American

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communalist model in mind, but also according to half-baked ideas about Arabs and Muslims more generally being primitive and exotic tribals and religious fanatics (hitherto preferred allies of the US), sublimated as 'communities': ideas of sheer nonsense, misleadingly abetted by the Iraqi National Council hovering in antechambers of the Pentagon, in concert with some academics, prior to the invasion and thereafter, pandering to uninformed prejudices in Washington.

The communalization of Iraq as reflected in the constitution of its new polity, and in the unleashing of untrammelled and ferocious sectarian conflicts (now, under US auspices, taking on electoral salience), is directly in keeping with ideas of sectarian pluralism being propounded, with various nuances, by tired triumphalist scholars and eager, untried younger ones, who concur on the communalization of the country on the assumption that an 'Islamic' polity would be the appropriate one in this war against modernity and modernism waged under the title of the Greater Middle East,[4] the Iraqi equivalent of evangelical attempts to roll back the 19th and 20th centuries in the United States. Hence the predilection of the occupation authorities in Iraq for more than flirtatious relations with the conservative Shiite clergy, including an attitude of Shiite ultra-montanism to foreign, Persian clerics, and their acquiescence to the abolition of the fairly modernist Law of Personal Status and its replacement by a bundle of communalist laws run by clergymen, Muslim and Christian. Such is the impulse to eradicate any notion of an Iraqi body-national that an Iranian cleric, Sistani, is being solicited by the US to play a foundational role in the political reconstitution of the country.

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The result of such a corporatist and communitarian political (and social) engineering implied by conceptions of Muslim pluralism can only lead, under present conditions, to the tyranny of the majority, when not to civil war. I will defer to Tocqueville's good sense and penetrating insight: such a communalist inflection of national selfhood tends, according to this most prescient of all observers of American democracy, to sap the virtues of public life, and is in his opinion admirably suited to human weakness, as 'the power of the majority [or what presents itself as speaking for the majority] is so absolute and irresistible that one must give up one's qualities as a man if one intends to stray from the track which it prescribes', and public opinion, or what stands for it, becomes 'a species of religion, and the majority its ministering prophet'.[5] For such communalism tends to devalue liberty—and therefore pluralism itself—in favour of collective virtue or so-called 'values'—as defined by the winning party, and dissolves civility into community.

So much, in brief, for communalist pluralism in a very contemporary setting. I shall move back to the point which prompted me to speak of Iraq, to the Muslim legal system. It is appropriate now to move to a consideration of some relevant questions raised by classical Muslim law and practice. I will not add to what is continuously said, and rightly so, about the tolerance of medieval Muslim polities and of Muslim law towards non-Muslims, though my attitude to these matters is historical rather than apologetic, and seeks less to make a rhetorical point in defence of Islam than to consider medieval practices of tolerance in the context of their time and in their ostensible implications for today. Clearly, medieval Muslim polities made arrangements for a relative form of self-rule by Christians and Jews, represented by their spiritual leaders, and provisions for

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freedom of worship. These communities were regarded as communities under protection, *dhimma*, at once socio-religious collectivities and units of taxation, and many of their members rose to high office or became purveyors of specialist goods, such as medical care for members of court, translation, and natural science, although these activities were by no means the preserve of non-Muslims. Non-Muslims achieved instances of incorporation into the ruling classes, following conversion (as in the Ottoman Empire) or without conversion (as with certain Rajput clans under the Mughals). Dhimma was not primarily a theological regime; there were indeed views of Christianity, some polemical and theological, others historical. But the mainspring of this arrangement was social, political and economic.

But it must be stressed that this regime was unstable over time and to the modern mind inequitable—and therefore not what we might understand by 'pluralistic' today—in its legal underpinnings. In classical Muslim polities—and by classical I refer not to the historically obscure foundational period of early Islam, but the classical caliphates of Damascus, Baghdad and elsewhere which might be characterized, politically and sociologically, as patrimonial, sultanic regimes—high office and social advancement, for Muslims and non-Muslims alike, depended largely on the personal favour and sometimes the disposition and whim of the ruler, or of his appreciation of immediate political advantage and disadvantage. It would be anachronistic to think of this as based on an institutionalization of notions of citizenship or equality of opportunity, which are modern phenomena. Bouts of persecution and enforced conversion existed, though they were infrequent, and by the standards of the Middle Ages Muslim polities were indeed benign and tolerant and knew little of the long-term hysterical fear and

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persecution of the outsider experienced by their European contemporaries obsessed with demons, witches, Moors, Saracens, Cathars, Jews and Lepers—it is perhaps instructive to remember that, on conquering England, William the Conqueror thought he was combating Saracens. Situations of war apart, wars of defence such as the Crusades or of conquest like those of Mahmud of Ghazni, such xenophobic energies among medieval Muslims were generally reserved for combating dissidents within the Abode of Islam.

Now we can shift our focus to legal arrangements. Here we must be concerned not with *shari'a* which is in historical fact not a code of law but a slogan that betokens good order generally, like the Greek *nomos* or the Sanskrit *dharma*. We must be concerned with the specific body of rulings, precedents, and law-making procedures and general principles called *fiqh*. This is a body of law which, apart from matters concerning rituals and devotions, takes as its principal point of departure the notion of individual capacity to enter into a contract, and this contractual capacity applies to individuals indifferently of religious community affiliation, or indeed of gender, the only conditions for enjoying this capacity being majority and sanity. Yet, upon the exercise of this generalized conception of right was superimposed a system of differential restrictions, for classical Muslim law, like all systems of pre-modern law, recognized that persons coming under its purview, not being citizens, enjoyed only those rights that befitted their stations. Legal personality was, first of all, restricted to the free elements of the population, and excluded slaves, who had a status not unlike that they had under Roman law. Women were less equal than men in regard to inheritance and other aspects of personal status, although the extent of this inequality, and the field to which it applied, varied among Muslim legal schools, women having

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for instance greater freedom in suing for divorce according to the classical Hanbalite school, or a more equitable share of inheritance among Twelver and Sevener-Ismaili-Shi'ites following the Ja'fari school. In fact, legal reforms in Iraq following 1958 used Ja'fari precepts to modernize inheritance law and render it more equitable to women, before the conservative reaction of the Baath regime overturned this. Women were also disadvantaged procedurally, in that in their legal witness they had a quantifiably smaller legal force—half that of men, and this disadvantage they shared with non-Muslims.

It would therefore not be right to speak in terms of toleration. The system of protection for non-Muslim communities in return for capital taxation, before it was carved into the stone of legal treatises, had initially been a mechanism for the socio-political and economic integration of local populations by the polity set up by the early Arab warrior-caste which initiated the Muslim conquests that eventually led to the Umayyad dynasty and, later, the Abbasids. It implied no recognition of disputational differences, as was the case at the time of the English revolution and its consequences, reflected in the toleration that John Locke suggested should be extended to nonconformist Protestants, but denied to Catholics. It assumed rather a set of quasi-natural differences. This integration of local populations—predominantly Christian—into the early Muslim polities was subsequently elaborated and integrated into a set of legal rulings which were economically equitable and socially differentialist, as I have just indicated, one which also allocated special dress to Christians and Jews (these were societies where, as in others, persons of different official, professional, regional and other groups were instantly recognizable by their specific dress),

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in addition to various rituals of daily abasement, though these remained largely unused, and were deployed as the political occasion required; they are still advocated by some radical Islamist groups today. As to foreign Christian residents, most generally traders, they generally enjoyed, as was the case almost universally (and Jewish bankers and traders at medieval European courts are a case in point) an extra-territorial legal status, negotiated on an ad hoc basis, prefiguring the later Ottoman system of Capitulations—despite the name, this did not imply initially any meddlesomeness on the part of foreign Christians, or disadvantage for Muslims, but only a set of commercial privileges granted by the sovereign—or the Mughal regime of 'factories'.

All in all, therefore, classical Muslim historical experience presents us with a set of precedents of plurality and pluralism which would not be recognizable to modern acceptations of pluralism, or which would provide 'sources of inspiration' for them. And in any case, classical pluralism in Muslim societies extended beyond the formal arrangements provided for by law, for these were societies of a highly composite nature, as were most human societies before the Protestant Reformation and the Napoleonic State, differentiated by language, dialect, locality, ethnic origin, clan relations and genealogies, social group, cultural baggage and much else. There is no reason, except for the revivalist discourses of Muslim traditionalism, to maintain that these differences were subject to the logic and institutes of Muslim jurisprudence, or that it was these institutes that governed social life. Classical Muslim law, including the apparently inflexible law of inheritance, has interacted with social and property relations in very diverse and very interesting ways, as it did with local customs; its courts were not always available

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in times when central control and communications were difficult; Muslim jurists, like lawyers everywhere, were practical men, not ideologues; and finally, recourse to the legal system is, after all, most often an instance of last resort, used when the normal arrangements and conventions of social life become contentious or indeed when they fail, in individual transactions or systemically. I cite all these matters in order to stress my firm conviction that it is not through law that we may be able to understand Muslim historical experience, but rather the inverse: it is by the careful and objective historical scrutiny of these experiences that we may be able to interpret the law and examine the way in which it influenced or failed to influence or otherwise interacted with practices and conceptions of pluralism. The world cannot be properly understood if stood upon its head.

Yet the curious fact is that we live today in a world where two unlikely bedfellows are at once vocal and televisually attractive, tending as they echo one another to drown out the voices that better represent the normal arrangements of social life. The one is a certain postmodern excess of zeal which, in the name of multiculturalist difference, celebrates the usually fantastic social traditionalism of other, nonwestern peoples and communities. The other is of course homegrown Muslim traditionalism, increasingly literalist and illiterate in modes of expression and of sentiment, which decrees that Muslims are in fact super-Muslims, that they are everywhere one, and have always been one as to their passion for medieval legal notions, and when not, must be made to realize their real essence beyond and behind the changing realities of Muslim societies, be it by education or by the deployment of a sanctifying violence of which much was witnessed in recent years: in Afghanistan, Iran, Algeria, Sudan, Egypt and elsewhere.

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I would submit that a notion of pluralism arising from these shadowy historical memories, real or contrived, is not useful for the present purposes of any Muslim society or rather, for any State with a Muslim majority, for it is States that must claim our attention today. I find the rhetoric of pluralistic indigenism, by Muslims as by others, not useful, and indeed in the long term harmful. I find it rather pointless to score rhetorical points, such as claiming that 'Democratization is not the same as Westernization' (the title of a recent article by Amartya Sen in *The New Republic*, 6 October 2003), for such apologetic points, easy to score but not very meaningful, are not sufficiently attentive to the potential practical consequences of such advocacy. Such practical consequences of indigenist reclamation and the attempted valorization of medieval arrangements are in evidence among Muslims as among others. Most superficially, they are evident in what we might term the extortion of particularity or of authenticity, such as many States, in Muslim lands and elsewhere, claiming that this or that democratic arrangement is out of keeping with indigenous and presumably Muslim values. More consequentially, and more systemically given the condition of countries such as Iraq, Afghanistan, Lebanon or India, they are translated into the model of communalism, and this at a time when as a result of war, inequalities, regional disparities, international stresses, and patrimonialism and clientelism, the social and national fabric has been fractured and indeed systemically disaggregated. Communalist pluralism can only aggravate the degradation of this fabric. It sets up region against region, community against community, leading to regressive social stresses the end of which is not yet in sight. By identifying a religious community with the nation, by transposing social

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group into political party and society into State, it downgrades civility in favour of blood.

The uses of indigenist pluralism are not a fatalistic call by nature but political contrivances, or at best sublimations of impasses and incapacities, flights from the realities of the present. No other matters account for the solicitation of shadows of the past, for calling social arrangements of a remote past blueprints for modern pluralism, for taking tribal consultation or conciliar authoritarianism that go by the name of *shura* for democracy, for the gentrification of archaism. All this after we have gone through major historical upheavals, adopted notions of citizenship, of parliamentarism, developed ideologically-based political parties, adopted schools and universities in our educational systems, taken over the notion of codified law, substituted science for received wisdom and for an ancient lore of nature. All of these, in the modern world, are of Western provenance, but having become universal despite resistances, are no longer Western. No amount of fantasy, no amount of teaching dharmic astrology at hitherto reputable Indian universities or dwelling on the Quran as a document of natural science and a manual of law or of ancient history, will change this, and no amount of seeking inspiration from legend will stop anachronism from being anachronism, unless of course Muslims choose to exit from history and live helplessly, violently and miserably in the dreamy Shangri-La of Authenticity, cocooned in an air of a generalized and paranoic fear of the Western demon, of xenophobia.

What must be realized is that it is not some trans-historical corporate social nature of Muslims that is calling them to seek intoxication with the mirage of a past that is no more. It is with realization such as this that we can see that the true

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conflict lies not between a West and an Islam, both of which do not in reality exist, in the form in which they are purveyed. It is rather between different sectors of Muslim populations: for Muslims everywhere, like everyone else, hold different views of public affairs, different ideological and social orientations, very different values, and divergent views on the role of religion in public life. I use the term 'Muslim' to indicate of course persons who are Muslims by accident of birth, irrespective of their belief or disbelief, or of the inflection they give to their Muslim belonging, or the lack thereof. It is a conflict among Muslims, as social and political actors. This is a plurality that must be kept firmly in view, and not be allowed to give way to a monolithic vision which impoverishes the past and distorts the complexities present. Muslim historical experiences can and indeed do inspire, but they inspire aesthetically, and perhaps in a vague way morally, but they cannot inspire the desire for their repetition.

NOTES

* Lecture delivered on 29 January 2005 at India International Centre, New Delhi.

1. N. Feldman, *After Jihad. America and the Struggle for Islamic Democracy*, New York, 2003.
2. P. Boyer, 'The Middle East in Modern American Popular Prophetic Beliefs' in A. Amanat and M. Bemhardsson (eds.), *Imagining the End: Visions of Apocalypse from the Ancient Middle East to Modern America*, London, 2002, pp. 312–35; Z. Lockman, *Contending Visions of the Middle East: The History and Politics of Orientalism*, Cambridge, 2004, Ch. 7.
3. Khaireddin Haseeb, *Mustaqbal al- 'Iraq* [The Future of Iraq], Beirut, 2004, p. 131.

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4. See P. Waldman, 'A Historian's Take on Islam Steers U.S. in Terrorism Fight', *Wall Street Journal,* 3 February 2004; Feldman, *After Jihad.*
5. Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy* in *America,* 2 vols. (1835), reprint New York, 2000, Vol. I, pp. 98, 123, 267, Vol. II, pp. 11, 123.

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Christianity and Islam can understand each other only by entering into a dialogue with humility and consistency. Respect for each other should be the running theme of such a dialogue. This would enable them to work together to change the human condition for the better. For Ramadan, it is a question of love. He says, 'you can reinvigorate love within academia, spread love and peace because at the end of the day what you want is love and peace.'

2

The Relationship between Christianity and Islam*

TARIQ RAMADAN

The relationship between Christianity and Islam is very topical, not only because of the time in history we are living in, but because it reveals many dimensions in our self-understanding. The understanding of our own self is affected by the way we look at what we perceive as the 'other', the Muslim or the Christian, in fact as in a mirror. It is easy to sit in a room and say one is open-minded and ready to speak to Christians, to Muslims or to Jews. The challenge is not to sit in a room and to say one is ready. The challenge is to show that we are doing it, we are making it, we are experiencing it in our daily life. Words are not enough, for words are that dimension of our connection with reality which is sometimes the easiest and the most misleading.

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My own experience, as a Muslim, was gettig to know people who were Christians before engaging with their religious texts. When I started to travel around the world, more than 25 years ago, I went to South America. I met Christians working on social issues at the grassroots level, trying to be consistent with their own values. I understood Christianity from the sincerity of their actions. We may disagree on the substance but we agree on the objective. The objective is the consistency between actions and principles, actions and values. For this faith is essential. So I met people in South America, and later in Africa who dealt with social issues. I first came to Asia 18 years ago; again I met with Christians, people working at the grassroots level. And then out of this personal experience, I became interested in their religious books, reading and understanding these through their experience, their morals and their testimony. I think it is important when it comes to Islam's relationship with Christianity, not to compare two texts, or two sets of texts, and say that this is the relationship we are talking about. We are speaking about human beings, of feelings, of psychology, of memories; we are speaking about that which is deep inside. Some people think that the true academic discourse is a discourse of texts. But academia is not only about texts, academia is about the reality. The reality constructs the text, it is the context, the memory, the psychology and the relationship. We need an academic discourse on reality, not an academic discourse on texts. We cannot transform academia into something which is theoretical and far from life and becomes an elitist way of looking at reality, a way in which people speak on behalf of others without any connection with reality. And all my life, I have one challenge, which is to reconnect universities with

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cities, universities and so-called professors with the reality, and with the people who are living this reality.

The dialogue between Christianity and Islam often lacks real understanding. We can focus on the theoretical dimensions and go through our texts. And at the end our texts, when we read them with an open mind, the texts say we are tolerant. And the discussion ends by saying that the texts do not encourage intolerance. We can go the other way, which is to speak about the reality and history and say that these people were bad: all the Muslims were bad because in this specific situation they were oppressing the Christians, or the Christians were wrong because in this specific historical circumstance they were oppressive. So we essentialize from a historical experience, and we define either Islam or Christianity. Speaking either only from the text or only from the reality would be wrong. The way we choose is to experience the dialectical process between text and historical experience. We should respect what history teaches us and learn from it and then come back to the texts and try not to repeat the mistakes of the past, try conceive a vision for the future.

This dialectical process is very important. I do not want to theorize the relationship between Islam and Christianity, what we had experienced and what we are experiencing now. I feel it is important to acknowledge that the relationship was not always good, that we have sensitive texts that could be misunderstood and misleading within our respective communities. Unlike many people from academia I feel it is imperative not to describe 'neutrally' but to take a stand. Neutrality in scientific discourse is never neutral. We can never be neutral; we always speak from a specific viewpoint. A dialogue with the perceived 'other' often takes a wrong turn when we compare our ideal with their reality,

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our values with their behaviour. What we should do instead is to compare values with values and behaviour with behaviour and probe further and look into the gap that we all experience between our values and our own behaviour. Let us not speak about our perceived discrepancies. Coming from a scientific methodology, I will not compare values with reality, but try instead to move from the reality to the text. As I told you, I am taking you on a fast journey through history and the idea is to remind us of some of the issues that are important in history and then move to the text and then form a vision in the end.

To understand history one needs time and effort. Study of history makes one humble and deepens the understanding of one's mind. It starts a process of realization, which says that the past was not always great. Let us start here, take the past as a lesson for humility. Even within academia, people speak about theory but do not link it with the past. One's own past can but reconcile one with humility because while our respective religions are great, our fellow brothers in Islam or Christianity have not always shown greatness. Developing a vision for the future involves learning from the past and learning is a spiritual process.

Let us draw a parallel from the concept of trauma in psychoanalysis. Childhood trauma that is consciously forgotten comes back later in life. And this is as true with history and collective psychology as it is in our personal lives. An Austrian converted to Islam in the 1920s and took the name Mohammad; he translated the Quran into English with a commentary. Coming from the heart of Europe, he had to deal with the relationship between the Judeo-Christian European tradition and Islam. According to him one can never understand the reactions of the present if one does not confront the trauma of the past. We can face the

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problems of the past by acknowledging them first, and then acknowledging the fact of trauma; only then can one go beyond it.

In the context of the relationship between Islam and Christianity, we know that there is something which is very strong in the Muslim mindset today. Coming from the history of the Middle Ages, the first important source of the Muslim perception of oppression is the inquisition in Andalusia which led to the view that one could not remain a Muslim in Europe. The Eurocentric view of the time saw Islamic culture as the undesirable 'other' which was the antithesis of Europe's growing domination of the world. This phenomenon affected other parts of the world too, and is central to the discourse of the co-option of polity by the church in medieval Europe. There is a verse in the Quran saying that the Jews and Christians will never accept Muslims as they do not follow their path, their religion, their way of life. This comes from the historical experience of rejection and persecution—the crusades and the inquisitions are part of the collective experience of Islamic culture. This was a very real problem the followers of Islam had in Europe. Within the context of Christianity, a very strong, very deep critical assessment has been made of this period. Muslims today should listen to voices within Christianity saying: 'this was not the true message of Christianity'. There were voices then, there are voices today, saying 'this is a shame in our religious tradition'. We have to listen to this. We cannot just accuse, judge the people of today by what happened yesterday and essentialize the religion by saying, 'you are what the past says about you'. That is not true, that is not right, that is not humanity.

The second great event which is part of our collective historical experience and shapes our relationship is of course

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colonization. Colonization was not just a political process and it was not perceived as such by the people who were colonized, whether here in India, or in other countries which were colonized. Missionaries came along with the colonizers, to civilize the people; the West was coming with its civilization, to teach the colonized how they were to be civilized. Civilization was technology, it was democracy and it was Christianity. Some of the voices supported colonization because this was the way to spread the word of Jesus. I heard this in India the last time I came here, but I heard it much oftener in Africa, when I responded by saying they needed to participate in interfaith dialogue. I have met some African scholars, educated in history and the roots of their country, who have said that they do not want interfaith dialogue because the Europeans came for centuries to convert them. This was proselytism; it had nothing to do with helping them, it was always about taking a loaf of bread in one hand and the Bible in the other. Colonization is discussed in the West today, and the French President Nicholas Sarkozy has remarked that the West need not apologize for colonization which also did some good. On the contrary, all colonized people say nothing was right in colonization, it was wrong on principle. We need to have a clearly articulated answer to this; is there something, or was there something that was good in the colonization process? Some say everything was wrong with colonization, others say the colonizers built hospitals and roads for the people. Now we should leave this discourse behind us, be able to look beyond and listen to the voices within the West, within Christianity, saying colonization was wrong. The West has scholars; they have religious voices saying that colonization was wrong. We need to listen to the other side, and not only to the people who agree with our viewpoints. We need to discuss these issues

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with intellectual honesty, and acknowledge that some Christian missionaries have worked sincerely to help the people. I have met Christians at the grassroots level, sincere, helping the people and not trading religion for bread.

The issues of persecution in the Middle Ages and colonization constitute the trauma. At the same time we need to understand why Christians raise questions about persecution under Islamic rule. In the Ottoman Empire in the 13th and 14th centuries non-Muslims—and among them the Christians—were obliged to dress differently so that the Muslims could know who they were. These injustices have happened in history. So we need to acknowledge the fact that Muslims have used privileged status to victimize and oppress other people and to stigmatize them. We speak about an ideal condition where people lived in diversity, Muslims lived in harmony with the Jews, the Christians. That is fine, but it was mainly an elite business. At the grassroots level it was not always so ideal, at the grassroots level people were discriminated against, some Muslims did not understand the true message of Islam, and we have to be honest about this. It is wrong to take something out of context and claim that that is Islam or this is the great Andalusian period. It may not have been the only reality. The Prophet alone was doing right with the Islamic message. Others were doing things that could be disputed, are open to criticism, can be assessed. All our scholars have said so. All our scholars have said that Muslims have been very quick to idealize some people, and to confuse respect with blind following, that the critical mind has been absent, absent even from the way we deal with our scholars. When one sees a great scholar like Abu Hanifa sitting with his students and pushing them to criticize him, this is very close to today's views on education. But when we think of the instructions

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in our mosque, communication is one-way, top-down. Worse, we do not even listen to the one who talks, we do not study, we do not know, but we idealize.

Coming from the Christian experience, the Ahmadiya is something which we have to reassess. We have to acknowledge the fact that historically speaking it was not always, and was in fact far from being always, an institution of quality and respect. The Prophet, peace be upon him, had said that the Jews have the same rights and the same duties as us. The Prophet respected the Christians and the Jews but the Muslims after the Prophet have not always done so. We have to acknowledge this historical fact which is a very important reality. Now, in some Muslim majority countries, there is structural discrimination against non-Muslims. One cannot deny the fact that historically speaking it is happening. I have met with governors, with people in Malaysia, people in Sudan, people in my country of origin, talking about the voice we have to use to spread Islam, about how to give the others a way to speak but with continence, that we have to protect ourselves from what they have to say, and that we have to end what is structural discrimination. When Christians cite historical problems with Muslims arising from structural discrimination we cannot deny the fact, and this is an ongoing process. However if one has to look at a historical dimension, during some periods in the Ottoman Empire such as the reign of Suleiman the Magnificent, there was no structural discrimination. Some rulers were in fact very open-minded, open to Christianity, Judaism, and allowed their propagation, but some others were not, and we have to acknowledge this. Thus these are elements of our mutual and common traumas. We have to accept and acknowledge this, it is the message that history sends all of us. I will never accept the Muslim mindset and the state of

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Muslims only in the context of the references to the text of the scriptural sources, but in the context of history and reality.

It should humble us to come to this understanding; that this is what we have done with our texts, this is what some Muslims or some Christians did with texts, spreading love, spreading respect, spreading mutual understanding. This is what we say today. But not all of us think this way, because there still are Muslims saying no to discussions with others. We still have Christians, like a person in Berlin who interrupted my talk saying that he was not going to listen to a heretic because at the end of the day I was not going to state why I was not following Jesus. When he left the room another Christian from the gathering came to me and said that this person was not one of them. This is a very narrow identification. This is exactly what I experience sometimes with Muslims, with some Muslims there is no other way. So we are dealing with the history of misunderstandings, wrong perceptions and traumas and we have to try now to go beyond this, but for me the only way to go beyond this is to acknowledge that it happened, to acknowledge the fact that this is our current history or our respective histories, and then to try to ask ourselves why it happened.

We need to ask ourselves where it comes from, why it is happening and why in both traditions, Christianity and Islam, the readings and interpretations are completely different, and that they are not coming out of nowhere, they are coming from the texts. Within Christianity a literal reading of the text is what the Protestants call fundamentalism. The message of this is that anyone who is not acknowledging the fact that Jesus is the Son of God cannot experience salvation. Fundamentalism is coming from the text in a specific interpretation. If one reads the Christian literature in the

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Middle Ages, one will find that not everyone had a say. We understand that there are many interpretations; the starting point is to understand that Christianity is complex because there are many interpretations. In some interpretations one cannot be acknowledged by God if one does not recognize Jesus as the Son of God. Second, if your prophet came after our prophet and this is not a revealed text then he is not a true prophet. This understanding is based on a commonsensical logic of the religion. And the logic is that no one can ask the Christians to acknowledge the fact that Prophet Mohammad is a prophet because if they were to accept that he is a prophet they are no longer Christians. But this logic could lead you either towards the fact that I do not acknowledge your prophet but still I respect you, or to the view that I do not acknowledge your prophet so I am going to fight you because you are heretics. And the point is that the texts are interpreted through a mindset, which could be closed or open. The Catholic Church in medieval Europe reflected this literal understanding of the scriptures when they imposed their authority and set up the inquisition and discriminated against not only the Muslims, but also against the Jews and even the Protestants. Though both the Christians and the Muslims say religion has nothing to do with violence, this is not true. Religion has to do with violence, because it has to do with human beings, and any one of us is potentially violent. The scriptures contain texts that can be used to remove this violence, or texts that can help us to justify it, it depends on the mindset of the reader. Violence between religions has a rational historical basis.

The Prophet, peace be upon him, was with Al Queresh before he came to Mecca to perform the pilgrimage. The people of Queresh were to sign a pact, but they were denying the truth of Islam, and denying the fact that he was

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a Prophet. When his nephew Ali came and he was writing *Bismillah Rahim e Rahim,* the non-believers objected to his writing *Rahim e Rahim.* Ali, full of faith, but driven by emotion rather than a critical mind, said that he could not remove *Rahim e Rahim,* as these are names of God. The Prophet asked him to remove the words as he put himself in the minds of the other; in contemporary psychology we call it intellectual empathy. Likewise the Prophet asked Ali to accept their objection to Mohammad Rasulullah and asked him to write his name as Mohammad son of Abdullah. When Ali, full of love, faith and emotion, could not do so, the Prophet himself changed his name in the text of the pact. The Prophet's argument was that if they were to acknowledge him as a Prophet, then there would not be a war. One cannot write an equal pact based only on one's own logic and not the other side's.

Thus it is not rational when, in dealing with Christians, Muslims expect them to acknowledge that the Quran is the very word of God.

A dialogue starts with deep faith and intellectual empathy and a critical mind. A reasonable attitude is simple, it has to have a reasonable rationality, reasonable spirituality, and reasonable understanding.

For us Muslims Islam is not the last religion. Abraham was himself a Muslim, before Islam. What Islam means is to acknowledge that there is one God. So Islam in the time of Jesus was Christianity, Islam at the time of Moses was Judaism, and this does not contradict history.

So it does not mean that there is no last revelation that you are following—of course you are following it because you believe in it—but you cannot colonize the concept of Islam only for yourself. At the end of the day you are not the judge of the other religion. You have to spread the word,

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but we keep the word and we judge other people. I can discuss with all scholars and Muslims, the important point for me is to say that there are facts that can be misunderstood and interpreted very superficially. We need to agree on the interpretation. My point is to acknowledge the fact that texts are problematic if we read them literally, both in the Bible as well as in the Quran. So in history we have trauma, in texts we have risks: how are we to deal with this?

To deal with history and to deal with the texts, to build the future, the first point is education. When I speak of education, it is a very deep word but the starting point is that when one deals with history one deals with human beings, and when one deals with texts one deals with ideals. So one is in a space between human behaviour and ideals. In between these two there is a need to educate oneself by knowing that the starting point of education is humility. I am advocating humility everywhere, because it is the universal state of mind that is necessary now for every one of us. With arrogance there is no true education, education comes out of humility.

If we want to build a future, and try to come together, we need education. Education is first to know a bit about one's own self. We need to step cautiously; as the Prophet once advised the Muslims to avoid going too fast to the text of the Arabs. This was because he wanted them to be secure and then to be open. One is open in the right way when one feels secure with one's own way—and this is very important. If you do not know who you are, you are scared of who you are not. This is a basic psychological phenomenon. When Buddha was speaking about compassion, the first step of compassion he was talking about was compassion towards one's own self. Likewise, when we speak about education,

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the first step is education about one's own self. And then you open the door, you open the ways towards the others.

There are four conditions in the interfaith dialogue.

The first condition is to want to learn. I am going to listen to what you are telling me about your texts. I am not deciding that my interpretation of your text is better than yours. Just as no Muslim would like a Christian to claim that his reading of the Quran is final, no Muslim has the right to interpret the Bible and imagine that his reading is superior. They cannot overlook centuries of theology, centuries of scholarship, just because they think that they have the means to reach the text. The Bible is not an easy text to read, the Quran is not an easy text to read, and we need scholarship. So during interfaith dialogue we need to speak with the other and understand the other's text through his reading of it and without any bias from one's own reading of it. The Muslims should understand that this is the only way, because if not, they will have to answer others reading the Quran and saying that the Quran sanctions violence.

Second, I have the right to ask, out of sincerity, any question I want to. When one is in a critical dialogue, which is an open dialogue, it is necessary to ask questions. The only way to go beyond mistrust is to ask all the questions that arise in one's mind. One can quote a verse, ask its meaning and listen to what the people are saying from their knowledge and understanding. All questions are legitimate and the only way to build trust.

Third is to ask oneself what kind of connection one has with one's own community. This is important because today we have specialists of interfaith dialogue who go from one country to another in similar settings and talk about interfaith dialogue. They are completely disconnected with their own community. There is a new community of people

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speaking about the communities, never connected to the communities, and these are the new specialists of interfaith dialogue. They change nothing but they meet everyone. And in fact, they do not need to, because they know each other. So the condition here is to be connected to one's own people. In all the universities of the world, in all the communities we need scholars, we need professors, connected to the people. Those who are able to translate, to think in a very complex way far from the people are not going to change our society. To think about complex issues in a simple way, to try to spread around a very strong message of commitment, this is where our responsibility lies. One does not have to blame the people who cannot read and understand. We have, instead, to ask all the people who do read and understand what they are doing with their reading and understanding. The important thing is the commitment to change.

And the last condition is to work together, and to work together is not to sit around the table and say we are going to speak about this verse. Rather we need to speak about human beings, about social justice, about you as Christians, us as Muslims, what can we provide as an ethical teaching to protect the dignity of the human being, to be able to have a discourse with all religions about the oppressed people, the need of justice, the need of dignity. Do we have in Christianity, in Islam, in Judaism, any teaching which asks us to neglect nature, to not respect nature? There is no teaching telling you not to respect, but we do not come together to work on these issues. We prefer wasting our time on theoretical differences rather than to come to a true discussion and a true discussion can happen only if one is sincere with one's values. The point is not to be in competition with other religions, the way is to be in

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competition with the world to make it better tomorrow than it is today. Our religion tells us that diversity was wanted by God. If Allah had willed He would have made us one community but we are not one community, and so it must be for the better. Many Muslims are very content that the Quran says they are the best community among the people. Likewise the Jews think they are the chosen people. Do we realize that we are exactly the same? We have to read the whole of the verse, which says: You are the best people in so far as you promote what is right and you resist what is wrong. You are the best when you do something, not because of your blood, but because of your creation. At the end of the day what matters is your behaviour, the way you are, whether you are consistent.

All of us, at the end of the day, have to come down to something which is very simple. Do not judge the other, come back to the roots of the religion, enter into a dialogue with something which is central here: humility as a state of mind, consistency as a state of intellect. Respect the other, even if we have differences of opinion. We work together to change the human condition for the better: this is the way to look at the trauma and to accept the past, to look at the text and accept the misleading interpretations, and then to look at the future to build something and to take from the others what you have forgotten in your own tradition. The Christians working at the grassroots in South America taught me what was in my own religion. It is a question of love, you can reintegrate love within academia, spread love and peace, because at the end of the day what you want is love and peace. If we are competing for converts then there is something wrong in our understanding.

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NOTE

* Lecture delivered by Tariq Ramadan at the Jamia Millia Islamia on 3 July 2008 entitled 'Christianity and Islam: Values and History'. The lecture was organized by the Outreach Programme, JMI, in collaboration with The Attic, New Delhi.

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Rumi asks the central question: 'What is it to be a Muslim?' Through his experiences of living in different Muslim countries, he has come to the conclusion that Muslims can have different identities and varied interpretations on different aspects of life.

3

Shifting the Boundaries: Revisiting Islam and Muslimness

RAZA RUMI

Muslimness is an elusive state of being. There are watertight strictures of the theological identity defined by men, interpreted as the *Sharia,* on the one hand; and the broad political and cultural sense of the self, on the other. Identity, in any case, is a messy affair: shifty, shifting and, eventually, imagined. While 9/11 placed Muslims at the centre stage of global politics, the broth had already been simmering in the cauldrons of biased academe and pop reality magnified through the bloodthirsty lens of corporate media.

So what is it to be a Muslim? An inflexible bag of rituals? Or a cultural sense of belonging or a deeper dogma ingrained in young minds? I have never considered myself anything but a believer, a 'practising Muslim'. This has never been at variance with my secular and inclusive pretensions despite the fact that the clergy in my country considers

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secularism akin to atheism, a sort of mirror image of the Pakistani political foundation. The clerics translate secular as *la-deen*—at best, irreligious and at the worst, godless.

Ironical that this business of religious identity is articulated in a land that was the crucible of the secular Indus valley civilization, the non-militant Buddhism and a peculiar version of South Asian Islam that spread via the sufi *khanqahs* and was a sort of amalgam of the Central Asian with the ancient South Asian. Even more ironical is the reality, neglected and veiled, that the lived Islam is located around *dargahs*, tribal codes and customs which are irreligious in their own way. But who cares? Referred to as the world's most dangerous country, Pakistan, according to the pundits of global opinion, is a haven for Islamic terrorists. Collateral damage, therefore, is kosher and a necessity to undo the unstated part of the 'axis of evil'.[1]

Labels and more labels. On the global shelves such products sell well and work in favour of a war machine hungry for energy resources, territory and blood.

* * *

It was a glorious autumnal afternoon when a United Nations colleague rushed into my room in a ramshackle municipal building south of Kosovo, not far from the bastions of orthodox Christianity in northern Kosovo and Serbia. 'Planes have hit the World Trade Center,' he said. An hour later we were glued to the television sets.

The greatest cliché of our times is how 9/11 changed everything but like many other clichés this was true. At least for Muslims across the globe. For weeks, I lived among endless debates and hushed insinuations about the global Muslim problem.

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All of a sudden my Indian colleague, a closet Bharatiya Janata Party supporter, threw the gauntlet of my messed-up identity as a Pakistani Muslim. It had suddenly become a South Asian menace. In every drawing-room conversation, we were described as inheritors of the barbarian invaders. The script was being polished for all that was to follow. The Westerners in the United Nations Mission, though, were more careful with their choice of words. They privately confessed the folly of engaging with the Taliban. I was quick to remind whoever would care to listen that Jihad and Taliban were simple imperial instruments and not the Muslim behavioural archetype.

The Kosovars, too, were stunned. Overwhelmingly Muslims, they shared no cultural affinity with the Taliban brand of Islam. Kabul was thousands of miles away and they only had a vague empathy with the bombed Afghanis, especially the nameless civilians who, trapped in crossfire, had nowhere to go.

We had a mosque next to the municipality building; a Turkish-Ottoman-style grand structure. I attended several Friday prayers whose simplicity was no match to the boisterous South Asian ritual. Old men with Turkish caps would be all dressed to pray and almost all the believers came dressed in Western clothes. What got me wondering was the mosque leader, a gregarious man, who would be found in the local pub during the never-ending evenings of that little town. This was a little unpalatable for a Pakistani. One day I asked him about his rationale for blending alcohol with Islamic practices. There was laughter in response.

I never got a rational answer.

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At Jakarta airport, I noticed a letter from the Interior Ministry pasted on the wall. It directed airport authorities that nationals of countries such as Afghanistan, Sudan, Somalia, and yes, Pakistan, needed security clearance before the issuance of visas.[2]

This was a shock to my notions of Islamic brotherhood (fed to us by school textbooks and the media). The official explained my potential security threat in a roundabout way. I was irked that this was happening to me at Jakarta airport, not JFK or Heathrow. Making an effort at self-control I managed to get out of the situation quickly. It helped to invoke Islamic fraternity and show resentment towards the Western media's stereotyping tendencies. Though, what really was the quick ticket to avoid harassment was probably the work-status card of an international development organization that I was carrying.

As we drove through the capital of the most populous Islamic nation, the lack of religious symbolism was unbelievable. There was hardly any show of Islam despite the fact that this nation is home to several active fundamentalist groups. The bar signs and thronging tourists made the culture appear inclusive and liberal. My next destination was Jogjakarta, a city that defines the spiritual nodes of Indonesia's most populated and influential Java Island.

Jogja's physical and cultural landscape derives directly from the omnipresent and living volcano, Mount Merapi. The place has grown under its awe-inspiring shadow for 10,000 years. Villagers living on its slopes refuse to leave even though the last time the volcano erupted was just two years ago. They are bound by the mystical powers attributed to the mountain. These powers are seen through lightning, thunderous clouds and days of ash-rain. This paganism mixes

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with the locals' devotion to Islam in an unexpected and fascinating form. On Friday, mosques are full of devotees and as they rise from their prayers the social chit chat alludes to magical stories and the powers of Mount Merapi. How are such devout Muslims so steeped in their local culture? 'This must be the South Asian Muslim identity crisis,' I thought.

While in Jogja, I chanced upon a book called *Mysticism in Java*,[3] by the anthropologist, Niels Mulder. The author traces Javanese mysticism from prehistoric to modern times. According to Mulder, the mix of Buddhism, Hinduism and Javanese animistic belief systems was a fertile ground for the rise of Islam in the 10th and 11th centuries. The mystical essentials were close to Islam's message of unity of being and its emphasis on inner spirituality.

Jogja is also the seat of the Borobudur temple complex. Built between the 7th and 8th centuries, it was the spiritual centre of Buddhism in this part of the world. An aerial view of Borobudur shows its geometric *mandala* design, which is a Hindu-Buddhist symbol for the microcosm of the universe. Not far from Borobudur, is Prambanan. This is a magnificent 9th-century temple designed for Shiva which also honours Vishnu and Brahma, the famous trinity of Hindusim. On full-moon nights, the Ramayana ballet, inspired by the epic, is staged here. Music and dance are central to Javanese life. The richness and cultural heterogeneity of this country is truly marvellous.

Women's participation in Indonesian public life is extremely high. One sees huge numbers of women with their heads covered in scarves, going about the business of life casually and confidently. I contrasted this with the misogynists back home whose first feature of an ideal Islamic system entails locking women in the house. While returning,

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I stopped at a music shop. Hundreds of languages and dialects, thousands of islands and sub-cultures, make Indonesia a complex, rich environ. As a Pakistani, the inclusive version of Islam practised here is inspiring. Neither at odds with local cultures nor busy reinventing history, it celebrates its traditions as much as its faith. In fact, the defunct Mutazilla[4] movement, rationalists of the medieval times, is very much alive in the country. I was told that the recent bombings in Bali were an aberration and were off-shoots of imperial projects elsewhere.

* * *

Pakistan celebrates Allama Iqbal's birth and death anniversary in an annual ritual of official platitudes making Iqbal into the ideologue of the two-nation theory. Iqbal's progressive, indeed revolutionary, views embodied in his passionate poetry are buried under the deadweight of clichés. For instance Iqbal disdained Mullahism, celebrated the living principle of movement and vitality in Islamic thought; and emphasized *ijtehad* (intellectual/scholarly interpretation) of Islamic teachings through a modern parliamentary framework. Lack of ijtehad has impoverished the development of Islamic thought.

It is indeed a tragic irony that in the homeland Iqbal dreamt of, the mouths of those talking of ijtehad are forced shut by the very religious zealots who were ridiculed by Iqbal. In *Zarb-e-Kalim*, Iqbal writes:

Your prayer cannot change the Order of the Universe,
But it is possible that praying will alter your being;
If there is a revolution in your inner Self
It will not be strange, then, if the whole world changes too.[5]

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In the famous series of lectures—*The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*—Iqbal held:

> ...but since things have changed and the world of Islam is today confronted and affected by new forces set free by the extraordinary development of human thought in all its directions, I see no reason why this attitude [*finality of legal schools*] should be maintained any longer. Did the founders of our schools ever claim finality for their reasoning and interpretations? Never. ... The teaching of the Qur'an that life is a process of progressive creation necessitates that each generation, guided but unhampered by the work of its predecessor, should be permitted to solve its own problems.[6]

Maulana Rumi and Iqbal communicated a shared message: *de'dan day'gar amuz, shan'idan day'gar amuz* (learn to see and think in a new way). As Suroosh Irfani writes eloquently, this message 'sums up an outlook of life as a forward assimilative movement, even as one remains rooted in an Islamic heritage. Indeed, the message arose in a historical context when old certainties were crumbling and the new were struggling to be born: Rumi lived at a time when the Muslim world was traumatised by Mongol invasions, while Iqbal's was a time awakening of the colonised masses that eventually led to the independence of India and Pakistan.'[7]

What Pakistan appears today is not the dream that Iqbal articulated for a separate homeland for Muslims of India. The extremists who now wave their flags on government buildings propagate a version of Islam that Iqbal always resisted.

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Fourteen centuries ago, it was Hussain (AS), the grandson of Muhammad, who led the dissent against the emergence of the Empire and the Church in Islam, and his martyrdom made him an everlasting symbol of egalitarianism and democracy. Hussain (AS), his family and associates gave up their lives struggling to uphold the right of Muslims to select their leader, to resist the emergence of monarchy and to protect the central Islamic tenet of brotherhood and redistributive justice.

But the ruling classes undid a tribal republic created by the Prophet (Peace be upon Him) where blacks, the poor, non-Arabs and minorities coexisted with Arab Muslims. Hussain (AS) died helpless, calling for support, not just to the treacherous residents of Kufa but to the generations to come. 'This is why Iqbal cried years later that the blood of Hussain (AS) had created a garden [of liberation] challenging tyranny for all times to come.'[8]

When Islam found an Empire, a clergy was born that had no room for the radical faith evolved in Makkah and Medina. The leading scholars were coerced or co-opted by the Empire. The horrific treatments meted out to dissenting scholars such as Imam Malik and Abu Hanifa testify to this distortion.

The clerics who compiled Islamic Law under the Abbasids made a firm alliance with kings and added the 'apostasy Fatwa' against any movement that challenged the Abbasid kingdom. Sufis, philosophers and scholars all got their share of killings at the hands of the monarchial state that Hussain (AS) challenged at Karbala.

The tragedy in Karbala also affected the intellectual discourse on the freedom-determinism debates. Abu Sa'id ibn Abi al-Hasan Yasar al-Basri[9] declared that man was totally responsible for his actions. He argued this position in a letter

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addressed to the Umayyad caliph—Abd al-Malik. This famous letter attacked the widely held acceptance of determinism; and reiterated that early theological disputes were largely related to the struggles against despotism and oppression.

The debate that followed the Karbala tragedy matured into an intellectual wrangling among Mu'tazila—trying to give a rationally coherent account of Islamic beliefs—and Ash'ariyya—reacting against the excessive rationalism of the Mu'tazila. Thus the anti-monarchy debates ensued within the faith.

In the words of Ali Shariati: 'Martyrdom is a death which is..., selected with all of the awareness, logic, reasoning, intelligence, understanding, consciousness and alertness that a human being has.'[10]

* * *

Even a brief visit to Malaysia is enough to explode the spin-doctored myths woven by the mainstream Western media portraying Muslims as intolerant and inward-looking. Malaysia, under the shaping hand of the charismatic Mahatir Muhammad, emerged as an economic miracle in the 1980s. The country gained independence a decade after Pakistan and at the time was poorer than most developing countries. Yet, during the 21-year rule of Mahatir Muhammad it transformed into a prosperous and progressive place, a testament to plurality and coexistence within the Islamic framework. Malaysia's 25-million-strong population is a baffling mix of Malay, Chinese, Indian, Ibans, and Kadazandusuns, among others. While the Malays constitute a marginal majority (over 50 per cent) of the total population and are, generally, practising Muslims, the other groups practise their beliefs with equal freedom.[11]

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Kuala Lumpur is dotted with mosques, temples and churches. People from all cultural backgrounds have contributed in making Malaysia what it is today. The country's socio-cultural development carries important lessons for Muslim states and societies.

Notwithstanding this impressive achievement, Malaysia has its own share of communal tensions: The northeastern Kelanten state—not enjoying the same fruits of economic progress as the rest of Malaysia—is ruled by Islamists. Kelanten has a history of political instability and frequent change of government and the general opinion, including those of its sympathizers, is that it has no chance of impacting the political landscape in the rest of the country. Though authoritarian, Mahathir gained legitimacy due to the consistent inclusive development that he delivered. His broad-based vision was often criticized for being too soft and inclusive on non-Muslims. Striking evidence of cultural inclusion is reflected by the 16 million tourists that visit Malaysia each year bloating its economy. Its campaign to market itself as exotic, with its catchy slogan 'Malaysia—truly Asia', works like a charm on the minds of tourists worldwide.

The issue of women's participation in the Islamic context has to be given special emphasis due to the negative coverage it has attained in the international press. In Malaysia, like in Indonesia, women are a numerous and visible working force. The civil service staff is almost 50 per cent women and women in head scarves are commonly seen in hotels working as waitresses and receptionists. These modest yet equal participants in the country's economic and political life go to the mosques and pray in the same room as men. I wonder how a certain maulvi I heard in Lahore would react, given

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his statement that the Almighty would not accept any prayers that a woman made outside the confines of her house.

* * *

Friday prayers in a KL mosque were reminiscent of the traditional adherence to all stages of the ritual. There was Makkah towards the west; and here were people bowing down, standing up, and bowing down again. The difference, however, apart from the mosque's modern structure, was that the Imam was using a laptop and flat screens to deliver the *khutba* in Malay and English.

Malaysia, like any other society, is open to criticism too. The disproportionate control of Malays over positions of power make the minorities wary and resentful. On the other hand, Chinese are seen to be the most entrenched group in business, jealous of outsiders making inroads. Mahathir has been rare among figures of authority in voluntarily leaving the seat of power during his lifetime to make space for others.

Dr Mahathir has been a vociferous proponent of ijtehad in Islam. To quote from an interview he gave in 2006:

> Unfortunately, for a long time, they closed the door on ishtihar (ijtehad). But it is not something wrong, it has been done before. Perhaps we should revive that discussion... today we see Shias blowing up Sunni mosques, Sunnis blowing up Shia mosques, we see a lot of antagonism between the different sects and yet they all claim to be Muslims...they consider different sects as not being Islamic. But if we go back to the fundamental teachings of Islam, then we eliminate the differences in interpretation; perhaps it would be easier for us to get along together, to be brothers and sisters in Islam. In that way I think we can be united,

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> and of course unity is strength, and at the same time we can utilise the whole potential of the Muslims.[12]

Dr Mahathir, citing Christianity's experience of reform, also remarked:

> They have Protestants, Catholics, they have Orthodox [Christians]...and the Catholics and Protestants have been known to fight it out in different small groups... In the past, they used to kill each other, they used to burn at the stakes because of differences in understanding and they tended to condemn others as heretics. But today, they are much more liberal. They don't question each other on the interpretation of the religion. What has happened to the Muslim religion is the same. There is fragmentation due to different interpretations.[13]

Mahathir's words are sharp and chilling. As a South Asian Muslim, I wonder who will assume the leadership with such a vision in a region that houses a multitude of Muslim people—a disparate, heterogeneous mass of humanity which is both inward-looking and maligned.

NOTES

1. The famous coinage by the former US President George W. Bush in his State of the Union Address on 29 January 2002. Bush was referring to governments that he accused of abetting terrorism, and two of the three governments accused were those of Muslim states.
2. This section draws on a feature by the author entitled 'Insider's Indonesia' published in the weekly *The Friday Times*, Lahore, Pakistan, 18–24 May 2007.
3. *Mysticism in Java: Ideology in Indonesia*, Niels Mulder, Yogyarta: Kanisius Publishing House, 2005.
4. The Mutazilites advocated a theology which aimed at locating the Islamic creed in reason. For further details see

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J.V. Ess, *The Flowering of Muslim Theology*, USA: Harvard University Press, 2006.

5. This translation is from Farzana Hassan in her piece 'Remembering Allama Iqbal' published in the *Chowk* magazine (www.chowk.com).
6. These lectures, originally in English, have been widely published. The version used here is from lecture 6 on this website: http://www.allamaiqbal.com/works/prose/english/reconstruction. Emphasis mine.
7. Suroosh Irfani: 'Rumi, Iqbal and 'Dynamic Sufism', *Daily Times*, Lahore, Pakistan, Saturday, 21 April 2007.
8. From author's piece entitled 'Radical Message', published in *The News on Sunday*, the weekly magazine of Pakistan's newspaper *The News*, dated 3 February 2008.
9. Abu Sa'id ibn Abi al-Hasan Yasar al-Basri (642–728) was a Muslim ascetic who was a popular figure. Yasar al-Basri stressed religious self-examination and rejected determinism and held that people are responsible for their actions.
10. This quotation is courtesy Amal Hamada's piece entitled 'Paving the Way for a Revolution' (available at http://www.islamonline.net). For a detailed discussion of martyrdom, see Ali Shariati, *Martyrdom, Arise and Bear Witness*, Chapter 1, available online at http://www.shariati.com/.
11. For more details, see author's feature entitled 'Marvels of Malaysia', published by the weekly *The Friday Times*, Lahore, Pakistan, April 2006.
12. Interview with Malaysian national news agency Bernama.com, dated 19 March 2006 in conjunction with the completion of the 1440 Hijrah Vision Report commissioned by the Islamic Development Bank.
13. Ibid.

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In its confrontation with modernity, the ideas of democracy, human rights, tolerance of religious and cultural diversities, the values and practices of liberalism and humanism, Muslims have to learn how to adjust to the demands of a pluralistic society—how to do so is the real challenge for them.

4

Islamic Culture and the Brotherhood of Mankind

I.H. Azad Faruqi

Islam is the name of a religion as well as a culture and civilization. The latter, more exactly, being based on the former. Islamic culture, in its development, nevertheless involved other factors besides the Islamic religion, in a significant way. The Holy Qur'an, which is the word of God revealed to the Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon Him) and the *Hadith*, the reports about the sayings and deeds of the Prophet, provide the foundations of both the religion as well as the culture of Islam. Hence, on a topic like the one mentioned above, we can start our discussion with some of the important teachings and concepts of the Holy Qur'an envisaging the universal brotherhood of mankind. Later on we can observe the implications of these concepts as unfolded and manifested in Islamic civilization. We may, as well highlight some of the achievements of this civilization

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and culture, having direct or indirect bearing on universal brotherhood. At the end we can make some observations concerning the situation in Islamic societies about Muslims in general, pertaining to our subject, in the modern period and at present.

One of the most significant concepts with regard to the universal brotherhood of mankind, and which the Qur'an shares with other Semitic religions, is the idea that the whole of humankind, irrespective of caste, creed, colour or race are all descendants of one man and woman. The Qur'an explicitly emphasizes this theme in a number of verses of the following import:

> *O mankind! We created you from a single (pair)*
> *Of a male and a female, and made you into nations*
> *And tribes, that ye may know each other (not that*
> *Ye may despise each other). Verily the most*
> *Honoured of you in the sight of Allah is (he who is)*
> *The most righteous of you. And Allah has full*
> *Knowledge and is well acquainted (with all things).*
>
> (Chapter 49: Verse 13)[1]

This theory, in spite of all the differences, unites the whole of mankind in a universal brotherhood as members of one family, ultimately of common descent.

Another concept very much emphasized by the Qur'an and underscoring the brotherhood of all mankind is the universality of the Divine Guidance. In line with the strictly monotheistic concept of God envisioned by the Qur'an, His lordship is also envisaged on a universalistic level. Hence, in the Qur'an He is called Provider and Sustainer of all the worlds, *Rabbul Aalameen*, not *Rabbul Muslimeen* (Provider of Muslims). Further, like God's lordship and other qualities including those of provision and nourishment, which are considered on a universal level, His guidance is also not

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limited to any particular race, nationality or community. Thus, in the framework of the Semitic concept of prophets or apostles being the conveyers of the Divine Guidance, the Qur'an declares:

> *For We assuredly sent amongst every People a Messenger, (With the Command), 'Serve God, and eschew Evil.'*
>
> (Chapter 16: Verse 36)

Yet, at another place within the purview of the Semitic world, with which the Arabs, the first addressees of the Qur'an, were comparatively familiar, it says:

> *Say: 'We believe in God, and in what has been revealed to us and what was revealed to Abraham, Isma'il, Isaac, Jacob, and the Tribes, and in (the Books) given to Moses, Jesus, and the Prophets, from their Lord: We make no Distinction between one and another among them, and to Allah do we bow our will (in Islam).'*
>
> (Chapter 3: Verse 84)

The same message of the universality of Guidance and the all-inclusive approach of the Qur'an can be seen in its vehement opposition of all religious groupism. This comes out explicitly in its criticism of the Jews and the Christians who were part of the milieu in which the Qur'an was revealed. Each of the two claimed to have the exclusive possession of the Truth and hence of Salvation.

> *And they say: 'None shall enter Paradise unless he be*
> *A Jew or a Christian'. Those are their (vain) desires.*
> *Say: 'produce your proof if ye are truthful'.*
> *Nay,—whoever submits his whole self to Allah and is a*
> *Doer of good,—he will get his reward with his Lord;*
> *On such shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve.*
>
> (Chapter 2: Verses 111–112)

There are a number of verses with similar connotations, which can be quoted from the Qur'an, which all carry the

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message that the Divine Guidance is not a monopoly of any particular community, race or region. In fact, because of the Qur'an's repeated emphasis on this point, it has been made part of the Articles of Faith of a Muslim to believe in the prophethood of all the messengers of God, who have been sent to various communities, races or regions. Some of them of the neighbouring areas have been named in the Qur'an, while others are referred to in general. How the Muslims ended up with the same exclusivist attitude of believing themselves the sole possessors of the Truth and hence that of the Goodwill of God, is a separate field of study, with which we may dabble briefly later on.

However, it may be asserted that it was such universalistic ideas in the basic vision of Islam as contained in the Qur'an, which facilitated Muslims in a significant way, in erecting the lofty structure of Islamic civilization within a couple of centuries after the advent of Islam. The development of Islamic civilization starting by the seventh and coming to a mature level by the 10th century of the Christian era was a remarkable affair for a number of reasons, and not the least as a manifestation of the universal brotherhood of mankind. If we look at the map of the world in the 8th century, excluding the New World of the Americas, which of course were unknown at that time, we will find that the whole region—from Spain, the southwestern part of Europe, through the whole of North Africa and West Asia till the borders of China, which had an extended arm in Central Asia at that time, and up to the northwest part of India in Sindh, and from Caucasia in the north to the borders of Sudan in the south—was astride an empire, which was going to be the arena of a leading civilization of the world. And this remained so, for as long as eight centuries to come. The core area of this civilization was the so-called Fertile Crescent,

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consisting of the modern countries of Iran, Iraq, Syria and Egypt, which served as the melting pot for the development of the classical Islamic civilization, while the outlying areas received as well as contributed to it.

Before we mention some of the characteristics of this Islamic civilization, which are directly related to our subject of discussion, it may be relevant to mention some facts which helped in the course of the development of this civilization and the directions it adopted.

First of all, it should be observed that, as any map of the world would show, the areas mentioned as the cradle of the Islamic civilization, particularly its core areas, have a number of bottlenecks in the landform. These restrictedly accessible areas had provided, since ancient times, the shortest, if not the only practically possible, routes in the international East-West trade. This remained the situation till Vasco da Gama, at the close of the 15th century, circumnavigated South Africa. Till then, nearly all the land or sea trade routes between China and Southeast Asia, on the one hand, and the Mediterranean World, on the other, passed through areas occupied by Muslims since the 7th century onwards. As is well-known in the case of the famous Silk Route, these trade routes not only contributed to the prosperity of the areas through which they passed, but they served as the conduits for cultural exchanges as well.

Secondly and even much more significantly, the core areas of the Fertile Crescent, particularly Iraq and Egypt, but next to these Iran and Syria as well, have been home to various civilizations, one after another, since the dawn of human settlement and urban civilized life. The cultural and civilizational residue of these, accumulated over thousands of years in this area, provided much raw material in the development of Islamic civilization, particularly in its classical

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period. The religion of Islam and the Arabic language, in fact, provided both the binding force and the necessary acids to melt the various ingredients taken from different civilizations of past and present and of neighbouring or remote areas.

Now, if we look at the Islamic civilization and culture in its heyday, that is, from around the 9th to the 16th centuries of the Christian era, some of its most prominent features, almost immediately noticeable, would be its cosmopolitan, universalistic and egalitarian character. It would not only be the fact that almost all the races of mankind would be represented in the same cultural and civilizational milieu, nor would it be even the phenomenon that immediately after declaring his belief in the Muslim Articles of Faith, a man from any background would find the doors of all walks of progress, in an Islamic society, open to him. But, it would also be the singularity that the followers of other religions and upholders of other ways of life, like Jews, Christians, Sabians and later, to a limited extent, Hindus in India, would be able to continue to live according to the norms of their traditions, and contribute actively in the various streams of life, under the umbrella of Islamic civilization. In the classical period of this civilization, that is, from the 8th to the 13th centuries, the non-Muslims living as active members of the Islamic civilization not only adopted the cultural patterns of this civilization, including the Arabic language as the medium of their expression, and excluding, of course, their personal religious beliefs, but they served as translators, teachers and even as leaders in the cultural and academic domains.

The cosmopolitan character of the Islamic civilization can further be gauged from the simple fact that among the 37 caliphs of the Abbasid Arab dynasty, which reigned from Baghdad, not more than a few caliphs were born of an Arab

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mother. The rest were children of slave-girls from regions as far apart as Europe or India. It may be noted here that slavery, though widespread in the classical and medieval Islamic civilization, had a very different character in Islamic society, compared to other civilizations. The children of a slave-girl, according to Islamic law, had the same rights in the inheritance of their father as those of the married wife. Many talented slaves were freed and chosen to be son-in-laws of their earlier masters. The cases of the Mamluk dynasty in Egypt (the word *mamluk* means slave in Arabic) which remained in power for about 250 years, controlling Syria and parts of Arabia as well, and the Slave dynasty at the start of Delhi Sultanate in India, where one freed slave after another ruled empires, speak volumes about the egalitarian nature of Islamic society.

This highlights the exceptional social mobility and the absence of rigid social stratification, which were significant features of Islamic civilization. The wide gap between the rulers and the ruled, a characteristic of many a contemporary civilization, was much narrower in the case of Islamic civilization. Nor were the social divisions fixed and immutable. Several famous political, scholarly and artistic figures, who cast their long shadows on Islamic history, were of humble origins. This phenomenon may perhaps be explained by the fact that the medieval Muslim society, though agrarian in nature, like other societies of that period, was not controlled by any sacrosanct landholding or administrative group, as, for example, the nobility in Western Europe or bureaucracy in China. The foundations of Islamic society, broadly speaking, not being rooted in the authority of any permanently privileged or restricted group, were based on Islamic *shari'ah* or Divine Law, which provided the ultimate justification to any institution in Islamic society. Islamic law,

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which was in vogue fully in the Islamicate societies of the pre-modern period, was essentially derived from the injunctions in the Qur'an and reports in the Hadith. It was mostly of a contractual nature, which put various parties involved on equal footing with reciprocal obligations of rights and duties. Whether it was the ceremony of marriage or the oath of loyalty to a ruler, a matter of proper distribution of inheritance or a bone of contention between neighbours, in all affairs the spirit of the contract, with mutual obligations was paramount. Legal matters were to be decided by seeking guidance from the shari'ah by a scholar of this law, who, though appointed by the government, was independent of it in his decisions. The government or the ruler too was only a party in the sight of shari'ah or the authority to implement it, the *qazi*.

There are two further points regarding the Islamic culture and civilization in the pre-modern period—or, to be more exact, before the much faster-changing West European society started to have an edge over it—which we may want to allude to at this juncture. The first point is about the high standards of culture and the brilliance in intellectual and artistic fields achieved by this civilization in comparison to, for example, the pre-16th-century European and probably to contemporary Chinese civilization as well. These were the only two civilizational areas outside the purview of direct Islamic influence, though in the case of the former, that is the European, the links between its Renaissance and Islamic culture are traceable, at least in certain respects.

The second point would be about the outstanding cultural unity and harmony, despite political diversity, in the whole area affected by the Islamic civilization. From Spain, and later from the most northwestern tip of Africa, to Indonesia and Malaysia, it was the same philosophy of life, the same

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laws and regulations, similar aesthetics and principles, similar manners and etiquette, and similar customs from birth to the disposal of the dead, which held sway. Most of the giant intellectual or academic personalities of the Islamic world were widely travelled as well. It was more or less the same syllabus which an aspirant for civil services would study in Egypt or in Bukhara in Central Asia. And if the *Mathnawi* of Mawlana Jalaluddin Rumi was written at Qunia in Turkey in the 13th century, it was not strange if we find Shah Bu 'Ali Qalandar after few years, writing his own composition, highly influenced by the former in style and content, at Panipat near Delhi. The unity of life and culture in the medieval Islamic civilization, encompassing such a large area of the populated globe, was a remarkable feat in itself. It was also a singular experiment in the concrete achievement of a cosmopolitan society having the idea of universal brotherhood of the whole mankind as one of its constituents.

However, the cultural and civilizational exploits of Islam, a very brief and inadequate estimate of which we have tried to outline above, found themselves overtaken soon after the start of the 17th century. Islamic civilization and culture were outsmarted, humiliated, defeated at one front after another, and consequently lost their self-confidence. It can be argued that this was not so much, as commonly believed, because of the decay which set in at a very fundamental level in Islamic culture and society in the late medieval period, which forced it to abdicate the position of a leading culture of the world and turned it steadily into a backward society, but it was also, to a great extent, the entry of a new rival in the world arena, the Western European civilization, which tipped the balance sharply and decisively against all traditional societies.

From about a century or two before 1600, and with ever-increasing speed in the centuries after that, Western

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European society had gone through deep-rooted, fundamental and all-embracing changes which could only be described as colossal. The phenomenon of modernity, which is the name given to all these changes, together with the values, ideals and institutions produced by it, though first developed in Western Europe, had already become now a global reality. The responses of traditional societies when coming in contact with the phenomenon of modernity, or even of the various parts within a geographically widespread traditional culture like Islam, varied greatly.

From a policy of almost complete isolation of a Tokugawa Japan from alien influences, for about two hundred years, to an enforced Westernization of Turks in the Islamic world in the early decades of the 20th century, and at various levels in between, we have all kinds of examples of the reactions of traditional societies to the phenomenon of modernity. Moreover, these reactions are not static, these are processes, which are changing, growing and adjusting themselves with the ever-changing occurrence of modernity itself.

Nonetheless, as far as the Islamic culture and societies are concerned, with the exception of Turkey, which seems to have thrown in its lot with Europe and at least appears to be clear about some of its ideals, in the other parts of the Islamic world the situation is not very different even today from what we have described above at the onset of its confrontation with modernity. Speaking very generally, the Islamic world, ignoring the differences due to local variables, has not found yet a clear concept of how to adjust with the requirements of modernity in a way which may be satisfactory with regard to its loyalty to its religio-cultural heritage as well as to the demands of various modern ideals and practices.

In its confrontation with modernity, it is not so much scientific knowledge or technological knowhow which have

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to be dealt with, to be learnt and adopted by Islamic societies, but, what is more crucial, the ideas of equality, democracy, human rights, tolerance of religious and cultural diversity and a number of values and practices related to liberalism and humanism, and other such ideals.

We have mentioned that modernity has thrown a challenge to all traditional cultures and societies, but it dares the Muslim world in some special ways. Unlike, perhaps, the Hindu or Christian tradition, where the dichotomy of religious and secular can be maintained and religion can be said ultimately to be a matter of the attainment of personal salvation, Islam, almost by its very vision, is community-oriented. It is as much a reunion between man and God, which is sought by the Holy Qur'an, as a society of believers, moulding their lives, and in consequence the whole society, in accord with the Divine dictates. And though *iman* or faith in the Islamic religion, is in the end a matter between man and God, still the path to win the favour of Allah is through fulfilling duties in the collective life.

How Muslims evolve to adjust the demands of their religious vision in this regard, within the factual reality of a pluralistic society like the one we have in India, and like the one the whole world is fast turning into, is yet not clear, though it is obvious that sooner or later they will have to do it. The challenge of adjustment with the multiplicity of the religio-cultural heritage of mankind is just one example, the concept of universal brotherhood being related with it. Their achievements in the past in this field within the limitations of those times have been noted. We have yet to see how they acclimatize with its vastly expanded interpretation in modern times. There are hosts of such questions, on which Muslims have to take significant decisions, reinterpret their tradition, take risks and apply

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their minds and souls to find answers and solutions, which may satisfy their conscience before God and before the world.

NOTE

1. All the quotations from the Holy Qur'an are from the English translation by Abdullah Yusuf 'Ali, revised and edited by The Presidency of Islamic Researches, Ifta', Call and Guidance, Saudi Arabia, n.d.

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Few issues in Islam and Muslim societies have attracted as much attention as the attitude towards women. The image of the veil, harem, segregation and subordination to men have been a consistent theme in literature. Islam is therefore viewed as patriarchal, oppressive and incompatible with values such as freedom, democracy and human rights. Linkages between patriarchy and Islam have been established because of a misreading of the Qur'an. An enlightened reading of the Qur'an is necessary because the holy book is against all forms of oppression and exhorts believers to follow the true path of God. Such a reading is important to reclaim the true spirit of the Qur'an. 'I am one among the people,' says the Prophet which poses a challenge to the politics of exclusion and the 'masculinization' of religion.

5

Islam and the Politics of Gender Discrimination

P.K. Abdul Rahiman

Though the question of terrorism, jihad, and alarmist concerns such as 'Muslim rage', and 'green menace'[1] have dominated contemporary discourse on Islam, few issues in Islam and Muslim societies have attracted more consistent interest—and yet proven so susceptible to stereotyping—as issues of women. Women in Muslim societies have been the subject of images and generalizations of Orientalist fantasies, critical feminist explorations, and apologetic resistances. For

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many, the subject of women in Islam is characterized by the image of veil, harem, segregation, and subordination. Islam in general is viewed as patriarchal, oppressive, and incompatible with values such as freedom, democracy and human rights.[2] Linkages between patriarchy and Islam are established through the construction of relations between the alleged advocacy of sexual inequalities in the Qur'an and the long history of discrimination against women in many Muslim societies.

Orientalists considered Islam as the sole designator of Muslim societies and the main determinant of the status of women. The depiction of Muslim societies as inherently traditional, while associating traditionalism with backwardness and stagnation, has created the image of Muslim women as inherently oppressed. In contrast, the portrayal of the West as rational and superior suggested that the changing positions of women in Muslim societies could only be explained in the context of the declining influence of Islam and the increasing Westernization of Muslim societies. This essentialization of Islam and the West as binaries in explaining the gender dynamics in Muslim societies not only negates the universality of the history of patriarchy and gender discrimination, but also considers the West as the normative.

On the other hand, there have been Muslim conservative and apologetic voices articulating the position of women in Islam. Each of these articulations represents itself as 'the authentic' voice of the Islamic conception of gender equality and justice. They often idealize patriarchy by reading inequality into the Qur'an on the basis of some textual specificities, and present an ideal not accompanied by the problems and issues encountered in the diversity of Muslim experiences. In the conservative reading of the Qur'an, male

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superiority is both ontological, since women are said to have been created from/after men, and moral-social, since God is alleged to have 'preferred' men over women.[3] God is also said to have given men a 'degree above' women and entrusted them 'guardians' or 'superior' or 'rulers' over women.[4]

The conservatives adhere to a very rigid and literal interpretation of the religious texts without considering the spirit of the scriptural specificities. They produce volumes of theological works in an attempt to warn the 'pious' of the possible danger of women venturing out of the household. Shiekh Abdullah ibn Baz, a Saudi Arabian Muslim cleric, has interpreted the Qur'an to warn women about the need to keep to their households.[5] The conservative theologians argue that segregation of the sexes is important for the preservation of the 'traditional order of Islam'. For instance, Shiekh Mohammed Hasnaya Makhluf, in his controversial religious decree of 1952, denied women's right to participate in the political process and to be elected to parliament on the grounds of 'their inherently unsuitable nature' and also as a 'protective measure'.[6] It has been argued that segregation of the sexes, as a doctrinal injunction, is strictly enforced in Islam because the intermingling of sexes would 'lure man and woman into the pits of unbridled sexual desire and lust'.[7]

Though many modern Muslim scholars like Abul A'la Maududi declare that 'men and women as human beings are equal, who make up the human race as its equal constituents',[8] their position on the role of women in the socio-political and economic spheres of Muslim societies establishes male superiority as the 'order of Nature'. They further seek refuge in the 'scientific' explanations borrowed from the writings on female psychology and physiology in

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order to prove that their position is in consonance with Nature. Following the analysis of Anton Nemilov, Abul A'la Maududi argues that the science of Biology reveals that woman is, by nature, a 'tragic being'.[9] The Egyptian scholar Allama Farid Wajidi also presents a similar argument:

> the Book of Nature, the sciences, and philosophers of Europe have emphatically proclaimed that though woman may try her best...she cannot be equal of man in physical and intellectual powers.[10]

It is a paradox that the conservatives—who have been entrenched in the binary assumptions about Islam and the West and whose pronouncements about the concept of gender justice in Islam are often triggered as a response to the cultural and intellectual hegemony of the West—in order to establish the physical and intellectual inferiority of women overwhelmingly embrace the Western 'scientific' tradition as infallible and normative.

For the conservatives, biological characteristics determine the status and position of women in almost all spheres of life. The domain of work is divided into the public and the private as a 'dispensation of nature'.[11] While the public remains the exclusive domain of men, the women are relegated to the domain of the private. The functions of the female body, such as menstruation, pregnancy, and child bearing and rearing, are regarded as her 'biological traged[ies]',[12] making her physiologically unfit for any work except that of bearing children and household chores. This division of labour further redefines the concept of work by devaluing domestic work as one that requires lesser or no physical, emotional or intellectual ability.

The biological essentialism, manifested in the masculine notions regarding women, is presented as a 'natural'

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principle of functional dichotomy of the two sexes. However, this essentialization is not limited to the domain of physical work alone, it also denies a woman's intellectual ability and any meaningful identity. Maududi claims:

> Man and woman are not equipotential in all aspects of life: in some woman is weaker than man, in others she is stronger than man. Try however hard she may, it is impossible that geniuses favourably comparable with Aristotle, Ibn-I-Sina, Kant, Hegel, Khayyam, Shakespeare, Alexander, Napoleon, Salah-ud-Din, Nizamul-Mulk Tusi, and Bismark will ever come forth from among women. Similarly, all the men of the world together—[however] hard they try—cannot produce from among their sex even a most ordinary mother.[13]

The question of equipotentiality is reproduced to reinforce the biological essentialist propositions and to negate the intellectual potential of women. However, the 'natural' dichotomy, constructed to define the roles and behaviours of men and women, is projected as a 'progressive' measure, decreed in the divine words, to ensure gender equality and justice. Maududi explains:

> Is this justice that, besides performing their natural functions *in which males cannot share*, women should also be burdened with those civic and cultural responsibilities, for the performance of which *Nature has freed men from all other (i.e. biological) functions*?...This is not justice but injustice, not equality but inequality.[14] (italics mine).

It further constructs hierarchies in which a woman has to 'submit her to men and oblige him who is responsible for the maintenance of this system, be he her husband, father or brother'.[15] The conservative assumption that the male is the normative standard bearer not only limits woman from the full consideration of ethical-spiritual and socio-political

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positioning within the intellectual tradition of Islam, but also reinforces the images of women as 'subject[s] without agency'.[16]

Do these conservative pronouncements mean that the Qur'an advocates gender inequality and discrimination against women on the basis of sexual/biological differences? Are men's privileges, in their biological capacity as males, doctrinal? Or does the Qur'an treat men as the normative self and women as the other? Can these conservative interpretations of the Qur'an be regarded as the most 'authentic' representative of the Islamic worldview?

An affirmative answer to these questions is possible only through a misconception, like that of the Westernization theorists and Orientalists, that gender discrimination and patriarchy are essentially Islamic—a position which negates the history or the universality of the history of gender discrimination. Women's status and role, as well as the patriarchal structure and gender relations in Muslim societies, are a function of multiple factors, most of which have nothing to do with the doctrinal position of the Qur'an and the Hadith. Nonetheless, the conservatives justify their position on patriarchal practices and gender inequality with reference to their knowledge of the Qur'an and the prophetic traditions. This in turn creates an image that gender discrimination in Muslim societies is a manifestation of the Quranic advocacy of misogyny. The orthodox's fear that freedom for women will cause society to degenerate into licentious promiscuity has created a situation in which the basic rights of women have been forsaken and the fundamentals of equality, fairness, and justice, as enshrined in the Qur'an, have been completely overlooked.

In contrast to the conservative standpoint we find numerous examples of women, during the lifetime of the

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Prophet, raising their heads from slavery and subjugation, and claiming their right to join as equal contributors in the making of the Islamo-Arab history. The Qur'an enabled women to regain their right to life by condemning the cruel practice of female infanticide in scathing terms.[17] It conferred the rights of individual ownership and economic independence on women, while simultaneously obliging men to secure all their material needs. The basic principles of female inclusion in political affairs can be found in the traditions of the Prophet as he had sought allegiance from both men and women, and had included women among the ranks of his Companions.[18] The Prophet invalidated marriages that were contracted without the authority and consent of the woman. It was because of the social transformation and sense of empowerment that Islam brought into 7th-century Arabi society, that the young wife of the Prophet, A'isha, could actively participate in the political affairs of the Muslim community in total consonance with the Qur'an and the prophetic tradition.[19] Moreover, contrary to the Arab practice, women like A'isha were consulted by the Arab patriarchs in matters of Islamic jurisprudence, pre-empting the possibility of the masculinization of religion. The fact that A'isha reported a large number of authentic Hadith shows the significant role women played in the intellectual traditions of early Islam.

However, patriarchy, as a politics of gender inequality rooted in the theories of sexual differentiation, staged a comeback and segregated women from the socio-political affairs of the community. It was the conservative nature of the later Islamic intellectual traditions, that gained dominance from the Abbasid period, which brought the misogynist ideology back to the centre stage of Muslim life. The institutionalization of this conservatism in Islamic history

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and intellectual traditions owes its origin to the majoritarian theory of juristic proclamations that declared Islamic law as complete. Thus, *ijtehad* (independent reasoning), based on the framework provided by the Qur'an and Hadith, was declared closed.[20] From then on, the jurists were expected to just imitate the established authoritative doctrines of law, further weakening the relationship between ijtehad and *ijma* (consensus of the scholars). As Liela Ahmed points out, the legal system did not reflect the ethical injunctions of Islam enjoining fair treatment of women.[21] This process of masculinization of the religious traditions negated the scriptural experiences of women, and led to their voicelessness in the intellectual history of Muslim societies. Amina Wadud further points out that the Islamic doctrines were interpreted either for excluding women and their experiences or for making the male vision predominate women's perspectives, desires, or needs.[22] Thus, gender hierarchy became the normative social behaviour of Muslim societies, which in turn was explained as natural, moral, and ordained by God.

The justifications for gender hierarchy and discrimination of women has its roots in the development of the Islamic sciences such as Hadith (prophetic tradition), *tafsir* (exegesis), and *fiqh* (jurisprudence) during the early period of Islam. In order to examine the process of the evolution of Islamic sciences, one needs to know about the sources of Islamic faith and praxis. The foundation of the Islamic faith is located in the Qur'an, which, for Muslims, is the 'divine discourse' or 'speech of God'. The meaning of the 'divine discourse' is derived through other religious traditions, especially the Hadith and tafsir, as these traditions form the basis for the development of Islamic jurisprudence and law. There are two important categories of Qur'anic verses,

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classified by the Qur'an itself as *muhkamat* (categorical) and *mutashabihat* (allegorical). The muhkamat are *ayat al bayyinat*, clear verses without any ambiguity. The mutashabihat verses are figurative, metaphorical, and allegorical.[23] Moreover, Maududi and Sayyid Qutb maintain, that the historical context of Qur'anic revelation is important for understanding its meaning. This provides the space and scope for the earthly realization of the divine discourse using the human sensibility. Further, the human perception and interpretation of the divine discourse cannot be inimitable and equal to the 'speech of God'. Though tafsir, in all its forms, remains a human endeavour, it assumes great significance in the later Islamic intellectual traditions and becomes a dominant discourse, as a mediator between the text and its meaning and intent.

Like any project of interpretation, the tradition of Qur'anic interpretation is not independent of the 'prior text' of the interpreter. The 'prior text' refers to the perspectives, circumstances and background of the individual reader. In other words, any project of interpretation is influenced by the historical processes and the contexts of the interpreter and his or her interpretation. It not only represents the historical conditions, scholarship, concerns, and preferences of the exegetes, but also their subjective notions, and sectarian and ideological loyalties. As Amina Wadud points out, 'the meaning assigned to a text by any exegete cannot exist independently of the language and cultural context in which the text is read'.[24] Thus, no Qur'anic exegesis is fully objective and independent of the ideological position of the interpreter. Some details of the interpretation reflect the subjective choices of the interpreter and not necessarily the intent of the Qur'an. Thus, the reception and interpretation of

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Qur'an and its meaning is always partial. Hence emerges the need for a space for historicity within the tradition of tafsir, which overwhelmingly depends on the corpus of Hadith. This will allow readers from different contexts to relate to the text, within the framework of their faith and without being the intellectual hostages of another. On the other hand Hadith, as a textual representator of the life, words and deeds of the Prophet, is second in sanctity to the Qur'an. In terms of its function, it is also regarded as the first among the numerous traditions as the interpreter of the Qur'an. Even though painstaking efforts of criticism and screening preceded the compilation of the six cannonical collections— said to contain only *sahih* (sound) traditions— the authenticated Hadith came to contain strands of differing, sometimes even contradictory, traditions. These traditions were carried on the basis of the consensus of its supporters. Significantly, the principle of ijma had become one of the most important and infallible sources of Islamic law by the 10th century.[25] Similarly, the Hadith tradition, with the aforesaid divergence, continued to provide the community of believers with an interpretation of the scriptures and a model of sacred and ideal past that needed to be emulated, not only in an individual's physical existence but also in his or her metaphysical space.

Though the tradition of sahih Hadith contains innumerable instances of the Prophet's sensitivity to the question of women's rights, and of their place in the social life of the community, there are traditions attributed to him which are often employed, in both intellectual and popular proclamations, to cast out women from the socio-political and intellectual life of the community. Thus, we find a saying attributed to the Prophet that 'those who entrust their affairs to a woman will never know prosperity', a quote often

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employed, along with many others, to exclude women from positions of political responsibility. However, other authenticated traditions of the Prophet and the history of 7th-century Islamic life do not authorize this misogynistic tradition. Fathima Mernissi analyses the complexities involved in the process of the battle of *Jamal*, the first *fitna* (civil conflict) in the Islamic history, and the political conditions in which Abu Bakara is supposed to have reported the above tradition of the Prophet. She argues that it was only Abu Bakara who cited the gender of one of the opponents as a reason for his neutrality in the civil conflict. No other Hadith among the numerous Ahadith (plural of Hadith) collected by al-Bukhari on the subject of civil war in a chapter entitled *Al-fitna*, the civil war, makes even a veiled reference to the sex of the leaders.[26]

Though it is difficult to make any distinction between the text and the meaning attributed to it, a reading of the textual tradition and its exegesis, based upon its historicity and contextuality, would allow us to explore how a particular text gets interpreted.

The gender differentiation and concept of male superiority over women as a doctrinal injunction in the Islamic tradition originates from the classical interpretation of the Quranic verse of the Sura (chapter) 4:34. This verse has been interpreted as follows:

> Men are in charge of/are guardians of/are superior to/ have authority over women because God has endowed one with more/because God has preferred some of them over others and because they spend of their means. Therefore, the righteous women are obedient, guarding in secret that which God has guarded. As to those from whom you fear rebellion, admonish them and banish them to separate beds, and beat them. Then if they obey you, seek not a way against them. For God is exalted, great.

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The interpretation of this text as establishing men's superiority and authority over women has enforced the notion of men's power over women as the normative model for gender behaviour in Muslim societies. The interpretations of this verse, right from the classical exegeses to many conservative scholars of the contemporary period, reflect the patriarchal notions regarding women, their roles and their responsibilities. For Tabari, this verse primarily deals with the domestic relations between husband and wife. It ordains men's authority over women, which entails man's right to discipline his woman in order to ensure female obedience to God and himself.[27] In turn, men are obliged to pay dower to women, spend their wealth on them, and provide security for them. Female obedience is defined in terms of her marital fidelity, friendly behaviour to husband and his family, and good household management. On the other hand, rebellion (*nushuz*) is interpreted to mean female refusal to have sexual contact when desired by husband, refusal to obey the commands of husband, and other acts of defiance against husband.[28] Tabari's interpretation of '*bima fadhalallahu ba'dhuhum 'ala ba'dh*' is founded on men's economic ability and obligation to support their wives. However, the underlying assumption evident in his interpretation is not limited to the economic obligations of men, but also reflects the preferred status of men over women. For Razi, this verse provides men the power and authority over women similar to that of rulers over their subjects.[29] For him this superiority of men over women is both natural and legal. Among the natural abilities of men are better intellectual capacity and superior physical strength. It is for this reason that the prophets, scholars, and *imams* are men, and that is why men are preferred in the performance of the religious duties such as *jihad*, leading

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prayers, and giving Friday sermons. For Razi, the preferential rights man enjoys in matters related to marriage, divorce, and inheritance are indicators of the superiority of men over women. Secondly, the superiority of men over women is also due to the economic obligations of a man towards his wife.[30] In the exegesis of Ibn Kathir, a man is responsible for his woman, and he maintains, and leads her if she deviates from her duties.[31] According to Ibn Kathir, the superiority of men is based on the fact that men are better than women for certain tasks. That is the reason why, he argues, Prophethood and other important positions of leadership were exclusively reserved for men. The absence of the assumption, explicit in the tafsir of Ibn Kathir, that women also possess better skills to perform certain tasks is a reflection of the essentialization of female intellect and body. He follows the tradition of attributing to the Prophet the saying that 'people who appoint a woman to be their leader will never achieve success', and argues that women cannot be appointed as judges or given any position of leadership. Women's disobedience is defined as refusal of a woman to comply with the sexual needs of her husband.[32] This points to the strong affinity between the biological determinism that creates binary categories of men and women, the patriarchal notions of the interpreter, and the misogynist exegeses.

Although the contemporary Qur'anic exegeses dwell more on ethical and political issues in society, most of these works reproduce the diehard and rigid positions of their predecessors, especially on gender issues. However, the Islamic modernism of the mid-19th century challenged the analytical framework of the previous exegetes and their conclusions on gender. The essence of the Islamic modernist thought was the creation of positive links between the principles of Qur'an and modern thought, which could

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integrate modern institutions with the moral and social principles of Islam. The great task of the Islamic modernists was to break down the diehard conservatism of the Muslim scholars and to accustom the Muslim population to a gradual revision of Muslim law in the light of modern traditions.

The Egyptian scholar and theologian, and the most prominent Islamic modernist, Sheikh Muhammed Abduh (1849–1905) found that Islam and modernity were mutually compatible. He assured Muslims that the necessary answers to the problems and predicaments of modern life could be found, if the Qur'an and the Prophetic traditions were properly studied, re-establishing the practice of ijtehad. Abduh argued for the separation of *ibadat* (laws on religious duties) from *mu'amalat* (laws on social transactions) enshrined in the Qur'an and Islamic law. This rationale provided a space for a new methodological framework in the interpretation of the Qur'an and Islamic law. On the basis of this theoretical framework, Abduh interpreted Qur'anic verses related to women and provided a critique of the existing social practices and laws vis-à-vis women. He held that the oppression of women in the name of Islam, especially the abuses connected with divorce and polygamy were among the basic ills that had contributed to the stagnation of Muslim societies. He argued that women were deprived of their right to education and were denied access to the sources of knowledge in contradiction to what was required and necessitated by life and religion.[33] The essence of his ideas was his conviction that equality is the essence of the Islamic value system, and that social transformation would be possible only when the status of the traditionally disadvantaged half of the society, i.e. women, was improved.

Though Abduh registered a radical departure from the classical methodologies of Qur'anic exegeses in the

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interpretation of social laws enshrined in Qur'an, the Islamic modernist approach was not developed to the extent of challenging the masculinization of religion and its intellectual traditions. As a result, scholars like Maududi, as pointed out earlier, who were dangerously entrenched in the biological determinist trap, continued to reproduce the conservative positions of medieval scholars. It is a paradox that Maududi, who favoured the right to practise ijtehad, and employed this principle in his work, failed to develop a progressive model for social and legal transformation, particularly with regard to women. Maududi, who argued that without historicity and particularity, the Qur'an would consist of 'mere abstractions',[34] de-historicizes Qur'anic verses with regard to women in favour of conservatism. The conservative articulations on gender, from the early period till today, have influenced, or moulded, or reinforced the gender hierarchies and stereotypes in Muslim societies.

This is not to say that gender inequalities and discrimination in Muslim societies are a function merely of misogynist reading of Islamic texts, but to point to the linkages between textual positions and social realities. This is also not to reproduce the stereotypical and monolithic image of Islamic societies, but to critically engage in the intellectual tradition of Muslims in order to understand how the monolithic image of Islam, often constructed by the Orientalists, is reinforced and converted to the mirror image of Islam and Muslims.

Although the dominant discourses on gender within the Islamic intellectual traditions have reproduced the monolithic image of Islam, there have been various traditions within Islam that challenged conservatism and tried to develop hermeneutical models to reclaim what Liela Ahmed calls the 'stubbornly egalitarian' voice of Islam.[35] Many

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reformist and modernist scholars have emphasized understanding holistically the motive and intent of Qur'anic verses, thus representing the essence of the Qur'anic worldview. They also argue that if the law doesn't reflect the intent of the text, the law must be changed.[36] Ismail Ragi al-Faruqi, another modernist scholar, views Qur'anic values regarding moral and religious equality between men and women as the expression of the unchangeable principle of justice and equality of human beings, in any socio-economic condition. The 'priority' given to men over women in Sura 4:34 of the Qur'an is limited to the patriarchal society of Arabia, for the Qur'anic message should be located historically. In the social and economic context of the 20th century, in which many women are economically independent and are contributing to the financial needs of the family, the 'priority' of men over women based on their role as the providers is subject to change.[37]

Similarly, Islamic feminist scholars like Asma Barlas, Liela Ahmed and Amina Wadud have attempted a female inclusive reading of the Qur'an. Asma Barlas, in *'Believing Women' in Islam,* shows how Muslims came to read inequality and patriarchy into the Qur'an to justify the existing religious and social structures. She draws on the principle of textual polysemy to critique the interpretative reductionism that the Qur'an can be read only in patriarchal modes. Secondly, she argues against the interpretative relativism, the view that all readings are equally correct, without relinquishing the commitment to the textual polysemy on the ground that not all readings can be accepted as contextually legitimate and theologically sound, especially those that read various forms of *zulm* (injustice) into the Qur'an.[38]

Likewise, Amina Wadud, in *Qur'an and Women,* differentiates between the text and the culturally and

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historically occasioned interpretations of the text. She classifies Qur'anic interpretations into three categories, i.e. traditionalist, reactive and holistic. The traditional tafsir, written exclusively by men, inspired by various objectives, argues Wadud, follow an atomistic methodology with no effort to recognize the themes or to discuss the relationship of the Qur'an to itself, thematically.[39] She convincingly argues that a methodology for linking similar Qur'anic ideas, syntactical structures, principles or themes together is almost nonexistent in the traditional exegesis. The reactive exegeses often come from feminist ideals and rationales. Although they are concerned with valid issues, argues Wadud, the absence of a comprehensive analysis of the Qur'an sometimes causes them to vindicate the position of women on grounds entirely incongruous with the Qur'anic position on women.[40] To overcome this shortcoming, she develops a methodological framework by analysing each verse of the Qur'an in its context—in the context of discussions on similar topics in the Qur'an; in the light of similar language and syntactical structures used elsewhere in the Qur'an; in the light of overriding Qur'anic principles; and within the context of the Qur'anic worldview.[41] Within this framework, Amina Wadud's reading of Sura 4:34 shows that *qiwama* (being in charge of), *faddala* (prefer), and *b'ad* (some) have relative meanings in the Qur'an in general; particularly so in this verse, which relates to other gender-specific economic legislation such as inheritance rights and other economic obligations. In the modern world, the meaning of the verse is an expression of an ideal obligation for men to create a better society by improving their relationship with women.[42]

A reading of the Qur'an in a *liberative* mode is important to unread the misogyny read into the Qur'an, for the Qur'an positions itself against all kinds of oppression and exhorts

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believers to fight in the path of God and for the oppressed—men, women and children.[43] The word *mustad'afun*, used in this verse, refers to those who are vulnerable, marginalized, or oppressed in the socio-economic sense of the term.[44] The major difference between the term mustad'afun and other terms the Qur'an uses to describe the lower and impoverished classes of society such as *aradhil* (marginalized),[45] *fuqara'* (poor),[46] and *masakin* (indigent)[47] is that the first refers to a condition created by external agencies. Thus, the Qur'an demands, in definitive terms, from its followers, that they rise to fight all kinds of oppression. Then, if the oppression or the cause of oppression is textual, the fight against the oppression shall be aimed at undoing the oppressive contents read into the text. Such a reading is important for reclaiming the lost sense of meaningful identity, which the women in the Prophetic period cherished, categorically insisting 'I am one among the people', a challenge against the politics of exclusion and marginalization and a resistance against the masculinization of the religion.

NOTES

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3. Asma Barlas, *Believing Women in Islam*, Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002, p. 7.
4. Barbara Stowosser, 'Gender Issues and Contemporary Qur'an Interpretation', in Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad and John

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L.Esposito (eds.), *Islam, Gender, and Social Change*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1998, p. 33.
5. Nadia Hijab, *Women Power: The Arab Debates on Women at Work*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988, p. 45.
6. Barbara Froyer Stowosser, 'The Status of Women in Early Islam', in Freda Hussain (ed.), *Muslim Women*, Beckenham: Croom Helm, 1984, p. 32.
7. Muhammed Imran, *Ideal Woman in Islam*, Delhi: Markazi Maktaba Islami Publishers, 1995, p. 120.
8. Abul A'la Maududi, *Purdah and the Status of Women in Islam*, Delhi: Markazi Maktaba Islami Publishers, 2000, p. 147.
9. Maududi quoted in Mazharul Haq Khan, *Purdah and Polygamy*, New Delhi: Harman Publications, 1983, p. 23. The phrase 'tragic being' is defined on the basis of the 'biological tragedy of woman' by which Maududi means 'the female biological functions' that make her 'unfit for any work except that of bearing children and performing simple house keeping chores'.
10. Ibid., p. 129.
11. Ibid., p. 23.
12. Ibid., pp. 147–70.
13. Abul A'la Maududi, *Purdah and the Status of Women in Islam*, p. 156.
14. Maududi quoted in Mazharul Haq Khan, *Purdah and Polygamy*, pp. 22–3.
15. Ibid., pp. 61–2.
16. Amina Wadud, *Qur'an and Women*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1999, p. xi.
17. Qur'an, Sura 16, pp. 58–9.
18. Ali Shariati, *Women in the Eyes and Heart of Mohammed*, Bangladesh: Islamic Foundation Press, 1990, p. 11.
19. Fathima Mernissi, 'Women in Muslim History: Traditional Perspective and New Strategies', in S. Jay Kleinberg (ed.), *Retrieving Women's History: Changing Perceptions of the Role of Women in Politics and Society*, France: Berg publishers/ UNESCO Comparative Studies Series, 1992, p. 339.

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20. For further details on the closure of the doors of ijtehad see Wael B. Hallaq, 'Was the Doors of *Ijthihad* Closed?', *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, Volume 16, 1984, pp. 3–41.
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22. Amina Wadud, *Qur'an and Women*, p. 2.
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24. Amina Wadud, *Qur'an and Women*, p. 12.
25. Ibid., p. 32.
26. Fathima Mernissi, *The Veil and the Male Elite: A Feminist Interpretation of Women's Rights in Islam*, New York: Adison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1991.
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28. Ibid., pp. 64–5.
29. Razi, *Beynuth' Dar Ehia al-Tourath al Arabi*, Vol. 4, 2001.
30. Ibid., p. 71.
31. Ibn Kathir, *Tafsir Ibn Kathir*, London: Darussalam, 2000, Vol. 2 (abridged), p. 442.
32. Ibid., pp. 444–5.
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34. Abul A'la Maududi, *Towards the Understanding of the Qur'an*, 1988, pp. 26–7.
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37. Ismail Ragi al-Faruqi, 'Towards a New Methodology for Qur'anic Exegesis', *Islamic Studies*, March 1962, pp. 35–52.

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38. Asma Barlas, *'Believing Women' in Islam: Unreading Patriarchal Interpretations of the Qur'an*, Austin TX: University of Texas Press, 2002.
39. Amina Wadud, *Qur'an and Women*, p. 2.
40. Ibid.
41. Ibid., p. 5.
42. Ibid., pp. 69–78.
43. Qur'an, Sura 4:75.
44. Farid Esack, *Qur'an, Liberation and Pluralism*, Oxford: One World, 2002, p. 98.
45. Qur'an, Sura 11:27.
46. Qur'an, Sura 2:271.
47. Qur'an, Sura 2:83.

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Modern societies are by definition becoming increasingly diverse and religiously pluralistic. Capitalist transformation of traditional communities and the global spread of ideas through new media have led to a situation in which people have had to find new modes of coexistence. As modernity comes with growing pressure to draw boundaries and formulate identities, globalization also brings a new ambiguity into Islamic interpretations as a way of integrating different Islamic identities.

6

Public Religiosity, Parrots of Paradise and the Symbols of the Super-Muslim: Sunna and Sunnaization in Islamic Missionary Movements[1]

THOMAS K. GUGLER

Muslim Faith Movements (*Tahrīk-e īmān*) from South Asia have proven specific strengths in re-shaping the Islamic Religious Fields in the Diaspora communities in European countries as well as in their societies of origin. The Tablīghī Jamā'at emerged in 1926 as a Muslim response to the *shuddhī*-campaign of the Hindu missionary movement Ārya Samāj. Its founder, the charismatic Dĕobandī-trained

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ālim Maulānā Muhammad Ilyās Kāndhalawī (1885–1944), developed a six-point (*che bātein*) programme,[2] that still serves as the principal guideline for all lay preachers. His nephew Maulānā Muhammad Zakarīyā Kāndhalawī (1898–1982) wrote the handbook of the movement, a commentary on selected *ahadīth*, *Tablīghī Niàāb* (Urdū: Tablīghī Curriculum), which since 1940 has also been called *Fazā'il-e A'māl* (2 vols.) (Urdū: Virtuous of Good Deeds). Maulānā Muhammad Yūsuf (1917–65), the son of Maulānā Ilyās, and *amīr* of Tablīghī Jamā'at after 1944, wrote the second major publication of the movement, *Hayāt as-Sahābah* (3 vols.) (Arabic: The Lives of the Sahābah, the founder generation of Islam). After Maulānā Yūsuf's death in 1965, Maulānā In'āmul Hasan led the movement until 1995. Since then the movement has had a collective membership dominated by Maulānā Sa'd (b. 1965) and Zubair (b. 1950). From the late 1960s the movement has operated globally, with their European headquarters in Dewsbury (UK, founded in 1978),[3] the North-American headquarters in Chicago[4] and its world headquarters next to the Nizāmuddīn shrine in New Delhi. Members are popularly recognized by the white *shalwār-qamiz*, a fist-long beard, *miswāk*, black leather socks and sometimes prayer-marks on the forehead—the black leather socks (Deobandī *khufein*) being the differentia specifica. Its dynamics of conversion and mobilization rely heavily on Gujarati trader networks.[5]

In 1981 Memon Maulānā Muhammad Ilyās Qādrī' Attār (b. 1950) officially founded the Barelwī version of the Tablīghī Jamā'at, the Da'wat-e Islāmī (www.dawateislami.net), in Karachi. The idea for this movement, however, came from the India-based Arshād ul-Qādrī (1925–2002), who had already founded the Bradford-based

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World Islamic Mission together with Shāh Ahmad Nūrāni (1926–2003) of Karachi—in Mecca in 1972—to confront the Tablīghī Jamā'at. While Da'wat-e Islāmī copies the structure and activities of Tablīghī Jamā'at, their members differ mainly in appearance because of their green turban. The green colour of the turban, indicating their focus on the green dome of the Prophet in Madīna (Masjid an-Nabawī), is regarded as their trademark and has led to their popular label '*jannat ke tūte*', parrots of paradise. The six points of action of the Tablīghī Jamā'at (che bāten) are worked out into 72 directives, the Madīna-rewards (*madanī in'amat*), which serve as guidelines to evaluate the daily performance in the madanī card, which has to be forwarded to one's *negrān* (Urdū: caretaker) once a month. This madanī card is also a tool for formalizing the *murīd*'s (disciple) relation to the *murshid* (master), as the monthly points collected according to the 72 rewards indicate the *pīr*'s love for the adherent (*dost*—friend of 'Attār, *pyārā*—the cherished one of 'Attār, *mehbūb*—dear to 'Attār's heart, or *manzūr-e nazar*—favourite of 'Attār). 'Attāri's handbook of the Sunnas resembles the main book of the Tablīghī Jamā'at, *Fazā'il-e A'māl*, and is entitled *Faizān-e Sunnat* (Urdū: Spiritual Benefits of the Sunna). The highlight of the weekly *ijtemā'* is the Fiqr-e Madīna, the visualization of the Judgement Day and honest repentance of sins. The movement operates globally from their world headquarters Faizān-e Madīna in Karachi and all followers are requested to take *bay'a*, oath of allegiance, to Ilyās Qādrī 'Attār. The North American headquarters is in Chicago,[6] the European headquarters is the Faizān-e Madīna in Bradford, UK. Other centres of the same name can be found in Accrington, Birmingham, Barcelona, Valencia and Malaga. Members of the Da'wat-e Islāmī imitate the symbols of piety introduced

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Madrassa-tul-Madīna in Mumbai, March 2008, copyright: Thomas K. Gugler.

by the Tablīghīs into the religious market,[7] especially the prayer-marks on the forehead. They also stress the length of the beard[8] and the uniform dress code, which is a white shalwār-qamiz, with miswāk, a green beard-comb in the pocket, a green turban (*'imāma-sharīf*), and a brown *madanī cādar.*

The Da'wat-e Islāmī has an edge over the Tablīghī Jamā'at as since 1990 it has been running its own chain of madrasas, Madrassa-tul-Madīna, with more than 1,000 madrasas in Pakistan alone.[9] Most of the funding is channelled through the Barkati Foundation (www.barkati.net).

In 1992,[10] allegedly after a dispute with the Pakistani Organization Committee on financial issues connected to the first annual Da'wat-e Islāmīijtemā' in India in 1991, the negrān of the Indian branch of Da'wat-e Islāmī, Maulānā Muhammad Shākir 'Ālī Nūrī, also a Memon, split off to form the independent movement Sunnī Da'wat-e Islāmī (www.sunnidawateislami. net), which has its world headquarters in Mumbai in the Ismā'īl Habīb Masjid on Muhammad Ali Road, where Da'wat-e Islāmī's first weekly ijtemā's in India were held from 1988 onwards. As in the Sunnī Youth Federation or in Sunnī Tahrīk,[11] another offspring of the Da'wat-e Islāmī, Sunnī here marks the claim to be connected to the Ahl-e Sunnat wa'l Jamā'at (Barelwī)

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school of thought. Followers of the Sunnī Da'wat-e Islāmī (SDI) differ from followers of the Da'wat-e Islāmī in appearance because of their white turban. As several Indian Barelwī' *ulamā*' suspected Ilyās 'Attār to be a secret agent of the Tablīghī Jamā'at, they hesitated to support him when Madanī work began in Mumbai in 1988, propagating that those Da'wat-e Islāmī activities—keeping Muslims after prayer at the mosque to listen to *dars*, and sending the men around on travel-tours thus separating them from their families[12]—would not be Barelwī, but Dĕobandī *bidat*, innovation.[13] SDI's *darsī kitāb* is a commentary on selected ahadīth, too. Resembling Ilyās 'Attār's *Faizān-e Sunnat* it was first called *Faizān-e Sharī'at*[14] (Urdū: Spiritual Benefit of the Sharī'ah, 1999, written by Maulānā Muhammad Ibrāhīm āshi) with the subtitle explaining it to be the Barelwī Tablīghī Niàāb, but later officially renamed *Barakāt-e Sharī'at* (Urdū: Blessings of the Sharī'at) and rewritten by Maulānā Shākir 'ālī Nūrī with no more reference to the Tablīghī Jamā'at on its cover. *Barakāt-e Sharī'at* was published in three parts, each part at the annual ijtemā' in 2005, 2006, and 2007. The annual ijtemā', which has taken place since 1991 at the Vādi-e Nūr Azad Maidān in Mumbai, differs from the annual ijtemā's of the other two movements, as the first day of the three-day-meeting, Friday, is reserved for the sisters. The highlight of the weekly ijtemā' is the Zikr-e Madīna, the call to the Beloved Prophet to save one from the tortures of hells and the honest repenting of sins. Besides the weekly and annual ijtemā's in their headquarters, the Ismā'īl Habīb Masjid in Mumbai, the movement has weekly and annual ijtemā's in May in its European headquarters, Noor Hall, in Preston, UK. Sunnī Da'wat-e Islāmī organizes regular Youth Camps in Manchester at the North Manchester Jāmia Mosque. Other centres are in Blackburn (Razā Masjid),

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Bolton (Madīna Masjid) and Leicester (Ŭsmānī Masjid). The movement is currently setting up a *markaz* in Birmingham. The headquarters for North America are in Chicago. SDI has founded twelve madaris in India so far. The funding is largely organized through the Ibad-ur-Rehman Trust and via the platform World Memon Organization.[15]

khurūj fī sabil illah—'It is time to leave our families (...) for the sake of Islam'[16]

These three movements operate similarly. Employing peer pressure and rewarding conformity, the Sunna-mongers impose a strict dresscode on their followers and are organized in extremely mobile small units of lay preachers (jamā'at, madanī qafila, qafila), who invite followers for weekly (shab-e jum'a) and annual ijtemā's, congregations. Imitating the hijra towards Madīna, highly religious young men travel on missionary *gasht* (walks) and *khurūj* (journeys)—*chillā* for forty days, a grand chillā is four months—to mosques, where they eat and sleep during their preaching tours, and invite the local neighbourhood to join them in prayer (*naikī kī da'wat*—invitation towards good), after which they give dars, reading a chapter of their respective Sunna-catechism (darsī kitāb), which codifies the movement's corporate identity. They then urge people to register for missionary journeys (*tashkīl*). After returning from the missionary tour the leader (Urdū: amīr, negrān) is expected to give a report (*karguzārī*) on the local conditions and the results of their missionary activities. The notion of organized lay preachers in the footsteps of the Prophet is a quite new phenomenon in Europe and North America. As cultural conflicts have become intracivilizational in response to Western modernity,[17] the activities of both groups aim at the 'inner

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Haftawa Ijtemā' by Da'wat-e Islāmī in Bengaluru, March 2008, copyright: Thomas K. Gugler.

mission', bringing Muslims back to the 'real' Islam and saving them from Western influence.

Personalizing Sunnas: 'Islam Means I Submit to the Law of Allah and Muhammad'

The three movements stress piety of action as well as the strict and literal imitation of the life of the Prophet (*sunnat an-nabī*) in all aspects of the daily routine. As missionary, *dā'i*, the lay preacher has to act like a perfect, ideal Muslim, a Super-Muslim, so to speak. Selling Sunna as salvation goods,[18] the lay preachers are at the same time promoters

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and consumers of the commodities they promote. The main commodity they are prompted to put on the market, promote and sell is themselves. As the three missionary movements compete for impact, visibility is of the essence for them. The test they need to pass in order to be admitted to the social prizes they covet demands them to recast themselves as commodities, as products capable of catching the attention and attracting demand and customers (Baumann 2007: 6). With the interpretation of Sunna as a normative system of lifestyles, the Missionary Movements transform the consumer into a commodity. They mark their lay preachers with easy recognizable symbols and signs of belonging, which exemplify modern processes of transformation in systems of religious practice (Graf 2003) with the means of Identity Formation (Eisen 1998). This process I want to call Sunnaization.[19]

Rediscovering Roots: From Radicalization to Spirituality

The 'Islamic Project' of these three movements is the 'Sunnaization', that is, the re-shaping and re-construction of the daily routine and the individual markers of identity based on the examples of the Prophet and the Salaf, the pious ancestors, as portrayed in the hadīth literature. This so-called 'non-political' Sunnaization can be understood as the privatization or individualization of political re-Islamization.[20] It focuses on the private sphere instead of the state and argues with ahadīth rather than the Qur'ān. Dreams are now central for processes of hadīth-productions. Each of the three movements produced its specific commentary on selected hadith—*Fazā'il-e A'māl, Faizān-e Sunnat* or *Barakāt-e Sharī'at*—focusing on the Sunna of the Prophet, *sunnat an-nabī*. The Barelwīlay preachers have yet

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no publication on the Sunna of the Salaf, *sunnat as-salaf*, which would be comparable to the *Hayāt as-Sahābah*. These Sunna-catechisms teach a very specific Islamic etiquette in drinking, eating, walking, greeting, sleeping, brushing teeth, combing the beard, etc. 'Sunnaization' is a process to encourage people to establish the 'Sunnas of the Prophet', which means that every individual establishes deep, unambiguous and public visible ties to the Prophet in his personal daily worlds of living. It also means regulating one's behaviour by either substituting norms of behaviour (for example cutting instead of shaving a beard) or integrating additional essentializing parts into an otherwise unchanged behaviour, for example doing *zikr* (active remembrance of God by a specific mantra) while taking the step to board a bus with the right foot first. This re-essentialized Sunna becomes a normative system of life-styles, apparently emanating the power of trans-substantiation to convert a competition-ridden society of egomaniac subjectivity fetishists into a supportive community of loving brothers and sisters following Muhammad.

'I have never seen such long beards and such dark spots on the foreheads'[21]

The focus however, is the stage-managing of the lay preachers' imitation of the Prophet in the public sphere (cf. Jonker 2006), their symbols of piety, claiming capital of authenticity (cf. van der Veer 2006) to fuel the dynamics of conversions. Equipped with the symbols of the Super-Muslim, 'all the paraphernalia to win over the hearts of the people',[22] the lay-preacher has to serve as a role-model for the 'religious' Muslim. Neatly dressed followers and a demonstrative culture of cleanliness and discipline are central elements of

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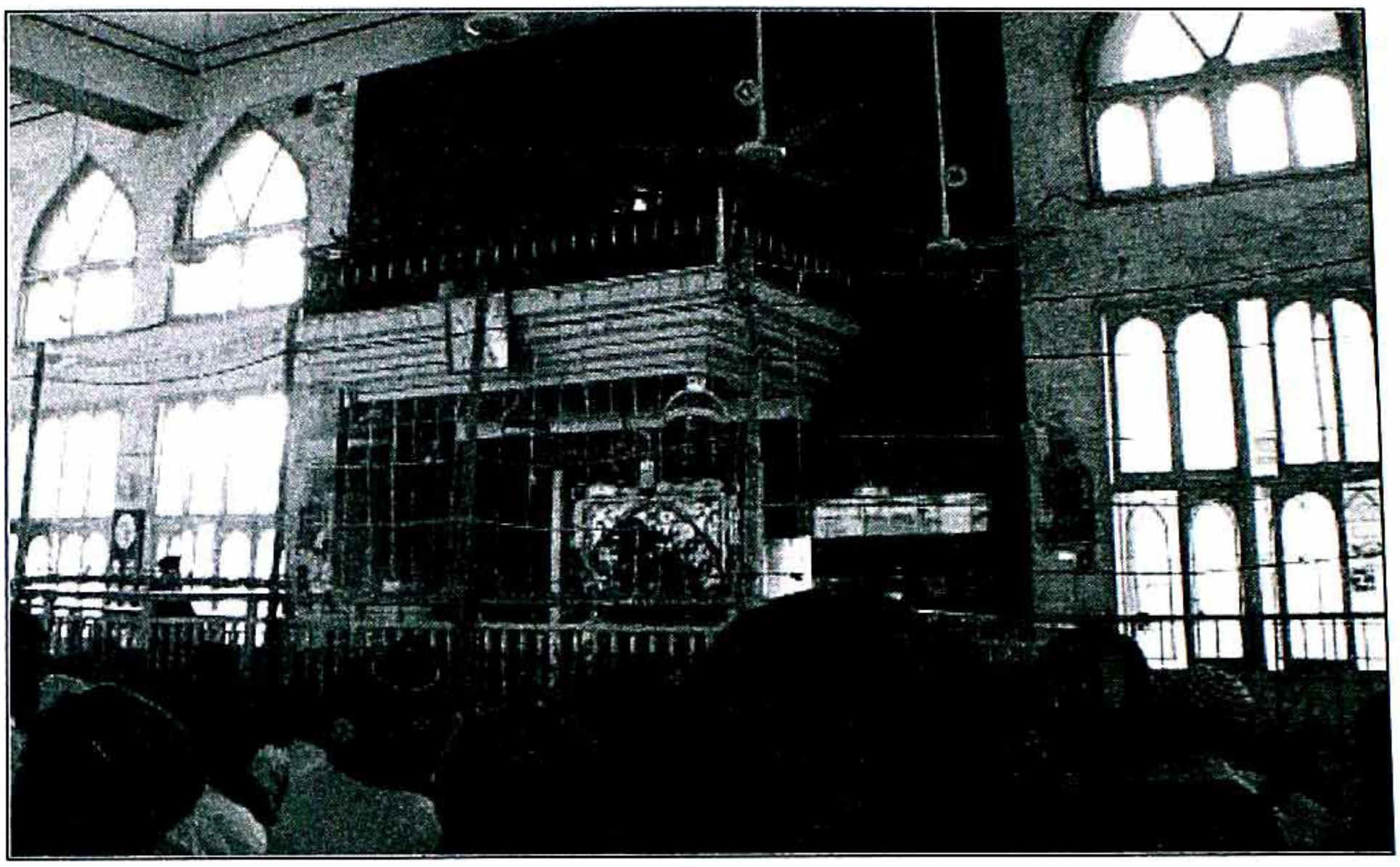

Faisal Iqbal and Imran Farhat, two cricket players from the National Team at the annual ijtemā' of Da'wat-e Islāmī in Multan, copyright: Thomas K. Gugler.

re-essentialized religious symbol systems. As agents of 'hard religion' the lay-preachers of Da'wat-e Islāmī compete with Tablīghīs in an aggressive rat-race for supplying salvation services.

As the lay-preachers also compete with modern and secular recreational activities, the modernization of religious rituals includes active marketing measures like the staging of religious mass-events (annual ijetmā's) with regional TV and sports stars. The customer-oriented approach allows the Sunna-companies not just to propagate more salvation-certitude (Heilsgewißheit), but also to generate more need for salvation, as any supply creates its demand in a market situation. Because of the bay'a the Da'wat-e Islāmī has again an edge over the Tablīghīs if it comes to securing customer loyalty. As a youth-movement especially, the Da'wat-e Islāmī systematically focuses on new consumer groups, who tend

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to be secondarily in traditional Islamic religious fields, which are usually dominated by male elders. The imitation Muhammadi is a means to generate not just sawab, but also social capital like trust- and authenticity-capital. The Islamic dress code serves in the here and now as a freedom-ticket with which young Muslims can autonomously generate social capital, which allows them to re-shape the Islamic religious field in their immediate environment. One can also talk about the Missionary Movements of health & wealth religions, which not just propagate a healthy lifestyle (no drugs, no promiscuity), but also integrate their followers in permanent-expanding trader-networks, thereby creating long-term social-structural processes of middle-class formation. In this respect one can conceputalize the Missionary Movements as a Social Movement.

Spaces of Dialogues: Barelwīyat kā agent kaun?

The early history of the Pakistani movement Da'wat-e Islāmī entering the increasingly pluralistic religious market in India is quite revealing in several aspects. The first madanī qafila from Karachi to Mumbai was organized in 1986. The muballighs set up the first markaz, the Ismā'īl Habīb Masjid in Mumbai in 1988. Their tablīgh activities, starting with waking up the Muslims from the neighbourhood to invite them to recite salāt-e fajr in jamā'at were copied from the Tablīghī Jamā'at in order to make sure that the Tablīghīs don't win more ground, but made the local Barelwī 'ulamā' suspicious, who saw the muballighs of Da'wat-e Islāmī as agents of a threatening force of Dĕobandization from within. In July 1991 Ilyās 'Attār, accompanied by a group of seventy muballighs, came to India in order to resolve the conflict with the local Ahl-e Sunnat 'ulamā'. On this occasion

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the Mumbai Barelwī 'ulamā' hired the hit man and top-terrorist Salīm Talwār to get rid of the perceived agent of Dĕobandization of the Ahl-e Sunnat movement. When Ilyās 'Attār came out of the house of Maulānā Zahīr ud-Dīn, whom he had tried to convince to support his movement, Salīm Talwār confronted him on Muhammad Ali Road, putting his gun to Ilyās 'Attārs' head, requesting him to leave India. Ilyās 'Attār is reported to have responded with a softening smile: '*ham sirf madanī kām karte hain.*' However, Salīm Talwār shot two of his disciples on the spot to make sure his request would be understood and followed.[23] Following this incident Ilyās 'Attār left India. He did not come to the first annual ijtemā' of Da'wat-e Islāmī in December 1991, but tried to cancel this first annual congregation and settle the conflict with the Indian-Barelwī 'ulamā' first. The ijtemā' however was organized by zealous Indian activists under the negrān Muhammad Shākir 'ālī Nūrī, who took the standpoint that the Tablīghī Jamā'at had to be confronted irrespective the support of the 'ulamā'. After the ijtemā' the Pakistani Organization Committee of Da'wat-e Islāmī refused to reimburse him his expenses and Muhammad Shākir 'ālī Nūrī broke away to form the independent movement Sunnī Da'wat-e Islāmī. Muhammad Shākir 'ālī Nūrī has since then not spoken a word with Ilyās 'Attār.[24]

Ilyās 'Attār returned to India only in 1997, on the occasion of the first official annual Da'wate Islāmī ijtemā' in Ahmadabad, where Madanī work began in 1990 with the help of Muftī Aqmal Qādrī, who has since then become a popular qāzī on Q-TV (Qur'ān-TV), giving fatawa to mostly Pakistani and Indians viewers worldwide. For this event the Indian Ministry of Railways launched three special trains called 'Madīna Express' from Mumbai to Ahmadabad,

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stopping during the prayer times. This second ijtemā' was a comparable disaster: the Pakistan Organization Committee claimed that the person in Ahmadabad in charge of organizing the ijtemā' did not send proper billing reports to Karachi and could not be reimbursed. Feeling humiliated by these administrative structures (and the fact that they had to transfer all the money they collected locally to Karachi first), about 900 members in Ahmadabad left Da'wate Islāmī to form the financially independent 'Da'wat-e Islāmī Society', which now organizes a weekly ijtemā' on Saturdays at the Golden Mosque (Sonherī Masjid) in Ahmadabad, attracting about 500 Muslims. Their local madrasa is called 'al-Madrassa-tul-Madīna' and the students also wear the green turban. Da'wat-e Islāmī Society has yet neither generated their own darsī kitāb nor have their activities crossed the borders of Ahmadabad, Gujarat. Da'wat-e Islāmī in Ahmadabad, which is in most instances a youth movement, holds its weekly congregation at the same time as the Da'wat-e Islāmī Society in the bigger Shāhī 'ālim Masjid, and has established meanwhile two much larger madrasas (Madrassa-tul-Madīna in March 2006 and Jam'īya-tul-Madīna in September 2007, with 135 students already) and is confident that it can win over the city again from the old 'deviationists'. The last annual ijtemā' of Da'wat-e Islāmī in India was in Kanpur in 2000. Since then the Karachi-based shūrā has not given the permission for another annual congregation in India.

Mujhe āpnī aur sarī dunya ke logon kī islāh kī koshish karnī hai (slogan of Da'wat-e Islāmī)

The founding history of the Da'wat-e Islāmī starts with a failure. Though the movement was officially founded by Ilyās

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Attār himself, the idea that the Tablīghī Jamā'at had to be destroyed with its own weapons came from the charismatic *munazir* (debater) Allama Arshād ul-Qādrī (5 March 1925–29 April 2002). He wrote the extremely widely read books *Tablīghī Jamā'at* (1987—which is read as a prime reference between Indonesia and the Gambiah), *Tablīghī Jamā'at āhādīs kī roīnī me* (Urdū: TJ in the light of hadīth), *Zalzala* (Urdū: Convulsion, 1998), *Zer-o-Zabar* (Urdū: Complete Destruction [of Děoband], written during his third imprisonment, 1979), and Da'wat-e Insāf (Urdū: Call for Justice, 1992). After studying the Tablīghī dynamics of mobilization, Arshād ul-Qādrī stressed the need to set up a rival Barelwī organization. The first attempt was the World Islamic Mission (www.wimnet.org),[25] Al-Da'wat-ul-Islamiyyat-ul-A'lamiyyah, which Arshād ul-Qādrī and the Karachi-based Shāh Ahmad Nūrānī (1 October 1926–11 December 2003) launched in Mecca in 1972. With its head-office in Bradford (http://www.wimuk.com), the WIM was the first Barelwī organization that systematically funded missionary travels on the global stage, setting up several educational institutions as well, among them the Islamic Missionary College in Bradford.[26] The WIM founded the first Barelwī Madrasah in Bradford in 1974, which was inaugurated by Arshād ul-Qādrī and WIM's present Secretary (Dr Allama Qamaruzzaman Khan Azmi). The WIM, however, faced serious difficulties in keeping up the incoming flow of money and in this respect the organization can be called a failure—which Arshād corrected. Arshād ul-Qādrī and the Karachi-based Shāh Ahmad Nūrānī, since 1973 head of the Jam'īyat-e 'Ulamā'-ye Pakistān (JUP), were the actual founders of Da'wat-e Islāmī. They appointed Ilyās Qādrī—who was the then Punjab president of Anjuman Tulaba-ye Islām, JUP's youth wing,[27] a Barelwī student organization

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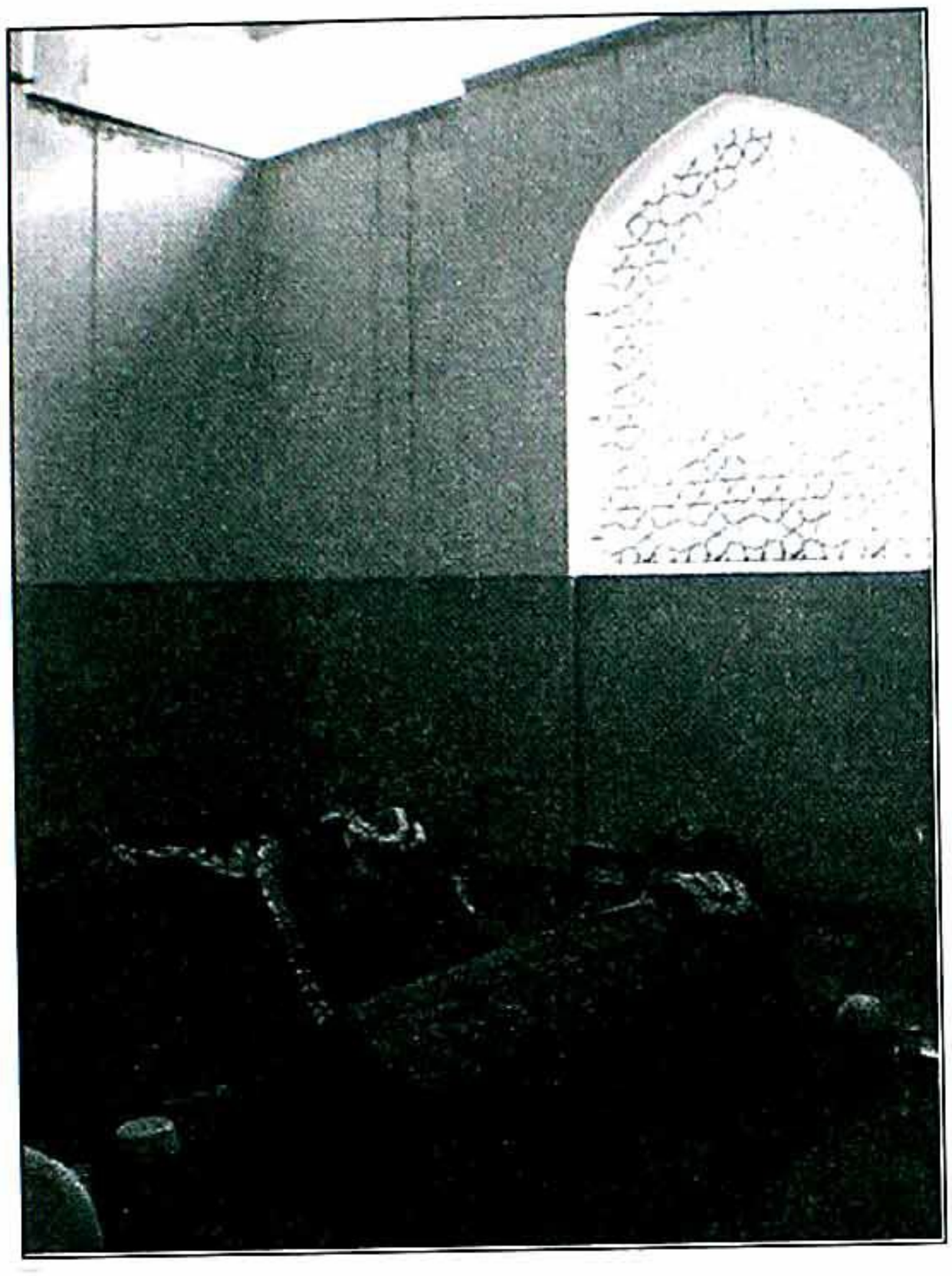

Qadiriya-Sufi Tombs at the Tablīghī markaz in Sultan Shah Masjid, Bengaluru, copyright: Thomas K. Gugler.

(which became infamous for destroying billboards picturing women)—as its amīr at Dār-ul 'ulūm Amjadia as they sought i) someone who could mobilize the young and ii) a Memon who with his connections to the Memon business community could systematically break up and destroy the Gujarati trader networks on which the Tablīghī Jamā'at rely for funds and for mobilization of conversion.[28] It is noteworthy that the World Islamic Mission,[29] whose president then was Arshād ul-Qādrī, did operate from Bradford, where Da'wat-e Islāmī set up its European headquarters.

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'I take every Sunnī like a crown on my head.' (Ilyās Attār on Sunnī Da'wat-e Islāmī)

In Děoband, Da'wat-e Islāmī is seen as another attempt of Barelwīs to copy the success of Děoband: 'they try to imitate anything we do without understanding it, which is why they always fail. One cannot imitate something one doesn't understand.'[30] In Bareilly, the khalifa of Ahmad Raza, Āzharī Mia, is not more promising, though more diplomatic. When I asked him whether he supports Da'wat-e Islāmī, which has a major centre in Bareilly, he replied: 'I know the organization, but haven't yet had any connections to someone from them.'[31] The relation between Da'wat-e Islāmī and Tablīghī Jamā'at is one of intense enmity, each portraying the other as non-Muslims, but in reality fortunately there is enough space for a tolerance of ambiguity everywhere. When I went to the Tablīghī Markaz in Shivajinagar, Bengaluru, where I was meeting the amīr who had thrown out Kafīl Ahmad after a dispute, which was actually the prime reason why he went to Glasgow, the madrasa boys showed me around. In the basement I saw a green turban, sitting in the first row, listening to dars. It struck me immediately and I felt deeply disturbed—for a second I wondered whether there really might be secret agents of Tablīghī Jamā'at in Da'wat-e Islāmī. The Bengaluru markaz is a special case which is noteworthy, as two tombs of Qādirīya-Sūfīs, Sultān Shāh Qādrī and Multān Shāh Qādrī—which the amīr was apologizing for as they did not manage to get the license to destroy them—are attached to the mosque. So it is in this case allowed for Barelwīs to visit the Tablīghī mosque to do du'ā at the tombs and listen to dars. It is however not allowed to read namāz together with Tablīghīs as reciting namāz behind a Děobandī turns anyone into a non-Muslim and one's marriage becomes null and

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void, according to Ahl-e Sunnat fatawa—but it is allowed to pray after the prayer-times, alone, in the Tablīghī mosque.

Religion is All Around: 'Every step you make is rewarding'[32]

Modern societies are by definition becoming increasingly diverse and religiously pluralistic. Capitalist transformation of traditional communities and the global circulation of ideas by new media and information technology have led to a situation in which people have had to find new modes of coexistence. As modernity comes with growing pressure to draw boundaries and formulate identities, globalization also brings a new ambiguity into Islamic interpretations, enabling them to integrate different Islamic identities (Graf 2007). Religious symbol systems are marked by highly conflicting semiotic complexities. Religious interpretation cultures constitute themselves only through processes of permanently updated actualization of passed-down myths. Ahadīth are selected, read and commented in different ways. Cultural interpretation systems will snatch away any reified finalization, because the agents in the world of religious sign systems are as a rule fictional. Fictional agents of actions, however, refer to agents in reality, never in an unambiguous way, but only in a mode of arbitrary selection marked by an abundance of options (Graf 2006). This paper uses in most parts the terminology of Religious Economics, not with the intention to reduce religious people to consumerists, but because due to the market situation in pluralistic societies the Missionary Movements of the Dĕoband and the Barelwī schools are forced to put the very same products and services on the religious market, though at the same time their emotional worlds of religious sentiment are completely different, just having in common that people receive

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enormous social and emotional support during missionary travels. But as Sigmund Freud said in *Das Unbehagen in der Kultur*: 'To deal with emotions in a scientific manner is a pain.' The Barelwī-Semantics of Sunnas appear at times strange as they, unlike the Sunna-Semantics of Tablīghī Jamā'at, merge into the Sūfī-Semantics of self-annihilation, self-annihilation either in the murshid Ilyās Attār or the Beloved Prophet Muhammad Mustafā. Maybe one should quickly translate those semantics of self-annihilation in terms of an inherent Indian religious 'Oceanic Feeling' (Masson 1980, Gugler 2008b) or 'Ewigkeitsgefühl' (Freud), i.e. waves of a feeling of sadness and disgust with the world mixing with the awareness of its transience (naturally including world destruction fantasies usually in the form of an obsession with the Day of Judgement); and specific nostalgia-feelings of a deep de-personalization mixing with cosmic narcissism (*kohut*)—before obsessive paranoid experts of Islam-analysis start unfolding their analytical expertise.

NOTES

1. A lot of the material used in this paper is drawn from interviews conducted during fieldwork in Pakistan (November 2006), Spain (November 2007), and India (January–April 2008) for the collaborative research project 'Muslims in Europe and Their Societies of Origin in Asia and Africa', funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research under the Grant Programme 'Humanities in Dialogue with Society'. For summaries and impressions of the fieldwork, see: Da'wat-e Islami in Pakistan: http://www.zmo.de/muslime_in_europa/ergebnisse/gugler/index_en.html; Da'wat-e Islami in Spain: http://www.zmo.de/muslime_in_europa/ergebnisse/gugler/index-

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spain2.htm; Da'wat-e Islami in India: http://picasaweb.google.de/thomas.gugler.

2. *Shahādah, zalāt, dhikr, ikrām-e Muslim, niyyāt,* and *nafr.*
3. Other major Tablighi Centres in Europe are: Association Foi et Pratique in Paris founded in 1972 (first jamā'at in 1962), An-Nur Mosque in Brussels 1975, Asociacion Annur Mezquita in Barcelona registered 1992 (founded 1985), and Friedrichsdorf Mosque Association in Germany in 2000.
4. The annual ijtemā' in Chicago 1988 is said to have been the largest Muslim gathering in North America until then. See: Mumtaz Ahmad, 'Islamic Fundamentalisms in South Asia: The Jamaat-i Islami and the Tablighi Jama'at', in Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby (eds.), *Fundamentalisms Observed,* Chicago: University of Chicago, 1991, pp. 457–530.
5. Cf. Philip Lewis, *Islamic Britain: Religion, Politics, and Identity among British Muslims,* London: I.B. Tauris, 1994, pp. 90–4. See also the paper by Thomas Blom Hansen, '"We are Arabs from Gujarat": the purification of Muslim identity in contemporary South Africa', *Seminar* 2003/2, RAU Sociology.
6. http://www.faizanemadina.us.
7. For the transformation processes through the market situation see Roger Finke and Rodney Stark, *The Churching of America, 1776–2005. Winners and Losers in Our Religious Economy,* New Brunswick: Rutgers University, 2005.
8. Ilyas Attār mentions in his smaller works every now and then, that Muslims have to be careful not to imitate the faces of the Jews. Cf. Imam Ahmad Raza Barelwi, *The Beard. An Islamic View-Point,* Mumbai: Raza Academy, n.d.
9. http://madrassa.faizaneattar.net. For a discussion see International Crisis Group: Pakistan, *Karachi's Madrasas and Violent Extremism,* Brussels: Asia Report No. 190, 29 March 2007.
10. To separate their origins from the scandalous happenings in 1991, the SDI claims to be founded in 1991 following dispute on a fictive ijtemā' in November 1989 (interview with a shūrā-member of SDI, Mumbai, 1 March 2008).

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11. http://Sunnītehreek.com.pk.
12. Other points of criticism were that Ilyas Attār used the title 'Amīr-e Ahl-e Sunnat' and claimed that it is obligatory for Muslims to wear the green turban.
13. Usually Deobandis claim that Barelwis introduced plenty of bidat. Cf. Matloob Ahmad Qasmi, *What is Sunnat & What is Bidat*, New Delhi: Adam Publishers, 2008.
14. New Delhi: Farid Book Depot, 1999 (second edition 2006). As this book is the link to the *Faizān-e Sunnat*, which Shakir Ali Nuri would not cite anymore—though *Barkat-e Shari'at* is cited by Ilyas Attār—it was officially deleted from the history of the SDI. Shūrā members told me in the interviews that this book was never used in SDI, though there are plenty of references to it in older editions of their books and the copy says on its cover: 'Sunnī Da'wat-e Islāmī kā maqbūl-e 'ilm-e Tablīghī Niàāb.'
15. Interview with a shūrā-member in Mumbai on 1 March 2008. The Powerpoint Presentation which the SDI used to ask for donations is with the researcher. For the WMO, see its official homepage: http://www.worldmemon.org
16. Sms from Kafil Ahmad to Sabil Ahmad, Glasgow, June 2007.
17. For some reflections on Islam's interaction with modernity see Ian Almond, *The New Orientalists. Postmodern Representation of Islam from Foucault to Baudrillard*, London: I.B. Tauris, 2007.
18. Cf. Robert Laurence Moore, *Selling God. American Religion in the Marketplace of Culture*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1994. Cf. also Rob Shields (ed.), *Lifestyle Shopping. The Subject of Consumption*, London: Routledge, 1992.
19. Not to be confused with the concept of Sunnification as defined by Burton Benedict in his work *Mauritius—The Problems of a Plural Society*, London: Pall Mall Press, 1965, p. 39: 'Sunnification means the abandonment of local and sectarian practices in favour of a uniform orthodox practice.'
20. Cf. Olivier Roy, *Globalised Islam: The Search for a New Ummah*, New Delhi: Rupa, 2005. Cf. Olivier Roy, *Secularism Confronts Islam*, New York and Chichester: Columbia University, 2007.

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21. Arshad ul-Qadri describing the Tablighi Jama'at, in *Tableeghi Jamaat*, Mumbai: Sunni Youth Federation, 2000, p. 17.
22. Ibid., p. 14.
23. Interview at the Chishti-Hindustan Masjid in Byculla, Mumbai in February 2008.
24. Interview with Shākir 'ālī Nūrīin, Mumbai, 23 February 2008.
25. See also: http://www.wimmauritius.org.
26. For example: Jam'ia Madina-tul-Islam in The Hague, Dar-ul-'uloom Alimia in the USA.
27. Established by Former Federal Minister Mohammad Hanif Tayyab. Its centre is Islamiya University in Bahawalpur. Its biggest fraction supports Maulana Shah Ahmad Noorani.
28. Interview with the grandson of Arshad al-Qādri, Khushtar Nūrāni, in New Delhi in March 2008.
29. http://www.wimnet.org ; Cf. also: http://www.wimmauritius.org.
30. Interview with the first Vice-Chancellor of Dar-ul-'ulum Dĕoband, Prof. 'Abd-ul Khalique Madrassi, in April 2008 in Dĕoband.
31. Interview with Dr Allama Akthar Raza Azhari at the Dargah-e Ala Hazrat in Bareilly in April 2008.
32. Dietrich Rössler, *Die Vernunft der Religion*, München: Piper, 1976, p. 7.

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Dayal discusses the Hajj sojourn of the ruler of Bhopal, Nawab Sikander Begam in 1864 to arrive at two conclusions. First, on the question of pan-Islamism as imagined in the recent historiography of the Hajj, to conclude that there were no Islamic loyalties among poor Indians or Arab or Turkish officials. There was no spiritual renewal; instead there was much concern with the inefficient administration and the poor hygienic conditions and the 'pauper' pilgrims. Second, 'Pan-Islamism' was a hollow solidarity because of the vast gulf between 'pauper' pilgrims and the Muslim elites of the Ottoman and Persian empires, which only revealed a divided Islam.

7

Encounters of Empires: The Hajj Sojourner and Pan-Islamism

SUBAH DAYAL

It seemed to me that begging was held to be as honourable as working; and when travellers take their departure (from Mecca), they are besieged by nobles as well as plebeians who clamour obstinately and violently for "bukhsheesh". Almost all the bad characters that have been driven out of India may be found in Mecca.[1]

To the ruler of Bhopal, Nawab Sikander Begam, quoted above begging was clearly not a legitimate vocation, let alone a respectable one. Contrary to our expectations, the account of her pilgrimage to Mecca in 1864 reveals no

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spiritual renewal. Instead, it offers ingenious prescriptions to cure Mecca of its unproductive subjects, its poor civic hygiene and its inefficient administration. Her commentary echoes colonial concerns in regulating the Hajj—a neurosis over disease, sanitation, documentation and the intractable networks of 'pauper' pilgrims. I discuss the Begam's account in the context of the debate over Hajj regulation in the 19th century to arrive at two arguments. First, I interrogate the category of 'Pan-Islamism' as imagined in recent historiography on the Hajj.[2] The Begam's account of her pilgrimage does not affirm 'Islamic' loyalties towards fellow Muslims, whether poor Indians or Arab or Turkish or African officials. Second, I argue that the category 'Pan-Islamism' simultaneously de-territorializes the regional, sectarian and class-specific articulations of Islam. I suggest that such erasures—based on a perceived invincibility of the British Empire along with a static alignment of Muslim subjects with their cultural identities—ignores the shared concerns and entangled political manoeuvres of ostensibly opposed states and their constituents.

My article therefore seeks to assess two contentious interfaces of sojourner migration—between competing empires with ambivalent pretexts to monitor the Hajj and between subjects of these empires, from vastly different backgrounds, with often incompatible motives to perform the Hajj. We find Muslim elites such as Sikander Begam, with no intention of settling in Mecca, desirous of a clean, smooth journey where beggars and officials do not hound her. The introduction of affordable steamship transportation, on the other hand, allowed poor pilgrims to set out on the journey in vast numbers. If a return seemed out of reach they could at least count on charity to sustain their stay in Mecca or finance their return to India.[3] These opposing

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constituents elicited responses from the colonial state which, too, were not always unanimous. Disagreements arose among provincial administrators, the Government of India and the Foreign Office in London.[4]

Before focusing on the late 19th and early 20th centuries, I will sketch a brief genealogy of early modern Ottoman, Mughal and Safavid contentions over Hajj traffic. I will then situate modern historiography on 'Pan-Islamism', shifts in Hajj regulation under colonial rule and the responses of British Indian subjects within this context. Circulatory migration did not necessarily result in the easy confluence of ideological identities, or as Fredrick Cooper notes, in 'networks [that] are soft and cozy and structures [that] are hard and domineering'.[5] Instead, I argue that these groupings often disintegrate as a result of movements, which were divided in terms of aims and affinities. Thus, we find people constantly reconfiguring themselves according to the practical and circumstantial needs of mobility and between the larger interactions of empires and later, nation-states.

GENEALOGIES OF THE PILGRIMAGE

Historians of modern empires often seem to forget that imperial rivalries, collaboration and circulation between territories existed long before the British domination of the 19th century. The economic and political control of Hajj traffic, as M.N. Pearson's work shows, was a consistent concern of the Ottoman, Mughal and Safavid polities during the 16th and 17th centuries as well.[6] Despite cooperation and relative peace, patronage extended to sojourners was a source of political legitimacy for all three early modern regimes. Just as the Ottomans widened their supervision of

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the pilgrimage, the Mughals increased imperial patronage of Hajj sojourners for a variety of reasons. Mughal rulers sometimes banished disobedient nobles from court under the pretense of a religious journey and, on other occasions, constructed hospices in the Hijaz for poor pilgrims.[7] Some Sunni Indian Muslim theologians argued that travelling through Shia Safavid Persia was a violation of pilgrimage rules and should be disallowed.[8] Throughout this period, and at later stages as well, Turkey and Persia also fought wars over their contiguous territories and sectarian differences.

Describing the experiences of Mughal nobles, Pearson notes that the pilgrimage had a 'strictly non-uplifting effect'.[9] Much like the Begam of Bhopal more than two hundred years later, some pilgrims returned to India fed up of corrupt officials in the Hijaz, disinclined towards orthodox Islam. On the other side, working from Ottoman archives, Suraiya Faroqhi points out that Sherifs often complained to their Sultan about Indian shippers who took alternative routes to the Hijaz to avoid port duties and customs at Jeddah.[10] A spontaneous alliance between Muslims from different regions, sects and classes was almost unthinkable in this context.

SHIFTS IN HAJJ REGULATION

Much like early modern empires, the British and Ottoman empires of the 19th century also sought political legitimacy, catering strategic negotiations to the protections sought by sojourners and subjects differentially. Encounters between Muslims from different regions, Michael Christopher Low argues, confirmed the political insecurities of the British. As early as 1857, he suggests, 'Pan-Islamic' ideologies or

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'Muslim-inspired political subversion [...] haunted colonial authorities in the wake of the Sepoy Mutiny.'[11] Low contends that these anxieties, ossifying under the Ottoman Sultan 'Abd-al Hamid II (1876–1908), anticipated the Khilafat Movement of 1919–24.

Sikander Begam's account of the Hajj itself questions the premise of such an argument. Where did loyal Muslim allies of the British fit in this model of 'Muslim-inspired political subversion'?[12] If 'political subversion' was the purpose of most Muslims performing the Hajj, then what do we make of the Begam's intense aversion towards her co-religionists in the Hijaz? I will discuss possible answers to these questions later.

Scholars of colonial medical history have offered alternate reasons for the colonial regulation of the pilgrimage in the later part of the 19th century. Mark Harrison notes that colonial officials saw the Hajj as the primary channel through which cholera reached Europe. Maritime quarantine preoccupied European powers at the Constantinople Sanitary Conference of 1866.[13] Valeska Huber argues that the International Sanitary Conferences were 'spaces of cooperation...between disciplines, nations, and cultures'.[14] The implementation of medical procedures in the Hijaz required British and Turkish officials to monitor facilities and share responsibilities to inspect pilgrims.[15]

However, British colonial responses to medical threats appear much more pragmatic. For instance, the Begam of Bhopal was allowed to travel with her doctor in 1864.[16] British colonial officials withstood European and educated Muslim demands for compulsory medical inspections or reduction of capacity limits on the grounds that such measures would raise ticket prices, making the voyage impossible for poor pilgrims.

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Radhika Singha suggests the colonial state, until World War I, sent mixed messages on the regulation of pilgrims.[17] Though the Native Merchant Shipping Acts of 1870 and 1876 tightened inspections of ships, and required that pilgrims have sufficient funds for a return ticket,[18] the effort seems to have been to maintain the monopoly of British shipping companies[19] rather than regulate pilgrim health or numbers. Such an inference can be drawn from the complaint made by the Bombay mercantile community in the *Bombay Gazette*, contending that quarantine during cholera season had dramatically reduced their profits.[20]

The Hajj Committee Report of 1931, written under H.B. Clayton and Muslim members of the Indian Legislative Assembly, attempted to tie together the concerns of governments across the Indian Ocean.[21] It required pilgrims to make a deposit for a return ticket and procure a passport in their districts or at the port.[22] Certain forms of sojourner mobility were now sanctioned and the extent to which poor pilgrims could manoeuvre the conditions of mobility circumscribed. The exclusionary resolution of sojourner mobility—the introduction of standardized travel documents—emerged from seemingly opposed but often shared anxieties of governance. New protocols of documentation combined with the calls for sanitation to prohibit more flexible, but untenable, forms of mobility.

WHOSE PAN-ISLAMISM?

In the decades following the Mutiny, Low writes, 'British officials began to sense the far-reaching dimensions of the Indian-Muslim diaspora in Mecca and the Red Sea region and its potential as a conduit for radicalism that would

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eventually fall under the term "Pan-Islamism".'[23] Harrison, on the contrary notes, 'the post-Mutiny preoccupation with public order and financial stringency lay at the heart of the Government of India's noninterventionist approach to sanitation in the 1870s–80s.'[24] Uniting both views on the significance of Hajj regulation is the Mutiny's presumed 20th-century apotheosis—'Pan-Islamism'. Since it is never defined, we can gather three possibilities: a Pan-Islamist was 1) someone who professed empathy with Muslims in other parts of the Islamic world, 2) someone who wished to travel or settle in the central Islamic lands, because these territories were considered conducive to Muslim spirituality or 3) someone who wanted to fight for all Muslim empires.[25] But the evidence from the later 19th century too does not fit neatly into any of these categories that undergird the threat of a 'transnational Muslim fanaticism'.

Rather than as a unified group, Muslim merchants responded in various ways to the British monopolies that controlled Hajj transport. Oishi Takashi tracks the contributions of Muslim merchants from western India and shows the variety of their ideological allegiances and their business interests in the Hajj.[26] Faced with the cartelization of the shipping industry, Muslim merchants turned to the Ottoman Empire, perceiving it as an alternative source of protection, a state with political clout, which would enable them to counter British commercial interests. A collective self-perception was not predetermined by an overarching religio-political cause.

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VULNERABILITIES OF STATES AND INTERSECTIONS OF GOVERNANCE

Governments of British India and the Ottoman Empire, although in opposition, faced crises of authority from the same subjects. The ability of some, especially leaders who wielded influence over a large number of pilgrims, to switch nationalities made both empires extremely vulnerable. Sojourner migration proved most unyielding because pilgrims, who sometimes stayed on in the Hijaz, circulated as subjects of one or both empires, undercutting both Ottoman and British authority.

In 1883, a former native of Sindh residing in the Hijaz, identified as Muhammad Hussein, Head Sheikh of Indians in Mecca, was accused of making lists of British subjects who wished to become Ottoman subjects. The deliberations culminated in the British Consul Moncrief convincing the Ottoman Vali and Grand Sherif to press for Muhammad Hussein's resignation.[27] The Sheikh, a man of 'high culture' who spoke Turkish, Arabic, Persian and Urdu, played an influential public role in the affairs of Indian Muslims in Mecca at that time. The Consul considered getting rid of him to be very advantageous, noting that 'British Indians visiting or residing [in Mecca] suffered much oppression at his hands, and he is a man who [is said to have] had extensive influence over the Muhammadens.'[28]

The need to strengthen nationality lines, Singha argues, led Turkish authorities to 'obstruct wealthy Indians from assuming too conspicuous a civic role' in the Hijaz.[29] Unless leading figures registered themselves as Ottoman subjects, they would not be reinstated in their positions. In the Sheikh's case the underlying reasons for shifting nationality, both his own and that of other Indians, remain unclear. The

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Vali explained he was not aware of Hussein's work and insisted the Indians would not be troubled were it not for 'a certain leading Indian's officious advice'.[30] Despite obvious indications that British and Turkish officials colluded to force Hussein's resignation, I would be wary of ruling out the possibility that Ottoman officials might have initially supported his endeavours. The Consul also characterized the Sheikh as a 'strong type of those Indians who are over-anxious to stand well with the local government'.[31] Turkish officials might have begun to perceive his influence as objectionable and, under diplomatic pressure from Moncrief, forced his resignation. In a self-congratulatory closing note, Moncrief wrote:

> Aun el Rafik Pasha, the new Grand Sherif, seems so far to be acting as well as he can in British interests, though the Turkish authorities, being very suspicious of the English, are exerting themselves to prevent her gaining influence in the Hedjaz.[32]

Rising tensions between British and Ottoman officials seem evident. An initial alliance between the Indian Sheikh and local officials possibly disintegrated, as the latter became more and more worried about well-established Indians in their territories. Also, financial and diplomatic obligations of the Ottoman Empire gradually widened Britain's sphere of influence, indirectly affecting administrative decisions of local Turkish officials. We witness an uneasy, tendentious partnership between two empires where political motivations remain implicit, but the insecurities of governance, of the unexpected, informal displacement of authority by subjects, compelled the two to meet.

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STRATEGIC PAN-ISLAMISM AND SOJOURNER SUBJECTIVITIES

Tracing the evolution of political affiliations between shifting groups of pilgrims, merchants, leaders and governments is necessary for a historical understanding of the relationships between sojourners and governments. What happened after the First World War cannot be read back retroactively into the 19th century. Nor can a presumption of stable cross-class alliances be counted upon for the early 20th century.

As an illustration, one can refer to the expressed sensitivity to the fate of the Ottoman Khalifa after 1919. In India, leaders of the Khilafat Movement and merchants indeed came together to oppose the monopoly of pilgrim transportation by a European Company, Messrs. Turner, Morrison & Co.[33] Thus English-educated and Deobandi Khilafat leaders and merchants alike opposed measures such as the compulsory purchase of return tickets because this would ensure profits of the British shippers. That this opposition was legitimated as a measure that protected the 'pauper' pilgrim's methods of travel was surely a strategic use of Pan-Islamist rhetoric. The interplay between the Ottoman Empire's extension of protection, Muslim elites' concern for legitimacy and the inclusion of poor sojourners, suggests a complex web of religious, economic and political alliances emerging in response to British influence.

But all pilgrims-sojourners were not poor to begin with, as Sikander Begam's account shows us. Nor were the sojourners' own perceptions of faith, ideology, and community untouched by the movement through sacred terrain. To the Begam, spiritual spaces, cherished from afar, seem distant and uncanny up close. Ironically, her sense of self as an Indian Muslim and a British subject crystallized

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through the journey. Ideological affinities disintegrated and differences vis-à-vis fellow Muslims magnified.[34] Sikander Begam challenged and disagreed with the Pasha of Mecca. She complained to him in vain about being inveigled by Bedouins and Turkish custom officials, of Mecca's irresponsible administrators and its unclean citizens. Indignant at his polite dismissal, she concluded that 'if only he had been a man of liberal views' he would have embraced her pragmatic recommendations.[35] She identified with notions of enlightened, 'modern' rule, posited in opposition to the imprudent and incompetent authorities of Mecca. No different than other travellers then, a Muslim traveller's self-awareness of difference sharpened in unfamiliar worlds, even if these spaces were spiritually identical. The Begam's testimony disturbs fantasies of religious universalism.[36] We cannot fit her narrative into a monolithic Pan-Islamism, one that fails to see the limitations of spatial relationships.

Cooper argues that ignoring the time-depth of cross-territorial processes generates a model of 'binary opposition of local authenticity against global domination'.[37] In the journey to Mecca, the centre of Islam, Sikander Begam's account does not suggest an ossification of 'Muslim' identity defined in unambiguous opposition to the threat of colonial domination. The limits of sojourner migration indicate that it did not always involve the reaffirmation of ideological values, but could also lead to moments of self-doubt and questioning the pilgrimage itself. Further, the Hajj sojourner manoeuvred an uneven terrain of regulations, simultaneously stringent and tenuous, placing contradictory demands of protection upon states.

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CONCLUSION

Pilgrim mobility was as much a problem for the maintenance of imperial, national and ideological boundaries as were other forms of mobility. The unevenness of laws and regulations under colonial rule bears testimony to the discordant voices of subjects and states, which shaped the terms of circulatory migration. An obvious point, easily ignored and thus worth stressing again, is that Muslims were never united in the protection they sought from states, be they Islamic or British. The rubric of 'Pan-Islamism' does not account for the divergent needs of 'pauper' pilgrims and Muslim elites nor their ambiguous relationships with the British, Ottoman or Persian empires. I began with early modern empires not to suggest a continuous, unbroken regulation of the Hajj, but to emphasize the existence of a divided Islam along with adversarial states. If Islam could not unite before colonialism, then why is it easily concluded that it congealed as a response to British rule? The particularities of Islamic revivalism, in its temporal and ideological origins, often get lost in studies that pre-date the colonial construction of 'Pan-Islamism'. Colonial authority did not homogenize, nor create a universalist/universal Islam, but encountered many diverse expressions of it in the 19th century. What had changed most significantly by the 20th century were the well-defined boundaries of nations, who now sought to preclude, regulate and limit the movements of more vulnerable pilgrims and citizens.

NOTES

1. Siobhan Lambert-Hurley (ed.), *A Princess's Pilgrimage: Nawab Sikander Begum's 'A Pilgrimage to Mecca'*, translated by

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E.L. Willough-Osborne, New Delhi: Women Unlimited, 2007, p. 72.

2. Michael Christopher Low, 'Empire and the Hajj: Pilgrims, Plagues and Pan-Islam Under British Surveillance, 1865–1908', *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 40 (2008), pp. 269–90.
3. *Report of the Haj Inquiry Committee* (by H.B. Clayton, Chairman), Calcutta, Government of India, 1931.
4. Mark Harrison, 'Quarantine, pilgrimage, and colonial trade: India 1866–1900', *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, 29, 2 (1992), p. 119.
5. Fredrick Cooper, 'What is the concept of Globalization Good for? An African Historian's Perspective', *African Affairs*, 100 (2001), p. 210.
6. M.N. Pearson, *Pious Passengers: The Hajj in Earlier Times*, New Delhi: Sterling Publishers Private Limited, 1994.
7. Ibid., pp. 114–16.
8. Ibid., p. 24.
9. Ibid., p. 119.
10. Suraiya Faroqhi, *The Ottoman Empire and the World Around It*, London: I.B. Tauris, 2005, p. 86.
11. Low, p. 270.
12. Along with other princely states, such as the Nizam of Hyderabad, the Begam of Bhopal sided with the British during the Mutiny, suspecting that their former Maratha enemies were its leaders. The Begam's obvious allegiance aside, Low, in his desire to read conspiracy into colonial motivations, also fails to notice that the Mutiny, far from being 'Islamic' in character, brought together upper-caste Hindus, Shias and Sunnis from different parts of India, while simultaneously some Muslim rulers continued to support the British. Surely, Islamic revivalism was one of many elements lending ideological precedents to the revolt. But, the convergence of these unlikely elements did not translate into a harmonious, national revolt as recent celebrations of the Mutiny's 150th anniversary would have us believe, nor was its 'symbolism undeniably Islamic' as Low suggests. In other words, we need

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to move beyond mutually exclusive explanations, about either national or Islamic essences of over-determined moments such as 1857.

13. Harrison, p. 121.
14. Valeska Huber, 'The Unification of the Globe by disease? The International Sanitary Conferences on Cholera, 1851–1894', *The Historical Journal*, 49, 2 (2006), p. 453.
15. Harrison, pp. 119–20.
16. Despite an initial hesitation, the Government of India granted the Begam permission to take her personal physician Dr Charles Thomson on the ship to Jeddah. Reasons cited to disallow permission were 'on the ground of the inconvenient precedent that would be thereby established, and of the peculiar character and object of her journey'. Perhaps the anxiety implicit here is that special permission granted to some passengers (or those who could afford to bring along medical personnel) would bind the government to extend privileges to others as well. Cf. Major R.J. Meade, Agent to the Governor General, Central India to Colonel H.M. Durand, Secretary, GOI, Foreign Department, 4 May 1863. Foreign, Political A, November 1863, 108–17. National Archives of India (NAI), New Delhi.
17. Radhika Singha, 'Passport, ticket, and India-rubber stamp: "the problem of the pauper pilgrim" in colonial India c. 1882–1925.' In Harald Fischer-Tine and Ashwini Tambe (eds.), *Spaces of Disorder: The Limits of British Colonial Control in South Asia and the Indian Ocean*, London: Routledge, 2008, p. 20.
18. Ibid., p. 123.
19. Huber, p. 470.
20. Harrison, p. 129.
21. *Report of the Haj Inquiry Committee*, p. 7.
22. Ibid., p. 19.
23. Low, p. 277.
24. Harrison, p. 124.
25. Gail Minault, *The Khilafat Movement: Religious Symbolism and Political Mobilization in India*, New York: Columbia University

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Press, 1982. Minault shows the Khilafat movement included all three of these, but leaders of the movement discouraged the latter two. Further, she understands the movement as anti-colonial and nationalist, and pan-Islamic specifically in its use of symbols. Again, I am not proposing a singular explanation for a movement nor do I want to over-valorize Khilafat as nationalist or 'secular' in its essence, but rather track multiple processes at work in the making of pan-Islamism.

26. Oishi Takashi, 'Muslim Merchant Capital and the Relief Movement for the Ottoman Empire in India, 1876–1924', *Journal of Japan Association of South Asian Studies,* 11 (1999), p. 85.
27. Cf. 'Ill-treatment of British Indian subjects at Mecca', NAI, Foreign, Secret E, June 1883, 30–5. I attempted to track the series of interrelated files in this case but aside from the summary and letters between Moncrief and the Earl of Granville, the files are not traceable. The exact nature of Hussein's activities and his relationship with Turkish officials remains unclear.
28. Ibid.
29. Singha, p. 22.
30. Cf. 'Ill-treatment of British Indian subjects at Mecca'.
31. Ibid.
32. Ibid.
33. Takashi, p. 93.
34. Cf. Lambert-Hurley, Introduction to *A Princess's Pilgrimage,* pp. xiv–xv. She further refers to Dale F. Eickelman and James Piscatori (eds.), *Muslim Travellers: Pilgrimage, Migration, and the Religious Imagination,* London: Routledge, 1990.
35. Lambert-Hurley, p. 128.
36. Cf. Sugata Bose, *A Hundred Horizons: The Indian Ocean in the Age of Global Empire,* New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2006, pp. 193–232. Bose interprets the movement of Indian Muslim intellectuals, such as Khwaja Hasan Nizami who travelled to Egypt and the Hijaz in 1911, as typifying experiences of transcendence, both territorial and spiritual. While

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recognizing disparities among pilgrims, his alternative, the vision of a harmonious cosmopolitanism, as imagined through middle-class intellectual encounters, once again elides contradictions within pilgrim mobility. The spatial relationship between the 'centre' of Islam and its peripheries too is a unidirectional and an unambiguous one, where pilgrims' journeys involve self-reflexive moments in which community ossifies against the difference of colonial domination.

37. Cooper, p. 199.

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Islam has been seen as a faith system that sanctions violence but a historical reading reveals this was by no means the general rule nor was it unique to this religion. The authority of the rulers in Muslim empires was circumscribed by the imperative to enforce the sharia *which set the limits to legitimate authority, and the need to delegate power with the expansion of the empire. This accounted for the diversity of Islamic thought and practice in politics which continues to this day. Islam is therefore neither a monolith nor is it a political project that advocates violence.*

Terror propagated by some Muslims in the name of Islam stems from specific local grievances. But it is wrong to equate Islam with terror. What is required is a historical and rational approach to the whole question of terror and why there has been a spate of violence in recent times.

8

Islam and Violence: An Uneasy Relationship

SUJATA ASHWARYA CHEEMA

In the wake of the events of 11 September 2001, the debate in the public domain, internationally, has centred on Islam and violence. The attack itself has been portrayed as a manifestation of Muslims' propensity to foment violence, deriving legitimacy for their actions from religion. Islam is seen as a faith system that sanctions violence. It is presented

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as the epochal evil, endangering the supremacy of Western values inaugurated in the aftermath of the Cold War. The lexicon of violence has become rife with terms such as 'Islamic terrorism', 'Islamofascism' and 'Islamophobia'. The brandishing of such terms gives Islam a pejorative connotation, as something that threatens peace and security in our times. Islam, then, appears as a monolith that unites its believers into a world where force and strife are only possible ways of engaging the 'other'. In this purportedly menacing world, dissent is impermissible and peace inadmissible. We are frequently bombarded by the media with images of Muslim men chanting death to 'Western' values and norms. As if in acting in conjunction, Muslim men (and women) have recurrently been held on suspicion or convicted for killing innocent civilians by terrorist acts in the name of *jihad* (war in the name of Islam), whether it be in Indonesia, Israel, Afghanistan, Russia, Spain, United Kingdom, or India. Is it surprising then that Islam is looked upon with fear and tension and Muslims with increasing suspicion? A number of other questions emerge at this juncture: Is violence inherent in Islam? Does Islam espouse and glorify violence? How has violence featured in the history of Islam? Does Islam endanger modern, liberal values such as secularism and democracy? How does one make sense of 'Muslim terror'? This essay attempts to answer these questions.

VIOLENCE AND ISLAM: A HISTORICAL EXPLORATION

A historical exploration of Islam is necessary to create a sense of perspective in examining the relationship between Islam and violence. To begin with, the study of

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the evolution of the Islamic State provides a starting point for examining 'Muslim violence' as central to the establishment, consolidation and expansion of the faith. Prophet Muhammad, along with his dedicated Companions and followers, challenged the existing belief system and structures of authority to establish the first Islamic 'state' in Yathrib (later renamed Medina). Shortly thereafter, when Mecca surrendered, Muhammad turned his attention to the extension and consolidation of his authority over Arabia. Through military action and astute diplomatic initiatives,[1] the Prophet of Islam united the warring tribes of the land into a politico-religious community. Within this unique state, faith became the dominant social bond.[2]

Muhammad took upon himself the mantle of political as well as religious leadership of the *ummah* (Muslim community), a term synonymous with Islamic society—dedicated Companions and followers of the Prophet—who had experienced what has been called 'total conversion' and adherence to the spirit of a hard-pressed and austere religious movement.[3] The role of leadership of his community involved exercise of political, legal and military powers. While the purpose of community and statehood was peace not conflict, Muhammad (and his followers) did enter into armed confrontation to establish his influence, prevent challenges to his authority, defend his realm, and seek territorial expansion like any other contemporary ruler of a state/empire. In any case, rules of behaviour, both for the ruler and the ruled, quickly emerged where the use of force was regulated to specified needs and circumstances, and violence and terrorism was strictly prohibited.

The occupation of Medina was a peaceful event, in which agreements were made between Muhammad and his followers on one side and the two warring tribes and some

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Jewish groups on the other. It was akin to an agreement in modern south Arabia when a *haram* (an 'inviolate zone' where contending parties can settle disputes peacefully) is set up: '[E]ach party was to keep its own laws and customs, but the whole area of *haram* was to be one of peace, disputes were *not* to be settled by force but judged by "God and Muhammad", and the alliance would act together against those who broke peace.'[4] Indeed, in consolidating his authority over Arabia, the Prophet of Islam employed force, but it is important to note this ambition was realized through disciplined use of arms rather than reckless violence. It is, therefore, difficult to agree with Eagleton that in Islam, 'the violence so far from being hidden, is sanctified in the canonical text [Quran] and enacted in the life of the most revered and imitated figure [Muhammad]'.[5]

The period of the Caliphate (632–1258), after the death of Muhammad, was marked by rapid expansion of Islam not only over the territories of the Byzantine and Sassanid empires, but as far as Morocco and Spain in the west and across Central Asia to India in the east. This period unfolded in three phases: the Rightly Guided Caliphs (*al-khulafa al-rashidun*) (632–61), the Umayyad Dynasty (661–750) and the Abbasid Dynasty (750–1258). Islam during this period acquired an all-encompassing character—from the faith of the believer, it developed a culture, a civilization, a political dogma and an economic doctrine[6]—as result of emphasis on peace and stability that remained an enduring feature of Muslim rule. The threat, often violent in nature, came either from internal opposition to the ruler and his rule or from external enemies. The State employed force for defensive purposes; indeed well-armed military apparatuses contributed to the stability of these empires. Violence was,

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therefore, not a marker of rule but part of the function or monopoly of the State over the use of force.

In the conquest of territories outside Arabia, Muslim armies proved to be successful builders rather than destroyers. 'For many in the conquered territories, [they] brought peace to people demoralized and disaffected by...years of Byzantine-Persian warfare. Local communities were free to continue to follow their own way of life in internal, domestic affairs. In many ways local populations found Muslim rule more flexible and tolerant than that of Byzantium and Persia.'[7] Those who preferred to retain their faith, as Saunders observes about Jews and Christians, 'were taken under Muslim protection (*dhimma*) and guaranteed security of their goods and property and the free exercise of their religion, on condition that they paid the *jizya*, tax'.[8] The Muslim rule shaped by a host of factors such as the pre-Islamic social traditions of the Bedouins, the imperial practices of Persia and Byzantium (and in later centuries in the form of Mongol and Turkish practices), and the beliefs of its leaders destroyed little in their conquests. As Peters argues:

> ...what they did suppress were imperial rivalries and sectarian bloodletting among the newly subjected populations. The Muslims tolerated Christianity, but they disestablished it; henceforth Christian life and liturgy, its endowments, politics and theology, would be a private, not a public affair. By an exquisite irony, Islam reduced the status of Christian to that which the Christians had earlier thrust upon the Jews, with one difference. The reduction in Christian status was merely judicial; it was unaccompanied by systematic persecution or blood lust, and generally, though not everywhere and at all times, unmarred by vexatious behaviour.[9]

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Whilst the external conflict in the course of geographical expansion of Islam were dealt with in deference to the indigenous practices of the conquered realms, the most important internal conflict led to the division of Muslims into Shii and Sunni. The struggle over succession to Prophet Muhammad brought with it the question of authority. Who was the rightful successor to Muhammad? Could Muhammad's successor, the caliph or the *imam*, be a believer from the community or appointed or was the succession ordained for someone from the family? The Shiis, and the various groups that sprang from them, evolved the idea that the successors of Muhammad, the imams, should be from the family of Muhammad. Indeed, they argued that the Prophet himself had chosen Ali, his cousin and son-in-law and his closest male relative to be his immediate successor. The supporters or partisans (Shia) of Ali as they came to be known could not succeed until the death of Uthman, the third *rashidun* (rightly guided) Caliph. By that time it was too late; Ali's succession as the Caliph was contested by the troops based in Syria under the leadership of Muawiyah. The civil war between Ali and Muawiyah came to haunt the early period of the Umayyads. The revolt and eventual killing of Ali's son, Hussein, in Karbala, led to the beginning of the history of Shiism. The ruling class used military power to counter threats to its legitimacy. Opposition had been met and contested by force; the focus, however, still remained the maintenance of peace and order. The recognition that Umayyad authority was maintained and preserved on a strong military capability was to both enhance and diminish the legitimacy of the State.

In this regard, with the systematization of *sharia* (religious law) from the Abbasid time onwards, a prominent group of theologians attempted to define the contours and limits of

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legitimate authority of the caliph. The struggle over succession to Prophet Muhammad and the Shii revolt during the Umayyad period, in addition to interrogating the limits of caliph's authority, also carried with them questions concerning religious authority. Who had the authority to interpret the Quran and the Sunnah of the Prophet? The Shiis evolved the idea that the successors of Muhammad, the imams, were more than merely political leaders. The imam was also a spiritual leader having the ability to interpret the 'inner mysteries' of the Quran. This made the imam infallible; he could, in one sense, 'prolong the revelation of God's will'.[10] The majority Sunni Muslims rejected this idea: for them the final Will of God contained in the Quran and Sunnah of the Prophet was revealed completely, and the ulama as interpreters of it, had the responsibility to oversee its conscientious implementation. The ulama were the guardians of laws and traditions, who legitimated the decision and legislations of the ruler. Given the vicissitudes of politics and the context of the discourse, the primary task of the religious scholars was 'to harmonize the existing socio-political situation with the sharia by interpreting *Quran, Sunnah* and *Hadith* in the light of political reality' so as to maintain peace and protect the unity of the Muslim community.

The most famous theory of the caliphate was articulated by jurist and theologian, Al-Mawardi (d. 450/1058) in his seminal work on Islamic statecraft, *Al-Ahkam As-Sultaniyah* (*The Laws of Islamic Governance*).[11] Acutely aware of the diminishing authority of the Abassid Caliphate in the context of the rise of Fatimid Caliphate in Cairo, the Umayyad Caliphate in Andalus and the establishment of the Buyid sultanate in Baghdad, al-Mawardi sought to reconcile the old and new realities by asserting that there could be only

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one caliph at a time. Al-Mawardi believed that caliphal authority was divinely ordained and sacrosanct as expressed in a verse in the Quran: '*O believers, obey Allah, and obey the Messenger, and those charged with authority among you.*'[12]

The caliph was, thus, the vice-regent of the Prophet and the caliphate was the principle upon which the community was established and regulated. Though al-Mawardi recognized delegation necessitated by the exigencies of governance, the caliph was the ultimate source of executive power and the symbol of authority in the State. Albert Hourani says that the later theorists, such as Al-Ghazali (d. 505/1111), acknowledged this development in the succeeding caliphates, by recognizing 'three elements [of power]: that of legitimate succession to the Prophet, that of directing the affairs of the world and that of watching over faith'. Though ideally these three aspects should be present in one person, this was not necessarily so. At least three groups of people fulfilled the exercise of these powers.[13]

In external matters, al-Mawardi talks about jihad as a form of defence, where the State could legitimately sanction the use of force. It was the duty of the caliph to defend the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the empire: 'He must fortify the border posts against attack and defend them with force against an enemy which might appear unexpectedly and violate what is sacred or shed the blood of Muslims or dhimmis [non-Muslim subjects] protected by a pact.'[14] This theological and ethical position guided the rules of external combat. Al-Mawardi prohibited the killing of women and children (except as combatant and shields in battle, and this too as a last resort). In this respect one is left wondering today when Akram Sabri, the Mufti of Jerusalem, or Shiekh Yousuf al-Qardawi, one of the most influential religious authorities in the world, condone killing of civilians and non-

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combatants in suicide bombings. Qardawi has called suicide bombing in Israel-Palestine an act of self-defence.[15] Islamic Jihad leader Sheikh Abdullah Shammi evokes the same argument: 'How come Israelis can claim self-defence and we can't?'[16]

In matters of internal rebellion and revolt, the emphasis was placed on obedience to the ruler—the ultimate aim being the maintenance of order and peace. While al-Mawardi does place limits on the power of the caliph, he sounds a note of caution: rebellion leads to *fitna* (chaos), and can be justified only when the ruler commits apostasy.[17] Even if the ruler was unjust or impious, it was enjoined upon the people to obey him, for any kind of order was better than anarchy, as al-Ghazali said: 'the tyranny of a sultan for a hundred years causes less damage than one year's tyranny exercised by the subjects against one another.'[18] Two centuries later, Ibn Taymiyya (d.1328), one of the foremost jurists of his time, opined, 'no good' could ever come out of 'rebellion either for religion or for the world'. These reflections have been seized by the Orientalists to substantiate their conception that the Islamic rule was despotic and predicated on violence and authoritarianism. It can be argued that the view affirming the linkage between obedience and fitna was contested and challenged both within Sunni Islam and across other sects that constituted the Muslim domain. Moreover, given the expanse of the Muslim rule, diffusion of power was inevitable, which effectively undercut the ambition of any ruler to concentrate power in his hands. In addition, the framework of power, which included the ulama and other functionaries of the State, ensured that the ruler upheld justice and obeyed the law. Indeed, Ibn al-Muqaffa (d.140/757), writing as early as in the first Hijri century, believed that the leader must have

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the allegiance of the people and be obeyed on the condition that the leader himself followed the law.[19]

In Sunni religious and political discourse, constraint on violence was placed by law i.e. the sharia and ordinances enacted by the ruler for its proper implementation. They contained appropriate provisions for the use of force, dispensation of justice and allocation of punishment. The emphasis was on establishing a peaceful and harmonious society. The just exercise of political power by the ruler within the bounds of sharia was a religious duty, said Ibn Taymiyya. It was enjoined upon the political authority to enforce the sharia, and thereby defend and uphold the faith. The practice of sharia impelled the ulama to concentrate upon its interpretation in order to subject the activities of the State and society to religious and ethical considerations. The scholars were of the opinion that the rule of sharia marked a 'legitimate' Islamic State. 'For the Sharia was the ultimate norm and the only common standard to be applied to a life lived under widely different circumstances.'[20]

Sunnism regarded the caliph neither as a prophet nor an infallible interpreter of faith, but a leader whose task was to maintain order and uphold justice: for this he should have the necessary qualities and knowledge of the religious law. With time, a de facto separation occurred between those who interpreted and maintained law (ulama) and those who enforced temporal order by the power of the sword. There emerged gradually an Islamic 'public sphere',[21] in which 'those who taught, interpreted and administered the law [ulama], together with those who exercised certain other religious functions—who led the prayers in the mosques or preached the Friday sermon—had come to form a distinct stratum of urban society': the ulama, the men of religious learning, became 'the guardians of the system of shared

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beliefs, values and practices'.[22] They were present in all aspects of social life as judges, teachers, preachers and guardians of shrines, dominating the public sphere and preserving the basic tenets of mainstream Islam.

In their task of preservation of the moral universe of Islam, the ulama constantly grappled with issues related to the legitimacy of the caliph and the nature of his authority, questions that had been raised in an acute form by the dissenting tendencies in Islam. While the Shiis accept the sharia in a form that has few major differences from that of the Sunnis, they hold that the ulama, in serving as agents of the Hidden Imam, has the authority to interpret the law and engage in social issues. None of the twelve Shii imams, with the exception of Ali, ever ruled an Islamic government. Therefore, the Shii ulama, under the various Muslim dynasties, have been as unobtrusive as possible and have lived as far as reasonable from the successive capitals of the Islamic empire.

The decline of the Abbasid Caliphate made the dispersal of power inevitable with the emergence of a large number of Muslim sultanates in an area extending from Europe to Southeast Asia. In this post-caliphate period of dynamism and expansion of Muslim rule, diversity was the central motif, which not only explains the resilience of Islamic civilization, but also challenges the mistaken assumption of Islam as monolithic. The consolidation of three major Muslim empires—the Sunni Ottomans in West Asia and Europe, the Shii Safavid in Persia, and the Sunni Mughals in the Indian subcontinent—testified to a diversity of administrative systems, modes of governance, corporate activities, and all such aspects that concerned the daily life of the people. As Esposito notes rather grandly in the re-emergence and dominance of these empires, 'history continued to

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witness the vitality, success, and divine guidance of Allah's Commonwealth.'[23]

Muslims rulers of the Sunni tradition, from the Rightly-Guided Caliphs to the last Caliphate of the Ottomans, employed conventional force as a means of defending the State. The State-funded army was charged with the duty of protection of the people and defence of the realm from internal and external challenges. In this way, the use of force was institutionalized as a State function governed by sharia. The imperative of implementing the sharia defined the nature and purpose of military engagements and the use of force in these societies. The juristic interpretations of the sharia also placed limitations on the exercise of power by the State. Additionally, the authority of the ruler became more diffused with delegation of power associated with the expansion of the domain. Thus, the place of violence within the framework of the exercise of power in Muslim realms has had many facets that reflect a variety of historical and lived experiences across and within societies. This is true as much in the present day as it was in medieval times.

JIHAD, TERRORISM AND ISLAM: PERCEPTIONS AND IMAGES

Jihad has been singled out as an obvious principle demonstrating Islam's historical attachment to force and bloodlust, which creates conflict with other civilizations, particularly between Islam and the West.[24] The notion that war in the name of Islam, jihad, exhibits the inextricable connection between Islam and violence can be contested. In the course of history, the notion of jihad acquired many different meanings, as a result of various challenges and

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changes that emerged within the Muslim domains and in the outside world. Diverse interpretations of the concept of jihad came from the jurists, who read the rules according to historical needs and circumstances. Therefore, it is impossible to delineate one dominant view or thinking on jihad. In Sunni tradition, jihad has not only been distinguished from 'war',[25] but also the principle of proper conduct in war follows from the religious purposes of jihad.[26]

In the Quran, jihad 'refers to the obligation of all Muslims to strive (*jihad,* self-exertion) or struggle to follow God's will. This includes both the struggle to lead a virtuous life and the universal mission of the Muslim community to spread God's rule and law through teaching, preaching, and where necessary, armed struggle.'[27] It also includes an obligation to defend Islam and the *ummah* in the face of aggression. The two broad meanings of jihad, non-violent and violent, are subject to a wide variety of usages and interpretations. According to one reading of the Quran, God has instructed the Muslims to propagate their religion only through peaceful persuasion and preaching. Jihad, here, is not considered a function of prophecy. Whenever the Prophet resorted to acts of war, it was not for the sake of disseminating the religious call, but 'for the sake of state [kingdom, *mulk*], and towards consolidating the Islamic polity. And there is no state which is not based on the sword, and sustained by virtue of violence and subjugation.'[28]

According to a prophetic tradition, the notion of defending Islam by force is affirmed along with the notion of propagating the faith through peaceful means. After the battle of Badr, in which the Meccans attacked Medina and the Prophet was compelled to repel the enemy by force, Muhammad told his followers: 'We return from the lesser

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jihad [warfare] to the greater jihad.'[29] Greater jihad is understood as having both spiritual as well as political significance. It may 'express a struggle against one's evil inclinations, an exertion [peaceful] to convert unbelievers, or struggle for the moral betterment of the Islamic community'.[30] In his famous book, *Milestones*, Sayyid Qutb, states that 'the jihad of Islam is to secure complete freedom for every man throughout the world by releasing him from servitude to other human beings so that he may serve God.'[31]

Islamists argue that war, even in the name of Islam, is a reflection of the concept of defence against aggression. The following verses from *Surat al-Baqrah*, makes this point clear:

> *And fight in the Way of Allah those who fight you, but transgress not the limits. Truly, Allah likes not the transgressors. And kill them wherever you find them, and turn them out from where they have turned you out. And Al-Fitnah is worse than killing. And fight them not at Al-Masjid-Al-Haram (the sanctuary at Makkah), unless they (first) fight you there. But if they attack you, then kill them. Such is the recompense of disbelievers. But if they cease, then Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.*[32]

There are several significant points here: First, it instructs Muslims to '*fight...those who fight you, but [to] transgress not the limits*'. This in itself is the complete opposite of an idea which assumes that conflict and war was actively sought in Islam. Secondly, there are restrictions placed on certain tactics and actions in warfare, under the injunction '*transgress not the limits*'. From the very beginning, it was forbidden to kill non-combatants, women, children and rabbis unless they were a party to the combat. Finally, Muslims are forbidden to initiate the violence ('*but if they attack you, then kill them*'), and to end it once their enemies have: '*If your enemy inclines towards peace, then you too should seek peace and put trust in God*[33] and '*Had Allah wished, He would have made them dominate you, and*

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so if they leave you alone and do not fight you and offer you peace, then Allah allows you no ways against them.'[34] Such restrictions along with others related to war in pursuit of jihad make it difficult to conclusively assert that Islam looks at peace with consternation.

There are also a number of verses, called the 'sword verses' that call for slaying unbelievers, such as: '*When the sacred months have passed, slay the idolaters [the Meccans] wherever you find them, and take them, and confine them, and lie in wait for them at every place of ambush.*'[35] This verse is one among others, which is often cited to demonstrate that Islam and its scripture espouse violence. The same verses, says Esposito, have also been selectively used (and abused) by Muslim rulers to justify their wars of conquest and by religious extremists to develop a 'theology of hate' and intolerance and to legitimate unconditional warfare against unbelievers. He further says that more complications occur when the verses are cited incompletely, which distorts the full intent of the verse.[36] For example the full intent of the above-mentioned verse from *Surat at-Tauba* is distorted or misrepresented if the qualifier, '*But if they repent and fulfill their devotional obligations and pay the zakat [the charitable tax on Muslims], then let them go their way, for God is forgiving and kind*', is missing.[37] Another verse also suffers the same fate: '*Fight those who believe neither in God nor the Last Day, nor hold that forbidden which hath been forbidden by God and His Apostle, nor hold the religion of truth [even if they are] of the People of the Book.*' This verse, too, is cited without the line that follows, '*Until they pay the tax with willing submission, and feel themselves subdued.*'[38]

Jihad as a means to conduct war for religion has been carefully regulated in Islam. The rules and guidelines—whom it is incumbent upon and who is exempted, in which circumstances it must be called, how the war should be

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conducted, when the fighting must stop, and how the prisoners of war must be dealt with—are known through the Quran and Hadith as well as through the historical record accumulated over successive centuries of Muslim rule. Thus to regard the notion that Muslims are instigated by some elemental connection of their religion to bloodlust would be to ignore the wide spectrum of views on the subject and to erroneously draw its equivalence with wanton exercise of violence.

Terrorism involving Muslims is associated with the doctrine of jihad. The events of 11 September 2001 are portrayed as jihad in 'force' and have moulded the image and perception of Islam in the 21st century. The terror and violence espoused by Osama bin Laden and other members of Al-Qaeda are seen to be illustrative of a pan-global Muslim terror phenomenon that has a typically anti-West clarion cry. These perceptions, actively vetted by the media, have made Muslims, in general, the target of fear and suspicion everywhere. Terrorism, in the wake of the 9/11 attacks, is equated with Islam, which is represented as embodying violence in both faith and practice. In the West, there is an attempt at homogenization of the myriad lived experiences of Muslim communities across the world, under the rubric of their faith. There is also an attempt at categorization: *all* Muslims are depicted as violent with an irrepressible urge for committing terror in the name of religion,[39] which suppresses the distinction between those who advocate terrorism and those who do not. When the entire community is portrayed in this way, believers of Islam become a 'threat' or 'potential threat' to peace, order, security, modern secular values, democracy and so on. Politics in Muslim domains are viewed with increasing suspicion and any opposition to the (neo)-liberal agenda of the West is interpreted as bearing

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potential for terror.[40] This is broadly the contour of the discourse in which terrorism involving Muslims is seen in the Western and other liberal domains.

It is pertinent here to understand how violence and terrorism became a signifier for Islam in contemporary times. The study of violence, until the mid-1960s, was dominated by the belief that political violence is exclusively the pursuit of the fascist right and the communist left. Though violence was recognized by social scientists to be present in the 'Old World', it was viewed as a symptom of infancy of modern politics.[41] In the optimism of the post-World War II scenario and in an age dominated by beliefs such as 'end of ideology'[42] and 'decline of religion',[43] it was difficult for social scientists to imagine that liberal-democratic societies would be wrecked by violence ever again. In the early 1970s, when the Israel-Palestinian conflict came into the limelight, terrorism was solely identified with the violent political tactics of the PLO.[44] It was the Iranian Revolution of 1979 that brought Islam into the lexicon of terrorism. The support of the theocratic government in Iran for the suicide missions of the Hezbollah against the US and Israel in the Lebanese conflict of the early 1980s led to the reading of the Muslim dimension of the conflict in the Western world.[45]

The popularity of Islamist Hamas during the first Palestinian *intifada* (uprising) and the willingness of the Palestinian youth to undertake suicide attacks on Israeli civilian targets revealed that political appeal backed by religious mandate had ready constituency among the Muslims.[46] The religious justification for the terror campaign launched by Osama bin Laden in the 1990s and the twin tower attacks affirmed the growing belief that terrorism was inherent in Islam. Naturally enough, Pope Benedict XVI in his lecture delivered at the University of Regensburg in

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southern Germany used conversations of the Byzantine emperor Manuel II Palaeologus—with an unnamed Persian interlocutor—on Christianity and Islam as *oratio recta*, counting violence as Islam's singular achievement. Benedict drew attention to that part of the conversation where Manuel II addressed the central question about the relationship between religion and violence in general and quoted him as saying: 'Show me just what Muhammad brought that was new and there you will find things only evil and inhuman, such as his command to spread by the sword the faith he preached.'[47] This exchange is an excellent example of dialogues between the past and present. Histories are disingenuously invoked to make sense of the modern Muslim malaise.

The tendency to consider Islam as inherently violent and antithetical to democratic culture and values bears out the prevailing theory that there is a 'clash of civilizations' between the Muslim world and the West, propounded by Huntington in the early 1990s. Huntington contended that the 'dominating source of conflict' at the turn of the 20th century would no longer be ideological or economic but based on cultural factors.[48] He divides the world's cultures into seven current civilizations, Western, Latin American, Confucian, Japanese, Islamic, Hindu and Slavic-Orthodox.[49] Huntington argues that the end of ideological confrontation between liberal democracy and communism will see future conflict occurring along the fault lines between civilizations at a micro level, and identifies Islam as the primary source of friction. Not only does he consider Muslim countries to be involved in far more intergroup violence than others, he singles out Islam itself as the most conflictual of all civilizations.

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In contending that Islam is a different civilization whose people are convinced of the superiority of their culture and are obsessed with the inferiority of their power, he argues that the conflict between it (Islam) and other civilizations is both historical and contemporary.[50] Indeed, Huntington believed that his thesis explained the conflict in former Yugoslavia, the Gulf crisis in 1990, the war in Afghanistan, conflict in southern European countries and the rise of ethnic conflict States in the former Soviet Union. Those who adopted his approach pointed out that the presence of militant Muslims explained the conflicts in Kosovo, Kashmir, Gujarat, Chechnya, Indonesia, the Philippines, and the Arab-Israeli conflict. From this position, the civilizational bent of Islam ensured that mere Muslim presence spelt strife and conflict.

This monolithic approach to Islam has been criticized for ignoring the dynamic nature of Islam and Muslim realms over centuries since the time of Muhammad. The history of Islam 'is marked by the existence of a multiplicity of traditions, primarily because the religion has always accepted a tradition of interpretation (*ijtihad*) and innovation (*tajdid*). This has resulted in doctrinal differences and schisms giving rise to different political practices and approaches.'[51] It also fails to take into account the presence of Muslim States that are not exactly on the path of confrontation with the West, such as Egypt, Pakistan, Turkey or Morocco. Most importantly, where civilizational conflict did occur, it was more likely to be between groups that were culturally similar,[52] that is within the same civilization and not between them, which is unaccounted in Huntington's scheme of affairs. The growing rift between Shii and Sunni Muslims is a case in point.[53] In Huntington's worldview, there is no place for secular Muslims living in Western countries or Muslims who

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embrace Western values. Once again violence and Islam are conflated at the expense of the plural character of this faith system.

The propensity to view Islam as a monolith is also manifest in another dimension, specifically in the realm of politics. Political exertion on the part of Muslims is always fundamentalist. In this discourse, there is no difference between the politics of Pakistan's Muslim League, Iran's theocratic government, Palestinian Hamas, Lebanese Hezbollah, Afghanistan's Taliban, Philippines-based Abu Sayyaf group, Chechen rebels, Muslim resistance groups in former Yugoslavia, rioters in Paris suburbs, Algeria's Armed Islamic Group, or Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and Jordan. The specific issues that animate their politics are blurred when their linkage with Islam is singled out. Such an approach inhibits the understanding of Muslim politics in its variegated and multifaceted dimension, leads to construction of stereotypes, plays upon the fear of terror, and consigns Muslims to the category of the evil 'other'.

Further, Islam is linked specifically to terrorism through the Assassin phenomenon (1090–1272). Bernard Lewis designated the Nizari Ismaili Shii sect or Assassins (as they are popularly known), as the 'first terrorists' in Islam.[54] It is debatable whether a small group of followers who gathered under the religious leadership of Hasan al-Sabah, the 'Old Man of the Mountains' can be called terrorists. When the Nizaris protested against the wrongful succession to the Fatimid Caliphate, they were declared heretics and banished. Daftary says that from early on Nizari Ismailis 'were preoccupied with a revolutionary campaign' with the goal of removing an illegitimate political leadership and were pitted for 'survival in an extremely hostile environment'.[55] Milton-Edwards comments that the strategy of violence

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adopted by this Ismaili sect 'was political violence rather than terrorism in the sense that it was the final route of defence for a beleaguered sect' that was persecuted. In addition, 'the intended targets of Assassins were political figures rather than ordinary Muslims.' In this way, argues Milton-Edwards, 'violence perpetrated by the Assassins can be interpreted in two ways: as jihad as a defensive act or as a political act during a period of great turmoil where violence contributed to art of statecraft and politics.'[56] The linkage between politics and violence was definitely not peculiar to the Muslim realms, as it was very much a part of contemporaneous Christian fiefdoms and their crusades.

The Naizari Ismailis, though, 'produced military commanders rather than theologians and jurists'. Considering their 'numerous crises and persistent enmity of a majority of Muslims', they did 'maintain a sophisticated outlook and literary tradition' built upon a 'significant collection of books, documents and scientific instruments'. To call them terrorists would be to endorse the 'Crusader myth' i.e. the mistaken association of Nizaris with political murder and hashish addiction that spawned the Assassins legend.[57] Such myths read into modern politics feed into the Orientalist reading of the Muslim population as people who display unique susceptibility to violence. So while the so-called 'terrorists phenomenon' can be broken down into scattered groups emerging out of a variety of political contexts and expressing a range of grievances, they are perceived by the Western countries and their followers, as powerful enough to bring about destruction and chaos on a global scale.

The construction of Islam as antagonistic to the prevailing world order (and primarily the West), profoundly affects the way in which policy-makers formulate responses to

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confront the menace of terror. It is the significance of the context that was ignored when United States launched the war on 'global terror' in response to the events of 11 September 2001. In establishing 9/11 as a manifestation of the 'geostrategy of Islam'[58]—whose aim is to undermine the system of modern international order mostly represented by the West—all adherents of Islam are placed under the spotlight. This leads to characterization of Islam as a faith system that sanctions violence, and suppresses the voices of moderation that question the alleged symbiotic relationship between Islam and terror. Terrorism defined in this manner aggregates *all* acts of political violence involving Muslim individuals, groups or states in a fused category of 'Islamic terror' without salience to their political, social or strategic context. This refusal to contextualize terrorism makes it 'impossible to classify conflicts according to the threat they represent[ed] and above all to negotiate with the movements or states with which a conflict could effectively be resolved'.[59] This trans-nationalization of 'threat' makes any rational response to acts of terror by Muslims impossible, manifested in the failure of simultaneous wars on Al-Qaeda, Taliban, Hamas, Hezbollah, Syria, Iran, and others.

CONCLUSION

The inextricable link between Islam and violence has little historical resonance. Though violence and force have been a part of the statecraft of Muslim polities, they are by no means unique to them.

All States employ conventional means of force to counter internal and external challenges to their respective existence and legitimacy. The authority of the rulers in the

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Muslim empires was curbed by the imperative to enforce the sharia, the call of the jurist to set the limits of legitimate authority, and the need to delegate power with the expansion of the domain. This also accounted for the diversity of Islamic thought and practice in the political sphere. This tradition continues to flourish in modern times, with diverse political representations and experiences of Islam across different realms. Islam is neither a monolith as its diverse expressions continue to demonstrate; nor has its political project been a mere instumentalization of violence, as witnessed in the popularity of its teachings. Its political lexicon has been shaped by the lived political experiences of Muslims in manifold, particularistic locales. Terror propagated by Muslim groups and individuals in the name of Islam emerges out of localized circumstances and expressions of specific grievances. While violence does tend to jeopardize the safety and security of ordinary civilians and must be condemned, it would be fallacious to equate Islam with terror. It would be more ingenious to discern and understand the pattern of Muslim violence by looking at its utilitarian motif in times of conflict and change. This would enable a rational approach towards resolution of conflict and constructive engagement with Muslims in societies that have witnessed a spate of violence in recent times.

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Saima Saeed provides a conceptual framework for the relationship between media and democracy. She examines this relationship against governments' use of the media to control and manage public opinion both at home and abroad. She does this against the kind of media reportage of 9/11 and the wars that followed, using two techniques: first, a discourse analysis of some of George Bush's speeches between 2001 and '03, and second a content analysis of media reports on Iraq and Afghanistan.

9

The Theatre of 9/11: News Media, Public Diplomacy and the 'War on Terror'

SAIMA SAEED

Terror and news about it sells. It makes for 'good hard news', the kind of stories that big news networks like to lead with in their prime time bulletins. War has been a defining feature of the 20th century, a century that will go down in history for making war a mass-mediated phenomenon by the all-pervasive media. The way modern wars employ media not just in the run up to conflicts but also during and after military combats is indicative of how wars are not just fought on geographically demarcated battlefields now, but are symbolically played out in the larger

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public arena of a hyper mediascape and the Web 2.0, even as 'live' footage of the war zone compressing 'time-space distanciation' enables a worldwide audience to virtually experience the 'reality' out there.

Powerful news organizations exhibit their technological tour de force by airing events 'live' as they unfold, extending the terror front onto the home front. Modern wars are thus fought both on the ground and in the airwaves, on television screens of trans-border broadcasting stations and in the headlines of powerful newspapers. Representations are often made depending on which side of the fence one is on, much like President Bush's now infamous words—'You're either with us or against us.' Media, instead of questioning this logic, become instrumental in furthering the 'just war' argument resulting in Habermasian 'refeudalization of the public sphere'. From being the 'oxygen of democracy' to Thatcher's proclamation that publicity is the 'oxygen of terrorism', media's transformatory potential then becomes questionable.

So crucial has been the media in framing, priming, mediating and managing wars, that critics suggest that increasingly 'foreign policy decision-making has become epiphenomenal to newsroom decision-making', so much so that now 'news organizations determine which wars constitute news, who will cover them and for how long.'[1] At the same time it is also felt that this surfeit of images of terror does not necessarily make people more sensitive to human suffering but instead ends up trivializing it.

Taking 9/11 as a case example I wish to inquire into the contemporary use of media for 'propaganda' and 'public diplomacy' and its impact. And as this one 'event' went on to forever change the relationship between the Middle East and the West, it authenticated the hypothesis that modern

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wars are indeed media wars. Winning modern wars is as much dependent on carrying out domestic and international public opinion campaigns as it is on defeating the enemy on the battlefield. Modern nation-state apparatuses stand to gain tremendously from controlling the media and shaping their output, by 'thought control'. It is worth recalling how in 1916 the Creel Commission had to 'manufacture consent' for the First World War; years later, the 'Vietnam Syndrome' had to be cured. By the time the Gulf war happened, no questions were asked; many attributed this to the 'CNN effect'.

In a paradigmatic shift from the way wars were fought in earlier times, in waging the 'war on terrorism' the US administration used the following approaches all having to do with communication and media as tools of war. In this strategy the American use of information not as an additional device of war but as part of its main weaponry stands out. I have identified these as:

Propaganda
Advanced Information Warfare
Public Diplomacy

Used in various permutations and combinations, these approaches are applied, some long-term, others short-term, in an integrated campaign so closely with each other that sometimes it is hard to distinguish one from the other. The thin dividing line between say *political news management* (especially of television and print media) and *propaganda* is often crossed. 'Public Diplomacy' stems from a more adept use of news media, this time including neutral, seemingly least political, areas like educational and cultural exchanges to create a more favourable opinion of the US in order to reduce suspicion and build credibility for its policies.

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This article is divided into two sections. In the first section I provide a conceptual framework within which to locate the relationship between the media and democracy against the specific backdrop of how governments use media in war in order to control and manage public opinion both within their domestic public spheres as well as at the larger global levels. The second section studies the media reportage of 9/11 and the wars that followed using two techniques—first, discourse analysis of some of George W. Bush's speeches in 2001–03 and second, content analysis of some newspaper and television reports at the time of the war in Iraq and Afghanistan,

ENGENDERING CONSENT: A CRUSADE FOR DEMOCRACY OR A RACE FOR SURVIVAL?

Politics and journalism are two parallel processes, contiguous but separate, simultaneous but disparate. While the two rely on each other in varying degrees, each feeding from the other, ironically it is the independence of journalism as a field and as a profession from any political or economic control on which rests its credibility. For, journalism that is controlled ceases to be a free, truthful and objective voice of the people—the very principles on which hinge the 'fourth estate's' claim to power. The history of the press, in most countries, has been not so much a history of its growth but that of its struggle for freedom from the control of the state. At the cost of sounding normatively mundane and familiar it is worth reminding ourselves of the classic liberal theories of the press. Socrates and Plato met at the *agora,* the Greek marketplace, to discuss issues around their polis in what can be seen as embryonic stages of the Western

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tradition of democracy. For Bacon the public wisdom of his milieu was 'the idols of the market-place' and for John Stuart Mill this enlightened exchange formed the realm of the 'market-place of ideas'. An informed citizenry is seen as a benchmark of an effective democracy in which all decisions are made after deliberations amongst the 'body public'.

Renowned American journalist and political scientist Walter Lippmann's much discussed work *Public Opinion*, originally published in 1922, is central to our understanding of news media and its relation with society and truth. For Lippmann, 'news is not a mirror of social conditions, but the report of an aspect that has obtruded itself', something that he refereed to as the 'pseudoenvironment', a fabrication of the real world. Only when social conditions take 'measurable shape' can the 'body of truth and the body of news coincide'. The press for Lippmann therefore cannot substitute for institutions but 'like a beam of searchlight that moves restlessly about' it can bring lots of issues from the darkness to light.[2]

Jurgen Habermas also saw the public exercising its will on matters that concern all using 'undistorted communication'. Explaining his concept of the 'public sphere', Habermas wrote: 'By "the public sphere" we mean first of all a realm of our social life in which something approaching public opinion can be formed. Access is guaranteed to all citizens. A portion of the public sphere comes into being in every conversation in which *private individuals assemble to form a public body*... In a large public body this kind of communication requires specific means of transmitting information and influencing those who receive it. Today newspapers and magazines, radio and television are the media of the public sphere.'[3]

More than inclusive participation of the 'public of citizens' Habermas was concerned about the 'discursive level of

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opinion formation' in the political public sphere and its quality. Journalists are seen as important actors in this arena. They play a key role in selecting and deciding on programmes, controlling the news both on the demand and the supply side. As a result of organizational and hierarchical complexities, gatekeeping by editors, professionalization and routinization in the everyday functioning of newsrooms, 'effective channels of communication become more centralized' with time. For Habermas these 'selection processes become the source of a new sort of power'. Collective actors outside established political systems get lesser opportunities to influence the views and opinions presented in the mainstream media. Which is why Habermas fears that media themselves initiated a 'refeudalization of the public sphere' or the creation of the 'manipulated public sphere'. He says representations at both the political and semiotic level hinder critical debate and are the worst form of exploitation. Liberalism's ideal that all political opinion be based on debate remains unfulfilled; instead opinions are filtered through media industries whose disproportionate power and political hegemony distorts the information which is presented to a hapless and unsuspecting citizenry.

Modern representative democracies, in order to maintain their power and control, have little option but to include citizens in their decision-making to generate a consensus or a 'collective will' for their policies. For a nation-state, fighting a physical war involving heavy loss of life, including those of its own soldiers, is too big a decision to take without public support.

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THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF PROPAGANDA WARS

By selling its policies to the public without giving citizens an opportunity to formally vote or even to hold informed debates around issues, citizens are reduced to consumers; delivered to the state by the capitalist media system. In this manner, the unsuspecting citizens forfeit their citizenship rights without the knowledge of having done so because of the subtlety of the process. It leads to the atomization of the citizen and the fragmentation of reality. Corrupted by the capitalist market mechanisms, the media ironically end up producing 'special forms of packaging news and views in a consciously integrative propaganda form'[4] in which community campaigns shape the public consciousness, its agenda and ultimately the public sphere. It is a kind of propaganda which scholars term 'integration propaganda', without which modern governments cannot survive. It is propagated not through stray pamphlets but in the main channels of communication through 'newspapers, television, movies, textbooks, political speeches produced by some of the most influential, powerful and respected people in a society', and is difficult to recognize because of its omnipresence.[5] In spirit and in execution not very different from what Hitler wrote in *Mein Kampf*—'All propaganda has to be popular and has to adapt its spiritual level to the perception of the least intelligent of those towards whom it intends to direct itself.'

The uses of propaganda techniques during two world wars and propaganda efforts during the cold war era have been rather well documented. German wartime propaganda used a variety of media like leaflets and printed material but most prominently the recently invented radio that transmitted the speeches of Nazi leaders. For more than a decade the

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German 'Propaganda Minister' Paul Joseph Goebbels, the brain behind the Nazi propaganda machine mastered this technique. Buried in close to 6,800 pages of his manuscripts (later recovered by the US authorities in Berlin) are his philosophies of effective propaganda. Goebbels maintained that state propaganda should be planned and executed by one authority which has to take decisions as to when propaganda campaigns must be 'begun, augmented, diminished, and terminated'. The other principle that Goebbels followed was that in order to evoke audience interest, propaganda must be transmitted through an 'attention-getting' communications medium. Goebbels personally preferred the motion picture newsreel to radio because he thought it provided the 'proofs' for his propaganda contentions. Goebbels also created special 'news' stories to build around his propaganda. Doob, in his detailed study of Goebbels' methodologies of propaganda, lists how 'funerals of prominent Nazis were made into newsworthy pageants; the same technique was applied to the French and Belgian victims of British air attacks. German and Nazi anniversaries were also celebrated routinely.'[6] Another scholar studying the Nazi and Japanese radio propaganda finds that the transcripts of foreign short-wave broadcasts were built carefully such that 'each item is a neat, tightly-packaged story, full of image words, dramatic, sharply-pointed, easy to remember.'[7] Thomson, tracking the history of short wave propaganda by the US, finds out how the United States which started late in developing short-wave propaganda caught up rapidly. As of 1941, only 13 international short-wave transmitters were available, mostly beaming programmes to Latin America. At the conclusion of the war, in 1945, the Office of War Information alone was using 36 transmitters in the continental United States and

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had installed 14 government-owned transmitters overseas. Furthermore even the captured transmitters in Europe and Asia were pressed into its service.[8]

NEWS AS AN IDEOLOGICAL APPARATUS

The power of the media in determining what events are delivered to the public and which are omitted, and how these events are encoded and conveyed, involves an ordering of the world through media discourse. It implies the creation of meaning, as in the sense-making activity of the media. As Cohen remarks, 'The mass media may not be successful in telling us what to think, but they are stunningly successful in telling us what to think about.'[9] Or, as Bourdieu puts it, the very fact of reporting or putting on record 'always implies a social construction of reality that can mobilize (or demobilize) individuals or groups'. For him the greatest stake today 'in local as well as global political struggle is the (media's) capacity to impose a way of seeing the world, of making people wear "glasses" that force them to see the world divided up in certain ways... Television plays a determining role in all such struggles today.'[10]

Elsewhere, Denis McQuail showed how control over mass media offered definite advantages. First, the media help attract and direct attention to problems. Second, the mass media can help confer 'status and legitimacy'. Third, they can also be a channel for 'persuasion and mobilization'. Fourth, media can help 'bring certain kinds of publics into being and help maintain them'.[11] McCombs and Shaw dealt with the 'agenda-setting' function of the press in-depth in their seminal work in the 1960s and '70s. By 'agenda-setting' McCombs and Shaw meant the ability of the media

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to 'mentally order and organize our world for us', which gives it sweeping political powers. Their hypothesis was that the 'mass media set the agenda for each political campaign, influencing the salience of attitudes towards the political issues.'[12] J.W. Carey in 1969 saw mass media as both a force for integration and for dispersion in society; McLuhan held it as a key to his global village.[13]

Building on Antonio Gramsci's concept of hegemony (*Prison Notebooks*, 1929–35) neo-Marxists argue that news content routinely supports the dominant ideology. Hegemony refers to the processes by which the dominant ruling classes influence and shape popular consent through the production and diffusion of meanings. Hall, Hallin and Giltin have all established how news media support and reinforce political and economic status quo. Williams argued why 'hegemony has continually to be renewed, recreated, defended, and modified'.[14] Dahlgren shows how the powerful American media lend support to American foreign policy by creating a certain image of its opponents. This is done by news narratives that position 'violence in the foreground, while the social and political factors which it expresses recede to the background. Ideologically violence in these societies is shown to be a consequence of their internal instability.' Media create and support the 'motif of disorder with sub motifs of violence/unrest, subversion and combat' by deliberately omitting any analysis of the Third World's historical and social causes of conflicts. And as Dahlgren says , 'the systematic coercion and terror' that many of these governments use to maintain their power is usually not termed as 'violence'.... What develops is a case of 'them' and 'us', 'they', the people of the Third World and 'we' the industrialized West typified by order and stability, a higher form of civilization.[15]

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Chomsky and Herman through their substantial body of political writings analyse what they call a 'propaganda model' of the US media. Their book *Manufacturing Consent* argues that since media news outlets are now run by large corporations, they work under the same economic and political pressures as any other big businesses. The 'elite domination of the media' and 'marginalization of dissidents' results from the operation of what they identify as news 'filters' which are the essential ingredients of their propaganda model. These news filters are:

> (1) the size, concentrated ownership, owner wealth, and profit orientation of the dominant mass-media firms; (2) advertising as the primary income source of the mass media; (3) the reliance of the media on information provided by government, business, and 'experts' funded and approved by these primary sources and agents of power; (4) 'flak' as a means of disciplining the media; and (5) 'anticommunism' as a national religion and control mechanism. These elements interact with and reinforce one another. The raw material of news must pass through successive filters, leaving only the cleansed residue fit to print. They fix the premises of discourse and interpretation, and the definition of what is newsworthy in the first place, and they explain the basis and operations of what amount to propaganda campaigns.[16]

In all this the important question is not about how much power which media has but on who controls the media and to what end.

INFORMATION WARFARE

Technologies of mass production of weapons as a result of industrialism and the ability to move troops quickly to war zones because of revolutions in transportation had a large

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part to play in shaping of the two World Wars and the geopolitical configurations that followed. On the communication front telegraph redefined the speed with which messages were sent to troops on the battlefield. Developments in telecommunication and information technology helped in the advancement of the conduct of warfare.

Control over information is one of the biggest concerns of modern states. For Giddens 'survelliance', that is the 'collection and storage of information' used to coordinate populations, that is in fact the *control of information*, along with *centralized control over the means of violence*, is the key to the organization of modern state systems.[17] The coordination of the means of warfare with technological developments in communication in a very real sense changed the way 'modern wars' came to be fought and conceived. In a paradigmatic shift these wars have in practice become more of Information Operations (IO), the second arsenal in the armory of modern wars, where the victory lies with the side which has superior technology in controlling and processing information globally. If the 1991 Gulf war became the first television war broadcast live, the wars fought after 2000 have become more e-driven relying heavily on computer simulations, global surveillance, media manipulation, representation and framing. This is why Frank Webster calls the new wars since the Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA) 'information warfare in the era of globalization', replacing the 'industrial warfare' of 1914–70s involving the mass mobilization of entire populations in war efforts.[18]

The first distinctive tactics of military communications were called *Signals*, from which came the name of the signal corps. So close has been the association between communication technologies and the military that the field

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of electronics matured only after requirements in war forced advances in the field of radar, fire control and later even the development of the fist computer. The Electronic Numerical Integrator and Calculator (ENIAC) developed by the University of Pennsylvania in 1943 was financed and sponsored by the army. Even the first communications satellite system was a result of the efforts by the military, and the Pentagon was behind the discovery of COBOL (Common Business Oriented Language).[19]

The information age's prodigy, network-centric warfare (NCW) also called network-centric operations (NCO) is a new doctrine of war pioneered by the United States Department of Defense. NCW/NCO seeks to translate an information advantage, enabled in part by information technology, into a competitive war-fighting advantage employing advanced networking of well-informed geographically dispersed forces: 'NCW translates information superiority into combat power by effectively linking knowledgeable entities in the battlespace' across timezones.'[20] This warfare guided by computer-aided operations achieves a unique compression of time and space serving to dehumanize war, making it virtual, televisual and a fit subject for transmission and consumption. 'Battlespaces' replace traditional 'battlefields', conveying a sense that 'the mission environment or competitive space encompasses far more than a contiguous physical place.'[21]

By calling it a 'war on terror' the enemy referred to is rendered abstract and omnipresent, could be found anywhere, anytime. It's a war call which is 24/7 and open-ended. It is then a permanent war, a global war that transcends space and time.

The psychological aspects of this war include 'thought control' through a medium that can reach the maximum

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number of people in a very short time, which is the mass media. The concept of psychological warfare gained usage after the First World War and primarily employs propaganda for external control and 'pacification' at the domestic level.

Today's military commanders stand to gain more than ever before from controlling the media and shaping their output.[22] Psychological warfare is a communication that impacts on the senses, feelings and thinking patterns of an entire population. Psychological wars therefore involve what Mattelart calls the 'systematization of the population's political indoctrination' so that it can be moulded as required. Giddens eloquently argues how internal pacification is made possible because of a 'heightened administrative unity' which in turn helps 'police' civil disturbances. The whole system is based on surveillance whereby the state can keep a watch over the activities of its population.[23]

THE IDEOLOGY OF 'NATIONAL SECURITY'

A greater headway in this direction was achieved by linking this policy of total war with the policy of national security. The national security doctrine provided a justification of war, whether political, psychological or social, in the name of maintaining the unity, integrity and security of the nation. In the US this doctrine found its legal manifestation in the National Security Act of 1947 which allowed for setting up of wartime institutions and 'made the war priorities of the period also peace-time priorities'. It provided for 'an integration of the foreign policy with the national policy, also linking security with notions of development'.[24] From this doctrine were born the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and the National Security Council, two bodies that

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have extraordinary executive control over all matters of defence and foreign policy. For Mattelart, 'the very existence of the CIA introduced and sanctified secret activities and surveillance as standard State policies.'[25] Under the pretext of national security even propaganda began to be legitimized. It also allowed the government to crush what it calls 'subversive propaganda' antithetical to its interest.

THE CAULDRON OF PUBLIC DIPLOMACY

Developments in both communication and international governance have changed the political dynamics of policy-making. Since the intensification of globalization both in reach and influence, global governance has moved away from the long held traditional model of states working in a limited number of organizations to dictate administrative rules towards a more fluid and heterogeneous policy architecture in which states have to work closely, negotiate and compete with other actors both within and outside their sovereign boundaries. States constantly feel the need to re-regulate and re-organize policy to adjust to these changing dynamics. The state then as a master organizer of consensus needs to direct its propaganda not just in the confines of its domestic public sphere but also at the global public in order to win allies and support from the international community. In this it uses diplomacy and public-relations techniques, the third approach to using media in war. In the period following the Cold War, public diplomacy became so important that governments could not afford to overlook it.

In the 'battle for hearts and minds' of the people it was realized that image-making is an integral part of foreign

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policy. In fact scholars have sighted how the period following the war in Iraq resulted in strong anti-American sentiment in most Asian and particularly West Asian countries. As Leonard in his detailed study on media and diplomacy states, the problem is that post-September 11 'public diplomacy has not failed to deliver information rather it has failed to deliver information convincingly'. He shows how the tone of many messages by the US was 'declamatory without any apparent intent to engage in dialogue or listen'. Leonard is particularly critical of the way the US government resorted to crude psychological operations such as dropping leaflet bombs, citing how its text was very 'forensic'. For him these sorts of messages become enmeshed in a 'battleground' of 'your information versus my information'.[26]

PROPAGANDA, PACKAGED LIES AND THE 'WAR ON TERROR'

At this point it will be a useful exercise to go back to the genealogy of the word 'terror' or 'terrorist'. Of course everyone has heard the oft-repeated slogan that 'one person's 'terrorist' may be another person's 'freedom fighter'. The term terror can itself be traced back to the French Revolution in which the period between May 1793 and July 1794 was termed the 'Reign of Terror'. Terror as it was understood at the time was a state in which people lived in constant fear. Post the 18th century some new words came into the dictionary by adding suffixes to the word terror: Terrorist, terrorism, bio-terrorism and so on. And now 'Islamic jihad', 'Islamic extremism' are included in the lexicon. Scholarship on the subject suggests how after the end of the Cold War, terrorism in a sense 'replaced the old

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figure of communism as the spectral enemy'. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri evince how the enemies of the Empire are usually branded as terrorists, 'a rude conceptual and terminological reduction that is rooted in a police mentality'.[27] Or as Parenti puts it—'Who is and is not a 'terrorist' in the media is a matter of politics'.[28] The use of the word 'terror' or 'terrorists' to describe one's political opponents is done to gain the political vantage point. In this approach the heads of state build public support for policies by regularly speaking directly to the citizens and generating positive news content through the press—which, if done well, can provide the governments with what Samuel Kernell declares to be 'near-monopoly control' over policy and news agendas.[29] And this is precisely what the Bush administration did to make the case for what it called a 'just war'. Each time President Bush decided on any fresh intervention he first made the grounds for it by a series of highly published media interventions. Central to the whole debate about how the visual news media create meanings and make us see events in a certain way is Gitlin's analysis of 'media frames'or interpretative patterns. For Gitlin 'media frames' are 'persistent patterns of cognition interpretation and presentation, of selection, emphasis and exclusion by which symbolic-handlers routinely organize discourse.'[30]

In the next section I analyse the language, timing and the rhetoric employed in three speeches President George W. Bush made in three consecutive years—2001, 2002 and 2003.[31] A discourse analysis of his speeches is done to map the following four contexts—first, that of the President's attempt at justifying the war; second, the creation of the image of the enemy; third, his doctrine of the 'rogue states' and his positioning of the home nation US as the protector against these terrorists; and last, a call to the international

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community to join this 'war on terror' as the morally correct thing to do. All these are what constitute the fourth media weapon in the modern wars, that of political news management.

BUSH'S 'CALL TO ARMS': 2001–03

A State of the Union address by the US President to the joint session of the Congress and the American people was delivered on 20 September 2001, pre-empting and leading up to the war on Afghanistan called *Operation Enduring Freedom* in that year. It is interesting to note that the names of military operations: *Operation Enduring Freedom in 2001* and *Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2003* were carefully chosen, each ending with the word freedom that lends it a moral sanctity. In this strategically important speech Bush builds the opening argument with—'On September the 11th, enemies of freedom committed an act of war against our country.' Expanding on the terrorist action he explains how: 'The terrorists' directive commands them to kill Christians and Jews, to kill all Americans, and make no distinction among military and civilians, including women and children.' He condemns the terrorists as 'heirs of all the murderous ideologies of the 20th century...they follow in the path of fascism, and Nazism, and totalitarianism.' Finally he divides the world into two halves—the civilized world and the terrorists. Bush says: 'The civilized world is rallying to America's side.' He ends with a prayer—'Fellow citizens, we'll meet violence with patient justice...assured of the rightness of our cause, and confident of the victories to come.'

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The State of the Union address on 29 January 2002 is equally interesting. Stating the progress made in Afghanistan he says: 'The last time we met in this chamber, the mothers and daughters of Afghanistan were captives in their own homes, forbidden from working or going to school. Today women are free, and are part of Afghanistan's new government.' Then he goes on to lay the ground for his upcoming aggression against Iraq. He names three nations on his hit list which must be chastized as they form what he calls an *axis of evil*. He names them. 'North Korea is a regime arming with missiles and weapons of mass destruction, while starving its citizens. Iran aggressively pursues these weapons and exports terror, while an unelected few repress the Iranian people's hope for freedom. Iraq continues to flaunt its hostility toward America and to support terror. The Iraqi regime has plotted to develop anthrax, and nerve gas, and nuclear weapons for over a decade. This is a regime that has already used poison gas to murder thousands of its own citizens... States like these, and their terrorist allies, constitute an axis of evil, arming to threaten the peace of the world...' Then he resolutely pronounces to the world: 'And all nations should know: America will do what is necessary to ensure our nation's security.' The speech made it clear that either a nation must ally with the US and be a part of the civilized world or take the part of the 'axis of evil' with dire consequences.

Scholars like John, Domke and others have pointed out in their study how during the summer and autumn of 2002 President George W. Bush extended the 9/11 crisis through emphasis in public communications on internal 'homeland' security and an external 'war on terror', 'discourses into which Iraq was carefully inserted over time'.[32]

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Exactly a year later on 28 January 2003, the State of the Union address was quite different. This speech showed Bush's complete antipathy to the Iraqi President: 'The dictator of Iraq is not disarming. To the contrary; he is deceiving.' And then President Bush went on to give details of the weapons that Saddam possessed. He cites the following figures: 'The United Nations concluded in 1999 that Saddam Hussein had biological weapons sufficient to produce over 25,000 liters of anthrax...enough doses to kill several million people. He hasn't accounted for that material. He's given no evidence that he has destroyed it. Our intelligence officials estimate that Saddam Hussein has the materials to produce as much as 500 tons of sarin, mustard and VX nerve agent.' In hindsight it all goes to show the Pentagon's capacity for 'spin', as it was brought to light in later years that Saddam Hussein did not possess WMDs.

And then, in a mysterious twist to his speech and an outstanding example of political spin, President Bush strangely connected 9/11 to Saddam Hussein in a dramatic and provocative manner with these words: 'Imagine those 19 hijackers with other weapons and other plans...this time armed by Saddam Hussein. It would take one vial, one canister, one crate slipped into this country to bring a day of horror like none we have ever known. We will do everything in our power to make sure that that day never comes.'

The point being made here is that a good leader like him will do whatever it takes to protect his countrymen.

A quick look at some public opinion polls points out the skewed understanding of the reasons for 'war on terror'. In a *New York Times*/CBS News poll, conducted over the weeks leading up to the invasion in Iraq, 45 per cent of respondents said Saddam Hussein was directly involved in

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the 9/11 attacks. A *Washington Post* poll reported that nearly 7 in 10 respondents thought Hussein was involved in the attack.

TELEVISION WARS: IS THE TRUTH OUT THERE?

The Gulf war unleashed the power of visuals, 'raw footage' and live television through the practices of on-the-spot narrativization and instantaneous visibility. News networks' fetish for war stories is evident from the fact that years later, even at the sixth anniversary of 9/11 in 2007, both BBC and CNN had the Iraq 'report card' as their top story.

Critics suggest that television reduces the realities of war and makes a mere spectacle out of it. The much criticized phrase 'Shock and Awe' used by a veteran war correspondent to describe the Baghdad night sky as US and British forces rained close to 1,500 bombs and missiles down on the ancient Iraqi capital went on to exemplify how television news sadly ended up trivializing a disastrous war into a Reality TV drama for viewership. On 21 March 2003, as the whole world watched this television spectacle of war, reporters in both Baghdad and the US sprung into action. It was a moment of great television. 'The sky is lit up, Tom!' shouted veteran war correspondent Peter Arnett to NBC News anchor Tom Brokaw. 'Just like out of an action movie, but this is real, this is real; this is shock and awe, Tom!' Brokaw took his cue. 'The overture is over,' he replied. 'This is the main piece.'[33]

The immaculately dressed anchors in their controlled television studios thousands of miles away from the atrocities of aerial attacks looked excited and ready to take on danger in order to be the first to 'break' the story. Many news

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organizations incorporated red, white, and blue logos into their visual promotions, journalists sported patriotic lapel flags, studio discussion happened against plasma backgrounds of 9/11 footage. For Baudrillard, the fallout from this relentless visibility is an 'obscenity of the visible, of the all-too-visible... of what no longer has any secret, of what dissolves completely in information and communication'.[34] The reduction of current events to what Bourdieu calls a 'litany of events with no beginning and no real end' and its resultant effect of depoliticization, that is the public's disenchantment with political events, is an opinion echoed by many.[35] The Al Gharib prison photos and the controversies that came to surround them further illustrate how media indulge in the visual spectacle and lead to fragmentation and hatred amongst people.

Some key questions in need of urgent answers then stand out: Have the media through this kind of coverage helped reinforce stereotypes leading to 'Islamophobia'? And will media as the 'hypermarkets of terror videos' and 'producers of shock and awe therapy' be able to regulate themselves? Where must we draw the line when showing images of extreme violence?

THE MUZZLING OF THE PRESS

The role of journalists in reporting conflict has not received the kind of scholarly attention that it deserves. It was Bernard Cohen in 1963 who was the first to separate the 'neutral' role of a journalist from his 'participant' role. The former is based on a journalist's autonomy as a political actor, the second on his positioning as a political actor. The tradition of the 'watchdog journalist' is fast diminishing. Patterson

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who in a five-country survey of 1,300 journalists sees a prime reason for this: that journalists are expected to perform many roles at the same time—'watchdog, messenger, reporter, analyst, advocate, broker'.[36] The problem is that these roles are not fully compatible. In focusing on one role, the journalist inevitably diminishes his/her ability to do justice to the other roles. This brings us to questions about standards of 'objectivity' in news reporting. Truth, relevance, balanced reporting, neutral presentation amounting to factuality and impartiality in reporting have been seen as hallmarks of objective reporting.[37]

The US muzzled the media in the following ways. First, by 'embedding' reporters; second, by allegedly bombing the Al Jazeera—an important channel in the Arab world with a considerable viewership in the region—thus killing news diversity. And because of the above, and linked to these two, the global media failed to ask hard-hitting questions, ending up becoming a mouthpiece of the US In an interesting study that is indicative of how governments manage news, scholars like Grossman and Kumar have traced the institutional development within the White House of the Office of the Press Secretary to handle the President's relations with reporters.[38] As reporters are dependent upon the White House for news, the administration can shape the coverage it receives by restricting the flow of information to the press. Journalists often go by what Lance Bennett called 'indexing' by government sources which virtually identifies the key areas that need to be flagged in any Government Issue or statement.[39]

Peri explains how the war reporter does not have the freedom to write what he or she wants to.[40] Unlike other fields, information in the realm of national security is held as a virtual monopoly. When it comes to national security,

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the sources of information are few and access to them is controlled. Compton also suggests a nexus between power elites, the military and the media. As Compton sums up his findings: 'The goal was to produce dramatic and sympathetic stories about the troops. Their solution was to attach, or "embed" more than 600 reporters with specific military units. These reporters travelled 24 hours a day under the protection of the same soldiers they were supposed to write stories about.' Commentators added that 'embeds' could only see what military personnel allowed them to see.[41]

Wars bringing unprecedented censorship in the name of national security is nothing new but the bombing of the 'enemy media' shows the ideological move of completely disallowing any alternative point of view to exist, here the media from the Arab World. On 13 November 2001, a US missile hit Al Jazeera's office in Kabul, Afghanistan, during the US invasion of that country.[42] On 8 April 2003, a US missile hit an electricity generator at Al Jazeera's office in Baghdad. The fire that erupted killed reporter Tareq Ayyoub and wounded another staff member.[43]

Shamefully, the orders to bomb these offices came from the top, from the very people who use the rhetoric of Freedom of Press, as became apparent from the scandalous leak of the Al Jazeera bombing memo that left the rest of the world aghast. The Al Jazeera bombing memo is an unpublished memorandum made within the British government which purports to be the minutes of a discussion between US President Bush and Prime Minister Tony Blair which took place on 16 April 2004 at the height of US attack on Falluja, Iraq. The *Daily Mirror* published a story on its front page on 22 November 2005 claiming that the memo quotes Bush speculating about a US bombing raid on Al Jazeera's world headquarters in Doha and other

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locations. The story claimed that Blair persuaded Bush to take no such action.[44]

A BBC article in 2001 aired a story on how US Secretary of State Colin Powell told the emir of Qatar, Sheikh Hamad Khalifa al-Thani 'to rein in the influential and editorially independent Arab al-Jazeera television station, which gives airtime to anti-American opinions'.[45] As also recommended by Frank J. Gaffney Jr. (who held senior positions in the Reagan Defense Department and was the President of the Centre for Security Policy) in his article, 'Take Out Al Jazeera': 'it is imperative that enemy media be taken down if they insist on using their access to the airwaves as instruments of the war against us and our allies'.[46]

It comes as no surprise, as was evident from the Worldwide Press Freedom Index 2006 compiled annually by *Reporters Without Borders*, that the United States' rank (53rd) had fallen nine places since the 2005 index, after being in 17th position in the first year of the index, in 2002. Relations between the media and the Bush administration sharply deteriorated after the President used the pretext of 'national security' to regard as suspicious any journalist who questioned his 'war on terrorism.'[47]

Before I conclude, here are some questions that the media need to ask themselves: Why did they fail to investigate the veracity claims of the wars that followed the September 11 attacks? Why did they fail to don the mantle of mediators of peace given their vast potential to shape public opinion? What can be done in this age of 'broadcast democracy' to make media take centre stage in conflict resolution? What are the enabling environments and forces that can help in media democratization so that the press is able deliver in an impartial, unbiased and truthful manner? And finally, what

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will it take for the media to win back the 'trust' of the people which is so central to its own legitimacy claims?

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Section II

Islam in India

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The essay surveys the material on the eschatological appearance of the messiah (mahdi) in the prophetic tradition (hadith) and then analyses the messianic claimants in Sunni Islam: the North African Muhammad Tumart (1078/81–1130), Sayyid Muhammad Jawnpuri (1440–1505) of Gujarat, the Sudanese mahdi Muhammad Ahmad (1844–85) and Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (1837–1908), the founder of the Ahmadi movement in Islam.

10

Some Aspects of the Messianic Idea in Sunnī Islam*

YOHANAN FRIEDMANN

Expectations of a redeemer have been a widespread phenomenon in human history. The hidden, innermost thoughts and aspirations of a people can be gauged from their description of the forthcoming redeemer of their messianic age. Muslims have not been different in this respect and have cultivated the hope that at some time in the future a redeemer will appear and transform the nature of human existence for the better. He will also transform Islam into the only religion, bring about religious uniformity in the world and cause Islam to reign supreme.

The Qur'ān contains numerous verses of eschatological content, but the idea of the *mahdī* cannot be derived directly from it. The Hebrew word *mashi'aḥ* (Aramaic: *meshiḥā*), from

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which the English 'Messiah' and 'Messianism' are derived, appears several times in the Qur'ān in the form *al-masīḥ*, but it seems to have been initially understood as a proper name of Jesus rather than as a title with messianic content. The situation in the ḥadīth is more complex. The two celebrated collections of al-Bukhārī (d. 870) and Muslim b. al-Ḥajjāj (d. 875), which are traditionally considered as the two most authentic repositories of prophetic ḥadīth, include no references to the mahdī, but the other canonical collections, such as al-Tirmidhī, Abū Dā'ūd and al-Nasā'ī, do include material on the mahdī's expected appearance. The absence of the mahdī idea from the Qur'ān and from the collections of al-Bukhārī and Muslim has been used to raise doubts concerning the centrality of the idea in classical Islam. I. Goldziher, one of the founding fathers of Islamic studies in Europe, suggested that 'in Sunnī Islam the pious awaiting of the *mahdī* never took the fixed form of dogma', despite the fact that it was treated and documented in the ḥadīth.[1]

In the Shī'ī tradition, the idea of the mahdī became of central importance. The Shī'ī tradition has maintained for centuries that the Shī'a had been wrongfully deprived of the leadership of the Muslim community and lived under oppression. Such feelings served as a fertile ground for the development of messianic ideas, for expectations of a saviour who would appear and redress the wrongs suffered by the Shī'īs. It is important to understand that in the Twelver Shī'ī tradition the identity of the mahdī is well known: he is Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-'Askarī, the son of the 11th *imām*, who disappeared as a child in 873 and is believed to have been in occultation ever since. The specificity and undoubted identity of the Shī'ī mahdī expected to appear at the end of days may be the principal

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reason why there were very few messianic pretenders among the Twelver Shī'īs after the disappearance of the twelfth imām in 873. On the other hand, the expectation of the mahdī among the Shī'īs has always been vivid and its importance among contemporary Shī'īs can be gauged from the fact that Article 5 of the 1979 Iranian constitution seems to imply that the government of the *faqīh-i 'ādil o muttaqī* will last only until the manifestation of the hidden imām.[2]

In the Sunnī tradition, the situation is substantially different. While Goldziher may be correct in saying that the expectation of the mahdī never took the fixed form of dogma, this should not be understood to mean that the idea has had little importance in Sunnī Islam. Some Sunnī scholars took pains to undermine the mahdī traditions and even considered them unreliable; nevertheless, numerous Sunnīs made messianic claims throughout Islamic history. Four of them will be considered in some detail in the present article. Even in modern times, mahdist claims are made time and again in various regions of the Muslim world. In 1948 a person called Musa Aminou claimed to be a mahdī in Upper Volta, while another made a similar claim in Senegal.[3]

We are now ready to introduce the messianic idea in the classical traditions of Islam. This is essential in order to survey later examples of mahdīs as they appeared in history. According to the classical Muslim ḥadīth, the mahdī is part of an eschatological drama and will appear some time before the Day of Judgement. His appearance is integrated into a series of wondrous, dramatic and terrifying events expected to precede and herald the Last Day (*ashrāṭ al-sā'a*, 'portents of the Hour'): the sun will rise in the West; a huge fire, designed to drive all humanity to the place of the Last Judgement, will emerge in the Yemen; a frightful beast carrying the ring of Solomon and the staff of Moses will

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appear; a one-eyed false messiah called al-Dajjāl will come forth, having the word 'infidel' (*kāfir*) inscribed on his forehead; the earth will collapse in the East, in the West and in the Arabian peninsula; the river Euphrates will recede, revealing a mound of gold; Yājūj and Majūj, also known as Gog and Magog, will be freed from their chains in the East and move West; Muslims will fight the Indians, the Turks, the Persians and the Jews; Constantinople will be conquered. All these events will take place at a time characterized by senseless killing, religious instability, prevalence of infidelity over belief, and a disproportionately high number of women in the population. All normalcy will come to an end. Facing these trials and tribulations (*fitan* or *malāḥim*), the few remaining believers will be helpless; at most, they will attempt to seclude themselves on uninhabited mountain-tops to save their faith.[4]

Three figures play major roles in Muslim eschatology: the *dajjāl*, Jesus and the mahdī. Muslim traditions vary concerning the identity of the latter and it stands to reason that his identity changed because of political and polemical considerations. A rarely quoted tradition maintains that 'the mahdī is none else than Jesus' (*lā al-mahdī illā 'Īsā*)[5] and other traditions seem to identify Jesus with the *mahdī* without explicitly using the latter term. However, the identification of Jesus with the mahdī eventually lost currency and was even declared spurious by several medieval scholars of ḥadīth.[6] The projected role of Jesus as the messiah must have been embarrassing to Muslims in their polemics with Christianity, though some traditionists held that Jesus will be a Muslim when he comes for the second time.[7] David Cook has recently argued that the identification of Jesus with the messiah was renounced because the Muslims felt ill at ease having an eschatological hero who was also 'the god

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of another faith.'[8] Ibn Khaldūn mentions a tradition which understands this ḥadīth in a completely different manner; according to it, *lā almahdī illā 'Īsā* means that nobody except Jesus spoke in the cradle (*mahd*).[9] The Shī'īs also objected to the identification of the mahdī with Jesus; the very specific identity of the mahdī in the Shī'ī tradition made this identification impossible.[10] This does not mean, however, that Jesus lost his eschatological role completely: even without holding the messianic title, he continued to play a major part in the extraordinary events preceding the Day of Judgement.

The time is now ripe to describe the eschatological drama in greater detail. Its chronology is not lucid and the relevant traditions are frequently phrased in an abstruse fashion and use outlandish vocabulary, probably intended to intensify the atmosphere of awe and mystery. In most cases the story begins with the supernatural occurrences described above and the appearance of the false messiah (*al-dajjāl*), who will be

> ... short, walking with his thighs wide apart, having curly hair, having one eye while the other is obliterated, neither protruding nor sunken. Should you become confused, know that your Lord is not one-eyed (*rajul qaṣīr afḥaj ja'd a'war maṭmūs al-'ayn laysa bi-nāti'a wa lā jaḥrā' fa-in ulbisa 'alaykum fa-''lamū anna rabbakum laysa bi-a'war*).[11]

The dajjāl will remain on earth for forty days, but each of these may last for a year, a month or a week. When this period comes to an end, Jesus will descend—next to the white minaret located east of Damascus.

The Jesus of Muslim eschatology is expected to be a rather militant figure—very different from his character in the Christian tradition—who will perform a number of violent

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deeds designed to symbolize the defeat of Christianity. The Prophet said:

> ... There was no prophet between me and him (i.e. Jesus) and he is about to descend. You will recognize him when you see him: a man of medium height and bright complexion, wearing two pieces of cloth (*rajulun marbū' ilā al-ḥumra wa al-bayāḍ bayna mumaṣṣaratayn*). His head seems to be dripping, though not wet. He will fight the people for the sake of Islam, will crush the cross, kill the swine and abolish the poll-tax (*jizya*). In his time, God will annihilate all religions except Islam. He will kill the false messiah and remain on earth for forty years; then he will die and the Muslims will pray at his funeral.[12]

Classical scholars of ḥadīth usually interpret this tradition in terms of real warfare: Jesus is expected 'to fight the people for the sake of Islam until Allah will annihilate in his time all the religions except Islam'.[13] The abolition of the jizya is understood in two ways: either it will lapse because all non-Muslims will have to embrace Islam, or it will be made superfluous by the unprecedented abundance of money in those days.[14]

The tradition describing the deeds which Jesus is expected to perform after his descent appears very rarely in a slightly different version; it reads 'he will abolish war' (*yaḍa' al-ḥarb*) instead of 'he will abolish the *jizya*' (*yaḍa' al-jizya*).[15] This version evidently transforms Jesus into a more peaceful figure, though the breaking of the cross and the killing of the swine are retained in both cases.

Another equally 'peaceful' version of the same tradition is quoted in Ibn Ḥanbal's *Musnad*:

> 'Īsā b. Maryam will descend as a just *imām* and a righteous judge, will break the cross, kill the swine, restore the peace (*yurji' al-silm*) and transform the swords into sickles

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> (*yattakhidhu al-suyūfa manājila*).[16] The venom of every scorpion will disappear (*tadhhabu ḥumatu kulli dhīḥumatin*)[17] so that a boy will play with a snake without being harmed.[18]

Ibn Māja records a considerably expanded version of the tradition in which peaceful conditions follow the total defeat of the Jews. In this version, Jesus descends while a few Arabs perform the morning prayer in Jerusalem, led by a righteous imām. When the imām recognizes Jesus, he desires to relinquish his place as the prayer leader in his favour. Jesus, however, instructs him to retain his place in the front. When the prayer is over, Jesus tells the worshippers to open a certain door. The dajjāl appears behind that door, accompanied by 70,000 Jews, each having an ornamented sword. When the dajjāl sees Jesus, he runs away. Jesus catches up with him near the eastern gate of the city of Lydda and kills him. At the same time, God defeats the Jews. Ibn Māja then mentions the breaking of the cross, the killing of the swine, the abolition of the jizya, and the idyllic conditions prevailing in the animal realm. He continues:

> The earth will be filled with peace like a vessel with water. The declaration of faith (*kalima*) will be one. None except Allah will be worshipped, and war will come to an end (*wa taḍa' al-ḥarb awzārahā*).[19]

The peaceful conditions described here result from the religious uniformity which Jesus set up by rather violent means.

In a similar vein, a tradition that is not recorded in the canonical collections of ḥadīth reads:

> It will be one of the signs of the Hour that the swords will not be engaged in (waging) *jihād*, and that the pleasures of the world will be sought after by feigning piety.

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And another version reads:

> ... that the swords will be transformed into sickles (*min ashrāṭ al sā'a an tu'aṭṭala al-suyūfu min al-jihād wa an tukhtala al-dunyā bi-'l-dīn wa ruwiya: an tuttakhadha al-suyūfu manājila*).[20]

This tradition does not seem to view the "eschatological disarmament" with any great favour; rather, it considers it one of the odd and unnatural phenomena expected to take place just before the Day of Judgement.

JESUS AND ISLAM

After Jesus lost his messianic role, he was 'demoted' to a figure merely merely paving the way for the mahdī's appearance. As for the mahdī himself, he was now expected to be a descendant of the Prophet, bearing the Prophet's name and genealogy. The mahdī's genealogy is sometimes described in terms which could be used in support of various messianic claimants. The tradition according to which 'the mahdī will be from my descendants, from the sons of Fāṭima' (*al-mahdī min 'itratī, min wuld Fāṭima*)[21] could be used in support of Shī'ī messianism, while the 'Abbāsī claim to legitimacy found endorsement in the identification of the mahdī as 'a descendant of my uncle al-'Abbās'.[22] Evidently enough, all these utterances bestow upon the mahdī an unquestionably Muslim character and mitigate the embarrassment of having Jesus performing such a decisive role during the eschatological cataclysm. The mahdī's actions are described in a less detailed fashion than those of Jesus. He is expected to reign five, seven or nine years and to establish justice on earth. He is also expected to usher in a period in which supply of money is limitless and he will give

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away any amount for the asking.[23] His basic task is described as follows:

> ... the Prophet said: If only one day remained of this world, ... God would prolong that day ... until he sends a man related to me—(or, a man) from my household whose name will correspond to mine and whose father's name will correspond to that of my father... He will fill the earth with equity and justice, even as it had been replete with wrong and iniquity (*law lam yabqa min al-dunyā illā yawmun ... la-ṭawwala Allāh dhālika al-yawm ... ḥattā yab'atha fīhi rajulan minnī—aw—min ahl baytī—yuwāṭi'u 'smuhu 'smī wa 'smu abīhi 'sma abī yamla'u al-arḍqisṭan wa 'adlan kamā muli'at Ẓulman wa jawran*).[24]

If we merge the activities of Jesus with those of the mahdī, we can understand the nature of the early Muslim community's messianic expectations. Jesus is portrayed as a rather militant figure, engaged in the establishment of religious uniformity through the destruction of Judaism and Christianity and the consequent transformation of Islam into the sole religion. The mahdī, on the other hand, strives to establish justice and to create unlimited wealth on the face of the earth.

Jesus performs these tasks as a Muslim. Some traditions say so explicitly, stating that he will come 'believing in Muḥammad, adhering to his religion' (*muṣaddiqan bi-Muḥammad ... wa 'alā millatihi*);[25] in others, Jesus' affilation with Islam can be inferred from the fact that immediately following his descent, he prays under the leadership of a Muslim imām; and when he dies, Muslims pray at his funeral. This may come as a surprise to some readers; however, describing Jesus in this manner is easily understandable within the Islamic worldview according to which Islam (indicating the absolute and exclusive submission to Allah)[26]

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is not only the name of the religion and the civilization founded by the Prophet Muḥammad at the beginning of the 7th century AD, but also the name of the ancient monotheistic belief which existed since the creation of mankind. The most celebrated case in which a pre-Islamic personality is perceived as Muslim is that of Abraham about whom the Qur'ān says that he was 'neither a Jew nor a Christian but a *ḥanīf* Muslim and was not one of the idolaters'.[27] While the Qur'ān does not explicitly describe Jesus in this manner, it would certainly not be surprising to perceive Jesus as a Muslim in the Islamic tradition. There he is a prophet like all the others and if he had been a Muslim during his initial mission, it would only be natural if he retained his erstwhile religious affilation during his second coming.

It is, thus, the Muslim Jesus who brings about the destruction of Christianity during the eschatological drama. This idea has immense value for Muslim polemicists: what could be more humiliating to their Christian adversaries then having Jesus inflicting the final defeat on their faith?

THE MESSIANIC MOVEMENTS

We can now move to the core of our presentation and characterize the messianic movements which emerged among the Sunnī Muslim community over the centuries. In including a person in this framework, I am not passing judgement on the sincerity of that person's messianic claim. Anyone who advanced a claim to be a mahdī, convinced a substantial number of people to accept it and left behind documentation which enables us to study his thought is a mahdī for the purposes of this study. I have chosen four

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examples from different periods and different regions. They are the North African Muḥammad b. Tūmart (1078/81–1130), Sayyid Muḥammad Jawnpūrī (1440–1505) of Gujarāt, the Sudanese mahdī Muḥammad Aḥmad (1844–85) and Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad (1837–1908), the founder of the Aḥmadī movement in Islam. These examples should enable us to identify the characteristics of Sunnī mahdīs and should also allow us to find out to what extent the thought of these persons reflected the specific circumstances in which they emerged, and, on the other hand, to what extent the pertinent classical tradition tended to make them similar to each other despite the diverse circumstances in which they were active.

None of these Sunnī claimants commanded universal acceptance, but some of them made considerable impact in the regions where they emerged. In at least two cases they succeeded in establishing political entities. None of these entities was destined to last for very long, but some of their founders are still remebered as important figures in the development of the modern nations in the areas of their past activities. Furthermore, during the relatively short periods of their existence, Ibn Tūmart and the Sudanese Muḥammad Aḥmad produced a type of Muslim governance which is highly significant for the evaluation of radical Muslim movements and their objectives.

APPOINTMENT

Perhaps the first question which we should answer at this stage is: how does one become a mahdī? In a more academic formulation, we may ask: how did each of these religious figures attempt to establish his legitimacy, what arguments

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did he use in order to convince a substantial number of people of his crucial importance in the religious history of Islam? The most elaborate appointment ceremony is undoubtedly that of the Sudanese Muḥammad Aḥmad. The substantiation of his claim to be a mahdī is provided in numerous visionary encounters with the Prophet, the first four caliphs, the mythical al-Khiḍr and other fundamental figures from Islamic history and mythology. Descriptions of these encounters are included time and again in Muḥammad Aḥmad's letters and he has repeatedly used them in order to convince addressees of the veracity of his spiritual claim. It is significant to observe that both political and spiritual leaders are present in these encounters. Each encounter is called a 'presence' (*ḥaḍra*). The first such encounter is mentioned in a letter from the beginning (*ghurra*) of Sha'bān, 1298/end of June 1881:

> A prophetic presence occurred to us. Our friend *al-faqīh* 'Īsā was there. The Prophet ... came, sat down next to me and said to the aforementioned brother: 'Your *shaykh* is the *mahdī*.' ['Īsā] said: 'I believe in it.' Then the Prophet said: 'He who does not believe in his being the *mahdī*, denies God and His Prophet.' He said this three times.[28]

Thus, Muḥammad Aḥmad is appointed mahdī by the Prophet himself. The Prophet declares that rejection of Muḥammad Aḥmad's messianic claim is tantamount to the denial of God and of His Prophet; the clear implication is that such deniers are infidels. The Prophet also instructs two figures to accompany Muḥammad Aḥmad at all times: the first is 'Azrā'īl, the angel of death; the second is the mythical figure of al-Khiḍr, whose characteristics include longevity and even immortality. The placement of both figures in Muḥammad Aḥmad's entourage seems to signify the defeat and death to be suffered by the enemies and the

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longevity to be enjoyed by Muḥammad Aḥmad and his supporters. The famous Ṣūfī 'Abd al Qādir al-Jīlānī is also present at the ḥaḍra; his appearance may be explained by the mahdī's membership in a Ṣūfī order.[29] In other descriptions of the appointment session, the Prophet tells the mahdī that he was created from the light of the Prophet's heart (*innaka makhlūq min nūr 'inān qalbī*), that his name was changed from Muḥammad Aḥmad to Muḥammad al-Mahdī by the Prophet, and that the mole on his right cheek—reminiscent of the 'seal of prophethood' between the Prophet Muḥammad's shoulders—is a symbol of his being the mahdī. In a similar vein, the Prophet extracted the mahdī's heart from his chest, rinsed it and placed it back—in emulation of the 'chest opening' (*sharḥ al-ṣadr*) performed by angels in order to cleanse the Prophet's heart when he was a child.[30] 'Azrā'īl is designated as the commander of his army, holding in his hands a flag of light which is the flag of victory and a guarantee against defeat. The Prophet seats the mahdī several times on his chair and girds him with his sword. The four 'righteous' caliphs, leaders of the Ṣūfīs (*aqṭāb*), al-Khiḍr, the ten angels and 60,000 deceased saints are present. Elsewhere, the mahdī is supported by 240,000 Ṣūfīs, the *quṭb*, the 'People of the Cave' and the messengers of the ten angels.[31]

The appointment of Sayyid Muḥammad Jawnpūrī was much simpler. When he was born in Jawnpūr on 8 October 1443 (Jumāda al-ūlā 14, 847 AH), a voice from an invisible source (*hātif-i ghaybī*) exclaimed: 'The truth has come, and falsehood has vanished away; surely falsehood is ever certain to vanish' (*jā'a al-ḥaqq wa zahaqa al-bāṭil inna al-bāṭila kāna zahūqan*).[32] In the city temples, the idols tumbled from their pedestals. The boy was born clean of all impurities—which probably means that he was born

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circumcised—and upon birth covered his pudenda with both hands so that no one could see his nakedness. A seal of sainthood (*muhr-i wilāyat*) was seen on his back. The Prophet informed the father in a dream that he had bestowed his own name on the boy who was hence named Muḥammad. He was also called Abū al-Qāsim, the Prophet's own epithet (*kunyā*). When Shaykh Dāniyāl, the head of the Chishtī Ṣūfīs in the city, was apprised of all this, he determined that the boy was the 'promised mahdī' (*mahdī-yi maw'ūd*) because his birth was similar to that of the Prophet.

The appointment if Ibn Tūmart is said to have been even simpler. In 1121–2/515, after returning to his native place from some travels, he made a speech in which he praised the Prophet as the person:

> who predicted the coming of the *mahdī* who will fill the earth with justice and equity as it was full with injustice and wrongdoing; God will send him to abrogate falsehood by truth and replace injustice with justice; he originates from the farthest Maghrib, his times are the last times, the name is the name, the lineage is the lineage, and the action is the action.[33]

When he finished his speech, ten of the present approached him and said: 'Master, this description exists only in you; you are the mahdī' *(yā sayyidī hādhihi al-ṣifa lā tūjadu illā fīka fa-anta huwa al-mahdī)*.[34] These ten persons pledged allegiance to Ibn Tūmart under a tree and were later followed by a group of 50 and another of 70. In contradistinction to the two cases discussed above, here we have no divine or prophetic intervention; we have only a veiled declaration of the claimant and agreement of a rather small number of supporters.

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EXCLUSIVITY

A major characteristic of the four messianic claimants is their claim to religious exclusivity. All of them maintained that whoever denied their claim to messianic status was an infidel. In the case of Ibn Ṭūmart, this was directed against the dynasty of the al-Murābiṭūn on whom he heaped the most extreme accusations.[35] If we move to Sayyid Muḥammad Jawnpūrī, we find a similar attitude. Non-acceptance of Sayyid Muḥammad Jawnpūrī's messianic claim is tantamount to non-acceptance of the Prophet Muḥammad which necessarily means that deniers of Jawnpūrī's claims must be considered non-Muslims.[36] Surprisingly enough, Ṣūfī concepts are used in order to dissociate the Mahdawīs from all other Muslims and declare all non-Mahdawī Muslims as infidels. When Shaykh Muṣṭafā Gujarātī (d. 1577), who argued the Mahdawī case at the court of Akbar, was asked why he insisted, in a daring contradiction to the views of the 'ulamā', that Jawnpūrī was the mahdī, he responded that in the Ṣūfī movement—to which he and his predecessors belonged—it is forbidden to reject the words of a *walī*.[37] Moreover, such a rejection is tantamount to infidelity, as is clear from a *ḥadīth qudsī* in which Allah says:

> Whoever is inimical to one of my saints, is inimical to me; and whoever is inimical to me, will enter the Fire (*man 'ādā waliyyan min awliyā'ī fa-qad 'ādānī wa man 'ādānī dakhala al-nār*).[38]

This stringent attitude has serious ritual and social consequences. Sayyid Muḥammad Jawnpūrī forbade his followers to pray behind a non-Mahdawī imām, and instructed them not go to places where this may be necessary. If someone did pray under the leadership of a non-Mahdawī, he must repeat his prayer because it was

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invalid. If Mahdawīs went to a town, they had to pray in their own congregation even if they were very few in number.[39] Jawnpūrī's attitude to non-Mahdawīs can best be gauged from a tradition according to which he raised his sword and said that 'this is the only thing that remains for them' (*bāīshān īn mānda ast*) and declared them *ḥarbīs*, unprotected inhabitants of enemy territory against whom war may legitimately be waged. According to Islamic law, such persons are not eligible to pay the jizya; Jawnpūrī nevertheless expressed his desire to levy jizya from them should God issue an order to this effect and give him the power to implement it.[40] In other words, he was willing to use the most unequivocal language in order to demonstrate that non-Mahdawīs could not be considered Muslims.[41]

We find similar attitudes in the thought of Muḥammad Aḥmad, the Sudanese mahdī. As is well known, the four years of Muḥammad Aḥmad's messianic activity were characterized by war against the British and the so-called Turko-Egyptian regime. This war was routinely described as jihād; since jihād is a war against non-Muslims, it was essential for Muḥammad Aḥmad to declare his opponents as infidels. Time and again he declares that whoever denies his claim to be the mahdī belongs to this category. He routinely asserts that the Prophet himself had affirmed that whoever rejects the mahdī is an infidel: *man ankara al-mahdī fa-qad kafara.* It must be said, however, that despite the repeated assertions by Muḥammad Aḥmad and other messianic claimants, the *ḥadīth* literature includes barely any references asserting the excommunication of persons who deny someone's claim to be a *mahdī.* Traditions to this effect do not seem to exist in the major Sunnī collections; in Shī'ī literature, too, they are extremely rare. Ibn Khaldūn refers to this tradition in his *Muqaddima,* but takes pains to

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characterize it as an extreme one (*wa ḥasbuka hādhā ghuluwwan*) and as having the strangest chain of transmitters.[42]

The fourth example is that of Ghulām Aḥmad, the founder of the Aḥmadī movement in Islam. As is well known, the Aḥmadī movement never advocated military jihād, but the attitude of its founder to non-Aḥmadī Muslims developed in an exclusionary direction. In his early works he maintained that only those who deny law-bringing prophets are considered infidels and said:

> It has been my belief since the beginning [of my mission] that nobody can become an infidel or *dajjāl* by denying my claim; such a person certainly is erring an deviating from the straight path ... but I do not call any person who pronounced the shahāda infidel (*ibtidā' sē mērā yih madhhab hay kih mērī da'wē kē inkār kī wajah sē ko'ī shakhṣ kāfir yā dajjāl nahīñ hō saktā ... źāll awr jādda-yi ṣawāb sē munḥarif źarūr hōgā lēkin kisī kalima-gū kā nām kāfir nahīñ rakhtā*).[43]

However, this comparatively moderate view of non-Aḥmadī Muslims soon began to change and more stringent pronouncements can be found in Ghulām Aḥmad's later works. Finally in *Ḥaqīqat al-waḥy*, published for the first time less than a year before his death, he explained that anybody who rejected his claim to spiritual eminence was an infidel. The most unequivocal statement of this attitude is found in the 5th volume of the *Barāhīn-i Aḥmadiyya*, published for the first time in 1905. It reads: 'He who denies this mission, will be declared infidel' (*jōshakhṣ is da'wē sē munkir hay wuh bi-har ḥāl kāfir therā'ēgā*).[44]

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JIHĀD

The conclusion from this exclusionary worldview was the obligation to wage jihād against the opponents, though the jihād is not of the same type in all cases. Ibn Tūmart fought against the dynasty of the Almoravides (*al-Murābiṭūn*) whom he accused of anthropomorphistic attitudes, which in his view are tantamount to infidelity. A secondary accusation related to the Almoravide customs, and especially their attire: their men veil themselves while their women do not cover their faces as they should. Hostile statements about 'the veiled infidels' (*al-kafara almulaththamūn*) or 'the veiled anthropomorphists' (*ahl al-tajsīm al-mulaththamūn*) are frequently found in his works.[45]

The jihād of the Mahdawīs in 15th-century India was of a much more restricted scope, and their efforts to establish a Mahdawī state ended in failure. Nevertheless, under the leadership of Khwāndmīr (1513–24), the Mahdawī movement acquired military character and began to engage its enemies in battle.[46] This resulted in the development of Mahdawī thinking on jihād and caused some debate: the question was raised whether it was legal to fight against Muslim rulers who rejected Sayyid Muḥammad Jawnpūrī's messianic claim but, of course, did not renounce Islam. When Sayyid Khwāndmīr started preparing for war, some of his closest associates argued that it was illegal to fight Muslims even if they rejected Jawnpūrī's messianic claim.

The Mahdawīs who supported jihād maintained that war was the proper response to the oppression practised against them by the Muslim rulers of Gujarāt. Naturally enough, the Qur'ān (22:39–40), in which the early Muslims were given permission to fight because they had been wronged and expelled from their habitations, is used as evidence to

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support this attitude. When the 'army of the accursed' (*lashkar-i mal'ūnān*) started attacking the Mahdawīs—killing them, burning their mosques and houses and branding their faces—Sayyid Khwāndmīr thought that jihād had become the individual duty of every believer, be he man or woman, slave or free.[47] His supporters stressed that the Qur'ān and the ḥadīth speak harshly against those who reject the mahdī. According to a peculiar interpretation of Qur'ān 11:17, those who do this are destined for Hell.[48] According to a ḥadīth, anyone who rejects the mahdī is an infidel (*man ankara almahdī fa-qad kafara*). It would be, of course, better to forgive, endure or reach an agreement with those who consider the religion of the mahdī a reprehensible innovation; at the same time, if none of the peaceful means helps and the enemies place themselves outside the pale of Islam (by rejecting the mahdī), it is legal to fight them. Eventually, all agreed that this was the right way and resolved that no one could be spared the fury of jihād without recognizing the messianic status of Sayyid Muḥammad Jawnpūrī.[49]

The dilemma of the Sudanese mahdī Muḥammad Aḥmad in declaring jihād against his enemies was easier because the so-called Turko-Egyptian regime against which he fought was in manifest alliance with the British and the army included British units. In contradistinction to the Indian Mahdawīs, Muḥammad Aḥmad never had any scruples when he waged jihād against the Muslim allies of the British, and jihād is undoubtedly the prevalent motif in his thinking. Nothing can stand in its way: neither the desire to be with wife and family, nor the necessity to work for a living is sufficient reason to refrain from jihād. In matters of livelihood in particular, Muḥammad Aḥmad takes an extremely

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deterministic stand and asserts that livelihood is in the hands of God; He will provide it even if men run away from it:

> If a man rides the wind to run away from his livelihood, the livelihood will ride the lightning to catch up with him (*law rakiba al-'Abd al-rīḥ hāriban min rizqihi la-rakiba al-rizq al-barq ḥattā yalḥaqahu*). Therefore, striving to obtain livelihood is tantamount to doubting God. One will never obtain more than was destined for him, neither will he received less. After all, asks the Qur'ān (39:36), 'shall not God suffice His servant?'[50]

The thinking of Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad, the founder of the Aḥmadī movement, was different. As is well known, the Aḥmadī movement never advocated military jihād, but this does not mean that it refrained from other types of struggle against its opponents. The Aḥmadīs held that military struggle was justified in the early days of Islam when the religion had to resist military assault and faced physical extinction. By the time of Ghulām Aḥmad the situation changed. The threat facing Islam then was not military but ideological; the appropriate defence must also be ideological. Ghulām Aḥmad therefore did his best to refute the views of the Christian missionaries and of those Muslims who propagated ideas which he considered wrong. Regarding the Christian missionaries, he rejected their description of Islam as a violent religion spread by the sword, as well as their belief that Jesus was alive in heaven and would descend to earth for the second time. As for the mainstream Muslim 'ulamā', he rejected their support for the second coming of Jesus and their descriptions of the expected mahdī as a bloody figure who would destroy all religions except Islam. He thought that both these views provided the missionaries with weapons which they effectively used in anti-Muslim polemics. Aḥmadī jihād, waged by means of

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polemical encounters, preaching and writing, was designed to undermine these ideas and deprive the missionaries of their advantage in polemics.

HIJRA

The exclusionary attitude to 'others' and the struggle against them by military action or by other means are common to the four messianic claimants which I am discussing in this presentation. Two of these claimants, Sayyid Muḥammad Jawnpūrī and the Sudanese Muḥammad Aḥmad also advocated *hijra*, migration, which was intended to bring about a substantial transformation of the existing social order.

Sayyid Muḥammad Jawnpūrī received at the age of forty a divine command to migrate from Jawnpūr and to summon the people to God's way. In emulation of Jawnpūrī's compliance with this command, and drawing inspiration from Qur'ānic verses such as 4:88 and 8:72,[51] performing the hijra became an essential test of a Mahdawī's commitment to the movement. The time of the hijra was important: those who performed it early were considered better than the late-comers and might serve as their spiritual guides (*murshid*).[52] Those who accepted Jawnpūrī's claim to be the mahdī but did not perform the hijra were called 'hypocrites' (*munāfiqān*), or 'nominal' Mahdawīs (*lisānī*): persons who support the mahdī by word, but not by deed.[53] The mahdī declared the hijra to be an individual duty (*farḍ 'ayn*)[54] and gave it a definition which went far beyond the obligation to move away from one's place of residence. In addition to the physical move, it involved complete reliance on God and resignation to His will (*tawakkul o taslīm*), an

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abandonment of desire to receive anything from human beings (*az khalq bē ṭama'*), abandonment of gainful employment (*ta'ayyun*),[55] considering both benefit and harm as coming from God (*nafa' o źarar-rā az khudā-yi ta'ālā bīnad*), living in seclusion (from non-Mahdawīs?) and other ascetic qualities.[56] It also entailed cutting any emotional ties with relatives who were left behind. For example, if someone left Gujarat but remained emotionally attached to his relatives who stayed behind, he would be considered a wrongdoer (*ẓālim*).[57]

Hijra is, therefore, not only a means to gather Mahdawīs outside their regular habitats in order to build the human resources for the movement; it is also a symbol of a substantial social change. Numerous traditions about the mahdī and his successors indicate that for the Mahdawīs, family relationships had to be replaced by membership in the Mahdawī community. This is the reason for the cases in which members of the movement who stayed in a Mahdawī institution (*dā'ira*) were instructed not to socialize with their relatives in neighbouring towns. An extreme example of this attitude speaks about a Mahdawī who requested permission from Sayyid Muḥammad Jawnpūrī to accept his mother's invitation and visit her. Jawnpūrī instructed the man to tell his mother that he was dead. From the mother's vantage point, he was, indeed, dead: the filial relationship came an end when the son joined the movement. Similarly, when a Mahdawī died, his inheritance was distributed equally between the members of the dā'ira; nothing was given to the biological family members if they were not Mahdawīs. Again, blood relationships were rendered inconsequential and non-Mahdawīs were excluded from inheritance in the same way as unbelievers are according to Islamic law.[58] Severance of all family relationships was necessary in order

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to transform the movement's members into single-minded devotees, unencumbered by family responsibilities; Jawnpūrī must have thought that this was a reasonable price to pay in order to strengthen the loyalty of the Mahdawīs to their movement.

The Sudanese Muḥammad Aḥmad was ordered to perform hijra to Jabal Qadīr by the Prophet. Time and again he asserts that hijra is a commandment included both in the Qur'ān and in the prophetic sunna and refraining from it is tantamount to infidelity. Economic or social reasons cannot serve as an excuse for avoiding it. Quoting Qur'ānic verses and prophetic traditions, Muḥammad Aḥmad asserts that the existence of dependents cannot be used as a reason to stay at home: the members of the muhājir's family who stay behind will be taken care of by God himself.[59] Tending a field cannot serve as an excuse either, because 'with God are things that are better and more lasting' (*mā 'inda Allāh khayrun wa abqā*) (than any agricultural produce). Furthermore, the pain caused by the separation from the family is less than the divine punishment inflicted on those who refrain from performing the hijra. Only if this is not feasible, it is permissible to perform the hijra together with the family.[60]

THE *MAHDĪS* AND THE PROPHETIC PERIOD

As we have seen, the idea of the mahdī originated in classical Muslim literature dealing with the wondrous events expected to precede the Day of Judgement. However, in the works of the messianic claimants whom I surveyed, this motif has receded into the background and we barely hear them saying that Judgement Day is imminent. Instead, some

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of them developed the idea that the period of the Prophet would be recreated in their times, and that they themselves had been given, to say the least, some prophetic qualities.

The first example of this approach is Sayyid Muḥammad Jawnpūrī who based his messianic claim on divine appointment. God informed him that he was the mahdī of latter days (*mahdī ākhir al-zamān*).[61] Nevertheless, the Mahdawī teachings have very little to do with the messianic idea in its classical form; Sayyid Muḥammad Jawnpūrī and his followers occasionally spoke about the end of times, but did not fill this concept with any specific meaning. They did not predict the imminent enactment of the eschatological drama which plays such an important part in the relevant classical traditions. On the other hand, they did their utmost to invest their leader with a status almost equal with that of the Prophet or, at least, closely connected with him in the spiritual sense. Mahdawi hagiography has a rather extraordinary *basmala* mentioning the 'two Muḥammads'.[62] Elsewhere it speaks about 'Muḥammad the messenger of Allah and, secondly, Muḥammad *mahdī* the desire of Allah' (*yakī Muḥammad rasūl Allāh thānī Muḥammad mahdī murād Allāh*) who are the two (perfect) Muslims in the world.[63] In a similar vein, we are told that the Qur'ān is explained by the 'tongue of the two Muḥammads' meaning the Prophet and Sayyid Muḥammad Jawnpūrī (*bayān al-Qur'ān bi-lisān al-Muḥammadayn fa-humā al-nabī wa al-mahdī ṣallā Allāh 'alayhimā wa sallam*). The striking usage of *ṣallā Allāh 'alayhimā wa sallam*—an honorific formula normally reserved for the Prophet alone—for both the Prophet and for Jawnpūrī clearly indicates that the Mahdawīs' veneration for the mahdī was no less than their veneration for the Prophet himself.[64] The essential parity between the Prophet and the mahdī is also reflected in the statement that the

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Prophet explained certain aspects of the Qur'ān while the mahdī explained the others. It is also significant to observe that an important Mahdawī source approvingly quotes a tradition according to which the mahdī will 'destroy whatever was before him and launch Islam afresh' (*yahdim mā qablahu kamā Ṣana'a rasūl Allāh wa yasta'nif al-islām jadīdan*).[65] Furthermore, those who did not have the good fortune of being guided by the Prophet, will be guided by the mahdī at the end of days. This seems to indicate that the mission of the Prophet had remained in some sense unfinished and was completed by Sayyid Muḥammad Jawnpūrī.

A similar affinity between a messianic claimant and the Prophet is maintained for Muḥammad Aḥmad, the Sudanese mahdī. We have already seen that he was appointed by the Prophet himself. But the relationship between the mahdī and the Prophet is not only spiritual. The mahdī is genealogically related to the Prophet: his father's parents were descendants of Ḥasan b. 'Alī, the Prophet's grandson; this is clearly intended to make Muḥammad Aḥmad's genealogy compatible with the classical descriptions of the mahdī's forefathers. His mother was also Ḥasan's descendant on her mother's side.[66] The Prophet determines that 'Abd Allah (al-Ta'āyishī) is the mahdī's son and will be his successor. Paraphrasing a frequently quoted tradition, the Prophet is made to declare that 'whoever hurts the khalīfa 'Abd Allah, hurts the mahdī; whoever hurts the *mahdī*, hurts me; and whoever hurts me, hurts Allah.'[67] In another attempt to create affinity between himself and the Prophet, Muḥammad Aḥmad appointed three caliphs and wanted to appoint a fourth, but his intention was foiled when the Sanūsī mahdī contemptuously rejected the offer to serve as Muḥammad Aḥmad's third successor.

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In most cases, Muḥammad Aḥmad's appointment as the mahdī is described as effected by the Prophet. It is noteworthy, however, that in the late years of his career, after the great military successes and the consequent growth in his self-confidence, we find a statement in which God himself is presented as making the appointment. Three times He is quoted as telling the Prophet: 'This is your *khalīfa*, O Muḥammad' (*hādhā khalīfatuka yā Muḥammad*). Furthermore, on the night of Shawwāl 6, 1301/July 30, 1884, while in the state of full wakefulness, Muḥammad Aḥmad heard God greeting him. 'I understood,' he says:

> that it was not an angel, nor a messenger, nor a prophet, because I heard Him with all my body, no letter or sound, (from) no direction or place, not with the known organ (sc. the ear), neither whispering nor audible, (coming) neither from near nor from far... (*fa-'inda dhālika fahimtu annahu laysa min malak wa lā rasūl wa lā nabī li-annī sami'tuhu bi-jamī' badanī, bi-lāḥarf wa lāṣawt wa lājiha min al-jihāt wa lā makān min al-amkina wa lā bi-'l-jāriḥa al-ma'lūma wa lāyūṣaf bi-'l-sirr wa lā bi-'l-jahr lā bi-'l-qurb wa lā bi-'l-bu'd...*).[68]

ACHIEVEMENTS

We may now ask ourselves: what were the achievements of these four movements and what impact did they have in the regions in which they operated? Though the Gujarati Mahdawīs seem to have produced a very sophisticated system of ascetic and mystical thought, they accomplished little in practical terms. The community continues to exist, has a centre in Chicago, some community centres in India, a website from which some publications may be downloaded and from which information about community activities may be gleaned, but it must be rather small. Its activities in the

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15th century and beyond did not bring about very impressive results. The achievements of the Muwaḥḥidūn and of the Sudanese Mahdists were much more substantial. The Muwaḥḥidūn established an empire which ruled over parts of north Africa and Spain between 1130 and 1270. The Sudanese Muḥammad Aḥmad acted as a mahdī for only four years, but he had spectacular military successes against the British and the state which he established lasted for 14 years after his death, until the British reconquest of the Sudan in 1899. Ghulām Aḥmad had no political aspirations, but established a movement which is still in existence, has maintained durable leadership and institutions, and boasts of several million adherents across the world. It is quite clear that all these achievements are in no way near the classical image of the mahdī. It is therefore interesting to pose the following question: how did these messianic claimants themselves evaluate their achievements? We cannot answer this question for all of them, because not all of them related to it. We can say, however, that in the thought of all of them, the eschatological expectations of messianic justice and prosperity have only a minimal importance and are mentioned only rarely. In the works of the Sudanese Muḥammad Aḥmad and in the writings of Mirza Ghulām Aḥmad it is possible to discern their own evaluation of their achievements and prospects. As for Muḥammad Aḥmad, it is clear that he considered the elimination of British rule in the Sudan as an enormous achievement. Encouraged by this success, he developed pan-Islamic aspirations and became convinced that the conquest of Egypt would follow, that he would rule Syria and the Maghrib, and anticipated a trumphant entry and an allegiance ceremony in Mecca.

Ghulām Aḥmad, on the other hand, saw his achievements in a completely different light. A substantial part of his

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activity was in the field of interreligious polemics and so was his perceived achievement. He was convinced that he had successfully confuted Christianity and hit the Christians at the most sensitive christological point: he had proved that Jesus died a natural death, like any other mortal, and refuted the belief that he would ever return to earth.

Summing up, we should mention again one of the common features of the four movements which have been discussed here: their exclusivity. It stands to reason that their radical approach to the question of community boundaries, excluding Muslims who rejected their messianic claims, was the main reason for their failure to gain wider acceptance and to make a more lasting impact on Muslim history and society.

NOTES

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1. Goldziher, 'Introduction', p. 200.
2. During the Occultation of the Walī al-Aṣr (may God hasten his reappearance), the *wilāyah* and leadership of the Ummah devolve upon the just [*'ādil*] and pious [*muttaqī*] *faqīh*, who is fully aware of the circumstances of his age; courageous, resourceful, and possessed of administrative ability, he will assume the responsibilities of this office in accordance with Article 107.
3. Monteil, *L'islam noir*, pp. 257–68.
4. Ibn Māja, *Sunan, Kitāb al-fitan*, vol. 2, pp. 1295–1372; Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan*, vol. 2, pp. 468–69; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Fitan wa al-malāḥim*, pp. 16–18.

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5. Ibn Māja, *Sunan, Kitāb al-fitan* 24, vol. 2, p. 1341, no. 4039.
6. See al-Bayhaqī, *Bayān khaṭa' man akhṭa'a 'alā al-Shāfi'ī*, vol. 1, pp. 296–301; Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-'Ilal almutanāhiya*, vol. 2, p. 862–3; al-Dhahabī, *Siyar a'lām al-nubalā'*, vol. 10, p. 67; Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, p. 89. But see Ibn Kathīr, *al-Fitan wa al-malāḥim*, p. 53, who does not see any contradiction between this tradition and traditions that identify the mahdī as a person different from Jesus: he thinks that there may be more than one *mahdī*. Pace E. Dickinson, *The Development of Early Sunnite Ḥadīth Criticism*, Leiden: Brill, 2001, p. 27, note 63.
7. See my *Prophecy Continuous*, pp. 115–16.
8. See D. Cook, *Studies in Muslim apocalyptic*, Princeton: The Darwin Press, 2002, p. 323.
9. Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddima*, p. 322 (tr. Rosenthal, II, 185).
10. Cook, *Studies*, p. 213.
11. Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan*, vol. 2, p. 470. For an exhaustive analysis of the traditions about *al-dajjāl*, see Halperin, "The Ibn Ṣayyād traditions ..."
12. Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan*, vol. 2, p. 471.
13. Tirmidhī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, vol. 9, p. 78 (Ibn al-'Arabī al-Mālikī's commentary); al-Qasṭallānī, Irshād al-sārī, vol. 5, p. 419; al-'Asqalānī, *Fatḥ al-bārī*, vol. 7, p. 304. This understanding is sometimes made clear in the ḥadīth itself; see, for instance, Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, vol. 2, p. 437.
14. Al-Qasṭallānī, *Irshād al-sārī*, vol. 5, p. 419; al-'Aynī, *'Umdat al-qārī*, vol. 16, p. 39.
15. This version appears in Krehl's edition of al-Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ* (vol. 2, p. 370); the Cairo edition of the same (vol. 4, p. 205) reads *yaḍa' al-jizya*, but mentions the other version on the margin. Al-Bukhārī's commentators deal only with the *yaḍa' al-jizya* version, though some of them also mention the other one. See al-Qasṭallānī, *Irshād al-sārī*, vol. 5, p. 419; al-'Aynī, *'Umdat al-qārī*, vol. 16, p. 39; al-'Asqlānī, *Fatḥ albārī*, vol. 7, p. 302.
16. Or: 'use the swords as sickles'.
17. For an explanation of this expression, see Ibn Māja, *Sunan*, vol. 2, p. 1362 (*Kitāb al-fitan, bāb 33*, no. 4077).

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18. Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, vol. 2, pp. 482–3; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Fitan wa al-malāḥim*, p. 112.
19. Ibn Māja, *Sunan*, vol. 2, pp. 1361–2 (*Kitāb al-fitan, bāb 33*, no. 4077); Ibn Kathīr, *al-Fitan wa al-malāḥim*, pp. 111–12, 122, 140.
20. Al-Zamakhsharī, *al-Fā'iq*, vol. 1, p. 329 (s.v. *kh-t-l*); Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Nihāya*, vol. 1, p. 281 (s.v. *kh-t-l*).
21. Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan*, vol. 2, p. 460.
22. Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-'Ilal al-mutanāhiya*, vol. 2, p. 856; cf. also ibid., p. 858.
23. Ibn Māja, *Sunan*, vol. 2, p. 1368 (no. 4083).
24. Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan*, vol. 2, p. 460.
25. Ibn Kathīr, *al-Fitan wa al-malāḥim*, pp. 123–4.
26. Of the numerous studies devoted to the elucidation of the term Islam, the following may be mentioned: H. Ringrren, *Islam, Aslama and Muslim*, Uppsala, 1949; D.Z. Baneth, 'What did Muḥammad mean when he called his religion Islam? The original meaning of aslama and its derivatives', *Israel Oriental Studies* 1(1971), 183–90; J.I. Smith, *An historical and semantic study of the term 'Islām' as seen in a sequence of Qur'ān commnetaries*, Missoula, 1975.
27. Qur'ān 3:67.
28. *Al-āthār al-kāmila*, vol. 1, pp. 77–8; cf. ibid., pp. 97–9; vol. 5, pp. 223, 457; vol. 7, p. 27.
29. Ibid., vol. 1, pp. 80–1, 379; vol. 3, pp. 322–3; vol. 5, p. 417.
30. Ibid., vol. 1, p. 422.
31. Ibid., vol. 1, pp. 83, 97–8, 175–6, 210–13, 221; vol. 7, pp. 116–17.
32. Qur'ān 17:81.
33. *...al-mubashsshir bi-'l-imām al-mahdī alladhī yamla'u al-arḍ qisṭan wa 'adlan kamāmali'at jawran wa ẓulman yab'athuhu Allah 'alā naskh al-bāṭil bi-'l-ḥaqq wa an yaliya makān al-jawri al-'adl wa almaghrib al-aqṣā manbatuhu wa zamānuhu ākhir al-zamān wa al-ism al-ism wa al-nasab al-nasab wa alfi?l al-fi'l.* See Ibn al-Khaṭīb, *al-Ḥulal al-mawshiyya*, p. 78.
34. Ibid., p. 78; Garcia-Arenal, *Messianism*, p. 171.

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35. Muḥammad b. Tūmart, *A'azzu mā yuṭlab*, ed. Ṭālibī, pp. 237–9; Garcia-Arenal, *Messianism*, p. 179.
36. 'Accept Muḥammad the *mahdī*, so that you may succeed. Whoever does not accept Muḥammad the *mahdī*, does not accept Muḥammad the messenger of God' (*fa-taqabbalū Muḥammadan al-mahdī la'allakum tufliḥūn wa man yam yataqabbal Muḥammadan al-mahdī fa-innahu lam yataqabbal Muḥammadan rasūl Allāh*). Walī b. Yūsuf, *Inṣāf Nāma*, pp. 15, 39–40, 365.
37. Gujarātī, *Majālis*, pp. 4, 8–9.
38. Walī b. Yūsuf, *Inṣāf Nāma*, p. 34. Cf. al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ, Kitāb al-riqāq*, no. 38 (ed. Krehl, vol. 4, p. 232).
39. Walī b. Yūsuf, *Inṣāf Nāma*, pp. 44–7.
40. Ibid., pp. 48–9. Cf. 'Alī, *Siyar-i Mas'ūd*, p. 95.
41. Ibid., p. 97.
42. Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddima*, p. 312; translation by F. Rosenthal, vol. 2, p. 159.
43. *Tiryāq al-qulūb*, Qādiyān, 1902, p. 259.
44. *Barāhīn-i Aḥmadiyya*, vol. 5, p. 82, note.
45. Muḥammad b. Tūmart, *A'azzu mā yuṭlab*, ed. Ṭālibī, pp. 260, 262.
46. Qamaruddin, *The Mahdawī Movement*, pp. 106–16.
47. Walī b. Yūsuf, *Inṣāf Nāma*, pp. 362–3, 369. For the distinction between jihād as a communal duty (*farḍ kifāya*) and individual duty (*farḍ 'ayn*), see 'Djihād', *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, new edition, s.v. (E. Tyan).
48. The verse reads in part: '...Whosoever disbelieves in it [or in him], being one of the partisans, his promised land is the Fire.' In the mainstream interpretation, this verse is directed against the non-Muslims who reject the Qur'ān or the Prophet, but the Mahdawīs interpret it as a reference to Jawnpūrī.
49. Walī b. Yūsuf, *Inṣāf Nāma*, pp. 363–6.
50. *Al-āthār al-kāmila*, vol. 1, p. 310; cf. vol. 4, p. 424; vol. 3, p. 133; vol. 5, pp. 262–3, 419; vol. 6, pp. 158, 177. 207, 242; vol. 7, pp. 74, 87. For an exhaustive treatment of the tradition condemning animal husbandry, see Kister, 'Land property

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and *jihād*', pp. 276–80. It is noteworthy that the ḥadīth literature contains also traditions in favour of agriculture which reflect the situation of the Muslim community after the wave of conquests in the first century and the acquisition of agricultural land in the occuppied territories. See Kister, pp. 290ff.

51. Qur'ān 8:72 reads: 'Those who believe, and have emigrated and struggled with their possession and their selves in the way of God, and those who have given refuge and help—those are friends one of another. And those who believe, but have not emigrated—you have no duty of friendship towards them till they emigrate...'
52. Walī b. Yūsuf, *Inṣāf Nāma*, pp. 200–01.
53. Ibid., p. 171, 202.
54. *Farḍ 'ayn* is contrasted with *farḍ kifāya*, a collective duty, which is not incumbent on every individual if a sufficient number of community members perform it. For a basic explanation of the two concepts, see 'Farḍ', *Encyclopedia of Islam*, s.v. (Th. W. Juynboll)
55. *Ta'ayyun* literally means 'being appointed to a position'. The word was probabaly pronounced ta'yīn, or even ta'īn. See Steingass, *Persian–English Dictionary*, s.v.
56. Walī b. Yūsuf, *Inṣāf Nāma*, p. 335.
57. Ibid., p. 187.
58. Ibid., pp. 196–8.
59. Qur'ān 63:9 enjoins the believers not be distracted by their children from remembering God, while Qur'ān 64:14 describes property and children as a 'temptation' (*fitna*). Qur'ān 65:3 which says that 'whoever puts his trust in God, He shall suffice him' is also understood as a promise to take care of the muhājir's dependents. The tradition quoted reads: 'O God, you are the companion for travel and the substitute (taking care) of the family' (*allāhumma anta al-ṣāḥib fī al-safar wa al-khalīfa fī al-ahl*). Muslim b. al-Ḥajjāj, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, vol. 9, p. 119 (*Kitāb al-ḥajj*, 425). For further occurrences, see Wensinck, *Concordance*, s.v. *khalīfa*. See also *Alāthār al-kāmila*, vol. 7, p. 115.

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60. *Al-āthār al-kāmila*, vol. 1, pp. 313, 346, 379–80, 421; vol. 2, pp. 43–4, 58, 153–4; vol. 3, pp. 40–2, 81–5, 194–7, 220, 319; vol. 4, p. 86, 178–81; vol. 5, pp. 4–5, 225–6; vol. 6, p. 225; vol. 7, p. 139.
61. Walī b. Yūsuf, *Inṣāf Nāma*, pp. 25, 328.
62. Sikandarābādī, *Sawāniḥ*, p. 2.
63. Walī b. Yūsuf, *Inṣāf Nāma*, p. 322.
64. Ibid., p. 309.
65. Ibid., p. 68.
66. *Al-āthār al-kāmila*, vol. 1, pp. 93, 99, 339; cf. Shuqayr, *Ta'rīkh al-Sūdān*, vol. 3, p. 114.
67. *Al-āthār al-kāmila*, vol. 7, p. 75. The classical *ḥadīth* reads 'whoever hurts 'Alī (or al-'Abbās), hurts me...' See Wensinck, *Concordance*, s.v. *ādhā*.
68. *Al-āthār al-kāmila*, vol. 5, pp. 455, 457; vol. 7, p. 125.

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Alavi looks at Unani medicine's engagement with colonial medicine in 19th-century India and re-examines the social history of north India as seen through the lens of Unani texts and healers.

11

From Scholastic Learning to Religious Healing: Unani Medicine and Civil Society in 19th-Century India

SEEMA ALAVI

A Greco-Arabic healing tradition, called *unani* in the sub-continent, evolved in India along with Mughal political culture. It not only healed the body but had a profound bearing on the social and political fabric of society. This essay looks at unani medicine's engagement with 'colonial medicine' in 19th-century India so as to question the idea of colonialism as the site of culture and power that imposes an exclusionary civil society in India. It rethinks the social history of north India as seen through the lens of unani texts and healers.

I also question the idea of colonial public health being a direct import from the Western model of civil society. Instead, I de-centre the state in my narrative and see the makings of civil society in 19th-century India being propelled

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by local communities of 'medical literature': the Persian, Arabic and Urdu driven communities that survive through the colonial era. These represent pools of knowledge that conflict with each other, challenge their traditional custodians, reach out to religious practice, some connect with the state, and others remain beyond its control. Civil society and one of its main pillars—public health reforms—rather than an imposition from the state, emerge out of this dynamic plural medical ethos.

I will elaborate this point through the example of one such strand of a knowledgeable community—the Urdu community of medical literature—that emerged in the 19th-century. Its emergence is significant as so far medical knowledge had been closeted in elite families and locked in Arabic and Persian scholarship. Some individuals used the specific conjecture of the 19th-century, where global capital, print capitalism and ravages of disease and death co-mingled, to push medical knowledge out into the popular vernacular—Urdu. This enabled unani to spill out of its 'scientistic' scholarly mould, and reconstitute itself as a user-friendly culturally embracive medical tradition. It enabled new hakims to reach out to people and cultural referents that hitherto had lain beyond the purview of traditional unani: the person of the Prophet, Sufi healing and astrology. As unani embraced new medical localisms it diversified and made them part of its own world of 'scientific rational' medicine. Again, contrary to recent formulations, neither were these medical localisms reified nor were they imbued with Western scientific instrumentation. Instead, they were incorporated within what had so far been a relatively 'scholastic' unani culture. For instance, the new hakim's stress on medical practice brought him closer to the religious and cultural etiology of illness. And as unani incorporated

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religious beliefs of illness, the imprint of 19th-century Muslim reformist and revivalist influences on it became more than evident. The new unani with its fresh authors and wider clientele was a critical player in the making of 19th-century civil society. It had tremendous potential to challenge both the traditional scholarly medical families as well as the expanding colonial medical system. Indeed it represented a pool of uncontrollable knowledge.

In the second part of the paper I argue that efforts to control this new unani brought the traditional families and the colonial state together. Demands for public health reforms and professionalization voiced by traditional families did not have an anti-colonial tone. Rather, they were pitted against the new Urdu unani. And they had the support of the state. This contradicts the recent understanding of 19th-century medical reforms in indigenous healing, that sees them as efforts by enamoured elites to bring medicine in line with Western scientific instrumentation; or else as efforts to cast their medicine as a set of cultural practices and therefore resist the encroachments of the state. Public health measures and the making of civil society, seen against the plural medical ethos of 19th-century India, hardly seem a novel Western import that was either outright resisted or simplistically subverted by elites. It had its own momentum which guided its engagement with colonial medicine. And religious practice and beliefs were very central to its dynamics.

I

Traditional families had clothed unani in elite Persianate deportment and scientificity based on the formulas of Greco-Arabic philosopher-medics: Aristotle, Hippocrates and

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Galen. In the 19th century, that was characterized by 'modern' capitalistic infrastructure, print culture, as well as the related disturbances of modernity—population explosions, famines, disease, epidemics and death—unani underwent tremendous internal change. As its traditional custodians struggled to cope, men from the service gentry class, hitherto excluded from its ambit, took advantage of this conjecture to fashion a new unani.

They pushed unani out of its narrow family confines and scholastic frame. They used the Urdu print culture to reach out to fresh kinds of medical knowledge that lay both within and beyond the purview of the older medical communities. With its longer rope, this unani broke loose of the control of both the older linguistically particularistic medical communities, as well as the colonial medical apparatus. But it borrowed from both. Thus it used the Persian idea of health as individual comportment introduced by Persian Mughal texts; and kept the Arabic Aristotelian and Galenic learning—a feature of the late 18th-century unani—as its intellectual core. But to this it added other knowledge such as the healing of the Prophet, the Sufis and other figures of religious authority.

The new focus on the cultural etiology of disease made the new hakims look to the embracive Persian rather than the Arabic canonical literature for inspiration. Thus medieval Persian texts like the *Zakhirah-i-Khwarzmshahi* that reflected the Unani shift from canonical materialistic knowledge to demonstrable and culturally diversified beliefs about illness became the models of Urdu medical literature.

The *Zakhirah* was translated into Urdu in 1878. It was a text that claimed culture and religious practice for medicine. It thus served as a useful model for the new unani literature that was looking for a similar embracive recast to contest

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both its traditional scholarly custodians and colonial authority. In 1878 the noted publisher of Lucknow, Munshi Newal Kishore, asked Hakim Haadi Hasan Khan Moradabadi to translate the text. Haadi Hasan through his translation gave a sharper religious profile to the healing dictums of the *Zakhirah*. Thus the Urdu *Zakhirah* gives a new Islamic orientation to healing. In the preface the hakim translator deflected attention from Aristotelian and Galenic rationality that was the defining feature of the Persian original. For Haadi Hasan, it was religious beliefs that shaped body humours and pathology. He claimed religious practice as its defining rationality. Haadi Hasan views God as the ultimate healer who created both disease and its cure. The scientia of medicine according to him lie buried in the natural habitat that God has created. The role of the physician is to identify these correctly and apply them appropriately. Extolling God as the ultimate medical authority, Haadi Hasan dedicates his book to Him.

Very much like his contemporary Indian Muslim reformers, he upholds the Islamic notion of well-being that includes not just the physical but the spiritual, moral and psychological health of the body. He projects the Prophet as the centre of his Islamic rationality. Thus unlike the Persian *Zakhirah* that believes in an abstract God as the author of the rational natural world, the Urdu *Zakhirah* projects Prophet Muhammad as the guide who helps the individual to comprehend rational medical knowledge that lies embedded in nature. Khan concludes that Prophetic piety and medicine are central to unani.

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HOME-GROWN TEXTS: THE *MAZHAR-UL-ULOOM* & THE *TIBB-I-NABAWI*

Late 19th-century unani claimed religious practice with a vengeance. The Urdu medical writers did not come from the established families of hakims. They therefore looked for alternate symbols of authority. Their obvious choice was the person of the Prophet. His authority became the ultimate reference point of legitimacy for unani. And this was only practical. In the 19th-century, the heightened pilgrim traffic to cities closely associated with the life of the Prophet, Mecca and Medina, at one level increased the fear of disease as people were seen to carry infection as they travelled across long distances. But it also put the spotlight on his life and teachings and shifted popular attention to his medical experiences and ideas about illness. The shrine at Mecca—the Kaaba—and the fountain of holy water—*aab-i-zam zam*—had a dominant therapeutic narrative closely tied to the person of the Prophet and the history of Islam. Indian pilgrims to Mecca brought these stories home. They further popularized the belief in the Prophet's medicine. In 19th-century India the symbol of the Prophet was up for new interpretations by Muslim revivalists and reformers of all hues. They demythologized him and made him more approachable and familiar in the cast of an exemplary human being. Urdu texts on unani were also affected by this trend and added to the expanding genre of literature on the Prophet. And like the reformist literature they too used the Prophet's authority to negotiate colonial intrusions into the medical realm.

Unani more than ever before associated itself with the medicinal knowledge identified with the Prophet. Thus the belief in the medical knowledge associated with the Prophet,

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and a life patterned on his conduct with the significance of prayers (*dua*), diet, Islamic bodily deportment and moral and spiritual etiquette became central to unani. Unani had always seen its rationality sanctioned by the Prophet. In the late 19th-century it saw no contradiction between the Islamic prescriptive path to well-being and rational medical knowledge. Indeed, it saw medication as very much part of this Islamic notion of well-being. In this period many fresh texts exclusively on the Prophet's healing were penned by hakims. The home-grown Urdu texts of the late 19th-century made Prophetic medicine and its idea of well-being their major theme.

In 1869, Ikram al Din Hafiz, a practising hakim of Lucknow, wrote the *Tibb-i-Nabawi* and made a strong case for allying unani with Prophetic medicine. He made it more than clear that health was about moral, spiritual, psychological and physical well-being. His 54-page-long text stresses the critical importance of prayers (dua) and piety combined with medicine (*dawa*) to cure diseases as well as emotional conditions like anger. Forms of piety derive from Quranic injunctions and recitation of its holy verses. The sayings of Prophet Muhammad or his Hadith are the ultimate reference point of all suggested cures. The text prescribes an Islamic way of life as led by the Prophet as a guarantee of good health. The *Tibb-i-Nabawi* is critical of Greek physicians like Galen who followed Aristotle and frowned on the mixing of medicine with piety. The author categorically states that 'a person who does not know the effects of prayers (dua) on bodily health reflects his own foolishness' (*himaqat*). Yet, Hafiz does not completely dismiss the value of medication. He is critical of ulema that regard the taking of medicine as un-Islamic.

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Tibb-i-Nabawi set the trend. Soon many other hakims used the symbol of the Prophet to convert their medical experience to medical knowledge. Having achieved that, they moved on to embrace other dispersed authority referents like those of the Sufi and fakir healers as well.

In 1878 Ihsan Ali Khan the hakim (*tabeeb*) of Zillah Allahabad, wrote the *Tibb-i-Ihsaani*. Here, unani steers even further away from its 'secular' mechanistic stance as he sees illness in terms of the relationship between the body and the soul. Very much like the Sufi healing practices of medieval Islam and the Pietist ideas of 18th-century Europe, he too sees the body and the soul united in health with the soul controlling the body functions. And in his discussion on pharmacy and the making of medicine he does not confine himself to the Prophet's dietary regimen but clearly invokes what he calls the 'superstitious charms of fakirs' as well. Thus for instance, a *mongaa* (precious stone) when tied to the forehead helps in curing headache; the wearing of the Christian cross around the neck is also recommended for its healing qualities etc. He warns the public that such cures are integral to health and should not be dismissed as the superstitious charms of fakirs.

In the late 19th-century the culturally embracive arm of unani reached out also to the Persian norms of medical civility that still simmered in society. Medical texts modelled themselves on Mughal Persian manuscripts, which had stressed proper bodily deportment and aristocratic virtue as central to good health. Pandit Kaashi Nath's *Akhlaq-i-Kaashi* written in 1870 for the 'ordinary people' was one such text. *Akhlaq-i-Kaashi* belonged to the genre of polite literature on conduct and etiquette that characterized Persian literary culture. The text defines a perfect man (*kamal-i insaan*) as someone who is not only healthy but is complete with

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humility (*sharf-i insaan*) and has knowledge of the polite culture of moral self-improvement, etiquette and conduct (*ilm-i-tehzeeb-i-Akhlaq*). Very much like Islamic medical ethics the text projects the hakim as one such perfect man who can combine medical knowledge or learning (*quwwat ilmi*) with piety and moral conduct (*akhlaq*), and experience and practice (*quwwat amli*).

II

Urdu medical texts were debated in the public sphere created by the Urdu newspapers. The newspapers mirrored the ambiguities of society as it came to grips with the plurality of unani traditions, and knowledge systems that seemed uncontrollable by either the state or traditional families. They carried viewpoints on both the new futuristic as well as the old preservationist unani. And of course, the print capitalist Munshi Newal Kishore (1836–95), editor and proprietor of Lucknow's Urdu newspaper—the *Oudh Akhbar*—gave a voice to a range of unani traditions in his columns.

However, since its core readership was in the high echelons of society, it allowed the voice of the elite who supported traditional unani learning to loom over all the others. Indeed, Munshi Newal Kishore, a notable Khattri entrepreneur of Lucknow, himself belonged to this upper crust of society. The *Oudh Akhbar* thus became one important advocate of the old canonical unani that had the support of the elite.

The *Oudh Akhbar* published the views of the traditional scholastic hakims on the future of unani and projected them as public intellectuals. In the columns of the *Oudh Akhbar* the Muslim public intellectual reworked the global ideas of professionalisation, historicism and modernity—all associated

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with public health—from within his own tradition. He challenged the Euro-centric nature of these concepts by offering for them new definitions. He attempted to negotiate the tensions between new Urdu-based knowledge systems that were beyond the control of the scholastic family and state, and the more controllable medical wisdom or science that lay within the purview of the state and family control. For instance, professionalization of unani for the public intellectual meant freeing society from the clutches of the ill-trained Urdu-read hakims and the dispensaries that employed them. Professionalization meant proper state control of Unani: accountability, identification of 'proper' practitioners, formalization of the terms and conditions of their service, their representation in municipal boards, sanitary commissions and other government bodies and adequate financial inputs for Unani by the state. Professionalization was a strategy to streamline Unani, purge it of the Urdu-read newcomers and bring its core Arabic canon and its new scientific experiments to the notice of English medical practice. It was a strategy used by the well-heeled hakims to withdraw unani into the family fold and place it under the surveillance of the state.

The Muslim public intellectual grounded his demand for professionalization in a critique of Unani practice. Knowledge systems in Urdu that had spilt out of the control of the family and state were the obvious target of attack. These were represented in the practice of the new-style hakims. It was not the system of medicine that was at fault. It was the practitioner who needed to be reformed. Very much like the Arab writers of medieval medical deontology who complained about quacks and charlatans of their times, the Muslim public intellectual complained about the fall in the standards of professional ethics and the incompetence

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of the new hakims. Professionalization meant tighter state regulation of unani's public face: the practitioners, pharmacists and their clinics. This was the way the public could be best served. The *Oudh Akhbar* argued that the government needed to intervene to pull unani out of the hands of the new hakims so that it could serve the people better.

Second, the public intellectual while reaching out to state support to hit out at the in-house constituency of Urdu hakims, made a case for cannibalizing aspects of Western medicine like surgery. He argued that hakims trained in modern surgery techniques could compete better with doctors in finding employment in public health institutions. But again, he did not see this borrowing as emulating the scientific instrumentation of Western medicine. Instead, it was viewed as a way to embellish unani's own robust scientific tradition. He demanded that the state invest to reinforce this scientific core of unani. He saw the scientificity of unani as more relevant than that of the British because it had a history in Hindustan that went back to antiquity. Indeed he saw the unique modernity and scientificity of unani as located firmly within the geographical and territorial imaginary of Hindustan as carved out by the colonial state. However, he reconstituted within it a national space for unani through rewriting its history. This national space was a cultural imagery. The new history of unani located its core in Hindustan that was now seen as a distinct cultural space-locale. As the public intellectual mapped unani onto the imagined cultural space of the nation, he projected it as part of Indian tradition and culture. He contrasted this lofty status of unani with the mundane status of English medicine whose 'modernity' was located outside the cultural space of the nation. He argued that unani's distinctiveness lay in the

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fact that it had historical roots whereas Western modernity had no history or territoriality in Hindustan.

Thirdly, the public intellectual used the novel technique of the advertisement to balance the tension between the colonial medical space and the national space it had carved out for unani. He encouraged the Urdu press to advertise both colonial as well as unani medical pharmacies and practitioners. This created a vernacular public and used it to bring the two systems of medicine into interaction. The newspaper print culture thus located unani in a lively and vibrant public sphere where medical debates had the potential to spill into the political domain, but significantly, where also unani could underline its difference with Western medicine and yet demand equal participation in public health measures.

Thus the demands for a more active role in the state's public health institutions and inclusion in its regulations emanated from within the unani tradition and these shaped the public health measures of the Government. Of course, these emanated because of the in-house tensions in unani and the contest for control of knowledge that they triggered. And this lent public health concepts like modernization, professionalization and state regulation a very different meaning as far as the hakims were concerned. However, it was this enormous turmoil in north Indian society, as reflected in the developments within unani medicine, and not a heavy-fisted state that defined Indian support or resistance to Western medicine.

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The custodians of Deoband adapted themselves to the changes brought about by the new world order under colonialism. With the changes being too profound to be addressed by patchwork arrangements, Maulana Sindhi, who was a cleric and exposed to the dynamics of world politics, worked to rehabilitate the assimilative and pragmatic character of Islam. He recognized social justice as a fundamental value of Islam which could enable an individual's spiritual fulfilment. He had a pluralistic vision and sought to bring about harmony among disparate elements through his progressive outlook.

12

The Tradition of Deoband and the Pragmatism of Ubaid Allah Sindhi

NASEER AHMAD HABIB

At the dawn of the 19th-century the Muslim community was confronted with the challenge of Western domination. This challenge reached its culmination in India in 1857. Passing through this challenge the Muslim community lost its cohesiveness and intellectual integration. As a result, one of the disciples of Mawlana Mumluke Ali brought the Arabic part of Delhi College to Deoband and another pupil, Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, took its English section to Aligarh. In fact, the establishment of Deoband was an important event in the history of Indian Muslims. It not only linked them with their own past but also provided them a

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bastion from which to cope with the new world order. Deoband was not only a madrasa but a movement. It was a movement to divert the outside *jihad* inward. In fact, the Muslim clergy had realized that in the absence of political power every Muslim was bound to share the responsibility. For this purpose religious knowledge was a prerequisite. Therefore, a madrasa was established for the dissemination of religious education. It can be said that Deoband was only one expression of that movement which has been mentioned by Metcalf as a movement of interiorization, which started in the early 18th-century in the Islamic world. The religious clergy, under the pressure, seems to have found its solution in the religious realm. A particular response was given and particular mode was adopted.

'This mode which traverses Islamic history is defined in terms of such themes as the need to abide by the Quran and Sunnah, return to origins, revival of *ijtehad* and Hadith studies, rejection of innovation and imitation (*taqlid*) in matters of law, and rejection of Sufiism.'[1] This general tenor expressed itself in various forms in different parts of the Islamic world. 'These various eighteenth-century movements assumed varying forms depending on local conditions and the personalities of the leaders.[2] Muslim clergy, panicked by the political chaos, seems to have taken refuge in fundamental sources, the Quran and Hadith. Shah Wali Allah was also moved by the current of thought and stood for reformation but adopted the method suited to his genius. He was not ready to abandon the writings of the *imams* of the law schools in this venture.

Shah Wali Allah adopted a conciliatory approach due to his particular background. Shah Wali Allah's father and uncle were inspired by the philosophy of Ibn Arabi but they were also admirers of Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi. Therefore their

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major concern was to harmonize two philosophies. Apart from that they were also interested in finding such a point of unity where the specialists of different schools of thought could be united. Shah Wali Allah inherited that approach from his father and uncle. When Shah Wali Allah went to *hijaz* for the study of Hadith, he was introduced to Shaykh Abu Tahir Madni.

Shah Wali Allah was advised by Shah Abu Tahir to reconcile the apparent difference of opinions on the comprehensive personality of the Holy Prophet. Motivated by this approach Shah Wali Allah attemted to find points of unity between the two schools of thought. He found these two schools of thought emerging from the basis of Muwtta Imam Malik's ideas; while the approach of Ummar, the second caliph, served as the quintessential inspiration behind the jurisprudence of Imam Malik.[3] Shah Wali Allah was also motivated by the same stimuli but his venture of going towards fundamentals was not at the expense of the different schools of Fiqh, which was the idiosyncrasy of the Wahhabi movement. He was ready to accept the writings of imams but in the light of Hadith. Therefore he was in favour of ijtehad. It seems that as time passed clergy abandoned the methodology of Shah Wali Allah. Personalities became so relevant that Sayyid Ahmad Shaheed refused to take the oath of allegiance to his spiritual mentor 'Shah Abdul Aziz, and Shah Abdul Hayy admonished his spiritual mentor Sayyid Ahmad Shahid for coming late for Morning Prayer. Shah Wali Allah's journey towards fundamentals was based on the principle of finding unity in diversity.

But this creative approach of Shah Wali Allah was given up under the severe challenge of imperialism. In fact the debacle of Delhi was similar to the sack of Baghdad. Therefore the founders of Deoband, panicked by the deluge

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of British domination, seemed to have jumped through the arch of their cherished world with fundamental sources in their hands. Their major concern was to save their heritage. Apart from that Muslim society was also in a state of shock due to the impact of the colonial challenge. Therefore the 'this worldly' approach of the founders of Deoband seems to have plucked at the heartstrings. As mentioned by Barbara Metcalf, 'The effectiveness of Deoband was judged to rest in their synthesis of the two main streams of the Islamic tradition, that of intellectual learning and that of spiritual experience.'[4] In fact through its mystic approach the Deobandi strand absorbed the shock suffered by the Muslim community after the debacle of 1857. This shock was so overwhelming that the Ashraf (elite) started thinking about migration. Some like Haji Imdad Ullah actually migrated to Hijaz (Land of the Holy Prophet). The success of Deoband lies in the fact that it re-directed people's thinking of physical migration into intellectual migration towards basic sources and to the Personality of the Holy Prophet. Therefore Hadith gained extraordinary importance. According to Metcalf, 'Rashid Ahmad rarely cited works of Fiqh, but on a matter of controversy he would provide relevant citations of hadith or Quran.'[5]

Deoband proved a springboard for the subsequent Islamic movement. It can be said that Mawlana Mawdudi's Jamaat-e-Islami and Tablighi Jamaat were indebted to Deoband. Interestingly Mawlana Mawdudi's Jamaat Islami seems to have adopted the Holy Prophet's Madina period as a role model, whereas Tablighi Jamaat seems to have adopted the Makkah period. Apart from that, some individuals like Shabir Ahmad Uthmani and Hussain Ahmad Madni opted for a different political line of action, keeping their Deobandi characteristics intact. In this way the Deobandi strand was

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able to adjust to motley approaches. Shah Wali Allah's addressees were the elite; Sayyid Ahmad Shahid organized the middle class; but under the Deoband movement, this worldly approach and revivalist zeal percolated to the lower classes and under its impact the 'high Islamic tradition is steadily eating into local custom-centred tradition'. Their ranks are continuously being swelled by those Western-educated elements that have become disenchanted with the performance of secular leadership due to its moral bankruptcy.

DEOBAND AND PUBLIC LIFE

But when the Deobandi strand encountered the dynamics of modern age, it seems to have faltered. The result depended on the *ulama*'s perceptions about the changes. The ulama of Deoband bureaucratized the institution. They used the print media and brought about a revolution in the availability of Islamic knowledge, but to save their cherished heritage they did not develop a basis from the inside to adjust to new institutions. According to their perception it was a transitional period. They believed that when the deluge of British imperialism receded they would be able to implement their old legal and social system with all its concomitants. According to them nothing was changeable in their system.

Most ulama are interested in creating an island within a modern state rather than invoking ijtehad. The Deobandi strand has not dealt with the new challenges sufficiently and there appears ambivalence in their approach. The modern state brought with it new institutions like the banking system and system of taxation. But the *zakat* is the only tax imposed

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by the Quran. 'Since the economy in which it was conceived and to which it was applied was a predevelopment economy, it was conceived as a wealth tax on the surplus and hoarded wealth of a person.'[6] But keeping in view the rise in government spending, its base should be extended and its rates should be re-fixed. However, when this suggestion was posited by an enlightened scholar, Fuzlur Rahman, ulama were shocked. The Deobandi strand coped with the situation of British India successfully. Now they are expected to continue their creative role to become a viable part of the world instead of secluding themselves in their nostalgic world. In this regard, 'W. Montgomery Watt lists five features of the Islamic self-image that he argues need to be changed if Muslims are to become part of the one world instead of secluding themselves in medieval fortress mentality. The first is the belief that the world is unchanging and static, or rather that human society has not advanced since the time of Muhammad. In essential, there can be no new problems—and by implication—no new solution ... Next, this unchanging of human nature justifies the Muslim scholar in asserting the finality of the rules and laws for human conduct contained in the Quran and Sunnah. Third, Islam is entirely self sufficient...it works against Muslims' ability to learn from the West in areas other than the purely technological. Fourth, the majority of Muslims lack historical awareness... Most continue to expect that Islam should expand to include the whole human race, and they continue to view the world through the prism of the dichotomy between Darul Islam and Darul-Harb. That is, most Muslims continue to see the non-Muslim world as inherently hostile to Islam... Finally... Muslims have sometimes wrongly understood the Quran, and are idealizing not the earliest Islam as it really was, but as it was alleged to have been by

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later scholars, ...he (Watt) ...discusses economic policy, the rights of women, and human rights as areas in which the idealization of early Islam and the failure to implement Islamic principles rationally have resulted in severe injustices.'[7] We don't think that Watt's suggestions should be adopted without any scrutiny and modification; however he does raise some pertinent problems which must be resolved for the peaceful existence of the Islamic world as a viable part of the polity of nations. For this purpose it is necessary to deconstruct that legal and social superstructure which was built on the basis of Islam in the medieval period and which has become redundant in the modern age. It is interesting to note that unconsciously reformers and revivalists seem to have moved in this direction. W.C. Smith mentioned that Sir Syed Ahmad was interested in 'moral aspects of Islam rather than its legal aspect'.[8] And among the revivalists some like Tablighi Jamaat seem to have concentrated on the Makkah period as a role model. Under the same influence some dynamic Islamic thinkers like Abul Husan Nadwi seem to have perceived Islam not as a system but as a message. But is there anyone who has taken this venture consciously? When we turn towards the Deoband milieu we see that it has not disappointed us altogether.

PRAGMATISM OF UBAID ALLAH SINDHI

Mawlana Ubaid Allah Sindhi (1872–1944) emerged more like unexpected thunder than as forecasted rain on the intellectual horizon. His emergence is proof of the fact that the old system of education, with its integrated worldview, has the potential to produce creative and original thinkers. Mawlana Sindhi's guiding light was Shah Wali Allah. Why

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did Shah Wali Allah attract him? Because Shah Wali Allah was given special training by his father Shah Abdul Rahim in order to harmonize the injunctions of Sharia with principles of rationality.[9] Shah Wali Allah inherited this tradition and having written *Hujjat Allah Baligha*, contributed a lot. Muhammad Qasim instilled this tradition of rationality at Deoband and Mawlana Sindhi inherited the tradition through his teacher Sheikh ul Hind. In 1905 the leadership of Deoband had passed to Sheikh ul Hind. The period from 1905 to 1915 when he moved to Hijaz, was a very critical time in the life of Muslim community. In 1908 Sheikh ul Hind appointed Mawlana Sindhi to organize Jamiat ul Ansar. Mawlana Sindhi became very active at that time. But some elements at Deoband were watching these activities with suspicion. They not only informed the authorities but also hatched a conspiracy to have Mawlana Sindhi removed. Therefore Mawlana Sindhi, in accordance with the instruction of Sheikh ul Hind, went to Delhi where he established an institution named Nazarat ul Moarif in 1912. The purpose of starting this institution was to acquaint the Western-educated youth with the philosophy of the teachings of the Holy Quran. In the meantime the First World War broke out. Sheikh ul Hind wanted to seize this opportunity and sent Mawlana Sindhi to Kabul in order to provoke the Afghan king Habibullah Khan to attack India. Mawlana Sindhi struggled for seven years. Having realized his motives, the next Afghan king Umanullah Khan stopped Mawlana Sindhi from continuing his activities. Mawlana Sindhi realized how amorphous was the basis of pan-Islamism. Since the times of Sayyid Ahmad Bareily pan-Islamism had been the rallying point of Indian Muslims. Mawlana Sindhi decided to move away from this romanticism. In fact he passed through a phase of interiorization. He carried on

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the study of *Hujjat Allah Baligha* (the book written by Shah Wali Allah) in order to come out of this quagmire. Soon after, Mawlana Sindhi had to move from Kabul to Moscow.

MAWLANA SINDHI'S INTELLECTUAL VENTURE

Mawlana Sindhi's migration from Kabul to Moscow was actually of a fundamental nature. It was a shift from pan-Islamism to nationalism, from nostalgia to pragmatism, from exclusivism to inclusivism. In this venture Mawlana Sindhi followed almost the same pattern, with small variations, that had been adopted by most revivalists and reformers alike so far. The pattern is:

1. **Negation:** refusal to accept the existing Islam as true Islam.
2. **Selection:** after disowning some practices or portions of Islamic history as true Islam, a reformer or revivalist selects some beliefs or period of Islamic history as the embodiment and manifestation of true Islam.
3. **Extension:** reconstructing and extending sacred history into contemporary history.

When Mawlana Sindhi was forced to leave Kabul, it was the most difficult time for him. But when he reached Russia and observed the zeal of the Russian people, he was amazed at how quickly the efforts to organize people on the basis of socialist ideology had met with success. When he compared the Russian revolution with the heyday of Islam—when Islam had brought about a revolution by destroying the imperial power of Iran and Rome—he came to the conclusion that there must have been some similarities in the objectives of the two revolutions. He says, 'I came to understand that Islam in its early period had brought about a similar revolution in

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which the Russians were now engaged. And the Holy Quran is the book of an identical revolution of the history of mankind.' (Mawlana Sindhi propounded that verses of the Quran should be studied on the basis of the order of their revelation rather than compilation, so as to understand their proper context and their true intention.)[10] 'I was fortunate enough in finding Shah Wali Allah, by whom I had been greatly inspired, offering similar exposition of the Holy Quran.'[11] In the light of his reading he started denying what existed in the name of Islam. He says, 'The toy houses you have built and which you consider sky-high cannot withstand the challenge of the time. Your civilization, society, thought and politics have become spineless. You call it Islamic civilization—it does not contain an iota of Islam.'[12] Having denied existing Islam as true Islam, he entered into the phase of selection. Here he exhibits an idiosyncrasy of approach in his process of selection. Iqbal held the non-Arab and classical approach responsible for this defection and wanted to go back to the pristine period of Islam; according to Muhammad Qasim, founder of Deoband, the world had dramatically declined from the time of the Holy Prophet; and some modern Iranian thinkers held the Umayyad period responsible for this defection. Mawlana Sindhi had a different view. He says, 'To do so is tantamount to negating Islamic history. During the Umayyad period Muslim civilization and society was considerably influenced by the elements of Syrian, Christian and Jewish thought. During the Abbasid Period, Iranian civilization and literature and Greek philosophy and logic greatly influenced the Muslim society. Through these very sources Muslim mysticism, scholasticism and philosophy were nourished. And in this way non-Arabs rendered great services to Islam. In India, Hindu thought greatly whetted Muslim philosophy

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and culture. It is strange that the Arab period of Islamic history has been considered sacred while Iranian, Turkish and Indian periods have been taken for times of degeneration. Whereas in the view of the Universal revolution of Islam all these periods are successive stages of the Islamic onward march. To adopt the complexion of nationalism at certain stages of Islamic revolution was a natural phenomenon. Unfortunately Iqbal could not realize the successive natural stages of evolution of Islamic history.'[13]

Here Mawlana Sindhi seems to have recognized Islam as an assimilative force and wanted to rehabilitate that assimilative character of Islam in order to incorporate the idea of nationalism into the existing Islamic paradigm. Having been exposed to the dynamics of international politics he was able to discern the fallacy of the idea of pan-Islamism. He came to the conclusion that new changes should be welcomed. He says, 'We should accept our defeat and we should chalk out a new strategy to cope with the present situation. Now the dream that we had been cherishing all along to establish Muslim rule in India with help of the Turkish Khilafat has obviously come to nothing. It is the age of establishing national government. Now we should lay the foundation of new society and in order to realize this end we should look for new avenues in accordance with prevailing situation. Now instead of religion the state should be organized on the basis of nationalism.'[14]

When he found some Indian students were being influenced by the socialist ideology in Russia he concluded that this ideology was bound to prevail in the future. He became active and keeping in view the assimilative character of Islam he quickly started the intellectual spadework in order to introduce a socialist economic programme into the Islamic system of thought. He found Shah Wali Allah

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pointing out certain evils prevalent in the Byzantium and Persian imperialistic societies that were similar to the evils of Russian imperialism at the time of Tsar. And he read that according to Shah Wali Allah one of the objectives of the advent of the Holy Prophet was to emancipate the working classes from the exploitation of Byzantium and Persian imperialism. He studied the works of Shah Wali Allah and found some basis for his venture. 'Wali Allah's views on Islam as Universal religion and law are interesting. When God wanted to raise the Final Prophet, the central region of the earth was occupied by the two tottering and morally spent empires of Byzantium and Persia. The destruction of these two empires was the necessary and logical end and fulfilment of Muhammad's mission...'[15] Due to this kind of progressive tinge in his thought Shah Wali had been a guiding light for Mawlana Sindhi. He, addressing the meeting of Ulama of Bengal on 3 June 1946, said, 'In my opinion, among the Hindu, Muslim and Sikh communities there is no dearth of such scholars who can justifiably develop a correlation between the spirit of their respective religions and European economy. In this way, they will be able to awaken the masses quickly. But introducing the religious symbolism in the fabric of the national movement, even if it has good intentions at its back, will not save the country from devastation.'[16]

In this background there were two problems Mawlana Sindhi was confronted with. How could the socialist programme be included in the Islamic system of thought without compromising the fundamental postulate of faith? And how could the basis developed within the Islamic tradition welcome not only the socialist programme but also its concomitants? Shah Wali Allah gave him some clue to solving this dilemma. Shah Wali Allah considered social institutions the basis of man's spiritual growth. In his view, as

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long as these social institutions were not properly organized and economic, political and social affairs were not adequately managed it would be impossible for man to attain the higher stages in the spiritual realm.'[17]

From this Mawlana Sindhi infers that one of the objectives of the advent of Islam was to emancipate the oppressed classes from the clutches of tyrannical rule. This principle became the focal point of his activity and around which he tried to build his social and economic system of thought based on the socialist ideology. Besides, that Mawlana Sindhi was also aware of the fact that the injunctions of Sharia would be irrelevant in the modern age. Fazlur Rahman, who seems to have been impressed by Mawlana Sindhi, discussed this problem in these words: 'The new forces have an ethic of their own and simply to return to the past is certainly no way to solve this problem—unless we want to delude ourselves. But recourse to the Quran and Sunnah in order to get there from an understanding of, and guidance for, solving our new problems will undoubtedly meet the situation. This is because the Quran and the Prophet's activity guided and were actually involved in society building. Besides, therefore, certain general principles that lie enunciated in the Quran and certain Prophetic precepts, their actual handling of social situations is fraught with meaning for us. But the meaning is not that we should repeat that very situation now, which is an absurd task, but rather to draw lessons from this concrete historic paradigm.'[18] According to Shah Wali Allah, the teachings of the Holy Prophet have two aspects, permanent and temporary. The basic thing which is important is the fundamental Islamic principles, not their particular application. What was unique in Shah Wali Allah and which had inspired Mawlana Sindhi was his perception that the Prophet had not been entirely inconsistent with

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the traditions and customs of the society in which he was born.[19] Shah Wali Allah took a revolutionary step and said, 'Besides the injunctions should not be strictly imposed on coming generations.'[20] Mawlana Sindhi's pragmatic mind was attracted towards this and he suggested a reasonable and practical way out: 'I consider the penal injunction laid down by the Holy Quran and the way in which certain administrative, social and economic matters have been defined and determined are not final and unalterable. They are just practical modes since the general and all-embracing guidance of the Holy Quran could be manifested only in that manner at that time and it was. Now they are the legal precedents for us and keeping them in view and in the light of the everlasting and universal wisdom of the Holy Quran, we can form new laws in every age.' In fact, according to Mawlana Sindhi, 'we are entering into the industrial age and we have no recourse other than to join the march. We cannot survive as stragglers. We have to give up enmity of the West. We should learn and take benefit from the intellectual treasurehouse of the West.'[21]

Subsequent events have proved the rationale of Mawlana Sindhi's vision. The Muslim world has assimilated the West but it did not do so as an active force but as a passive entity due to its irrational approach and intransigent behaviour. In fact, this is the illusion which the Muslim world has been harbouring for a long time—that West is incapable of solving its moral and social problems. A few scholars in the Islamic world have been able to appreciate the view that has been referred to by Toynbee regarding the moral superiority of the West.[22] Muslim revivalists don't seem to have realized this fact. It is a dangerous trend because in the Muslim world secular forces are losing ground to Islamic fundamentalists. Therefore a clash may be imminent. But the problem is

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rooted in the tradition of exclusivism. Now we see the solution Mawlana Sindhi offers for this problem in order to make Muslim world a viable part of the polity of nations. Mawlana Sindhi, addressing the meeting of Jamiyat al Ulamia Hind (Bengal) on 3 June 1939, said, 'We should take much benefit from the prevalent British System of Government by discarding the enmity of the West... We have stopped our way of progress due to our hateful attitude towards the West... This should be ended... We need a social revolution so that our country can play a role in the international movements...'[23]

Having passed through the two phases—'negation' and 'selection'—Mawlana Sindhi entered into the third phase of extension—to reconstruct and extend sacred history into contemporary history. Having accepted the emancipation of humanity from the clutches of tyrannical rule as one of the objectives of Islam, Mawlana Sindhi changed the terminology about Kufro-Islam (Being Muslim or Non-Muslim). He says, 'Therefore the people who are fighting against imperialism along with us, irrespective of their religious affiliation, will be considered our comrades and will not be labelled as infidels by us and those who give their support to imperialism, even if they are Muslims, we will not be ready to call them Muslims. And those who are not adherents of any religion but are fighting against imperialism side-by-side with us, will be our comrades.'[24] In this way Mawlana Sindhi wants to include those people in the realm of Islam who are ready to cooperate with Muslims for a noble cause, irrespective of their religious affiliation. It is a bold and enlightened-step. According to Mawlana Sindhi only those people can be labelled as irreligious who have no noble ideals before them to realize, who don't believe in any moral

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values, and who simply live to satisfy their carnal and material desires.[25]

According to Mawlana Sindhi, the Quran declares only those persons as infidels (kafir) who take life as a sport and who have no serious objectives before them. It is interesting to note that modern Iranian reformers followed almost the same line as Mawlana Sindhi did. They also passed through the phases of negation and selection. Whereas Iranian revivalists remained successful, as they were able to redefine their role model, Mawlana Sindhi could not do so. This might be the drawback of the Sunni world that considers seizure of political authority by a usurper a rightful act. Mawlana Sindhi remained busy supplying a basis from within Islamic sources for modern institutions. Mawlana Sindhi's preoccupation with this venture shows that he was more aware than Iqbal regarding the dynamics of modern capitalist society. According to him traditional Islam could not withstand the flux of modern age. Once he said to Dr Zakir Hussain, Head of Jamia Milliyya, 'Dr Sahib I want to make it clear...in my opinion if fifty per cent European thought comes anywhere our traditional Islam does not remain effective there.'[26] On the other hand Iqbal used to present his ideas with out keeping in view the dynamics of capitalist society. As W.C. Smith observed, 'Of Iqbal we can say that he himself was unable to see the full implications of his thought partly because he was not an economist and partly because of his natural prejudice in favour of the traditional Platonic Ideas.'[27]

But Mawlana Sindhi's involvement with intellectual work led him to make the same mistake as committed by Al-Frabi and Ibn Sina. As Fazlur Rahman mentioned, 'They do not realize that religio-moral experience, although it certainly has a cognitive element, radically differs from other forms

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of cognition in the sense that it is full of authority, meaning and imperiousness for the subject whereas ordinary form of cognition is simply informative.'[28] Neither could Mawlana Sindhi like Sir Syed Ahmad Khan win the support of the masses with his intellectual wonder, nor was he able to redefine the role models to motivate the masses. It was a major flaw in his programme.

However, Mawlana Sindhi does not stand as an iconic tower separated from the main process of intellect-building on the basis of the moral principles of Islam in order to meet the challenges of modern age; rather he is a part of that process. He has left a deep impression on Fazlur Rahman, Hafiz ur Rahman Sihwarwi, Jafar Shah Phulwari and Ghulam Ahmad Pervez. He was a torch-bearer of that movement which was initiated by Shah Wali Allah in order to bridge the gap between rationality and revelation. Shah Wali Allah also considered social justice a prerequisite for the establishment of a spiritual society. Mawlana Sindhi adopted this approach and considered the establishment of a society based on social justice as a fundamental objective of Islam. Mawlana Sindhi passed on this tradition to the next generation. Therefore we find echoes of Mawlana Sindhi's thought in the works of Fazlur Rahman. He (Fazlur Rahman) says, 'We have seen that the supreme value in the Islamic social message is adequate social justice. When violation of this value occurs to the extent that these very individual freedoms become inoperative and dead, then the principle of social justice and interference in private wealth must take over.'[29]

Mawlana Sindhi wanted to initiate the process of ijtehad and ijma. According to him the intentions and objectives of Islam 'are described in the Ayas of the Quran that revealed in the Makkah period and these intentions are formulated

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in the Madinah period. Therefore keeping in view these intentions and meaning we can formulate new laws according to the needs and demands of our time.'[30] Fazlur Rahman picked up Mawlana Sindhi's point of view. In-fact Mawlana Sindhi's work did serve as a stepping-stone for Fazlur Rahman's neo-modernism, 'in which all the specific cases in Quran and the Sunnah would be in effect converted into moral principles. The specific cases would be studied in the light of their context to see what moral principles they exemplify and it is these principles that would be considered authoritative.'[31] The way that has been suggested by Fazlur Rahman is the most suitable to rehabilitate Islamic history in the modern world. By restoring proper Islamic motivation we can cope with the factor of that moral flaw in the Muslim world, which has led sociologists and economists—generally Western—to an awareness that the intangible human element with its moral factors may be important.[32] In this way we can build a basis for modern institutions.

When Mawdudi and Khumayni proposed to vest the Islamic head of state or Islamic state with extraordinary power, they must at the same time have been aware of the demands of the dynamics of the modern age. But the methodology of Mawlana Sindhi and Fazlur Rahman seems more plausible. W. Montgomery Watt, in his book *Islamic Fundamentalism and Modernity*, discusses the ideas of two contemporary thinkers whose work demonstrates a mature approach to the need to reform and rethink the Islamic worldview—the late Fazlur Rahman and Mohammad Arkoun.[33] It is a tribute to Ubaid Allah Sindhi and Deoband. And the Muslim community seems to discover its comprehensive soul that was lost in the debacle of 1857.

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NOTES

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We may not have it in our power to "begin the world again", as Thomas Paine declared in 1776, but we can provide an adequate language for understanding the 21st century and decide for ourselves the importance of living together, understanding each other, and interpreting each other's lifestyle and value systems.

13

Pluralism on Trial

MUSHIRUL HASAN

No one can fathom the mystery of another person.
Each individual in the world is like an undeciphered manuscript.[1]

Seldom is one allowed to see a pageant of history whirl past, and partake in it too. Ever since becoming the capital in the early thirteenth century, imbibing knowledge and ideas and imparting cultures, becoming homogeneous and cosmopolitan in spite of the origins and ethnicity of its rulers and inhabitants, [Delhi] had remained the embodiment of a whole country, free of the creedal ghosts and apparitions that haunt some of modern India's critics and bibliographers chased by the dead souls of biased historians of yesterday.[2]

Long ago, the British Orientalist H.A.R. Gibb (1895–1971) discussed 'the atomism, the discreteness, and the intensity of the Arab imagination, its resistance to synthetic constructions and, above all, its aversion to rationalism'.[3] His conception of the 'Arab imagination' is untenable, for the

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reformist and traditionalist strands are so mingled that any period in history must be considered and judged as a whole. This is best illustrated by the expression of deep-seated convictions by sections of the Muslim intelligentsia in 19th-century Delhi. Even though 1857 left indelible scars and ruins and the best men were seized with despair, the second half of the 19th century appears to be fairly creative in the evolution, articulation, and dissemination of 'modernist' thinking. While the cramped sphere in which its proponents moved stifled intellectual activism, the historian must recognize that it was due to them, and to their impressive scholarly output, that upper India's Muslim communities, notably in Punjab and UP, were held together.

The noteworthy point is that there was amongst them, with the notable exception of Hali and a few other writers, no quest for a lost or submerged past, whose ideal images and exemplars would serve as prototypes and models for social and cultural innovation. Whether it is the poet Ghalib or the historian Zakaullah, there is no attempt to establish the Mughal glory of the past to evoke in Muslims a parochial consciousness. Instead, they explained the reasons for Europe's strength to demonstrate that Muslims could adopt European concepts and methods without being untrue to their faith. They stubbornly maintained, while exalting the place of reason and freedom in Islam, that true Islam teaches the family virtues, the application of reason, and true equality. So they argued that it was important to restore the rights, not of an outward and fossilized orthodoxy, but of the inward reason of Islam, and to reaffirm Islam's social values and cultural ideals in a world in which science and technology progressed. This could be done in such a way as to build a stable society endowed with a vigorous social order capable of playing an active and constructive role.

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The breadth of their appeal lay in their ability to reflect the aspirations of their time, as much as of their own people, and to speak in their own terms, both to the Urdu readers in their thousands and to the Western-educated elites of the cities.

Let us consider for a moment the kind of intellectual temper and inclinations that were widely diffused through the vast corpus of Urdu literature that Delhi alone produced.

There is no consensus on defining modernism, a term used by Muslim thinkers such as Muhammad Abduh and Western scholars like C.C. Adams and Gibb, or on delineating sharply the contours of a 'modern' way of life. Part of the problem lies in the philosophical predilections of those who regard themselves as *islahi* or modernists, their difficulty in seeing their own time in historical perspective, and the complexity of disentangling reform issues from the community's political entanglements and preferences. Under the circumstances, our protagonists' point of view, even when they rallied ordinary citizens to the banner of civic engagement to promote the public good, suffers from ambiguities. This is the burden of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan's arguments;[4] in fact, there are certain respects in which his own stance, a hybrid of liberalism and reform, is avowedly elitist, authoritarian and indifferent to even friendly censure. Yet he and his colleagues, though maligned as apostates or unbelievers by some, read the signs of the times, and used their sound critical judgment with a nice historical sense. They moved with the times, uncontrolled by theology, attacked the mumbo-jumbo of Muslim theologians, nurtured a moral and transcendental vision of Islam, and responded to the conditions of modern life with a strong universalistic component in defining the Indian Muslim.

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I shall not enlarge upon this question, as I have dealt with it elsewhere in the context of Awadh's *qasbas*.[5]

In another work,[6] we have discussed certain prominent figures whose achievement differed so widely. They range from people like Sir Syed, who moved heaven and earth to convince his community of the importance of Western education; to historians like Zakaullah; to novelists like Nazir Ahmad; to writers like Hali; and to poets like Ghalib. While none of them achieved quite the recognition or gained quite the lustre that surrounded their counterparts in other regions, their scholarly output was indeed impressive, and of some originality. Without being reformers of the type who go to the stake for their convictions, they each significantly affected the thoughts, feelings, and actions of a significant number of people in north India. In fact, even though historians have showed Syed Ahmad, Ghalib, Zakaullah, Nazir and Hali a condescension they do not deserve, they stand as principled, conscientious individuals with the promise and perils of a new colonial modernity.

Broadly speaking, each of them was different from the others in their background, thinking and aims. In the final reckoning, though, the spirit of Delhi's renaissance was present in each of them. When placed side by side, they appear to be in tune with the newer tendencies, not out of sympathy with them. Yielding to necessity and pointing to how 1857 brought the Muslim communities to the precipice, they engaged with changing Muslim attitudes towards modern education, reforming the Muslims from within, and creating a viable moral structure to fortify their confidence in their heritage, their present and their future. Despite being sometimes vague and evasive in their recommendations, they were strongly and consistently wedded to the ideals of abnegation, self-sacrifice and service,

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the basis of *adab*, a complex word encompassing literary taste and social decorum.

What legacy did such men leave behind? What was the impact of their main beliefs and their general outlook on life? To this, the answer is many-sided. In the first place, moderation was an essential part of their outlook and without it they would not have survived. Their type of devotion was therefore well fitted to become the model for thinkers and reformers and publicists whose members were increasing rapidly in the early 20th century.

If we regard Muhammad Iqbal, the 20th-century poet-philosopher, as their most prominent interlocutor, it will not take long to discover that some of his ideas represent not only a departure from the traditional methodological prescriptions but also contravene his previously declared principles. At the same time it is hard to dispute his stature or to deny his role as one of the key exponents of the most sweeping modernist reformulation of Islamic doctrine. Besides elaborating and refining Syed Ahmad's views on *ijtehad* or interpretation, he talked of *ijma* or consensus, one of the bases (*usul*) of the Islamic religious law, to revive and give the legal system an evolutionary character, and stated that 'the claim of the present generation of Muslim liberals to reinterpret the foundational legal principles, in the light of their own experience and the altered conditions of modern life, is, in my opinion, perfectly justified'.[7] Author of the chronogram inscribed on Syed Ahmad's tomb in the University mosque at Aligarh, Iqbal set its great reformer apart 'as probably the first modern Muslim to catch a glimpse of the positive character of the age which was coming'. According to him,

> The real greatness of the man consists in the fact that he was the first Indian Muslim who felt the need of a fresh

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orientation of Islam and worked for it. We may differ from his religious views, but there can be no denying the fact that his sensitive soul was the first to react to the modern age.[8]

In like manner, Nazir Ahmad and Ameer Ali shared certain views on polygamy, divorce and widow remarriage. They shed disquieting light on the seclusion of women, and on their soul-destroying burdens of joyless domesticity. Ameer Ali held that the Prophet secured to women rights they had not previously possessed,[9] and that he restrained polygamy by limiting the maximum number of contemporaneous marriages to four. He regarded polygamy not only as 'an unendurable evil', but hoped that a general synod of Muslim doctors would declare the practice, like slavery, as abhorrent to Islam.[10] He drew comfort from the 95 men out of every 100 Indian Muslims who were monogamists, either by conviction or necessity, to conclude that polygamy did not find much favour among the educated classes.[11]

Purdah retarded Muslim advancement, observes Ameer Ali.[12] But this British-trained lawyer and jurist lapses into the familiar apologetic tone and rhetorical device with the remark that purdah had many advantages for the 'unsettled and uncultured communities'.[13] In the same narrative, though, he points out that, 'to suppose that he [the Prophet] ever intended his recommendation should assume its present inelastic form, or that he ever allowed or enjoined the seclusion of women, is wholly contrary to the spirit of his reforms'. He concludes with the rhetorical flourish: 'The Koran itself affords no warrant for holding that the seclusion of women is a part of the new gospel.'[14] The truth of the matter is simple: in general, Muslim

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reformers wanted to unveil women's minds without unveiling their faces.[15]

Although Ameer Ali did not strike a responsive note in the heart of his generation, for he was a Shia and that too an anglicized one, his arguments are far more advanced, if not progressive, than Syed Ahmad's stance on Muslim women's education or Iqbal's denunciation of the modern Western woman as heartless and devoid of womanhood.[16] What is more, their followers construed the views of these two men, especially during the high noon of the Pakistan movement in the 1940s, in an anti-rational direction.[17] Even though some adamantly hold the opinion that amid the ups and downs of politics Iqbal's 'politics-mongering followers' distorted his perspectives, the crux of the problem, one that confronted the Muslim modernists generally, is their inability to formulate a basic synthetic attitude and resolve the contradictions between things 'Islamic' and otherwise. Shibli Numani mentioned this, though in general terms, while speaking at the Aligarh College in 1913.[18] A year earlier, he had been more explicit at his home turf in Nadwat al-ulama, when he told the assembled:

> If we remain inflexible in our attitudes rigidly and adhere to taqlid [blind adherence] (*taqlid-i jamud*), we will be destroyed. In our trying times, we will not be able to compete with any one. Hence, we must take into account the changes in the world and, accordingly, the demands of religion. [We have] to consider the resources we can marshal to meet the requirements of the faith.[19]

The tension between the position of Iqbal, Ameer Ali, and the neo-modernists and that of the religious orthodoxy assumed, for the most part, different forms in different periods. Yet, common to their basic predicament was to decide what elements in the history of Islam they should

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emphasize and re-combine for an effective self-statement to the existing challenges; what they should modify and what they should reject.[20] Despite anxious heart-searching, reformers and thinkers like Syed Ahmad and Iqbal found it extremely tricky to make their mind up. This, in part, explains their ambivalence on the status of Muslim women.

However dynamic his outlook on life might have been, in the female question Syed Ahmad's remained bound to a very narrow interpretation of the Quran and not even shared the modernist view according to which polygamy is regarded as permitted only under the condition that the man treats his wives with complete equality, i.e. as an implicit order for monogamy; nor has he ever mentioned the view launched by Syed Ameer Ali and his followers that Islam has freed the weaker sex and has given her a most exquisite rank in the society which could be proved by the long lists of ladies who played a leading role in the religious or cultural life since the beginnings of Islam.[21]

Unlike Turkish and Egyptian educators who placed changing the status, education and roles of women at the core of national advancement,[22] their Indian counterparts did not have the same degree of commitment. This is not all. Even when explored through the prism of nationalist educational discourses in other regions of India, notably Bengal and Maharashtra, one does not see the intersection of educational nationalism (not in the narrow but in its broad sense) and gender in north India's Muslim communities. So that Muslim educators, reformers and creative writers quite often espoused traditional notions in terms of modesty, domestic centrality, self-sacrifice and self-abnegation. The emancipation of women emerges in their writings and public stand as a lost option, a road tragically not taken.

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Moving to a more recognizable and an ideologically more cohesive entity, the *ulama* created their own structures and insulated themselves, at least on contentious issues, in their imagined world of piety. So long as they were not too visible in the public domain as agitators, as some had become in 1857, they were left alone within the confines of their theological seminaries. In addition to not disturbing the status quo, a lesson learnt from the 1857 experience and succinctly expressed in the Queen's proclamation, the colonial government even made concessions to religious sentiments or negotiated with religious orthodoxies which the Deobandis and Barelwis embodied.[23] No longer a set of specific rights, no longer a privilege to be enjoyed by a body or people in specific circumstances, religious freedom now became an open-ended entitlement. This arrangement suited the men of religion, especially because it enabled them, from the time Deoband's *dar al-ulum* came into being, to define the frame of reference, and the terms of the religious discourse, with a view to controlling its outcome.

In general, the imperial policy on critical social issues stemmed from a broad consideration of how best to curb the influence of the traditional Muslim groups, particularly theologians, beyond their own self-defined boundaries. After the horrors of the 1857 Rebellion, the imperial claim to social reconstruction in the Victorian image appeared to be a discarded project. No wonder, then, the government usually lent its weight, as a tactical step, to a traditionalist interpretation of the Shariat. To give one example, the courts' rulings very often worked to deny women access to property even though the Quran asserts that women are entitled to inherit a portion of a parent's or husband's wealth. Like the courts, the political arm of the Raj pursued no consistent policy with regard to women's property rights.

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This suited the theologians, who took little or no interest in issues of women's property rights.

In sum, if a mark of modern society was improvement in the status and rights of women, then neither the administrative nor the legal arms of the Anglo-Indian government were engines of modernization. What they gave to women with one hand, they often took away with the other.[24]

Being deeply sensitive to the religious susceptibilities even of those who were neither custodians of the Shariat nor certified by any person, body, or institution as its 'qualified' interpreters, the government made concession after concession to *muftis, mujtahids*, and maulvis. Even before 1857, it had fought shy of modifying Muslim criminal law even when some of its features were demonstrably not suited to the notions of justice entertained by the British themselves.[25] Not only was there a dual court system, but Hindu and Muslim criminal law continued to operate, albeit often without British participation or permission.[26]

In this rather complex process, the government sanctified the men of religion, while secular intellectuals, public figures, and other Westernized elites encountered exclusion and denial of official recognition. Indeed, officials either ignored or discarded their concerns on the presumption that they were uninfluential, unrepresentative, and not quite attuned to the so-called Muslim/Islamic way of life. As in the case of specific social reform issues, such as widow immolation, so also in relation to the growing liberal opinion, they secured 'an insistence on their own view by ignoring, marginalizing, domesticating, and exceptionalizing whatever did not accord with their presumptions'.[27] To say the least, this had a devastating impact on liberal processes as well as the secular nationalist projects.

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In the end, colonial perceptions of where the liberal intelligentsia stood influenced the sum and substance of the colonial agenda as well as its strategy towards the Muslims. Soon enough, public discourse was polarized, as evident from Syed Ahmad's tortuous reform career, between a wide variety of perspectives that often converged on certain matters. Moreover, because their platform was gradually narrowed by the government and their stature lowered within imperial structures—executive and judicial—liberals and modernists of all hues felt inhibited fighting their battles on an enlightened plank. Some pressed on, as evidenced from the career of various progressive literary movements from the 1920s onwards; others joined the revolutionary struggles. To keep their heads above water, the Communist Party of India acknowledged, in the late 1930s, and ultimately yielded to, the growing demand for cultural self-determination in terms of a Muslim collective identity. This was a fatal mistake.

In a more general way, the Muslim public at large, especially in the 1930s and '40s, was faced with only one choice: to shore up the variegated Islamist groups who presented themselves as the protectors and the authentic interpreters of the Islamic codes. As the decades rolled on, more and more reformers conceded the high religious ground to their opponents on education of women, their property rights and purdah. This opposition came not so much from traditional thinkers as from those steeped in modern learning.

Thus, the failure of Muslim modernism lies as much in colonial mentalities that retarded the flowering of liberal thought, as in the resistance to reform and innovation from Muslim orthodoxies: Shia, Sunni, the Ahl-i Hadis, led by Syed Nazir Husain of Delhi (d. 1902), the Barelwis and the Deobandis. This is probably what Shibli meant when decrying

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his community as 'blind', in the lifetime of Syed Ahmad and his own (*Qaum haqiqat mein Sir Syed Marhum ke waqt mein bhi andhi thi aur ab bhi hai*).[28] Blind or not, large segments of it were decidedly ill-equipped to value or promote democratic aspirations of the kind that became so central to the powerful reformist currents engendered by the Brahmo Samaj in Bengal and Arya Samaj in Punjab.

LIVING IN A PLURALIST SOCIETY

> We have created you from a male and a female, and We have made you into peoples and tribes so that you may come to know one another. The noblest among you in the eyes of God is the most pious, for God is omniscient and well informed [Quran: vlix, 13].

In my forthcoming book on Delhi's intelligentsia in the 19th-century, I have analysed the opinions of certain key figures that found vent in various directions. By and large, I have tried to show how best they took a crack at reconciling and integrating the religious and secular discourses, minimizing disharmony around them, and giving a secularized twist to communitarian debates. I want to emphasize just a few points at the end, especially because of a certain analytical blindness or blockage in the learned world, especially in relation to Delhi's intellectual and academic discourses and their impact on north India generally. The points I draw attention to are not only among the most engrossing themes for historians but are of the highest value to all who wish to know what advocates of pluralism were saying, and why their appeal diminished in the 1920s and '30s.

First and foremost, Syed Ahmad, Zakaullah, Nazir Ahmad, Hali, and Ghalib hardly ever dreamt of a unified society where everyone shared the same belief and practices. Without

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advocating the cultural merging of religious traditions or the dissolution of religious boundaries, they were content to let the hundred flowers bloom. They found wisdom in numerous religious traditions,[29] built bridges of understanding and mutual respect among them, and balanced, on the strength of their reading of Persian *akhlaq* literature, notably the works of Nasiruddin Tusi, the interests of different religious communities. While Islam was a necessary cultural and spiritual ingredient of the national culture, they viewed religion as a matter of personal choice and disposition. Again, while adhering to the personality paradigm of the Prophet, they drew on non-Muslim religious figures so as to develop a conception of coexistence among religious institutions and the men of faith in different religions.

In this way, all five put across, despite dissimilarity in emphasis, a maximally inclusive notion to make the various segments of society become parts of a whole.

Zakaullah's moral structure and his overall worldview served as a resource of engagement with other communities, and he extended the basic premises, conceptions and values of Islam to them. These included moral education, kindliness and a sense of justice. 'All men are equal, but it is the goodness of the person that makes him superior to the other,' he wrote.[30] Knowing full well how the world around him was charged with hatred and filled with sectarian animus, he explored the ways to move diverse cultural and religious traditions towards inter-community cooperation. He avoided theological controversies to become 'one of God's peacemakers who brought unity among the children of men by his goodness and love'.[31] Breaking decisively with the Arya Samaj's tradition of exclusionary nationalism, he made cultural pluralism—an idea previously associated with Syed

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Ahmad Khan and Ghalib—an article of faith. Delhi College, the main source of his early intellectual energy, may not have created a new form of liberalism, but it helped to invigorate liberal values, and to imbue its members with a more pluralistic understanding of north Indian society. Critics referred to Zakaullah disparagingly as a 'free-thinker', but, as Andrews put it:

> If the phrase 'free-thinker' means, that he thought freely and sincerely and with an open mind about religion, and regarded the spirit of his Islamic faith to be more important than the letter, then the phrase is nobly true concerning Zakaullah, and he well deserves the title. For it would have been hard to find a man more free from formalism and bigotry, more open-minded and tolerant. It was this fact that made him a close friend and associate of earnest Hindus all through his long life. It was this also which was one of the things that drew me instinctively to him from the first, and has remained rooted in my memory ever since.[32]

No wonder, when Pandit Tulsi Ram's family lighted the lamps to worship every evening, they included Zakaullah's name in their prayer at that time, along with those of other close family members. Andrews amplified this viewpoint:

> What most struck the imagination of us, Englishmen, who used to be present (at the Reading Room in Delhi), was the exceeding kindliness of toleration, unsullied by a touch of religious bitterness—an atmosphere in which political wisdom could mature and social friendships ripen. In all the many years during which I knew Munshi Zakaullah (and during the last years of his life I used to see him almost every day), I cannot once remember hearing a bitter or uncharitable word spoken by him concerning any Hindu religious custom. On the other hand, I have continually heard him speak with a deep respect for those who differed

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> from him fundamentally in matters of belief. Wherever he went his influence always made for peace and goodwill.[33]

Nazir Ahmad ascribed his own experiences to a senior, or *buzurg*, in his student days: 'in short, sometimes I was a Christian, sometimes a Muslim, and sometimes not at all.'[34] The source of Hindu-Muslim fracas, according to him, lay in the values instilled in youth and in the phobias created in them. But it was still possible to resolve disagreements through education and reconciliatory methods (*sazgari aur sulahkari*). Using the metaphor of a cloth merchant and a sweet maker, he remarked: 'After all, the sweet maker does not object to the cloth merchant not producing sweets like him; nor does the cloth merchant get angry with the sweet vendor for not selling cloth.' He referred to Zauq,[35] the poet, to point out that differences were the essence of creation, the gift of God that created people with diverse social and cultural habits and religions. Nevertheless, divergences had to be reconciled with the aid of British structures and the secularized educational curriculum, also a British gift, and not allowed to explode into violent conflicts.[36] In this, the great Urdu novelist tried shifting the self-image of the Hindu and Muslim ideologues to create new possibilities in which communal violence is not the core of the country's ethos. The choice had to be made, and then fought for.

If social identities and differences are constructed, fluid, multiple and overlapping, then every group has a right to its own history and myth-making that embodies and strengthens their identity. The key is to enable 'mythic structure and future dreams to embody the erstwhile enemy other in a benign way, even in loving embrace'.[37] A scholar writing on the long-standing Israeli-Palestinian conflict concludes with the plea:

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> It is our job to enter into the damaged and strange world of enemies and enemy systems, to suspend judgment, to see truths on all sides, to see justice and injustice on all sides, to engage in a level of empathy that is enormously demanding, all to help evoke peace processes that resonate at the most profound level of human consciousness and experience. If enough of us, on all levels of intervention, do this persistently and patiently, I do believe that we can stimulate a fundamentally new path to peace.[38]

Some of Delhi's best men of the late 19th century, Hindus and Muslim alike, reflected upon much the same sentiment. Nazir Ahmad, who was consistently impatient with demagogic religious leaders, did not want fellow-Muslims to demonize non-Muslims but to discover, through regular processes of self-examination, their own faults and weak points.[39] In *Taubat-an Nasuh*, he narrates the story of a missionary preaching and distributing books, like a member of a theatrical cast, at the Chandni Chowk bazaar. This was not an uncommon occurrence. The missionaries not merely read the Bible to their listeners, but rather demonstrated its purpose. In their street sermons they took the Bible with them and used it to emphasize the truth of their message. On that fateful day, so runs the story, a boy used an opprobrious epithet for the preacher. This agitated many of the bystanders, but not the preacher. He did not want the boy to be hurt by anyone. This act charmed Uleem [Alim], Nasuh's second son. He approached the same missionary for the Bible, which he read with great interest. Unlike his elder brother who disapproved of such reading habits, Uleem was struck by the fact that if Christians followed the teachings in that religious text, they could not be so bad as his people painted them. Nasuh, who listened to this story, remarked:

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> There is no doubt some opposition between the doctrines of Islam and Christianity, but then no two religions have so much in common. The Koran speaks well of Christianity and its professors, and their Gospel is held to be the word of God. The Mosalman may lawfully eat and intermarry with the Christian, and the alienation which now characterizes their relations is not sanctioned by the canon law. The best of our religious books could hardly have benefited you more than the missionary's volume. But you said just now you had learned sympathy for others from its maxims. Tell me, have you ever put this teaching into practice?[40]

The performance by the missionary, almost like a rehearsal of a text rescued from the Biblical records somewhere, and the reaction of the audience, open for us a panoramic window into the Delhi of that time and encapsulate an entire culture that was so much more tolerant than that in the following decades.

As detailed above, the process of entering into other cultures is daunting in any period of history and in any situation, but Zakaullah and Nazir Ahmad showed appreciation of whatever they read of Hindu and Christian texts. The former, having spent a lifetime of intellectual friendship with Hindu scholars, held firmly the view, right up to the day of his death at the advanced age of 87, that harmony and reconciliation [between Islam and Hinduism] were always possible.[41] 'Reconciliation', he contended, 'sustains faith [*iman*] and brings in its wake generous [*fayyazana*] behaviour.'[42] No wonder, Nazir Ahmad fervently applauded him for being 'far-sighted', in avoiding painful religious disputes. The fact is that Zakaullah observed toleration in every detail, in spirit as well as in letter, in religious matters.[43] 'What is the use of argument and

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controversy?' he told Andrews. 'Tell me your Beautiful Names for God, and I will tell you mine.'[44]

The account sketched above suggests that the dialogical element signalled a crucial step towards avoiding paradigms of encounter—and undermining religious violence. The point is not to exaggerate its limitations or to debate whether or not such men were authentically modern, but to highlight their inventiveness. As people who had no conception of pacts and unity conferences that became the métier of peace in the 1920s for the sake of immediate political goals, they talked of building on the overarching shared ethical values and practices, and acknowledging each other's common visions. Andrews, who was moved by such thoughts, concluded with a paean of praise to Zakaullah's kindness, courtesy, confidence and friendship. He deserved a place among the great Indians of the 19th century, so he wrote, as a 'singular and beautiful example of the combination of the past and the present, of the East and West', and also as a 'true prophet of the future'.[45] He owed something more to Nazir Ahmad— an idea of the power of Islam at its best, in moulding character and creating an atmosphere of reverence.[46]

Zakaullah's outward manners and customs were very much a part of Delhi's sharif ethos. His dress, his habits, his domestic life and his religious life—all that he valued most dearly—remained unchanged.[47] *Makhzan*'s editor, Shaikh Abdul Qadir, who knew him well during 1907–08,[48] wrote that while sticking to the old-fashioned style in dress and manner of living, he held 'progressive' views. Progressive or not, he remained true to the same social and cultural ideals that informed many others in his generation. While Islam provided them a universal frame of identity and considerable freedom to retain their regional, linguistic and class

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identities, the historically conditioned symbiosis between region, language and faith enabled the educated elites, if not the masses, to pursue a high degree of cultural and historical continuity to transform it into a modern national identity.

Whatever their difference in emphasis, Syed Ahmad, Ghalib, Zakaullah, Nazir Ahmad and others planted the seeds of a pluralist vision that could eventually become a touchstone of a liberal and secular polity. With Hakim Ajmal Khan and Mukhtar Ahmad Ansari, another prominent Dilliwala, providing depth and acceleration to the process in the early 1920s, their homes—Sharif Manzil in Ballimaran and Dar-us Salam in Daryaganj (now Ansari Road)—became powerful and living symbols of a new awakening.

This essay would have served its purpose if the sagacious and memorable admonitions of such men stimulate writers to reconstruct this heritage in South Asia. Moreover, it would be intellectually fruitful to foreground the submerged story of social and cultural invigoration and not just concentrate on, as is often the case, the inadequacies, contradictions and paradoxes of the Muslim intelligentsia and plumb the deep and hidden meanings of their 'failure'.

> The wind has blown away the dust of men
> unnumbered from your lane:
> Yet your true lovers are not daunted: men
> come to your threshold still.[49]

Reasonable as these conclusions are, we cannot escape the consequences of serious Hindu-Muslim disputes in the lifetime of Zakaullah, Nazir Ahmad and Andrews. Indeed, it was their misfortune that the prospect of inter-faith dialogue was to chill and then freeze the conditions needed to maintain the climate. Yet, as the new century begins, the

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peoples and countries of South Asia are striving towards greater cooperation in shaping their destinies. Nobody can predict the ultimate fate of such trends. All one can hope is that studying Delhi's past would be a source of knowledge of a cultural and intellectual heritage that belongs to all of South Asia. When the history of ideas of the countries of the subcontinent is better explored and better known, the historian will recognize the currents of influence which, from Pakistan to Bangladesh, constitute the very fabric of the history of Islam in the region. We may not have it in our power, as Thomas Paine (1737–1809) proclaimed in 1776, 'to begin the world again'. But we can provide an adequate language for comprehending the 21st century; and we can decide for ourselves the importance of living together, understanding each other, and interpreting each other's lifestyles and value systems. Arnold Toynbee sums up this message candidly in the following words:

> In order to save mankind we have to learn to live together in concord in spite of traditional differences of religion, civilization, nationality, class and race. In order to live together in concord successfully, we have to know each other's past, since human life, like the rest of the phenomenal universe, can be observed by human minds only as it presents itself to them on the move through time.... For our now urgent common purpose of self-preservation, it will not be enough to explore our common underlying human nature. The psychologist's work needs to be supplemented by the archaeologist's, the historian's, the anthropologist's and the sociologist's. We must learn to recognize, and as far as possible, to understand, the different cultural configurations in which our common human nature has expressed itself in the different religions, civilizations, and nationalities into which human culture has come to be articulated in the course of its history.... We shall, however,

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have to do more than just understand each other's cultural heritages, and more even than appreciate them. We shall have to value them and love them as being parts of mankind's common treasure and therefore being ours too, as truly as the heirlooms that we ourselves shall be contributing to the common stock.[50]

NOTES

1. Ghalib, cited in M.A. Sadiq, *A History of Urdu Literature*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1984, 2nd edition, p. 203.
2. Ahmed Ali, *Twilight in Delhi*, London: The Hogarth Press, 1940, reprinted New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1991, p. viii.
3. H.A.R. Gibb, *Modern Trends in Islam*, Chicago, Illinois: The University of Chicago Press, 1947, p. 109.
4. Thus, he wrote: '...What a great pity it is that the Muslims of this age have not only failed to discover any way to preserve the exercise of intellectual scrutiny, but have even discarded those methods that had been discovered in the past! In acquiring every kind of knowledge the condition of Muslims for a long time has been such that they hardly read in any area of learning in order to find out the reality and truth in it. Their purpose is simply to know all that is written in a given book, regardless of whether it be true or false.... If discussion occurs, it is not on the question of whether a principle written in a book is true or false, but simply on whether that particular principle is recorded in the book or not.... This method has destroyed freedom of opinion and broken the way of life that used to afford protection against falling into error. All their learning and wisdom has fallen into error.' Syed Ahmad Khan, 'Azadi-i Rai', M. Moaddel and Kamran Talattof (eds.), *Contemporary Debates in Islam: An Anthology of Modernist and Fundamentalist Thought*, London, 2000, pp. 119–20.

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6. Mushirul Hasan, *Reform and Renewal: Muslim Intelligentsia in Nineteenth Century Delhi* (forthcoming).
7. Muhammad Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, Oxford, 1934, pp. 159–60.
8. *Speeches and Statements of Iqbal*, Lahore, 1945, p. 131.
9. 'If Moslem woman does not attain in another hundred years, the social position of her European sister, there will be time enough to declaim against Islam as a system and a dispensation. But the Teacher who in an age when no country, no system, no community has any right to woman, maiden or married, mother or wife, who, in a country where the birth of a daughter was considered a calamity, secured to the sex rights which were only unwillingly and under pressure being conceded to them by the civilized nations in the twentieth century, deserves the gratitude of humanity. If Mohammad had done nothing more, his claim to be a benefactor of mankind would have been indisputable.' Ameer Ali, *The Spirit of Islam*, London, 1967 rpt., 1st edn. 1922, p. 256.
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11. Ibid., p. 231.
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14. Ibid.
15. Gail Minault, 'Other Voices, Other Rooms: The View from the Zenana', in Nita Kumar (ed.), *Women as Subjects: South Asian Histories*, Charlottesville, 1994, p. 119.
16. For Syed Ahmad Khan, *Tahzibul Akhlaq*, Vol. 1, pp. 71–4.
17. Fazlur Rahman, *Islam*, London, 1966, pp. 225–6.
18. Syed Sulaiman Nadwi (ed.), *Khutbat-i Shibli*, Azamgarh, 1965, p. 185.
19. Ibid., p. 131.
20. Rahman, *Islam*, p. 235.
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22. Barak A. Salmoni, 'Women in the Nationalist-Educational Prism: Turkish and Egyptian Pedagogues and their Gendered Agenda, 1920–1952', *History of Education Quarterly*, Vol. 43, No. 4 (Winter 2003).
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29. *Jitne mazajib duniya mein hain waqt aur maqam ke lihaz se sab ke sab aadmi ki islah aur uske faide ke liye chale hain aur har ek mein kuch na kuch faide aur sadaqat aur neki ke ansh maujood hai.* Nazir Ahmad, *Lekcharon ka Majmua*, Agra, 1918, Vol. 2, p. 154.
30. Zakaullah, *Mahasinul Akhlaq*, Vol. 1, Delhi, 1891, p. 209.
31. C.F. Andrews, *Zakaullah of Delhi* (with an introduction by Mushirul Hasan and Margrit Pernau), Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003, p. 98.
32. Ibid., p. 109.
33. Ibid., p. 107.
34. Christina Oesterheld, 'Nazir Ahmad and the Early Urdu Novel', *Annual of Urdu Studies*, Vol. 14 (1999), p. 40.
35. *Gulha-i rang rang se hai raunaq-i chaman/Ai Zauq is jahaan ko hai zeb ikhtilaaf.*

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36. Nazir Ahmad, *Lekcharon ka Majmua*, Vol. 2, pp. 420–1.
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Sikri gives a historical account of Islam in Bengal since the 10th century. Her primary concern is to study the impact of immigrant Sufis on the predominantly Hindu population and culture of Bengal and the ruling sultans. She concludes that it was the assimilative approach of Bengal's early Sufis that enhanced their influence as spiritual leaders of society.

14

Islam in South Asia: The Bengal Experience

VEENA SIKRI

The advent of Islam in the territory of West Bengal and present-day Bangladesh was as gentle as the breeze of the swaying date-palms that grow in profusion all over this beautiful region.

The geographical features of this deltaic region have evolved in tandem with the changing courses of three of Asia's great rivers: the Ganga, the Brahmaputra and the Meghna. Archaeological evidence confirms that rice-cultivating communities inhabited this region as early as the second millennium BC. It was only in medieval times that the name Bengal or Vangla became prevalent. Ancient Bengal was divided into several *janapadas* named after the non-Aryan ethnic groups or *janas* that lived there. Thus the Vanga janapada covered a major portion of present-day

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Bangladesh, particularly its south and southeastern districts. Pundra janapada comprised the territories of northern Bangladesh and the northern part of West Bengal. Gauda and Radha janapadas respectively covered middle and southern West Bengal.

The ancient city of Pundranagara (city of the Pundras), known today as Mahasthangarh in Bangladesh's Bogra district finds mention in late Vedic literature.[1] This is the earliest urban settlement in Bangladesh, with the excavated remnants of the walled city in Mahasthangarh continuing to provide new insights into this rich heritage. The great epic *Mahabharata* describes the royalty who attended the heroine Draupadi's Swayamvara ceremony as including the kings of Vanga and Pundra. The epic *Ramayana*, too, refers to the close links, political and economic, between the kingdoms of Ayodhya and those of Pundra and Vanga.

Excavations in the Birbhum and Burdwan districts of West Bengal show that by the 11th century BC the use of copper (for ornaments) and iron (for weapons) was widely prevalent. Terracotta plaques found at Pandu Rajar Dhibi in Burdwan district highlight the antiquity of this Bengali tradition. The ruins of Pandu Rajar Dhibi reveal a well laid out township and seals of the Minoan type indicating trade contacts with the Mediterranean region. Settled farming, including wet rice cultivation, as opposed to the hitherto prevalent shifting cultivation, became the norm in Bengal beginning with the 6th century BC.

By the 5th century BC the Indo-Aryan civilization, moving eastward along the Ganga river, was at the doorstep of the Bengal region. Thus began the 'Aryanization' of Bengal, a gradual process where, thanks to the already deep-rooted local traditions, the people of Bengal successfully retain even today many elements in their life and culture which are non-

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Aryan and even pre-Aryan.[2] The first Indo-Aryan empire, the Mauryan (321–181 BC) incorporated Varendra, with the capital at Pundranagara, as its easternmost province. Written during this reign, Kautilya's treatise, *Arthasastra* (3rd century BC) has references to the fine cotton fabric of Vanga as an important item of trade throughout India.

According to the Buddhist legend, Gautama Buddha spent six months in Pundranagara. In Jaina literature, Mahavira Vardhamana and his followers are said to have travelled and stayed in the Radha area of West Bengal. Both events are dated around 600 BC.[3] Yet, it is only under the third Mauryan ruler, Emperor Ashoka (c. 273–236 BC), that Buddhism began putting down roots in Bengal. Built during this period, the great Buddhist stupa at Sanchi (Madhya Pradesh in India) included Bengalis among its list of supporters. By the 2nd or 3rd century AD, an inscription at Nagarjunakunda (Andhra Pradesh in India) indicates Bengal as an important Buddhist region. A visiting Chinese pilgrim in the 5th century AD describes 22 Buddhist monasteries in Tamralipti (Tamluk) in southwestern Bengal, which was at that time eastern India's principal seaport.[4]

During the Sunga and Kushana periods deltaic Bengal continued to prosper as a group of powerful kingdoms with flourishing maritime trade with China and other countries. By the 4th century AD, however, most of these kingdoms came under the rule of Samudragupta. Samatata, the trans-Meghna region in today's Comilla and Noakhali districts, which at first remained outside the Gupta empire as a tributary state, was subsequently incorporated. Under Gupta rule Bengal prospered as an important province of a pan-Indian empire. Copper plates dating back to the 5th century AD excavated in northern Bengal indicate the existence of a well-structured local administration, with active participation

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of the people. Bengal benefited greatly from its share of national and international trade and commerce. The cultural and artistic excellence of the Gupta period influenced the traditions of Bengal, particularly sculptural art. This period is also renowned for religious tolerance and coexistence, where the Hindu rulers patronized Buddhism and Jainism.

During the 6th century AD parts of Bengal, beginning with the kingdom of Vanga, reasserted their sovereignty. Early in the 7th century Gauda, comprising western and northern Bengal, emerged as an independent kingdom under Sasanka, the first ruler of Bengal to successfully extend his empire over a vast territory of India from Kanauj in north-central India up to Chilka lake in Orissa, covering parts of Magadha (Bihar) as well. His capital, Karnasuvarna, has been identified in the Murshidabad district of West Bengal. However the death of Sasanka was followed by a period of great anarchy and lawlessness throughout Bengal, lasting almost 100 years.

This ended only in the mid-8th century with the founding of the Pala dynasty that ruled Bengal for the next 400 years, often considered among the most glorious periods in the history of Bengal. The Pala empire, which extended westwards beyond the boundaries of Bengal and Bihar as far as Kanauj, was recognized as a powerful force in north Indian politics. The Buddhist Pala kings, too, encouraged Hindu-Buddhist coexistence and amity. The second Pala ruler, Dharmapala (781–821 AD) developed two monasteries renowned as centres of Buddhist learning and as architectural monuments. These were the Vikramasila monastery near Bhagalpur in Bihar and the Somapura mahavihara at Paharpur in the Naogaon district of

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Bangladesh, which greatly influenced the architecture and construction of similar monasteries in Southeast Asia.

During the reign of the tenth Pala king Nayapala, the great Bengali Buddhist monk and scholar Atisha Dipankara Sree Jnana acquired fame and renown. He travelled to Tibet where he taught for 13 years and wrote many books on Buddhism in Sanskrit and Tibetan. The Pala kings were sound and judicious administrators. They were great patrons of the arts, as evidenced by the new heights attained in the terracotta and sculptural arts, in painting and in literary/ poetic compositions. Theirs was a land-based empire, basically agrarian in nature, especially with the decline of the Tamralipti port after the 8th century.

Contemporaneously with Pala rule, there rose in the Samatata region of southeastern Bengal a strong and fairly large kingdom under the Deva dynasty, with its capital at Devaparvata in the Mainamati-Lalmai area of Bangladesh. Archaeological excavations of several important viharas at Salban, Ananda and Bhoja reveal that under the Buddhist Deva rulers, Mainamati emerged as a prominent centre of Buddhist religion, culture and education.

The 9th and 10th centuries AD saw a rapid consolidation within Bengal, first with the kingdom of Harikela (modern Mymensingh and Sylhet) which soon encompassed both Chittagong and Comilla regions, and then, from 900 to 1050 AD, under the Chandra rulers, whose empire stretched from Sylhet in the north and covered the territory of the erstwhile Vanga and Samatata states. The Chandra kings had their capital at Vikramapura, in the Munshiganj district just south of Dhaka. By 1080, the Varman dynasty replaced the Chandra rulers. The Varman rulers, who were Hindus, ruled for less than a century, with their capital continuing at

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Vikramapura, before they were toppled by the Sena dynasty, which came to Bengal from the Deccan region of India.

The Sena kings (1097–1223), by defeating the Varmans in southeastern Bengal and subsequently the Palas in northern and western Bengal, were the first to bring the whole of Bengal under unified rule. Their capital continued at Vikramapura. Sena rule in Bengal is renowned for the unprecedented flourishing of Sanskrit literature, with notable examples being the *Gitagovinda* composed by Jayadeva at the court of Lakshmanasena and the anthology, *Sadukti Karnamrita*, compiled by Sridharadasa which contains 2,370 poems composed by 485 poets between the 10th and 12th centuries.

Accounts written by Arab merchants and navigators from the 9th century AD onwards describe the prosperity of the Samatata region as a result of the flourishing sea trade conducted through the port of Samandar, near the present Chittagong port. Thus, while the Palas used cowrie shells as currency, the Chandras issued silver coins that were more widely acceptable in international trade and commerce. The deltaic region of Bengal was the hub of two overlapping trade diasporas. The one extending eastward from the Arabian peninsula was dominated by Arabs or Persians; the other extending eastward from the Bay of Bengal was dominated by Bengali Buddhists.[5]

The 10th-century Arab geographer Masudi recorded the first evidence of Muslims residing in the Pala domains, involved in the textile trade.[6] The historian Maulana Minhaj-ud-Din Abul-Umar-i-Usman has provided the earliest narrative of the conquest of Bengal in 1204 by the Turkish cavalry officer Ikhtiyaruddin Muhammad Bakhtiyar Khalji, operating in the service of Muhammad Ghuri who had conquered Delhi just over a decade earlier in 1193.

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Muhammad Bakhtiyar easily evicted King Lakhshmanasena from the royal city of Nudiya (present-day Nadia), forcing him to retreat east first to his capital Vikrampur and subsequently to the trans-Meghna region, from where the Sena dynasty continued to rule their now very limited empire in southeastern Bengal till 1223.

Muhammad Bakhtiyar established his capital at Lakhnawati (Gaur). Even though he died just two years later after a disastrous campaign in Tibet, he can justifiably be described as the initiator of the independent Bengal Sultanate that continued right up to the Mughal conquest of Bengal. In these two years, Muhammad Bakhtiyar expanded the areas under his control to include the Malda, Dinajpur, Rajshahi, Rangpur and Bogra districts. The Teesta-Brahmaputra-Karatoya rivers set the eastern limits of his Lakhnawati principality. He placed each of these regions under the administrative charge of his nobles and military chiefs for maintenance of law and order and collection of revenue. He constructed mosques, madrasas and *khanaqahs* (shelters for the Sufis and saints). He issued gold coins in the name of Sultan Muhammad Ghuri of Delhi depicting a Turkish cavalryman holding a mace with the words 'Gauda vijaye'—on the conquest of Gaur (Bengal)—inscribed in Sanskrit, not in Arabic.

Throughout the 13th century successive rulers/governors of Bengal tried to assert their independence from the Delhi Sultanate, with varying degrees of success. The physical distance of Delhi from Bengal, combined with interregnums of weak rulers in Delhi allowed this to happen. From 1212 to 1227 Ghiyasuddin Iwaj Khilji as ruler of Bengal consolidated and expanded his territorial control, but when he sought to assert his independence, by declaring himself 'Sultan', the Delhi Sultan invaded and re-annexed Bengal.

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Fifteen governors ruled Bengal between 1227 and 1281, a period of great confusion before Ghiyasuddin Balban of Delhi re-established control and appointed his son Bogra Khan as ruler of Bengal in 1281. However, after his father's death in 1287, Bogra Khan rejected the control of the Delhi Sultanate and was virtually the independent ruler of Bengal. These rebellious activities caused the historian Zia al-Din Barani, in his *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*, to describe Delhi's view of Bengal as 'Balgakpur or the city of mutineers or defiant'.[7]

Beginning in 1300, Shams al-Din Firoz Shah ruled Bengal for twenty years. He assumed the title Sultan of Bengal and was able to further consolidate territorial control by bringing the Sonargaon (southeast Bengal), Satgaon (southwest Bengal), Mymensingh and Sylhet areas into his domain. It was under his rule that Bengal's most famous Sufi saint Shah Jalal Mujarrad (born in Turkestan and himself a disciple of Saiyid Ahmad Yasawi, one of the founders of the Central Asian Sufi tradition) settled in Sylhet with more than 300 disciples and preached Islam among the mountain-dwellers of this region.

Finally in 1342 the powerful ruler Shams al-Din Ilyas Shah headed the first of a series of dynasties in Bengal that were successful in retaining their independence from Delhi. Symbolically, he shifted his capital to Pandua. The strenuous efforts launched in 1353 and once again in 1359 by the Delhi Sultan Firuz Tughlaq to reannex Bengal failed. And for the next two centuries and more, the Bengal Sultanate reigned undisturbed by Delhi, despite political turmoil within.

By the 13th century the spiritual and worldly authority of Sufis, or Muslim holy men had already acquired great importance in the Islamic world as testified by the wealth of written and oral lore on this subject. Central Asian Sufis had been instrumental in converting Turkish tribes to Islam

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shortly before their 11th-century Ghaznavid-led conquest of India. The oldest Persian treatise on Sufism, the *Kashf al-mahjub* written in Lahore by Ali Hujwiri in the late 11th century, which summarized the extant Sufi doctrines and practices, had a determining influence on the role of Sufism in the spread of Islam in India. On the place of Sufi saints in Islam, Ali Hujwiri writes,

> [God] has made the Saints the governors of the universe; they have become entirely devoted to His business, and have ceased to follow their sensual affections. Through the blessing of their advent the rain falls from heaven, and through the purity of their lives the plants spring up from the earth, and through their spiritual influence the Moslems gain victories over the unbelievers.[8]

Chishti shaikh Ashraf Jahangir Simnani, writing around 1414 said that, 'In the country of Bengal, not to speak of the cities, there is no town and no village where holy saints did not come and settle down.'[9]

Indeed, the earliest known inscriptions in Bengal following the advent of Islam in 1204 describe the presence of immigrant Sufis. A stone tablet found in Birbhum district records an inscription of July 1221 about the construction of a khanaqah by a faqir (Sufi) whose father hailed from Maragha in northwestern Iran. Interestingly, the reverse side of this stone tablet carries an inscription in Sanskrit recording the conquests under the Buddhist Pala ruler Nayapala (c. 1050) and the large number of Hindu temples built in this region.

This juxtaposition brings up two important questions: what was the relationship between Bengal's Sufis and the Sultans? And what was the interaction between the Sufi saints and the predominantly Hindu population and culture that they encountered in Bengal?

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Under the Bengal Sultanate the influence of Islam remained primarily in the urban areas. Bakhtiyar Khalji's conquest in 1204 was followed by the arrival of thousands of immigrants from Turkey, Iran, Abyssinia, Arabia, Afghanistan, Central Asia and north India. They came as noblemen, judges (*qazi*), administrators, religious officials (*ulema*), traders, soldiers and Sufi saints and their followers. They were all part of the Muslim elite or *ashraf* where foreign origin, either their own or that of their ancestors, was the key element of their identity. Their presence was concentrated in the capital cities, which were successively Lakhnauti (from 1204), Pandua (from 1342) and Gaur (from 1432) as well as in the major provincial towns, which included Satgaon, Sonargaon and Chittagaon.

Side by side but socially distinct from the ashraf was the increasing number of Muslim urban artisans or industrial workers, grouped into communities according to their occupation, not unlike the *jatis* of Hindu society. They included weavers, loom makers, paper makers, tailors, bow and other weaponry makers, fishmongers and wandering holy men (*kalandars*). These were the earliest known groups of Bengali Muslims.

Right until the 16th century, foreign writers on Bengal referred only to the ashraf and other urban Muslims, with little or no mention of rural Muslims in any significant numbers. The only exception to this is the account written by the renowned Arab traveller Ibn Battuta, who journeyed to Sylhet in 1345 to meet Shah Jalal, after which he recorded that 'the inhabitants of these mountains had embraced Islam at his (Shah Jalal's) hands and for this reason he stayed among them'.[10] Ibn Battuta drew a distinction between these hill tribes who practised shifting cultivation and the Hindu peasants of the lowlands who practised wet rice cultivation.

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The Chinese official Ma Huan who visited the Bengal delta in 1433 indicates that the city dwellers were Muslims and not the peasants. Even the first European accounts of Bengal after Vasco da Gama's maritime journey in 1498 and by Ludovico di Varthema less than 10 years later describe the urban and not the rural population as being Muslim.[11]

This indicates a process of religious conversion that was slow, even leisurely and above all, interactive. The Sufis who came to Bengal were pious mystics rather than holy warriors or *ghazis.* There is hardly any contemporary evidence of violent conflicts or wars. Hagiographical accounts such as those describing the activities of one of the earliest Sufis of Bengal, Shaikh Jalal al-Din Tabrizi (a disciple of the renowned Sufi mystic Shaikh Shihab al-Din Suhrawardi, he travelled to Delhi around 1235 and arrived in Lakhnauti soon thereafter) which seek to project a very different picture were written more than three centuries after his death.

Rather, there is evidence that the early Sufis of Bengal, attracted by the yogic and cosmological traditions that were widely practised in Kamrup (Assam), sought to integrate elements of these into their religious lives. Less than 10 years after the advent of Islam into Bengal, Persian and Arabic translations of the Sanskrit manual on yoga, *Amritakunda* (Pool of Nectar), were in circulation under the title *Bahar al-Hayat.* Over the next five centuries, this Sanskrit text was repeatedly translated into Arabic and Persian, with commentaries. Some scholars regard *Bahar al-Hayat* as a work of 'religious syncretism'. Others consider this to be

> [T]wo independent and self-contained world-views placed alongside one another—a technical manual of yoga preceded by a Sufi allegory—with later editors or translators going to some lengths to stress their points of coincidence.[12]

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Whichever view one takes there can be little doubt that the assimilative approach by Bengal's early Sufis enhanced their influence as spiritual leaders in society, which gradually attracted more and more people to the new faith. Combined with this was the Sufi saints' influence over the Sultans and the ruling elite arising from their moral authority because of their knowledge of religious matters and their secular authority as guardians and representatives of the literary and intellectual traditions of Islam. Sufi saints would make predictions about who would assume political power and about the vicissitudes in the exercise of that power. Organized Sufi brotherhoods emerged such as the Suhrawardi, Firdausi and the Chishti orders. The Chishti order acquired great importance in the courts of Delhi and Bengal largely because by the 14th century theirs was the only major Sufi order to have become completely indigenous to the Indian subcontinent. Shaikh Akhi Siraj al-Din (1357) was the first *murid* (disciple) from Bengal who after distinguishing himself as the disciple of Shaikh Nizam al-Din Auliya in Delhi, returned to Bengal to carry on the Chishti tradition. His pupil Shaikh Ala al-Haq played a key role in the fortunes of the Ilyas Shahi dynasty in Bengal. This enduring alliance between the Chishti Shaikhs and the rulers of Bengal continued till the end of Mughal rule in the 18th century, even though by the 16th century the intellectually vibrant direct interactions between the Sufis and the Sultans had been replaced by politically neutral tomb-worship.

There were stormy periods in the relationship between the Sultans of Bengal and the charismatic, even politically active, Sufis. Each of them patronized the other, there were strong mutual dependencies, yet each feared being over-shadowed or being rendered irrelevant by the other. The

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Sufis with their authority in the realm of religion (*din*) had tremendous popular support. The rulers enjoyed temporal authority (in the realm of *duniya*) but once having attained their political power, were loath to share it with the Sufis.

During the 13th and 14th centuries, the Sultans sought to confirm their authority with reference to Perso-Islamic symbols that were not indigenous to Bengal. Thus on the Adina mosque built in Pandua in 1375, Sultan Sikandar 'proclaimed that he was the most perfect among kings of Persia and Arabia, not even mentioning those of the Indian subcontinent where he was actually ruling.'[13] The early Sufi orders, too, had their reference points not in Delhi or India but further west in Persia and Arabia. Over the decades this did create serious problems since in practical terms it ignored the local situation in Bengal where the rulers remained dependent on the cooperation of the large non-Muslim Bengali land-holding (*zamindar*) elite for managing the local government and administration.

Matters came to a head towards the end of the 14th century when some of the Sufi orders, in the interests of a reformed and purified Islam, began opposing the presence of non-Muslim Bengalis in the ruling class. By 1410 tension between the Turks and the Bengalis seriously intensified, leading to the emergence of Raja Ganesh, a powerful zamindar, at the helm of affairs as the de facto ruler. In 1415 his son, Jadu, converted to Islam and ruled Bengal for 17 years as Sultan Jalal al-Din Muhammad. Initially, he faced rebellions on two fronts: from the Muslim elite at his court, led by Shaikh Nur Qutb-i Alam of the Chishti order, and from the scions of several pre-Muslim ruling families from the interior regions of southwest and southeast Bengal.

The new, and very young Sultan adopted a policy of conciliation that in many ways symbolized the 'Bengalization'

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of foreign rule. He accepted the religious and personal guidance of Shaikh Nur Qutb-i Alam, thereby establishing the Chishti order as the principal Islamic authority in Bengal. He adopted the Hanafi legal tradition and built mosques and madrasas. He showed his commitment to the unity of Bengal by quelling all regional rebellions. By 1418 he began issuing coins from Faridpur, Satgaon, Sonargaon and Chittagong, thereby reasserting his authority throughout Bengal. The coins minted in the reign of Sultan Jalal al-Din reintroduced reference to the Muslim faith. At the same time several coins carried the lion motif, perhaps to appeal to the sentiments of those who worshipped the Goddess Durga. In this way the Sultan was appealing to all the constituencies in his kingdom.

Bengali Hindus were now formally integrated into the ruling hierarchy of the Sultanate. Sultan Jalal al-Din patronized Sanskrit language and culture. The Chinese traveller Ma Huan who visited Pandua at this time reported that 'although Persian was understood by some in the court, the language in universal use there was Bengali.'[14]

This is a significant indication indeed of the reassertion of Bengali culture at the highest levels. Similarly, the architecture of the mosques built from now on began to use Bengali motifs and design as distinct from the Middle-Eastern or north Indian traditions that had hitherto been popular. Extensive terracotta ornamentation was brought back into use, together with the square single-dome design with gently curved cornices for mosques. Towards the end of his reign Sultan Jalal al-Din shifted his capital to Gaur.

The true test of the acceptability for all Bengalis of these significant trends came when the Ilyas Shahi dynasty, after being restored to power in 1433, made no changes and instead persisted with the secular practices set in motion by

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Sultan Jalal al-Din. For the next 50 years and more under the Ilyas Shahi Sultans the Muslim rulers followed enlightened and liberal policies in the best interests of the people of Bengal. This is the first time we see the emergence of a society that shaped the real identity of Bengal.

The Husain Shahi dynasty that came to power in 1493 (after a chaotic seven-year interregnum of Abyssinian rulers) ruled till 1538. The founders of this dynasty came to India from Arabia and settled in Murshidabad. The period of their rule is often described as the golden age of the Bengal Sultanate. They extended their conquests to include Cooch Bihar (Kamata) in the north, Tripura in the east, Arakan in the southeast and Orissa in the southwest. They were great patrons of learning and as a result, Bengali language and literature flourished. The *Mahabharata* and *Bhagavad Gita* were translated into Bengali. Bengali Hindus participated in government at all levels, including the highest posts of *vazir* (chief minister), master of the mint and private secretary to the Sultan. In this way the Husain Shahi Sultans ensured the respect and patriotic support of all Bengalis. The saint and mystic Sri Chaitanya Dev (1486–1533) freely preached Vaishnavism. Hindu poets and writers referred to the Sultan as *raja* (king) and even *isvara* (God), as seen in the *Sri Chaitanya Bhagavat* composed in the1540s and in the *Chaitanya Mangala* composed around 1550.

The Portuguese official Tome Pires who visited the Husain Shahi court described the Sultans as having so thoroughly assimilated Bengali culture that the visitor could detect no trace of foreignness in either the court or its monarch.[15] The art historian Percy Brown has observed that in Bengal 'the country, originally possessed by the invaders, now possessed them'.[16]

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In 1538 the Mughal emperor Humayun, son of Babur (founder of the Mughal empire in India), conquered and occupied the capital of Bengal, Gaur. This victory was short-lived as the Afghans under Sher Shah and his successors continued to dominate Bengal for several decades from their new capital, Tanda. In 1574 Emperor Akbar, after defeating the Afghans at Patna, entrusted his commander, Munim Khan with the conquest of Tanda, which was successfully accomplished. Even so, anti-Mughal resistance continued, causing Abul Fazl Allami, author of *Akbarnama* to recall the old description of Bengal as *bulghak-khana.* In 1594, Akbar sent the Rajput noble Raja Man Singh as Governor of Bengal. He, too, faced stiff resistance from powerful zamindars and local chieftains, both Muslim and Hindu. Raja Man Singh established the Mughal provincial capital at Rajmahal (renamed Akbarnagar), but by 1602 Raja Man Singh had moved the centre of his military operations to Dhaka, from where he achieved considerable success. However, it was only under Emperor Jahangir (1605–27), after the appointment of Islam Khan, grandson of Shaikh Salim Chishti, as Governor of Bengal (1608–13) that the consolidation of Mughal rule in Bengal was completed. Islam Khan moved the provincial capital to Dhaka, which was renamed Jahangirnagar.

The incorporation of Bengal as part of the vast Mughal empire in India effectively ended this deltaic region's isolation from the rest of the subcontinent. This brought economic prosperity to Bengal as it greatly stimulated demand for textiles and other manufactured goods. It also hastened the exploitation and development of Bengal's huge forested hinterlands. However, being ruled from a distant capital as one of 12 provinces meant, at least in the initial years, that the imperial officials who governed by rotation

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lacked any attachment or deep knowledge about the land, language and culture of Bengal. This was in sharp contrast to the latter half of the Sultanate period, where the rulers had become closely involved with upholding Bengali language and culture. As a result the new wave of ashraf Muslims who arrived with the Mughal conquest remained separate from and did not relate easily to the non-ashraf Bengali Muslims. Mughal officials saw themselves as the rulers, as tax-receivers distinct from the Bengali tax-payers.

Bengal's Mughal ashraf were deeply religious and pious with close historical links to the Chishti order of Sufism. Sufi piety was very much built into the ethos of Mughal service in Bengal. The activities of the soldier-administrator and the mystic/ascetic were integrated since 'Sufism's world-renouncing vision formed, not an antithesis to the worldly business of running an empire, but a complement to it'.[17] Yet Bengal's Mughal rulers maintained a clear distinction between matters of religion and matters of state. Unlike the Bengal Sultanate in its early years, Mughal officials did not patronize Islam as a state religion. They followed a strictly non-interventionist position in religious matters, despite pressure from local *mullahs* (Muslim preachers) and Sufis to support Islam over other religions.[18]

As a result, the Mughals in Bengal did not promote the conversion of Bengalis to Islam. Mirza Nathan in his *Baharistan-i Ghaybi*, a Punjabi Muslim officer's first-hand account of his service in Bengal with Governor Islam Khan Chishti, writes that Islam Khan discouraged the conversion of Bengalis. On one occasion he actually punished one of his officers for allowing it to happen.[19] Fray Sebastiao Manrique, the Augustinian missionary who travelled through Bengal in 1629–30 and again in 1640 has described how, when Akbar conquered Bengal he had given his word 'that

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he and his successors would let [Bengalis] live under their own laws and customs'.[20] Although there were always conservative ulema who insisted on the emperor's 'duty' to convert the Hindu 'infidels' to Islam, such a policy was not in fact implemented in Bengal, even during the reign of the conservative emperor Aurangzeb (1658–1707).[21]

It seems paradoxical that despite such policies, it is precisely during the period of the Mughal rule that Islam spread beyond the urban areas to become the religion of the cultivators in the vast rural hinterland of Bengal. The first reports by Jesuit missionaries in 1599 about Muslim cultivators in the Dhaka region were followed by similar observations in 1638 about the Noakhali region, contained in a report written by the Mughal governor of Bengal, Islam Khan Mashadi. In the 1660s the *Alamgir-nama* written by Kazim B. Muhammad Amin stated that most of the peasants in the Ghoraghat (Rangpur region in northern Bengal) were Muslims.

It is significant that all these areas are in East Bengal, a region which witnessed exponential growth after the advent of the Mughal rule. The choice of Dhaka as the provincial Mughal capital began the process of opening up these hitherto densely forested eastern regions. Prior to the 1550s the lack of direct riverine contact between East Bengal and the areas to the west, including upper India, had inhibited the development of this region. In the second half of the 16th century, however, the Ganga river intensified its steady move eastwards so much that in 1574 the *Akbar-nama* records that the river had divided into two branches at the Afghan capital of Tanda, with one branch flowing south to Satgaon (north of Kolkata) and the second flowing east towards Sonargaon and Chittagong. Finally by the late 17th century the Ganga linked up with the Padma river and flowed through the heart of Bengal.

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This had a dramatic impact on the development of all the regions of East Bengal. The alluvial silt of the Ganga allowed wet rice cultivation on increasingly large tracts of land in the east. Cash crops such as cotton and silk flourished in the east. The easy availability of fertile land led to the rapid expansion of rice production and rising population density in the east as compared to the western regions of Bengal. Land fertility and demographic increases are reflected in the changes in the Mughal government's share (*khalisa*) of the land revenue demand (*jama*) during the first century of Mughal rule. From 1595 to 1659 the revenue demand for the southeastern regions of Bengal increased by 117 per cent and that for the northeastern regions increased by 97 per cent, while in southwestern Bengal this went up by just 54 per cent and in the northwestern region this declined by 13 per cent.[22] There were similarly substantial increases in the export of textiles, including the world-famous Dhaka muslin, surplus rice and other foodstuffs along with manufactured goods to Delhi and other parts of India by the land and river routes as well as to the rest of the world by maritime routes.

In order to meet its objective of maximizing revenue collection, the Mughal revenue system recognized the importance of keeping cultivators content and incentivized so that they would continue to bring more and more virgin forest lands under the plough. In this context the forest pioneer became the key figure who was carefully chosen and given *zamindari* (land rights) on favourable terms, including tax-free tenures of land as well as grants in exchange for certain conditions. The first of these was the requirement of maintaining loyalty to the Mughal state. The second was to mobilize local labour for cultivating the land and to adequately look after the cultivators dependent on

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him, including by advancing them rice, seeds and cash. Yet another condition, which allowed these forest pioneers, whether Hindu or Muslim, to play a decisive role in the religious development of the region was to build a temple or mosque on the land which would be supported in perpetuity by the yield produced. The support included providing for preachers, Quran readers and muezzins.

Subsequent religious and demographic patterns in the eastern region evolved in direct proportion to the number of grants given to Hindu or Muslim land pioneers. Since the majority of such pioneers were Muslims, it was mosques and Islamic piety that developed throughout East Bengal. Those seeking tax-free land included local chieftains and pirs, mullahs and pilgrims returned from Mecca. The people attracted to the mosques came as peasant cultivators or 'clients' of the zamindar. Most of them had hitherto been local fishermen or *jhum* (shifting) cultivators beyond the pale of Hindu society. They did not see themselves as being 'converted' to a new religion or as breaking with their past, but rather as accepting new ideas which gradually seeped into and became part of their own local cosmologies. After their death many of these charismatic Muslim pioneers continued to be revered as pirs or holy men and their tombs were worshipped. Some of them achieved the status of legendary saints enshrined in epic poems and popular folklore as individuals who expanded the frontiers of both religion and agriculture.

Thus the epic poem *Chandi Mangala* composed in 1590 by the poet Mukundaram celebrates equally the goddess Chandi, the hero Kalaketu who wants to clear the forest and the pir Zafar Mian who comes from the west with twenty thousand men to clear the forest. Saiyid Sultan's epic poem *Nabi-Bamsa* composed in Chittagong in the late 16th century

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seeks to connect Islam with Bengal's earlier religious traditions by presenting Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva, Rama and Krishna as successive prophets of God, followed in turn by Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Muhammad. Adam and Abraham are presented as good agriculturists, who cleared the forest and tilled the land. The message is that to be a good Muslim one must cultivate the earth, as Adam did.

In the late 17th century, the poem *Ray-Mangala* settled the conflict between the Bengali tiger-god Daksin Ray (King of the South) and the Muslim pioneer Badi Ghazi Khan by elevating the latter as a revered saint and resolving that from now on, in the Sundarban forest of southern Bengal there would be a dual religious authority, symbolized by placing the tiger-god's head at the burial mound of the Muslim saint: together yet mutually distinct. This epitomized the spirit of tolerance and equality that characterized Bengali society towards the end of the Mughal period 'so much so that large masses accepted Islam and even Hinduism was deeply affected as traceable in some of the elements of the Chaitanya movement'.[23]

Indeed, the spread of Islam into the rural areas of Bengal during Mughal rule had been so gentle, accommodative and non-confrontational that the successor regime of British colonial rulers remained unaware of it. It is only the results of the first official census of Bengal province in 1872 that revealed Muslims as 70 per cent or more in the districts of Chittagong, Noakhali, Pabna and Rajshahi and over 80 per cent in Bogra. With the exception of the Chittagong Hill Tracts region, where the population of Muslims was less than 10 per cent, all the districts of East Bengal, corresponding approximately to present-day Bangladesh, had a Muslim population of more than 50 per cent.

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In conclusion, the advent of Islam in Bengal has been an assimilative, composite and gentle process. Bengal's Hindu and Buddhist traditions, stretching into the ancient past have seeped deeply into the cultural consciousness of the people of the region. The coming of Islam, beginning with the 13th century, greatly added to the richness of Bengali civilization, thinking and culture: Islam metamorphosed and strengthened these, without supplanting or destroying them.

In Mughal Bengal we see the remarkable coming together of geographic, political, economic, demographic and cultural forces that resulted in the spread and establishment of Islam throughout this region. The mainstay of this process in Bengal was not the urban ashraf Muslim but the forest pioneer and the peasant cultivator. 'It is a testimony to the vitality of Islam, and one of the clues to its success as a world religion, that its adherents in Bengal were so creative in accommodating local socio-cultural realities with the norms of the religion'.[24]

NOTES

1. Richard M. Eaton, *The Rise of Islam and the Bengal Frontier 1204–1760*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994, p. 4.
2. Abdul Momin Chowdhury, 'Ancient Bengal', in A.F. Salahuddin Ahmed and Bazlul Mobin Chowdhury (eds.), *Bangladesh: National Culture and Heritage*, Dhaka: Independent University, Bangladesh, January 2004, p. 54.
3. Ibid., p. 69.
4. Eaton, 1994, p. 10.
5. Ibid., pp. 12–13.
6. In his book *Muruj al-dhahab* [*Les prairies d'Or*], quoted in Eaton, 1994, p. 11.

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7. K.M. Mohsin, 'Muslim Conquest : Bengal Sultanate', in Ahmed and Chowdhury, 2004, p. 98.
8. Eaton, 1994, p. 30.
9. Ibid., p. 71.
10. *Ibn Battuta Rehla*, p. 239 quoted in Eaton, 1994, p. 130.
11. Ibid., p. 131.
12. Ibid., p. 81, including footnote 31.
13. Ibid., p. 50.
14. Ibid., p. 60.
15. Ibid., p. 131, footnote 54.
16. Ibid., p. 70.
17. Ibid., p. 176.
18. Richard M. Eaton, 'Who Are Bengal Muslims? Conversion and Islamization in Bengal', in Rafiuddin Ahmed (ed.), *Understanding the Bengal Muslims*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001, p. 31.
19. Ibid., p. 31 and footnote 1 on p. 44.
20. Eaton, 1994, page 181.
21. Ibid., p. 134.
22. Ibid., p. 199.
23. Ibid., p. 128, footnote 43, quoting Abdul Karim's 'Social History'.
24. Eaton, 2001, p. 44.

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Hussain believes that the Muslims of Bihar had a distinct identity consciousness which drew them to the national movement. The concept of muttahidah qaumiyat or composite nationalism that served as a modus vivendi prevented Bihari Muslims from charting out a course separate from mainstream nationalism.

15

The Freedom Movement and the Muslims of Bihar: Delineations on Minority Identity and National Independence

MEHER FATIMA HUSSAIN

The Muslims in Bihar constitute a religio-linguistic minority group whereas the Hindus form the majority community. According to the 1931 Bihar census report, Hindus comprised 83 per cent of the population and Muslims 10.1 per cent. In the historical and cultural context, a minority can be defined as a group which is numerically smaller in relation to the rest of the population, it is non-dominant to the extent that its values are either inadequately or not represented in the public sphere or in the constitution of societal norms, it has characteristics which differ from the majority group and, more importantly, it wishes to preserve these characteristics.[1]

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The significance of identity in the self-perception of a community has increased in importance as societies have passed from tradition to modernity.[2] In this context, it is pertinent to mention that the Muslims of Bihar entertained distinct identity consciousness on grounds of religion and culture but despite their minority status were drawn in more ways than one to the clarion call of the nationalist movement. Usually historical accounts of the Muslims of colonial India focus on their separatist tendencies. Francis Robinson argues that the Muslims have certain primordial traits which direct them towards separatism, they are an innately separate political entity and there are always some symbols in their cultural storehouse which are used for political mobilization. Muslims are moved by a sense of brotherhood and cultural superiority and feel the need to have a Muslim government. This was the reason why the Muslim League was supported in its demand for Pakistan by Muslim minorities in both north and south India.[3]

However Francis Robinson's assertions ignore the different kinds of stratification of South Asian Islam based on class, region, language, dialect, sect etc. The anti-colonial and collaborative positions taken with the Congress by the Darul-Ulum at Deoband, Jamiat-ul-Ulema-i-Hind (JUH), Patna-based Imarat Shariah (the leading religious and cultural institution of Bihar), All India Momin Conference, Rayeen Conference, Mansoori Conference and Shia Political Conference have been totally ignored by him. Maulana Sajjad, *naib amir* (deputy leader) of Imarat Shariah was explicit in his rejection of the Pakistan scheme, *muttahidah qaumiyat* or composite nationalism served as the modus vivendi and the Bihari Muslims in particular abstained from charting a separatist course. Papiya Ghosh in her study[4] explored the theoretical paradigms concerning Muslims

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acquiring a sense of 'Islamic political community' from the later part of the 19th century. She disagreed with arguments that exemplify Muslims as adhering to a long-standing sense of community and distinct political entity based exclusively on the sense of religion. Her arguments are ranged against Farzana Sheikh's linkages of 'Muslim political action' as 'dominant Islamically derived political discourse' and the Muslim League's claim to represent Indian Muslims after the 1937 election debacle, rooted in Mongol-Mughal political values and norms, identifying with the ruling power, belonging to a superior race and therefore having the advantage of deference. To Farzana Sheikh, those who subscribed to these claims found Western liberal representation 'fundamentally inadmissible' as it denied the claims to power based on class and race as legitimate grounds for claiming representation.[5] Therefore, after the Congress won the elections in six of the eleven provinces, M.A. Jinnah postulated a Muslim nation whose rights were to be represented disengaged from numerical criteria, Muslimness being an elementary condition for legitimate power. Not only did the Congress not represent Muslims but as a non-Muslim body, it could not represent the Muslim consensus. Farzana Sheikh argues that among Muslims there was an awareness of the ideal of Muslim brotherhood, a belief in the superiority of the Muslim culture and recognition of the belief that Muslims ought to live under a Muslim government right across the political spectrum. These assertions are contested by Papiya Ghosh who cites the positions of JUH, Momin Conference and other religio-cultural institutions during the freedom movement. Through Imarat Shariah, the JUH tried to spread its doctrine of muttahidah qaumiyat that had two main sources of inspiration, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and Maulana Hussain

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Ahmad Madani. Maulana Azad in 1920 'resurrected' the concept of *ummah wahidah* (multi-religious state), which he later took to translating as muttahidah qaumiyat with an emphasis on nationalism and unity. Maulana Azad deployed Prophet Muhammad's alliance with the non-Muslims at Madinah in 628 AD as the basis of ummah wahidah and showed that Prophet Muhammad believed in a multi-religious state, a precedent politically practicable and applicable to India. Maulana Hussain Madani, JUH's president, theorized muttahidah qaumiyat in 1938 and asserted that Hindus and Muslims were co-partners in nation-making. Abdul Qayum Ansari, the leader of the Momin Conference contested the Muslim League's assertions of the Muslims constituting a monolithic community, since the League represented the upper-class *sharif* and not the *razil* (labouring class of Muslims) with total disregard to the interests of Muslim minority provinces. Papiya Ghosh cites Mushirul Hasan's observation that,

> ...given the deeply fractured and fragmented internal structures of the Muslim community, the organization of Muslims as a religious collectivity was and is based on mistaken assumptions.[6]

Paul R. Brass, through the Instrumentalist theory argues that ethnicity is to be seen as the pursuit of interest and advantage for members of groups whose cultures are infinitively malleable and manipulatable by elites.[7] The ideology of Muslim separateness did not flow necessarily and inexorably out of the objective differences between Hindus and Muslims, but out of the uses which were made of those differences through the manipulation of symbols of Muslim unity and Hindu-Muslim separateness by an elite class concerned to preserve its political privileges.[8] The

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Instrumentalist thesis of Paul R. Brass, however, fails to explain the case of Bihar, where also, as in the United Provinces, the Muslims were far ahead of Hindus in education and jobs, thus constituting the elite section of the region. However, unlike the Muslims of the United Provinces, the Muslims of Bihar did not chart an antagonistic course either in establishing educational institutions or in taking positions against colonial rule. On the contrary Bihar presented the ideal ground of Hindu-Muslim unity when the two collaborated to demand the separation of Bihar and Orissa regions from the dominance of the elite *bhadralok* class of Bengali Hindus, which they finally achieved in 1912. Also, the demand for separate electorate was emphatically opposed by Mazharul Haq, Syed Hasan Imam, Syed Ali Imam and Syed Mahmud.

M.A. Jinnah at the Muslim League's annual session held at Delhi in 1943 expressed that the Muslims in minority provinces championed the cause of Pakistan more than the Muslims of majority provinces; he said 'it was the minority provinces which spread the light when there was darkness in the majority provinces'.[9] The Muslims in Bihar constituted a religio-linguistic minority group who were assertive of their cultural identity, but were opposed to the creation of a separate Islamic homeland for the Muslims as stressed by Jinnah. Mushirul Hasan argues that,

> India's independence in 1947 was the culmination of a prolonged and sustained movement. The 'two-nation theory' was conceived by a small group and it hardly reflected the consciousness of a community.[10]

Also,

> ...put briefly, a decidedly elitist discourse should not be seen as reflective of Indian Muslims or their so-called

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communal consciousness. Nor can the politics of Muslim identity be reduced to a mere rationalization of normative Islamic discourse. Identities have seldom been unified; in British India, they were not only multiple but also invariably fractured owing to the working of an inherently disruptive colonial system.[11]

In the struggle for freedom, the Muslims played a dominant role and the resistance to the communal and separatist movement came invariably from all nationalist quarters. The *ulema* (Muslim theologians and scholars) supported the Congress and even issued a *fatwa 'nasratul ibrar'* (meaning, holy alliance) in this regard, followed by several others, exhorting their community members to participate in the freedom movement. Some distinguished supporters of Congress were Maulana Rashid Ahmad Gangohi, Mahmudul Hasan, Shibli Naumani, Mohammed Ali Monghyri, Shah Suleman Phulwarevi and others. Though religiously conservative, politically the ulema were very progressive, and the Congress-ulema alliance remains a unique feature of the Indian national movement.[12]

The Bihar Provincial Muslim League (BPML) was set up on 15 March 1908 and the leading Congressmen Syed Ali Imam and Mazharul Haque were elected its president and secretary, respectively. They endeavoured to bring the policies of the League in consonance with those of the Congress. In the movement for separation of Bihar from Bengal, educated and enlightened Muslims were in the forefront. An Urdu journal *Murgh-e-Suleman* of Monghyr (Bihar) dated 7 February 1876 demanded 'Bihar for the Biharis', a slogan that became the rallying point of the agitation. The movement got the guidance of Sachidananda Sinha, Mahesh Narayan, Ali Imam, Hasan Imam, Mazharul Haque, Mohammad Fakhruddin, Syed Sharfuddin and

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Sarfaraz Hussain Khan and the demand was conceded in 1912, paving the way for greater nationalist collaboration. Mazharul Haque presided over the Muslim League session of 1915 at Bombay in a daring and an anti-colonial tone.[13] The session was also attended by a delegation of the Congress on a goodwill mission including leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, M.M. Malaviya and Annie Besant. It was against this background that the Lucknow Pact was signed by the Congress and the Muslim League in 1916. It is however unfortunate that in spite of the better political understanding that was arrived at in 1916, the *Gaurakshini* (cow-protection) movement by Hindus directed against Muslim sacrificial practices caused immense communal tension. The movement was strong in Bihar among Rajputs, Brahmans and the Kayasthas, and around 1908, in South Bihar the recrudescence of the movement overlapped with the *Gwala* (milkman) movement which was an attempt by the *Ahirs* (cultivating caste) to improve their caste status. By 1912 the leadership of the Gwala movement was also captured by the Rajputs, Brahmans and the Kayasthas.[14] Consequently, Bihar in 1917 suffered from one of the most serious riots at Shahabad over the issue of *gaukushi* (cow killing). Gyanendra Pandey called it 'a colossal outbreak of violence'.[15] In the enquiry reports of the Congress and the Muslim League put together by Mazharul Haque, facts were concealed deliberately to check the growth of the schism between Hindus and Muslims. The Bhagalpur Conciliation Board even made it a rule to dissuade Muslims from performing cow sacrifices in order to harmonize Hindu-Muslim relations. Mahatma Gandhi in his speech at Bettiah and Muzaffarpur in 1917 and again at Bettiah in 1920, supported the gaurakshini movement, and simultaneously attacked the British for daily slaughtering of cows

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(approximately 30,000 a day) against the occasional cow sacrifice by the Muslims. Queen Victoria way back in December 1893 had expressed her suspicion to Viceroy Lansdowne:

> ...though the Mohammadans' cow killing is made the pretext for the agitation, it is in fact directed against us, who kill far more cows for our army, etc. than the Mohammadans.[16]

Significantly, the year 1917 also marked the beginning of the Gandhian era in the history of the national movement as Mahatma Gandhi successfully experimented with *satyagraha* (passive resistance, literally truth-force) and non-violence at Champaran in Bihar. Also, Montagu, the Secretary of State made his historic declaration on 20 August 1917 for self-government and gradual realization of responsible government in India. The Indian National Congress at its special session held at Bombay in September 1918 under the presidentship of Syed Hasan Imam categorized the reform scheme as unsatisfactory and demanded elected legislature and a responsible executive, separate finance and public services. A deputation was sent to Britain under Syed Hasan Imam to impress upon the government to grant a constitution duly accepted by the majority of the people of India on behalf of the Congress, All India Home Rule League and Muslim League. The Congress and Muslim League thus presented a formidable united front in opposing the reforms.[17] The Khilafat and Non-Cooperation movements (NCM) also presented a united opposition to British imperialism. The Khilafat movement's alliance with nationalistic forces is often denounced as being 'ephemeral and opportunistic' in nature, Muslims joining the Congress and accepting Mahatma Gandhi's leadership being motivated merely by

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religious considerations. Mushirul Hasan argues that the debate is centred on the supposed contradiction between Indian nationalism and 'Islamic nationalism' and can be disregarded, for its implications, if any, were hardly discernible in the religious political trends of the 1920s. He also observes that

> ...it is a lesser known fact of modern Indian history that the Khilafat committees in some areas were often indistinguishable from local Congress bodies, volunteer groups, Kishan Sabhas and Home Rule Leagues in their composition and political objectives.[18]

Mazharul Haque established the Sadaquat Ashram at Patna which served as the office of the Provincial Congress Committee, and the Bihar Vidyapith to accommodate students who had boycotted government schools and colleges in the wake of the NCM. Women's participation was also high and Begum Abadi Bano alias *bi-amman* (mother of the Ali Brothers), Mrs Md. Shafi, Sharda Devi, Mrs Wahab, Mrs Manzoor and others arduously toured the remote villages of Bihar to champion the cause of *swaraj* (self-rule) and the NCM, generating consciousness among women of the struggle for the freedom of the country.[19]

The cultural aspirations of the Bihari Muslims strongly centred around the language issue and winning safeguards for Urdu, since Bihar constituted a multilingual state with languages such as Hindi, Urdu, Awadhi, Magahi, Maithali, Bhojpuri and even Bengali spoken in the province. The formation of Nagari Pracharini Sabha at Benaras in 1893, the Hindi Sahitya Sammelan at Allahabad in 1910 for promoting the cause of Hindi, and Anjuman-e-Taraqqi-e-Urdu in the United Provinces in 1903 to defend Urdu,[20] created rival camps. The Anjuman was initially affiliated to the Muslim Education Conference and assumed

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independent status in 1912, henceforth thriving under the secretaryship of Maulvi Abdul Haq.[21] M.A. Ansari at the annual session of the All India Muslim League held at Delhi in 1918 upheld the cause of Urdu as the literary, economic and political language of the country.[22] By 1920, a via-medium was being worked out by Mahatma Gandhi who was sincerely asking Hindus and Muslims to accept Hindustani as the national language. The Anjuman-e-Taraqqi-e-Urdu in Bihar came into being in 1923, through the efforts of Zubair Ahmed and Qazi Abdul Wadood and got affiliated with All India Anjuman-e-Taraqqi-e-Urdu in 1938. On 19 January 1925 a non-official resolution was moved by Saidul Haque in the Bihar and Orissa Legislative Council to recognize Urdu as an official language in Bihar. The Provincial Congress Committee had already adopted both Hindi and Urdu in the proceedings and Rajendra Prasad had supported the popular demand, but the resolution was opposed by Sachidananda Sinha. In a special meeting of Anjuman-e-Bihar held on 2 February 1925 at Patna city, deep regrets were expressed at government's policy of not adopting Urdu. In 1925 a resolution was passed in the Congress session that the lingua franca or the national language of the future India would be Hindustani written in both Nagari and Persian scripts, but the resolution failed to win the support of the zealots of the Hindi and Urdu languages. At the political level, the Nehru Report also brought mixed responses, and divided the provincial Congress Muslim leadership, with Syed Mahmud favouring and Shafi Daudi and Mohammad Fakhruddin opposing it. Syed Mahmud and Abdul Bari remained close to the All India Muslim Nationalist Party formed in 1929 to mobilize support for the Congress in general and the Nehru Report in particular. Unfortunately, the years 1923–28 were hit by

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at least 31 serious riots caused by the playing of music near mosques.[23]

Due to these political and cultural developments and rampant riots, there was low participation of Muslims in the Civil Disobedience Movement though the Bihar branch of JUH constantly encouraged Muslims to participate in the movement. The Muslim Independent Party (MIP) was floated in 1936 with Maulana Sajjad as president, and its manifesto included provisions to safeguard the interests of the Muslims, but its economic and political programmes were similar to that of the Congress. In the Bihar legislative election of 1937 the MIP won 15 out of 40 reserved seats, the Congress won 5 of the 7 Muslim seats it contested, while the BPML did not contest the elections. Before the Congress formed its 1937–39 ministries, Mohammad Yunus of the MIP led the interim ministry between April and July 1937. The Congress later with 98 out of 152 seats in the Legislative Assembly formed the ministry on 20 July 1937. During its tenure of two years in ministry, the Congress failed to share power with Muslim leaders and often ignored the sensitive political and cultural issues including the cause of Urdu. Syed Mahmud, the Education Minister in the Bihar Congress government, formed a committee with Rajendra Prasad as chairman and Maulvi Abdul Haq, Maulana Azad, Zakir Hussain, Syed Suleman Nadvi, Sachidananda Sinha and others as members, with the assigned task of compiling textbooks, a dictionary comprising the basic vocabulary and grammar of Hindustani language, including technical terms and phraseology for use by Hindi and Urdu writers. The committee failed to make progress and the dictionary of Hindustani prepared by Maulvi Abdul Haq was denied attention.[24]

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Some more and genuine complaints against the provincial Congress can be comprehended in Maulana Sajjad's letter addressed to the top Congress leaders. This mentioned that S.K. Sinha had been preferred to Syed Mahmud for the premiership and that Sir Sultan Ahmad had been replaced by Baldev Sahay as Advocate General of Bihar, also the Congress had failed to appoint a single Muslim to the Rural Development Department for two years. 'The Muslims had begun to feel that on issues of power sharing they were being totally ignored' and Maulana Sajjad made a humble appeal to the Congress to undertake a 'self examination of its failings and errors'.[25] The letter was however not made public by him since it would have further embittered Muslim sentiments towards the Congress.

The JUH held its annual session at Delhi from 3 to 6 March 1939, and in the presidential address Maulana Hussain Madani criticized the Wardha and the Vidya Mandir schemes, chiefly on the ground that they had totally ignored Muslim religious education. He deplored the tendency to unnecessarily revive the use of Sanskrit words in the Hindustani language which was being evolved. The JUH finally pointed out that this tendency, if not discouraged, would lead to further suspicion among Muslims against the Congress.[26] Similar complaints constituted a significant part of the Pirpur Report of the Muslim League and the Shareef Report of the BPML, published at Patna in December 1939.[27] The main issue of concern expressed in the Shareef Report was that Urdu medium *maktabs* (schools) were very few, Muslim teachers even fewer, and financial aid to schools and institutions was inadequate. Speaking at the Patna session of the Muslim League in December 1939, M.A. Jinnah argued that the Congress motive for advocating Hindustani was to suppress Urdu.[28] The efforts to maintain Hindu-Muslim

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unity suffered a further setback in 1940 following the death of Maulana Sajjad, the crusader for communal harmony.

Despite resentments, Muslim participation in the Quit India Movement was high. Taqi Raheem in his work provides a long list of Muslim freedom fighters who were in the forefront of the movement, imprisoned or martyred.[29] The Imarat Shariah's contestations of the Pakistan movement centred on the Muslim League's neglect of the minority provinces and the *ghair Islamiyat* (un-Islamic ways) of the Muslim League's leadership. Maulana Sajjad ridiculed the 'hostage argument' of M.A. Jinnah that was premised on two strange assumptions: one that any injustice done to the Muslims in provinces where they were in a minority could be avenged on Hindu minorities residing in Muslim majority provinces. The other, that the potential threat of retaliation by majority provinces would deter the victimization of Muslims in Hindu majority provinces. In reply, Maulana Sajjad wrote, the first argument implied a violation of the shariat as it would amount to un-Islamic treatment of loyal citizens; the second was unlikely, if historical precedents were anything to follow.[30] Apart from Imarat Shariah, another formidable organization that consistently fought against the Muslim League was the Momin Conference that also mobilized non-Momin backward classes of Muslims.

Syed Ali Zaheer, the president of the Shia Political Conference drafted a letter addressed to M.A. Jinnah requesting him to elucidate and define the status of the Shias in the scheme of Pakistan as proposed by the Muslim League. The letter demanded certain assurances such as religious freedom, fair elections and reservation of seats in ministries, legislatures and all elected bodies in proportion to their population for the Shias in Jinnah's proposed state of Pakistan. M.A. Jinnah in his letter dated 31 August 1944

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refused to accept such demands and made it clear that the Muslim League did not recognize any other Muslim political organization on equal footing.[31] The Shia Committee resolution declared Jinnah's reply unsatisfactory and in the process of the articulation of its demands gave primacy to the cause of national liberation. The MIP by this time was a member of the Bihar Muslim Parliamentary Board comprising JUH, Momin Conference and Congress Muslims, that was formed at a meeting held at Khanquah Rahmania at Monghyr in October 1945 in support of campaigning for the independence of the country and by extension of the *millat* (community). The nationalist and minority concerns were elucidated by the Imarat Shariah which expressed faith in the principle that 'those who lived in the country were a pre-existing nation: *Kul Sarzameen-e-Hind Ke Rahne Wale Ek Qaum Ke Hain*' and Urdu not a *mazhabi zaban* (religio-cultural language) but a *mulki zaban* (language of the land). Sajjad Zaheer suggested that in the formulation of the language policy 'the will of the masses shall prevail, and that both Hindi and Urdu should be the national language of India, with a suitable enhancement of their shared elements.'[32]

Unfortunately, the intractable growth of communal differences and pogroms in the 1940s limited the appeal of secular leaders. On 23 March 1941, the Muslim League celebrated 'Pakistan Day' provoking the Hindu Mahasabha to organize 'Pakistan Opposition Day' on 27 April, leading to outbreak of a massive riot in Bihar Sharif. The communal polarization intensely sharpened after the Muslim League's observance of 'Direct Action Day' that unleashed gory riots in parts of East Bengal. Riots broke out in Bihar when on 25 October 1946 'Noakhali Day' was being observed by eminent Congressmen of the district including Jagat Narayan Lal,

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K.B. Sahay and Murli Manohar Prasad. On 26 October various villages were attacked leading to the merciless killing of innocent Muslims, including women and children, at Chapra, Patna, Bihar Sharif, Jehanabad, Monghyr, Bhagalpur, Banka, Saharsa, Gaya, Saran and Santhal Pargana. Syed Mahmud, Abdul Bari, Liyaqat Ali Khan, Jawaharlal Nehru and Mahatma Gandhi toured different villages of Bihar to control the communal frenzy. The situation was brought under control by 8 November 1946 through resolute action by Colonel Venning and his Madras Regiment's soldiers who fought with great determination against their own co-religionists.[33]

Tension between the Congress and JUH turned sharp in the wake of the 1946 riot. A JUH general body meeting presided over by Maulana Hussain Madani demanded the setting up of tribunals to decide riot cases, composite police pickets for areas of Muslim habitation, licenses for those Muslims who wanted to keep arms for self-defence, security support for re-conversion to Islam, the release of arrested Muslims and the continuation of refugee camps till conditions were favourable for the return of the homeless.[34] The Muslim Students' Federation issued a pamphlet titled 'Divide Bihar' at Gaya in April 1947, and Jafar Imam, the president of the BPML, demanded a separate homeland in Bihar for the five million Bihari Muslims. The proposed homeland was to include the entire districts of Purnea, South Bhagalpur, South Monghyr, Patna, Jehanabad, Nawada and some parts of Gaya.[35] Abdul Aziz, the most prominent BPML leader, persistently persuaded the Bihari Muslims not to migrate, and demanded that the government should issue immediate orders in terms of economic relief and assurances against any communal assault in future to Muslims settling in Muslim inhabited 'pockets'. This, he felt, was the most

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effective measure for containing Muslim migration out of Bihar.[36] Around December 1946, the exodus of the refugees from Bihar was split between Bengal in the east, and Sindh and Punjab in western India, and continued even after independence and partition. After 1946, 1971 was the next watershed for the Bihari migrants from East Pakistan. Given that many Biharis had supported the Pakistan military and joined the central government paramilitary forces in 1971, they came to be stigmatized as collaborators, were massacred, rendered homeless and the Bangladesh government declared them to be Pakistanis who should be returned to their home country. They have been living since 1971 in 66 refugee camps spread across Bangladesh, awaiting repatriation to Pakistan. The Stranded Pakistanis' General Repatriation Committee (founded in 1977) is working in this direction. Ghulam Sarwar floated the Bihari Bachao Committee at Patna in 1972 that urged the Indian government to allow the uprooted Biharis to return to Bihar.

The stranded Biharis are exposed to glaring atrocities leading to the gross violation of their minority and human rights, besides their loss of a homeland and national identity. Due to successive changes and political developments in South Asia, the problem of repatriation and settlement has got even more complex. Mushirul Hasan very succinctly observes,

> ...the bitter and violent contest over power-sharing reveals a great deal about three major themes that have dominated South Asian historiography—colonialism, nationalism and communalism. What it does not reveal, however, is how partition affected millions, uprooted from home and field and driven by sheer fear of death to seek safety across a line they had neither drawn nor desired.[37]

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With the creation of Bangladesh and eventual denial of nationality to 'stranded Biharis' in Bangladesh and *muhajirs* (migrants) in Pakistan, the fallacies of the Muslim League's partition rhetoric—of Muslims constituting a single state and Pakistan constituting the final destination for the Muslims—has been eventually exposed.

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This is a case study of the All India Muslim Mahaz which shows that the institution of caste was one of the operative categories within Indian Muslim society. As the movement came into being in the early 1990s, the struggle to improve the conditions of lower-caste Muslims was taken over by Pasmanda Muslim Mahaz which marked a new kind of Muslim politics that emphasized redistributive justice rather than identity and representation.

16

New Directions in Indian Muslim Politics: The Agenda of the All-India Pasmanda Muslim Mahaz[1]

ARSHAD ALAM

INTRODUCTION

Despite the oft-repeated assertion of Islamic egalitarianism on the part of a section of elite Muslims, and consequently the denial of caste among Muslims,[2] the mere fact that there are contemporary movements attempting to mobilize lower-caste Muslims should be proof enough that the institution of caste is one of the important operative categories within Indian Muslim society. Going back half a century, the All India Momin Conference,[3] a platform of lower-caste Muslims, particularly the Ansaris, had mounted a serious challenge to the Muslim League's

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attempt to speak on behalf of all Indian Muslims. Apart from pointing out the fissures within Muslim society, movements such as these critique the reified and static notions about the Indian Muslim 'community' so often seen in the representations of the *Ulama* and the religio-political Muslim elite. Moreover, such movements at the same time are an internal critique of the state of leadership within Indian Muslims and may presage a new kind of Muslim politics, a politics which would be at once more about redistributive justice than about identity and representation. The article considers one such movement, the All India Pasmanda Muslim Mahaz.

THE BEGINNINGS

The All Indian Pasmanda Muslim Mahaz (hereafter Mahaz) initially, during the early 1990s, was a much more localized affair, operating within Bihar, a state known for its deep caste divisions. The Mahaz was formed by an Ansari journalist, Ali Anwar, along with a few like-minded lower-caste Muslims. From time to time it published articles in regional newspapers about the need for lower-caste Muslims to unite on a common platform. The group had also participated in the 'save reservation rally' held in Delhi December 1998. It was perhaps happenings in faraway Delhi that strengthened their resolve to have an organization of their own. The event in question was the joint publication of 'Muslim Agenda 99', by a group of Muslim organizations such as the All India Muslim Personal Law Board, All India Muslim Majlis e Masshawwarat, Jamat e Islami Hind, All India Milli Council and Jamiat Ulama e Hind. The 'Muslim agenda 99' claimed that Indian Muslims were socially, economically and

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educationally backward because they were discriminated against. They demanded all-India reservations for Muslims by declaring them to be backward as a 'community' and hence in need of state support. Earlier in 1994, such a demand had already been raised by the Association for Promoting Education and Employment of Muslims, led by Syed Shahabuddin and Syed Hamid.[4] The 'Muslim Agenda 99' seems to have acted as a catalyst for the Mahaz who perhaps for the first time published its own booklet. Titled 'Pasmanda Agenda 99', it was brought out, on 15 August, 1999 under the name of Pasmanda Muslim Mahaz, Bihar, as the Mahaz was known at that time. It categorically rejected the 'Muslim Agenda 99', questioning the motives behind the grand alliance. The Mahaz argued that since the majority of the Muslims were already beneficiaries of reservation through the Mandal Commission recommendations, the real purpose of 'Muslim Agenda 99' seemed to be to bring upper-caste Muslims within the fold of reservations.[5] Further, it argued that such a move would be doubly dangerous. It would not only make the upper-castes more dominant as they would corner all the benefits of reservation, but would also lead to an unprecedented communal polarization of society. The booklet clearly articulated the political agenda of the Mahaz and its understanding of Muslim politics. Subsequent pamphlets and leaflets brought out by the Mahaz have sought to reiterate the issues originally raised in this pamphlet making it in a sense the foundational document of the Pasmanda Mahaz.

From being a regional voice, the Mahaz transformed itself into an all-India platform only in July 2004 when it organized a rally in Patna, Bihar. The leaflet circulated on the occasion was issued in the name of All India Pasmanda Muslim Mahaz.[6] Recognizing that there are different caste groups fighting

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for their rights in different parts of the country, the Mahaz declared that from now on it would become the umbrella organization for all these caste associations and would seek to coordinate their activities. As such the different organizations need not be dissolved but would maintain their separate identities connected to the All India Mahaz. The leaflet introduced the Mahaz as a social organization which works for justice for lower-caste Muslims in the country. But it minced no words in saying that if need be, it would not shy away from active politics, even in the form of having an independent political party of lower-caste Muslims.

THE POLITICS OF PASMANDA

Before trying to chart out the political terrain of the Mahaz, it is important to know what is meant by Pasmanda. The term *pasmanda*, as translated by the Mahaz, is a combination of two words, *pase* and *manda* which when joined together means those who have been left behind. The Pasmanda therefore, is the depressed, the downtrodden and the marginal sections of Indian Muslim society. The Mahaz argues that 80 per cent of all Indian Muslims are in this category, meaning that all Muslims excepting those belonging to upper-castes are downtrodden and depressed. The Mahaz, then, seeks to represent the politics of these sections of Indian Muslims. According to the Mahaz, Muslims can be divided into three broad categories: Ashraf, Ajlaf and Arjal. The Ashrafs are the highest in the caste hierarchy, tracing their descent through well maintained genealogies, frequently culminating in Central Asia and Arabia. Among themselves, they are divided into Saiyyids, Sheikhs, Pathans and Mughals; the Saiyyids being at the apex of the caste

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structure, tracing descent through the line of the Prophet. On the whole, the four are collectively noble as compared to the Ajlafs who comprise the castes of low social, economic, political and ritual status. These are the middle or the lower-middle castes of Ansaris (weavers), Kalaals (liquor sellers), Raeens (vegetable sellers), Quraishis (butchers), etc. The Ansaris are probably the most in terms of numbers, some estimates placing them at 40 per cent of the Indian Muslim population. The last category is that of the Arjals (singular *rizl*, meaning of no use) who occupy the lowest rung of Muslim society and have the lowest social status. A majority of these castes are considered unclean, even by other Arjals. Some of these castes are Lalbegis (scavengers), Dafalis (drum makers), Hawaris (cleaners), Dhobis (washermen), Halalkhor, Gadhedi, Bakho, Machuara, Nalband, Bhatiara, Gorkan, etc. While there are many more of these castes, their relative strength till today has been a matter of conjecture. As is clear from their caste names, these Muslim castes are known primarily through their occupation. Some of these castes, like Bakho and Nut, do not have a permanent dwelling place. The Mahaz claims that their socio-economic condition is worse than that of the Scheduled Castes. Their educational and economic condition is suggested in a survey of 100 households conducted in Patna. Out of a total strength of 574, only seven had passed their tenth standard, only three had done their intermediate and only one was a graduate. All seven who had completed school were jobless. Among the 100 households surveyed, there were only 5 persons who had government jobs, 2 of them being sweepers and 2 chaprasis. The same survey mentions that the rate of illiteracy for these 100 households was 62.5 per cent, and 26 per cent were chronically ill.[7]

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It is this lowest stratum of the Muslim population which is being increasingly called 'Dalit Muslims'. According to the Mahaz, the castes which comprise the Dalit Muslims are counterparts of Hindu Dalits. They argue that even the names of some of these castes are very similar to those of the Hindu Dalits and their occupations are similar. The Dalit Muslims, however, are way behind their Hindu counterparts. The reason for this, according to the Mahaz, is that they are not considered as SCs by the government. Hence, they have been denied facilities which their Hindu counterparts get. As a result of this they have lagged behind in every aspect. The Mahaz terms this a denial of justice which contravenes the equality principle enshrined in the Constitution. They allege that this constitutes discrimination in the name of religion, which is prohibited in the Constitution. One of the main demands of the Mahaz, therefore, is that these Dalit Muslims should be included in the Scheduled Caste category, and given the same benefits as Dalits of other religions. They point out that it does not need a Constitutional Amendment since the decision to exclude the Muslims from the category of Scheduled Castes was in the form of a Presidential Ordinance in 1950. Pointing to the pathetic conditions of these Muslim castes, the Mahaz puts forth the argument that their inclusion in the SC category will lead to their social, educational and economical empowerment. It is to be noted that most of these castes are beneficiaries of reservation under the Mandal Commission recommendations, but the Mahaz points out, and rightly so, that they are not in a position to make use of these benefits due to their pathetically low levels of education. It is perhaps this emphasis on the question of Dalit Muslims that puts the Mahaz on a different level from the Backward Muslim Morcha (hereafter Morcha), an organization centred in Bihar, which is concerned with the

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social and political advancement of backward Muslims.[8] However, whereas the Mahaz categorically posits that only certain castes among Muslims are qualified to be called Dalits, the Morcha uses the term Dalit Muslim in a much more nebulous fashion, including even dominant middle castes like Ansaris in the category.[9] Moreover, the Morcha has at times voiced its willingness to include the upper-caste of Sheikhs among the beneficiaries of reservation. The category of Sheikh is perhaps the most fuzzy and fluid among Indian Muslims: many lower-caste Muslims have entered this category as a result of Islamization. However, this attempt by the Morcha to include even such a fluid category undermines a deeper understanding of symbolic violence within the institution of the caste system. It is perhaps for this reason that the Morcha is losing its ground among lower-caste Muslims.[10]

This demand of Dalit Muslims does not, however, deny the depressed and backward status of the majority of Indian Muslims, which the Mahaz terms as Pasmanda. Now even though theoretical Islam discourages discrimination among Muslims except on the basis of piety and gender, its practice has been quite different.[11] Some of this discrimination is subtle, such as caustic everyday remarks against the lower-caste Muslims, calling them by their pejorative caste names, calling them foolish, unclean, of mixed blood etc. There have been instances where they have even been denied permission to lead prayers in the mosque, the most egalitarian of spaces. Frequently, it has been alleged by lower-caste Muslims that the mosques which they maintain are not funded adequately when it is known that a lower-caste man is the *imam* of the mosque.[12] On a much more visible level, the most important Muslim bodies have been staffed by upper-caste Muslims. Thus, starting from the various Madrasa

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Boards in various states to the high religious bodies like the All India Muslim Personal Law Board, various wakf boards, etc., are all manned by Ashraf Muslims. Similarly, most of those who claim to represent Muslims politically are Ashraf whereas the majority of Muslims are non-Ashraf.[13] Some of this discrimination has even been religiously legitimized. Thus the famous Deobandi Alim, Ashraf Ali Thanwi seems to justify caste endogamy in the name of similarity of 'social background'.[14] Similarly, the ideologue of Ahl e Sunnat wa Jamaat (popularly called the Barelwis), Ahmad Riza Khan Barelwi categorically states that even if Julahas and cobblers become Alim, they cannot claim equality with the Shareef (Ashraf) Muslims.[15] It seems, therefore, plausible to argue that beneath the veneer of Islamic egalitarianism, lie practices of institutionalized discrimination based on caste. Indeed within the Ashraf Muslims, there is a distinct conception of purity of blood which they seek to maintain and perpetuate. Although it is not expressly acknowledged, the concept of '*khandan*' becomes very important when it comes to issues of marriage. Leading Ashraf families are proud to maintain a *shajra* (lineage chart) which documents their foreign origin, their nearness to the Prophet or his Companions, and consequently their difference from lower-caste Muslims who are indigenous converts. Ironically, these very Ashraf Muslims, who pride themselves on their difference, are the leaders of the majority of Indian Muslims, who are Ajlafs and have much in common with other Indians. It is for this reason perhaps that the Mahaz constantly asserts through its pamphlets the need to recognize that until the leadership is in the hands of the Ajlas, Pasmanda Muslims, their problems will not be solved.

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CRITIQUE OF MUSLIM LEADERSHIP

In a fundamental sense the Mahaz was born due to the disillusionment of lower-caste Indian Muslims with the kind of politics being practised by the existing Muslim leadership. A critique of this leadership, therefore, is part of the core agenda of the Mahaz. As noted above, the Muslim leadership is in the hands of Ashraf Muslims. In north India, the Mahaz carries forward the legacy of Abdul Qaiyyum Ansari and others who had questioned this kind of representation way back in the 1940s. While it agrees that there may not be many Muslim lower-caste candidates who can compete with the upper-caste Muslims for government jobs, it questions their scarcity within religious and political institutions which do not require modern educational capital for success. The prime question being asked is: why, even though lower-caste Muslims form the majority, they are not given a chance to contest elections and become MPs, MLAs, Councillors etc. This, they argue, is the result of vicious politics on the part of upper-caste Muslims who do not want lower-caste Muslim groups to come up. Among the many examples they cite is that concerning the Lok Sabha Elections 2004: the general secretary of Jamiat Ulama e Hind, Syed Mahmud Madni contested against a sitting Muslim MP from Amroha, Ale Hasan Ansari, only because the latter was a lower-caste Muslim.[16]

The Mahaz notes that that the political parties look at the Muslims as forming a monolithic community, which is far from being true. There are a number of significant differences among them, the chief being caste; there are different traditions as well, some of which are simply too unorthodox to be grouped under the simple category of 'Muslim'. Ali Anwar, in his book *Masawat ki Jung*, refers to

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some of these cultural traditions of lesser known Muslim castes—Gaddi, Bakho, Nut etc.—having their own caste panchayats where Islam contends with the customary traditions of these castes for loyalty. The point is important for, in my opinion, it is a critique, not only of the way the government represents Muslims but also of the currently fashionable academic discourse on multiculturalism. Much of the Indian debate on multiculturalism operates within the categories of Hindu and Muslim Great Traditions, doing little justice to the plethora of Little Traditions within and across these two categories. This conception of multiculturalism oversimplifies the diversity in cultures by confusing culture with religion. Moreover, as a product of liberal theory, the discourse does not recognize the asymmetry of power relations within the social categories it employs. In seeking to foster a plural world, it is unwittingly strengthening the dominant religio-cultural complex, thus homogenizing an otherwise plural Indian Muslim society. Indeed in transforming questions of social and political equality into questions of cultural relations, multiculturalism in fact impoverishes and seriously compromises the old emancipatory project of social science.

Representation is not the only issue which the Mahaz raises concerning the contemporary Muslim leadership. At various places in their pamphlet, it comes across that their vision of Muslim politics is radically different from the currently dominant one. The Mahaz emphasizes that while it may be fashionable and convenient for others (meaning Ashraf Muslims?) to practise politics of secularism, it is of utmost importance to Pasmanda Muslims. What comes across plainly is a non-utilitarian understanding of secularism, which is at once different form the dominant Muslim understanding of secularism. The Mahaz does not view the Babri Mosque

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question as a Muslim question but rather argues that it is a national question and that it should be tackled at that level, not in secret parleys between the Sankaracharya and the All India Muslim Personal Law Board. The Mahaz claims that such moves can only increase the influence of already dominant sections (upper-castes among Muslims and Hindus) in Indian society. In fact, the Mahaz questions the very legitimacy of the All Indian Muslim Personal Law Board to be party to such talks. In the same vein, the Mahaz argues that the question of Urdu should not be seen in relation to Muslims. Those who do so do more harm than good to the cause of Urdu. Again they argue that it is a national question and should be tackled as such. While arguing against any state interference with the personal law of various communities, the Mahaz is critical of it in its present form and argues that it needs reform. Personal laws have changed in many Muslim countries, and there is no reason why it should not be possible to do the same in India. In short the Mahaz does not regard Muslim personal law as infallible and sacred, which makes its position very different from the mainstream attitudes in Muslim political and social formations.[17]

The other important agendas of the Mahaz include quality education for Muslim weavers and the adequate protection of their handlooms. The reason seems to be fair and simple. Ansaris, the Muslim weavers, are numerically the largest constituent among Indian Muslims. Being relatively mobile lower-caste Muslims, they have frequently been the target of Ashraf ridicule.[18] The Ansaris are perhaps the most numerous among those who today receive the traditional Islamic education in madrasas. The Mahaz, in arguing for quality education, indirectly criticizes the existing arrangement which makes Ansari students spend years in

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madrasas without receiving any training whatsoever which might enhance their skills for doing their business better than before.

The Mahaz also calls for implementation of reservations within those Muslim-managed organizations which receive state support.[19] For example, the Aligarh Muslim University is managed by Muslims but receives state funds. The Mahaz argues that AMU should reserve seats for weaker Muslim castes in all its courses. The demand is provocative and threatens dominant strata of current Muslim politics. AMU has been made a symbol of Indian Muslims. Any interference is construed as interference in the 'internal affairs of the community'. Now, this voice within the 'community' demands its share from those who have benefited the most under the prevailing arrangement. AMU apart, the several wakf boards and madrasa boards in various states are also the targets of this demand. Charging that most of these institutions are under the control of upper-caste Muslims, the Mahaz seeks to change such an arrangement, to make it more representative than at present.

The political agenda of the Mahaz, therefore, is very different from the current Muslim agenda which for the past 50 years has revolved around symbolic, emotive issues of protection of Personal Law, promotion of Urdu, autonomy of AMU and protesting the Babri demolition. A focus on these issues has led to the neglect of more consequential issues of education, poverty and employment and internal reform. It is perhaps not unfair to charge the Muslim leadership with taking the 'community' backwards in all these decades. The Mahaz in fact charges the religio-political Muslim leadership to be hand in glove with the BJP and RSS to keep these emotive religious issues alive so as to preserve its own relevance. Whatever the truth of this

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assertion, the fact remains that the contemporary Muslim agenda has to a large extent ignored issues of everyday concern of lay Muslims. In exposing the unrepresentative character of most Muslim bodies and bringing up the issue of everyday needs of the average Indian Muslim, the Mahaz has the potential to change the Indian Muslim political agenda. However, whether it will succeed in its mission remains to be seen since it is perhaps too early to understand the direction which this movement is taking. But a few observations are made in the concluding section.

ASSESSING THE MAHAZ

Ali Anwar explains that the word 'Pasmanda' should be understood more in class terms rather than in caste terms. He argues that the Mahaz represents a class of people from the lower Muslim castes who experience discrimination based on their caste status.[20] Moreover, these castes themselves have very low self-esteem of themselves. It is, therefore, necessary first to inculcate in them the sense of 'caste-confidence'. The Mahaz sees its present work as the preliminary phase of the struggle for equality in which questions of caste-based discrimination will be the most important. Maintaining that even a socially mobile low-caste person has low self-esteem, Anwar argues that inculcation of self-worth is the first stage of his movement. And this can be done through caste empowerment. Since in his opinion, caste feeling is deeply entrenched in Indian society, a low-caste Muslim, through acts of self-empowerment such as getting a government job or becoming a politician, simultaneously empowers his caste-fellows. Criticizing the Communist parties for turning a blind eye to this social reality, he argues that questions of

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caste are very important for re-appropriation of self-worth which has been denied to a section of Muslim society for centuries. It is only after this phase that questions of class would make sense within the Mahaz.

However, it must be pointed out that caste politics in sections of Indian society, despite claims to the contrary, has not escaped the caste matrix itself. The Bahujan Samaj Party, the Samajwadi Party and the Rashtriya Janata Dal are cases in point. While they promised to advance the democratic aspirations of the lower-castes, they have all failed to take that agenda forward. The RJD's Dalit policy in Bihar has not done much to take on the upper-caste private armies. More importantly, perhaps, the social bases of these parties themselves have witnessed what is called 'Sanskritization' which leads to the emulation of upper-caste lifestyle although on their own terms. In the process therefore they have themselves become more caste-conscious than ever before. There is nothing to suggest that a similar process will not happen in Muslim society. It has been noted already, that the parallel process of 'Islamization' within the Muslims leads to a strengthening of caste feelings.[21] During interviews with lower-caste Muslims, I was reminded of this social fact time and again.[22] While it would be fair to criticize the Ashraf Muslims for practising caste endogamy, lower-caste Muslims too are not free from it. During my stay in a predominantly Muslim north Indian *qasba*, I noticed that lowest-caste Muslims were freely abused by the intermediate-caste Muslims. The lowest-caste Muslims lived in a separate area of the town, and the locality was known by its caste name, *chamrauli*, an area where the Chamars live. Lalbegi and Halalkhor, the lowest-caste Muslims, whom the Mahaz calls Dalit Muslims, also lived there. Ansaris and Iraqis, of somewhat higher rank, who are substantial in number, have

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minimal and functional contacts with these Dalit Muslims; for the most part they have their own separate worlds. Yet the Mahaz has a sympathetic following here and one wonders if such practices do not defeat the very purpose of its politics.

But perhaps a more fundamental problem for the Mahaz would come from an important section of its social base, the lower-caste Muslim students and teachers at various madrasas. Even though Qasim Nanotwi, one of the founders of the madrasa at Deoband, opined that God entrusted learning to the four upper-castes, the brute fact is that Islamic education in India today is being carried on the shoulders of lower-caste Muslims. As I have argued elsewhere,[23] the very foundational principles of modern madrasas in India necessitate their operation among the lower-caste Muslims. In Azamgarh, my fieldwork showed that madrasa students came overwhelmingly from the lower-castes. The madrasas cannot do without these Ajlaf Muslim students; they come from very poor families in the hope of gaining a modicum of respectability and status in their society. In a sense they are the very reason for the existence of madrasa education in India. As upwardly mobile intermediate Muslim castes like Ansaris turn to modern English education (as is happening in Azamgarh), the madrasa will rely ever more on Muslims from the lower castes and classes to remain relevant in society. The average *alim* of today therefore, is most likely to be a low-caste Muslim, from the socially and educationally backward regions of Bihar, Bengal and Eastern Uttar Pradesh. The Islam being produced and internalized in these madrasas is a reified Islam, one for which it is an anathema to publicly acknowledge the existence of caste-based distinctions among Muslims. In other words, Muslims here are understood Islamically rather that sociologically. But perhaps more important is the fact that representations

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of Muslims as undifferentiated are in the interest of the madrasa which has to appeal to all sections of Muslims for financial support. Run mostly on community donations, the madrasa projects itself as an institution of the community as a whole; it would be suicidal for it to ally with organizations like the Mahaz, which in all probability would be termed as *fitna* by it. My own interaction with madrasa students led me to believe that the experience of caste discrimination hardly exists within the four walls of the madrasa, since most of the students are from lower-caste backgrounds. In the absence of this subjective realization, the Mahaz would have a tough time convincing them of its position. Moreover, these very students, once they graduate from the madrasas, will be opinion-makers in their respective localities since they are perhaps the only role-models for Muslims in the extremely backward regions of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. In the constitution of his own 'habitus', therefore, a madrasa graduate who has internalized the strategies of his own survival would in all probability reproduce and transmit the very same understanding of Islam which he gained from the madrasa where he studied. Moreover, as is well known, most of the religious institutions are controlled by Ashraf Muslims. There are reasons to believe that most of the funding for madrasas is provided by upper-caste Muslims. Under these circumstances speaking for greater lower-caste representation would automatically translate into an anti-Ashraf position. And a madrasa student can hardly take such a position without endangering his own prospects.

Ali Anwar is categorical[24] that his message will percolate down to even low-level Ulama. However, it seems to me that the Mahaz has no strategy through which to approach this important section. In my opinion, this constitutes a

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fundamental problem that the Mahaz needs to sort out. Only then perhaps can its larger agenda begin to look convincing.

NOTES

1. I am thankful to Ali Anwar, Usman Sb (Halalkhor) and many other activists of the Pasmanda Mahaz for their valuable time, which immensely helped me conceptualizing the problem. I would especially like to thank Professor Satish Saberwal for reading an earlier version of this paper and commenting on it.
2. The negation of caste among Indian Muslims has not only come from the politico-religious leaders but also from a section of Muslim academicians. See for example, F.R. Faridi, and M.M. Siddiqui (eds.), *The Social Structure of Indian Muslims*, New Delhi: Qazi Publishers, 1992. The collection of papers, in its own words, is an exercise in 'demolishing the presumption' that there are caste divisions within Muslim society.
3. Cf. Nafees Alam, *Momin Conference ki Vichardhara aur Rajniti ka Adhyayan, 1937–47*, (A Study of Momin Conference's Ideology and Politics), Unpublished MPhil Dissertation, Dept. of History, Jamia Milia Islamia, 2001. I am thankful to Dr Rizwan Kaisar for letting me go through this work done under his supervision. The writings of Qaiyyum Ansari and other leaders of the movement sought to expose the primarily sectional interest of Muslim League politics. See also Papiya Ghosh, 'Rartition's Biharis', *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, Vol. XV11, No. 2 (1997), pp. 21–33.
4. For details and the political conditions under which this demand was made, see Theodore P. Wright Jr., 'A New Demand for Muslim Reservations in India', *Asian Survey*, Vol. XXXVII, No. 9 (1997), pp. 853–8.

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5. Cf. *Pasmanda Muslim Agenda: Towards Twenty First Century*, Pasmanda Muslim Mahaz, Bihar, Patna, leaflet dated 15 August 1999.
6. Cf. *Pasmanda Jagao, Mulk Bachao*, All India Pasmanda Muslim Mahaz, Patna, leaflet dated 20 March 2004.
7. Cf. Ali Anwar, *Dalit Musalman* (in Hindi), New Delhi: All India Pasmanda Muslim Mahaz in alliance with World Dignity Forum and Heinrich Boll Foundation, 2004.
8. On the All India Backward Muslim Morcha, see Yoginder Sikand, 'A New Indian Muslim Agenda: The Dalit Muslims and the All India Backward Muslim Morcha', *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, Vol. 21, No. 2 (2001), pp. 287–96.
9. Personal interview with Dr Ejaz Ali, convener of All India Backward Muslim Morcha, 11 January 2002, Patna.
10. Another important reason for the Morcha loosing ground seems to be its hobnobbing with the BJP government during 2002–3 to gain favours for backward Muslims. This did not go down well even among the lower-caste Muslims.
11. Cf. Imtiaz Ahmad (ed.), *Caste and Social Stratification among Muslims in India*, New Delhi: Manohar, 1978, especially pp. 19–40 and 225–42; Ali Anwar, *Masawat ki Jung* (Struggle for Equality) (in Hindi), New Delhi: Vaani Prakashan, 2001.
12. Personal interview with Taufeeq Ahmad, founder of Madrasa Anwarul Quran, 5 January 2004, Azamgarh. The mosque-madrasa which he set up is perpetually short of funds to the point that even repair works get difficult. A Halalkhor (an extremely low Muslim caste which would qualify as a Dalit Muslim caste according to the Mahaz) by caste, Taufeeq Ahmad cited examples where he was denied funds for repairing his mosque, even as he claimed that money was made available by outside grants. According to his analysis, the only reason could be his lower-caste origins, since the mosques under Ashraf Muslims are never short of funds.
13. For details on the proportion of various Muslim castes in public bodies, see Ali Anwar, *Masawaat*, op. cit. It is rather hypocritical that Muslim leaders who cry hoarse about non-representation of Muslims in the Indian state sector, are

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utterly silent about the unrepresentative character of their own institutions.

14. 'A mature girl has the choice to marry or not to marry. She can marry whomsoever she wishes—no one can force her to marry a particular person. If she marries a person on her own, the *nikāh* will be valid irrespective of whether the *wali* is informed or not, and irrespective of whether the *wali* gives his consent or not. In all cases the *nikāh* will be valid. However, if she does not marry a person who is of the same social standing as her, and instead, *marries a person who is of a lower standing than her family*, and her *wali* is not happy about this marriage, *then the fatwā in this case is that the nikāh will not be valid.*' (Emphasis mine) The *wali* here means the legal guardian of the girl, frequently the father. The passage is taken from Thanwi's 'Book of Marriage' available on http://nazmay.com/islamicbooks/islamicbooks.php.
15. Cf. Fatawa Rizwiyya, Kitab un Nikah, Part 3, p. 117, quoted in Abdullah Danish, *Muslim Samaj Mein Jatiwaad* (Casteism in Muslim Society) (in Hindi), New Delhi: Shoshan Virodhi Manch, 1998.
16. Cf. *Open Letter to Electorates*, All India Muslim Pasmanda Mahaz, leaflet, undated.
17. Cf. *Pasmanda Muslim Agenda: Towards 21st Century*, Pasmanda Muslim Mahaz, Bihar, leaflet dated 15 August 1999.
18. Cf. Obaidullah Rahmani, *Tareeqh al Minwal* (in Urdu), Varanasi, 2004. I am thankful to Maulvi Qamruzzaman, a resident of Mubarakpur, for bringing this work to my notice. A lot of stereotypes about the Ansaris have also been the result of colonial writings. In this regard, see 'The Bigoted Julaha' in Gyan Pandey, *The Construction of Communalism in Colonial North India*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1990.
19. Cf. *Pasmanda Muslim Agenda*, leaflet.
20. Personal interviews with Ali Anwar and Usman Halalkhor, President and General Secretary of the Mahaz respectively, 12 December and 20 December 2004, Patna.

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21–22. Cf. Imtiaz Ahmad, op. cit., Introduction, p. 12. The observation is based on fieldwork conducted in 2004 in the north Indian town of Mubarakpur in Azamgarh and adjoining areas. Much of what follows is based on my observations there.

23. Cf. Arshad Alam, 'Understanding Madrasas', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 31 May 2003 and 'Understanding Deoband Locally: Interrogating Madrasa "Dhiya ul Ulum"' in Jan-Peter Hartung and Helmut Reifeld (eds.), *Islamic Education, Diversity and National Identity: Dini Madaris in India Post 9/11*, New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2006, pp. 175–95.

24. Personal Interview, 12 December 2004, Patna.

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Khan examines the influence of Sufism in Kashmir since medieval times, which emphasized social stability within the fundamentals of Islam.

17

Sinews of Sufism in Kashmir: Past and Present

MOHAMMAD ISHAQ KHAN

As an important centre of Sufism in the middle ages, Kashmir has since been known as the valley of rishis (*rishwaer*) or the Valley of Saints or pirs (*pirwaer*). Why is Kashmir not called *Islamwaer* or the valley of Islam or the abode of Islam (*daru'l-Islam*)? Is it that Sufis deviated from the teachings of Islam? Did they make compromises with the local culture? Were the Sufis different from the 'ulama, mistakenly considered to be the standard-bearers of the so-called 'Islamic Orthodoxy'[1] for their adherence to the law (*shari'ah*)? Is there any division between Sufism and the so-called established or institutionalized religion? Is it that the Sufis are 'liberal' in their interpretation of Islam, as against the 'ulama who stick to certain narrow or dogmatic interpretations of Islam? Several other questions exist that tend to show polarity between Sufism and Islam. For nearly three decades, I have been grappling with such questions. This essay seeks to provide an answer.

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Although the concept of the State in medieval Kashmir, as elsewhere in the Muslim world, was that of an absolute monarchy, based on military strength and exploitation of agricultural and artisanal labour, nevertheless, the rulers, by and large, sought to legitimate their authority by way of good governance. Without ever posing themselves as the champions of Islam or adherents of the so-called Islamic State, the Muslim rulers were deeply conscious of the religious susceptibilities of the non-Muslim population. Any direct affront to non-Muslims in terms of an avowed or hidden agenda of the State to demolish temples in order to strengthen the so-called cause of Islam versus infidelity (*kufr*) would have destabilized the Sultanate of Kashmir as early as its founding. As a matter of fact, references to the destruction of temples are particularly found during the time of Sultan Sikandar. But the person responsible for this was not the sultan himself but his minister, Suha Bhatt, a convert to Islam. Even if some critics may be misled by the Persian chroniclers' euologization of Sultan Sikandar as an iconoclast,[2] it cannot be denied that his convert minister's zeal had only a nullifying effect, since the sultan's son and successor, Zainu'l-'Abidin (AD 1420–70), reversed the policy of temple destruction. Not only did he allow reconversion to Hinduism, but he went to the extent of popularizing the Hindu religion while remaining steadfast to Islam.[3] Unquestionably, Zainu'l-'Abidin's close association with the Sufis and Muslim rishis impacted his policy of religious tolerance.[4]

Not surprisingly, therefore, the Kashmiri Brahman chroniclers extol the achievements of the sultans in hyperbolic terms. Pandit Jonaraja describes Rinchana's (Sultan Sadru'd-Din's) period as a 'golden age' for he 'gave rest to the land weary of trouble and disorder'.[5]

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Notwithstanding the Brahman chroniclers' sensitivities to the changes that occurred as a result of the Kashmiris' contact with the immigrant Muslims (*mlechhas*), they did not regard the State as a threat to their religion or institutions as it was the protector of its subjects against the forces of instability and every kind of fanaticism. When it was suggested to Shihabu'd-Din (1354–73) by his Hindu minister to melt the brass image of Buddha for coining it into money, the sultan, according to Jonaraja, angrily remarked:

> Past generations have set up images to obtain fame and even merit, and you propose to demolish them. Some have obtained renown by setting up images of gods, others by worshipping them, some by duly maintaining them, and some by demolishing them. How great is the enormity of such a deed.[6]

Significantly, Shihabu'd-Din's adviser on religious and administrative matters was the Kubrawiyya Sufi, Saiyid Taju'd-Din, for whom the sultan had constructed a *khanqah* (hospice) close to his palace in Srinagar. The sultan further granted the revenues of the village of Nagam for its upkeep.[7] Likewise the sultan supported the khanqah and the public charity kitchen (langar) founded in Kulgam by Saiyid Husain Simnani, a cousin of Saiyid Taju'd-Din, through state grant.[8] It was, however, the khanqah founded by Mir Saiyid Muhammad Hamadani in the name of his illustrious father, Mir Saiyid 'Ali Hamadani, which became the pivot of the activities of the Kubrawiyyas.

The advent of Saiyid Ali from Hamadan in Kashmir in 1394, along with a host of disciples, was, therefore, undoubtedly, part of the well-thought-out mission of the Sufis of the Kubrawiyya order to bring about the Islamic orientation of various independent sultanates that existed in Central Asia and Persia. A careful study of Saiyid Ali's

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magnum opus, *Dhakhirat al-Muluk*, and a bunch of his letters (*maktubat)* addressed to Muslim rulers, bring out the importance of his historical mission more as a Sufi scholar, teacher and missionary rather than as a radical reformer or revolutionary of Islam in the modern sense. What is of significance to emphasize is that Saiyid Ali had the intuitive ability to grasp the ethos of various cultures that he encountered during his extensive travels. While he did not want the rulers to impose the shari'ah from above, it was also his life-long mission to guide the rulers within the broader framework of the shari'ah. This explains the fact that the concept of shari'ah in his thought emerges as a never-ceasing concern of the ruler for the welfare of his subjects irrespective of religious differences. Although he uses the phraseology of believers and unbelievers in the context of the Qur'an, he brings home the eternal fact that the Creator makes no distinction in showering His bounties on all creatures. Thus, the Muslim ruler is repeatedly advised to render justice (*'adl*) and beneficence (*ihsan*) to his subjects on the basis of divine wisdom. According to Saiyid 'Ali, only such a ruler deserves to be called the deputy or the shadow of God on earth or the successor of the Merciful as constantly endeavours to enforce the shari'ah within the unbounded limits of its 'adl and ihsan. He is severely critical of a ruler who, guided by baser instincts or whims, violates the principles of tolerance and equity enshrined in the shari'ah. He denounces such a ruler as the deputy of the enemy of God (*naib-i dajjal)*. The sine qua non of Saiyid Ali's exhortations to Muslim rulers is a constant struggle, through personal piety, for establishing a welfare society on the social ethics of the shari'ah. His aim is not to make Islam subservient to the political interests of the State; rather it is to make the State serve the universal aims of *din*, namely,

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moral and social uplift of mankind through spiritual guidance and philanthropy.[9] This is the reason that the sultans not only accorded a warm welcome to the Kubrawiyya Sufis but also encouraged them to settle in the Valley as forces of social stability.

As a result of the traditions of tolerance and coexistence fostered initially by the Kubrawiyya Sufis, there grew up the devotional cults of the Brahmans around the Kubrawiyya khanqahs of Srinagar and Tral. The unique practice of ringing of bells by the Brahmans at these two khanqahs at the appointed time of the five-day daily prayers obtained in the Valley for several centuries. Within the domain of these khanqahs, Kashmiri Muslim religious life has continued to remain most flexible and accommodating. The rituals performed at these shrines have always tended to draw upon local religious vocabulary and local styles of verse; transmitting Islamic teachings in a form which may not be always described within the bounds of the shari'ah but certainly could be described within the culture that was born in its bosom. I have termed such an historical experience vis-à-vis Islam in Kashmir the shari'ah-oriented culture.[10] It can, therefore, be safely assumed that the ritual behaviour of Kashmiri Muslims is central to the position of unique strength that Islam enjoys in the Valley in spite of perceived or orchestrated threats to Kashmiri Muslim identity.

One of the abiding contributions of the Kubrawiyya Sufis to Islam in Kashmir was that they did not confine themselves to a narrow interpretation of the shari'ah. Considering contemplation and emotion crucial to the spiritual manhood of an individual, they sought to use them prudently as a particular method of approach to reality. Accordingly, no other ritual in the mosques and shrines of Kashmir has gained so much popularity over the centuries past as the

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practice of reciting an invocatory prayer, called *awrad-i fathiyya*, aloud in a chorus.[10] Likewise, the religious assemblies of the faithful in the mosques and the shrines of the Valley are marked also by the loud recitation of *durud*, *n'at*, and *manqabats* in chorus. Such recitations which gradually took on liturgical character are not just methods of approach to reality that have evolved through centuries of orderly evolution, but they are, indeed, a process of spiritual beginning having a certain location and a certain historical significance. The structure of contemplative and emotive life of a devotee of the shrine has certainly a discernible form which marks off the events contained in his collective behaviour from patent historical events.[11]

Although initially the khanqahs of the Suhrawardiyya and particularly the Kubrawiyya orders in the Valley received State patronage, it would be wrong to assume that they owed their success to this factor alone. Credit, undoubtedly, goes to the Sufis of Central Asian and Persian origin whose missionary labours exercised an indelible influence on the social organization of the evolving Kashmiri Muslim community. Further, what must be particularly emphasized is that during the course of the 16th to 19th centuries the role of exogenous religious teachers was corroborated and supplemented by Kashmiri men and women who had not been brought up in the traditional religious disciplines, but who belonged for the most part to the peasant and artisan classes. The emergence of the indigenous order of the Kashmiri Muslim mystic, known as the rishi, needs to be studied against the background of certain implications of a social character that the egalitarian and devotional attitudes of especially the Kubrawiyya khanqahs had for the Valley. Notwithstanding the social nature of the Rishi movement,

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its programme of reform was integrally bound up with the awakening of the religious conscience of individuals.[12]

Consequently, then, the Rishi movement, in spite of its local origins vis-à-vis its distinctive characteristics—extreme ascetic discipline, vegetarianism, celibacy and nonviolence—began to be looked upon with favour by the standard-bearers of the shari'ah and sunnah including the revered Sufis and hagiographers belonging to the Suhrawardiyya, Kubrawiyya and Naqshbandiyya orders. So important was the Rishi movement in traditional Kashmiri society that several of its unique social and religious characteristics were not regarded with suspicion. The strength of its social authority lay not only in its denunciation of the Brahmanic notions of caste, but also in the satisfaction that it gave to the spiritual instincts of the people in the Hindu-Buddhist environment of the Valley. The more directly personal and emotional religious approach of the Sufis greatly appealed to the people through the rishis who proved themselves to be the ideal cultural mediators of the Islamic spiritual tradition in Kashmir. In fact, the recital of litanies (*zikr*) was immensely valued as early as the founding of the Rishi order by Shaikh Nuru'd-Din.[13]

The popularity of Sufism and its appeal to almost all sections of Kashmiri society was in no small measure the consequence of the biographical works on the Sufis and the Muslim rishis, authored by their immediate disciples or later by their adherents. Thanks to the influence of the biographical (*tazkira*) literature, Islam developed more congregational features in Kashmir, not only in terms of emphasis on the importance of the prescribed congregational prayers, but also on the spiritual value of the recitation of chants and litanies. What, therefore, mark off most mosques and shrines in the Valley from the services

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prescribed in the Qur'an and the sunnah is the continued tradition of performing liturgical ceremonies despite the criticism of the Salfis (avowedly calling themselves Ahl-i Hadis, though generally known as 'Wahhabis') and the Jamat-i Islami. There is hardly a mosque in the Valley attached to a shrine where the people do not keep alive the spiritual and historical tradition of reciting chants and litanies in a chorus.[14] What is remarkable about the persistence of this tradition is that during centuries of Kashmir's transition to Islam such practices were not denounced as innovations (*bid'a*) by the doctrinaire legists.[15]

A careful analysis of the existing liturgical tradition in the mosques and shrines of the Valley reveals that Islam's success was effected more by the Kashmiris' urge to experience the divine in terms of love and not as a mere abstraction. In other words, Islam developed a resilient tradition of its own in Kashmir which was fostered first under the the Kubrawiyya Sufis, and later under the Rishi movement. Neither a miraculous feat of Mir Saiyid 'Ali Hamadani nor a matter of force displayed by Sultan Sikandar's minister, Islam's triumph was, in essence, a natural revolt of the human heart against the cold formalism of ritualistic brahman priests. It was a manifestation of an attitude of mind and heart which had been receptive to new religious influences from ancient times. Islam, with its warm mystical yearning after union with Allah, nowhere found a more suitable soil to thrive in South Asia than in Kashmir, where the atmosphere was charged with a long-standing, deep spiritual craving to know God. Consequently, the growth and development of various Sufi orders took place in Kashmir along the common purpose of personally experiencing God rather than merely seeking Him through theological learning. Of course, some 'ulama and even venerable Sufis expressed their disapproval of

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means like sama‘ for rousing ecstatic feelings to achieve nearness to God. But, on the whole, the Sufi way of ecstatic communion with the divine was debated. Sufi scholars of high calibre (Shaikh Ya‘qub Sarfi, Khwaja Habibu'llah Naushahri etc.) considered it to be a spiritual urge rather than a deviation from the Qur'an and the sunnah. Even such ‘ulama as initially condemned ascetic indulgence in sama‘ to be a deviation from the Qur'an and the sunnah later, after being offered a rich spiritual experience by Sufism itself, advocated the philosophy of understanding God in terms of love.[16]

It is not, therefore, difficult to understand why the Sufis attached great importance to inculcating love for the Prophet Muhammad, his four illustrious Companions and, of course, a Sufi master who followed the spiritual path in the true manner of the latter. Al-Kharraz, the renowned Sufi of the 3rd century AH/9th century AD, considered the ‘Righteous Caliphs’ to be men of ‘simple dignity and austerity’. His perceptive remarks about them are worthy of quote:

> When Abu Bakr succeeded to the leadership, and the world in its entirety came to him in abasement, he did not lift up his head on that account, or make any pretensions; he wore a single garment, which he used to pin together, so that he was known as the ‘man of the two pins’. ‘Umar b. al-Khattab, who also ruled the world in its entirety, lived on bread and olive-oil; his clothes were patched in a dozen places, some of the patches being of leather; and yet there were opened unto him the treasures of Chosroes and Caesar. As for ‘Uthman, he was like one of his slaves in dress and appearance; of him it is related that he was seen coming out of one of his gardens with a faggot of firewood on his shoulders, and when questioned on the matter he said, ‘I wanted to see whether my soul would refuse.’ When ‘Ali succeeded to the rule, he bought a waistband for four

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> dirhams and a shirt for five dirhams; finding the sleeve of his garment too long, he went to a cobbler and taking his knife cut off the sleeve level with the tips of his fingers; yet this same man divided the world right and left.[17]

Significantly, despite the position of privilege and authority enjoyed by the four Companions, there has always been unanimity of views among the Sufis and the 'ulama that the Companions' worldly achievements did not sully their souls' pristine purity and simplicity. That the testimony of their piety was widely accepted in the Muslim world is also reflected in these verses of Shaikh Nuru'd-Din Rishi:

> Salute the four Companions; Who bowed before Thee;
> They are the mainstay of the four worlds I do gratefully remember how kind Thou art.[18]

It is necessary to emphasize that as early as the emergence of the Rishi order the greatest Kashmiri exponent of Sufism sought to define the spiritual dimension of Islam in the dynamics of the personal qualities of an individual rather than in terms of his exalted position as a temporal ruler. Thus, for a real Sufi master like Shaikh Nuru'd-Din Rishi the four Companions are not merely sublime examples of living faith, but in his estimation, they are truly dynamic individuals. Each of them evokes the praise of Nuru'd-Din for his human qualities: Abu Bakr for his lovable nature and friendship, 'Usman for enabling men to distinguish between right and wrong (*furqan*) by compiling the Qur'an, 'Umar for his courageous spirit in subduing the snares of the ego and 'Ali for his generosity and compassion in treating the hungry as his guests. The Shaikh repeatedly exhorts men to cultivate the virtues of the four Companions of the Prophet. At one place he even yearns to pass over the bridge across the infernal fire (*pul-i sirat*) with them.[19]

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It was thus not only the veneration of Muhammad but also the exaltation of the spiritual role of his four Companions in the *tazkira* literature that gave a position of strength to Sufism in Kashmir. In fact, no study on Sufism in Kashmir is complete unless it takes into account the devotional and emotional attitudes of the Kashmiris to holy personages. An important feature of Muslim religious life is the singing of poems in praise of Muhammad (na't) in chorus in the mosques before or after congregational prayers. Similarly benedictions showered on the Prophet (durud) are recited loudly in chorus, much to the chagrin of visitors. Another distinguishing feature of Islam in Kashmir is that the majority of the faithful consider the Prophet Muhammad and Sufis to be spiritually alive and, more importantly, to be supporting the devotees in their enterprises. Spiritual assemblies (darbars) of the souls of the deceased Sufis are held in various shrines on special days where decisions are believed to be taken regarding the affairs of the world Kashmiris live in (pirwaer or the Valley of Saints). The shrine of the most renowned Suhrawardiyya Sufi of Kashmir, Shaikh Hamza Makhdum, at the Hariparbat hillock in Srinagar particularly attracts devotees with their petitions (*'arzis*) on Mondays and Thursdays. Numerous other shrines dedicated to the Sufis including those of the rishis spread in every nook and corner of the Valley continue to attract a large number of pilgrims. In fact, the most dominant characteristic of Islam in Kashmir is the Muslims' firm belief in the omnipotence and omnipresence of the friends of God (*Auliya Allah*). A traditional folk song (*row*) sung with great enthusiasm by Kashmiri women on the eve of two major festivals (*'ids*) and during the month of Ramadan in numerous localities of Srinagar till recent times, is symbolic not only of the Kashmiri Muslims' reverence for saints, but also points to the

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importance that the repositories of the relics of the Prophet and the great saint of Baghdad, Shaikh 'Abdu'l-Qadir Jilani, have gained in the local environment.[20] The song goes like this:

'Id has come stealthily, 'Id has come stealthily;
Let us proceed to the 'Idgah. Let us proceed to 'Idgah.
Let us follow the route through the Prophet's abode (Hazratbal).
Let us follow the route through the Dastagir Saheb's abode.
Let us follow the route through the Makhdum Saheb's abode!

It would be wrong to suppose that the popular belief in the holiness of the Sufis is an accretion from Hinduism. What must be emphasized is the role played by the Sufis themselves in stressing the importance of visiting the tombs of venerated Sufi masters for spiritual bliss. We hear of no less a person than Shaikh Hamza Makhdum paying visits to the tomb of Shaikh Nuru'd-Din Rishi. It is important to note that before Shaikh Hamza enrolled Mulla 'Ali Raina as his disciple, he directed him to pay a visit to the tomb of Shaikh Nuru'd-Din with spiritual solemnity. Baba Dawud Khaki, the most prominent *khalifa* of Shaikh Hamza, visited Multan with the main object of gaining spiritual benefits from the souls of the deceased Sufis. Likewise, the Sufis of the Kubrawiyya, Naqshbandiyya, Qadiriyya and Chistiyya orders attached great spiritual value to visits to the tombs of holy men undertaken by them in search of the Truth.[21] The initial results were, indeed, promising. The image of Islam as a religion of love was undoubtedly refurbished in the spiritual and social consciousness of the inquisitive Kashmiris. Sufism, therefore, acquired a more popular character and a new power of attraction. This was markedly reflected not merely in the popularity of Sufism at the societal level but also in

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the attitudes of the rulers and the ruling class who were definitely humble before the Sufi Shaikhs.

Yet another significant dimension of Sufism in Kashmir, as elsewhere in the Muslim world, was the conversion of several mosques, those attached to the khanqahs and those that sprang up adjacent to the tombs of the Sufis, into centres of theological learning. Such centres imparted knowledge until the twilight of the 19th century. Their products obtained *ijaza*, or authorization to teach others what they had learnt from a teacher. During the formative period of Islam in Kashmir the khanqahs were centres for the diffusion of Islamic knowledge. Shaikh Ismail Kubrawi founded one such khanqah on the eastern slope of the Hariparbat hillock in Srinagar. The khanqah attracted students from India, Heart and Transoxiana.

The sultans took measures for the establishment and endowment of madrasas, or institutions for theological instruction and placed them under the charge of learned scholars. The madrasas in Kashmir had the same courses of study as their counterparts in India, Turkistan and Persia. A young child was generally sent to the madrasa when five years old. Initially he learnt the Arabic alphabet in order to be able to read and memorize the Qur'an. He was then imparted lessons in the traditional sciences viz., Dogmatic Theology (*'Ilmu'l-Kalam, 'Ilumu'l-Tawhid*), interpretation of the Qur'an (*Tafsir*), Tradition (*Hadis*) and Jurisprudence (*Fiqh*).

What needs to be borne in mind is that most prominent Sufis of Kashmir, except generally the rishis, were originally the products of the madrasa and khanqah system of education. Not a few products of these schools further improved their knowledge of exoteric sciences in the religious seminaries at Mecca, Medina and several other parts

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of the Muslim world. There is considerable evidence in the sources to show that many Sufis obtained certificates (*sanads*) from the recognized authorities on Hadis in Arabia particularly and India. The close interaction between Kashmir and the Muslim world in respect of furthering the cause of knowledge resulted in the exchange of visits of scholars. Kashmir benefited a great deal from the visits of scholar Sufis, and some Kashmiri Sufis also became beacons of light in the Muslim world. Thus Mulla 'Ali Raina with his profound knowledge of Hadis, Tafsir, Fiqh and *tasawwuf* spent 12 years in the Arab world both as a student and a teacher. More significantly, the famous religious seminary at Sialkot which received six hundred thousand rupees as donation from the great king of Kashmir, Sultan Zainu'l-'Abidin, for the advancement of learning, later became a rendezvous for eminent scholars and Sufis. One of its teachers was Akhwund Mulla Kamal (d. 1017/1609) who migrated to Sialkot. He imparted lessons in the exoteric sciences and Sufism to students at the mosque of Miyan Waris in Sialkot. Numerous persons are said to have learnt at his feet, the most prominent among them being Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi, Mulla 'Abdu'l-Hakim Sialkoti and Nawab Sa'dullah Khan Allami.[22] Little wonder, then, that from the 17th century the influence of the Naqshbandiyya order on the development of Sufism in the Valley is noticeable in certain respects.

Although the Naqshbandiyya order was introduced in Kashmir during the reign of Sultan Sikandar, it did not make any headway in the Valley until the advent of Khwaja Khawand Mahmud towards the close of the 16th century. The attitude of the Naqshbandiyyas towards the Sufis of Kashmir is primarily reflected in the *Tuhfatu'l-Fuqara* of Shaikh Muhammad Murad Tang. A staunch follower of the

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Naqshbandiyya order, Tang not only visited the tombs of numerous Sufis of the Valley but he had personal interaction with several rishis of his time—Nur Baba, Naji Baba, Lal Baba, Mir Muhammad Sultan and Ummi Rupi Rishi. What impressed Tang particularly about the rishis was their simplicity, piety and service to the destitute and the needy. True, Tang shows his concern over the vegetarianism practised by the rishis; but, like the Sufis of the Suhrawardiyya order, he nowhere gives the slightest indication of any disapproval of the practice. Although both the Naqshbandiyyas and the Suhrawardiyyas enrolled some disciples among the rishis, they could not prevent them from observing certain norms which were thought to be necessary for the cultivation of piety in the rishi order. Only two examples will suffice. No less a Sufi of Shaikh Hamza Makhdum's status allowed Baba Hardi Rishi to practise vegetarianism after initiating him into the Suhrawardiyya order. Likewise, Mahdi Rishi Kakapuri, even after becoming the khalifa of Mir Muhammad Baqir Naqshbandi, subsisted on a vegetarian diet and continued to practise severe austerities.[23]

Neither the Suhrawardiyyas nor the Naqshbandiyyas were critical of the celibacy of the rishis. Significantly, some venerable names among the Suhrawardiyyas—Shaikh Hamza Makhdum and Baba Nasibu'd-Din Ghazi—did not marry. For Baba Nasib *nikah* (the marriage contract) alone was not the sunnah; there were many other sayings and deeds of the Prophet equally incumbent upon believers. One who did not conform totally to the sunnah was an apostate, continued Nasib, but one who gave up an act of the Prophet with the noble intention of devoting oneself solely to God was not guilty of committing a serious sin. Even the Prophet, remarks he, had approved of such an act. It is also in this

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context that Nasib refers to the celibacy of Christ, Mary, John the Baptist (Yaha), Uways-i Qarni and Bibi Rabi'a. Thus while addressing spiritual travellers (*saliks*), Nasib remarks: 'O Dervish, to keep away from women and children is the duty of men.' Conscious of the fact that the celebration of the marriage contract (nikah) was obligatory (*wajib*), Baba Nasib nevertheless advocated celibacy only in respect of those who were unable to fulfil the obligations of conjugal life owing to their whole-time meditations and austerities. Such views reflected only an attitude of the mind of a salik in the Path rather than an argument in defiance of the commands of the Qur'an and the Prophet.[24] Earlier Shaikh Al-Hujwiri had defended the Sufi viewpoint on this issue in eloquent terms:

> It is the unanimous opinion of the leaders of this doctrine that the best and most distinguished Sufis are the unmarried, if their hearts are unstained and their minds free from sin and lust.[25]

However, the very success of Sufi missionaries in Kashmir cannot be described in terms of Sufism's simple compromise with the practices of the rishis. True, extreme asceticism, self-mortification, long fasts, sexual abstinence and seclusion in caves marked the lives of many a rishi and a Sufi. But then the contribution of both the ascetics and Sufi scholars to Islam in Kashmir as exemplars of precept and example vis-à-vis the spiritual and social ethics of the Qur'an and the sunnah can hardly be denied. Of numerous Sufis and rishis studied by me over two decades, only a few Sufis belonged to the category of enraptured souls (*majzubs*). It would be nothing short of an intellectual disaster to dismiss Sufism as an aberration or a development outside the pale of Islam on the basis of the study of such exceptional cases. Once we are

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able to make a dispassionate study of the behaviour of the intoxicated souls, it would become abundantly clear that they seemingly deviated from the shari'ah under the influence of their *jazba* rather than intentionally. One needs to scratch one's mind, if not soul, to understand why some learned theologians who were initially critical of Sufism, became ecstatic after being overwhelmed by a spiritual experience.

It was, indeed, the madrasas and the khanqahs that enabled Sufism, as an important branch of knowledge, to counter the influence of the antinomianism and laxity visible in some intoxicated Sufis. Having attained an appreciable degree of inner equilibrium, thanks to the sobriety of the views of the Sufi scholars, Sufism's historical achievement in Kashmir lay in furnishing the sheet-anchor which would not simply hold the Kashmiri Muslim community fast to the shrines but, more importantly, to the fundamentals of Islam. The remarkable unity of purpose and action displayed by the Sufi missionaries as embodiments of social stability is not simply a spiritual but, more than that, a historical legacy bequeathed by them to Kashmir. This fact is expressedly recognized in the age-long celebrations of the anniversaries (*'urs*) of the Sufis throughout the length and breadth of the Valley; this despite the avowedly reformative, or rather radical, role of the Salfis and the Jam'at-i Islami.

NOTES

1. For my views on the so-called 'Islamic Orthodoxy', see *Kashmir's Transition to Islam: The Role of Muslim Rishis*, New Delhi: Manohar, 2002. For its perceptive analysis, see Richard Maxwell Eaton, 'Introduction' in *India's Islamic Traditions, 711–1750 AD*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003; also, Ishaq Khan, *Experiencing Islam*, New Delhi: Sterling, 1997.

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2. Mohibbul Hasan, *Kashmir under the Sultans*, reprint, New Delhi: Aakar Books, 2005, pp. 67–8.
3. Ishaq Khan, 'Islam in Kashmir: Historical Analysis of its Distinctive Features', in Christian W. Troll (ed.), *Islam in India*, Vol. II, New Delhi: Vikas, 1985, pp. 86–97.
4. Ishaq Khan, *Biographical Dictionary of Sufism in South Asia*, New Delhi: Manohar (forthcoming).
5. Pandit Jonaraja, *Rajatarangini*, English translation by J.C. Dutt under the title *Kings of Kashmira*, Calcutta, 1879–98, pp. 19–20.
6. Ibid., p. 44.
7. Ishaq Khan, *Biographical Dictionary of Sufism in South Asia.*
8. Ibid.
9. For a detailed analysis, see Ishaq Khan, 'Islam, State and Society in Medieval Kashmir', in Aparna Rao (ed.), and with a foreword and introductory essay by T.N. Madan, *The Valley of Kashmir*, New Delhi: Manohar, 2008, pp. 139–76.
10. Ishaq Khan, 'A Study of Ritual Behaviour and its Impact on the Evolution of Kashmiri Muslim Society', *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*, Vol. 5, No. 1.
11. Gousia Khan, 'Religious Devotion as Reflected in Kashmiri Poetry', *Third Frame*, Vol. I, No. 3 (July–September 2008), pp. 21–9.
12. Ishaq Khan, *Kashmir's Transition to Islam: the Role of Muslim Rishis*, Srinagar: Gulshan, 2005.
13. Ibid.
14. Gousia Khan, 'Religious Devotion'.
15. During the ascendancy of militancy in Kashmir, some militants with radical views on Islam stopped the faithful from collective recital of the *awrad-i fathiyya*, *durud*, *na't* and *manqabat* in several mosques of Kashmir. However, with the decline of militancy, devotees of the shrines have reverted to the traditional practice of intoning the awrad-i fathiyya or chanting benedictions on the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) aloud in chorus with a deeper sense of sacred duty. They pride themselves on being *ahl-i 'itiqad* i.e having both a belief and a firm conviction that what they believe or what

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they firmly accept in the mind is true. So they stick with making a sacred cow of the collective ritual recitation over loudspeakers. My newspaper article titled 'Remembering Allah', published in the most popular English daily of Srinagar in recent times, against the injudicious use of loudspeakers, even through it included an appeal from the Mufti Azam of Kashmir, Mufti Bashiru'd-Din, did not have any impact.

16. For greater details see Ishaq Khan, *Biographical Dictionary of Sufism in South Asia.*
17. Kharraz, *Kitab al-Sidiq,* quoted in A.J. Arberry, *Sufism,* London, 1990, p. 32.
18. Ishaq Khan, 2005, p. 119.
19. Ibid.
20. Gousia Khan has made a perceptive study of this significant dimension of Islam in contemporary Kashmir in her unpublished PhD thesis titled, *Muslim Life and Rituals: A Case-Study of the Major Shrines of Kashmir,* University of Kashmir, 2007.
21. Ishaq Khan, *Biographical Dictionary of Sufism in South Asia.*
22. Ibid.
23. Ibid.
24. Ishaq Khan, 2005, pp. 166–7.
25. *Kashf al-Mahjub,* tr. R.A. Nicholson, London, 1936, p. 363.

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Siddiqui argues that the Arab irruption and the convulsions of the 8th century revealed a dynamic cultural mosaic of Islam. The infusion of culture and ideas, which is a complex phenomenon spread over centuries, was reflected in different art-forms, dress-codes, cultural idioms and symbols.

18

Islam and the 'Frontier Zone'

SAMEENA HASAN SIDDIQUI

The infusion of culture and ideas is a complex phenomenon spread over many centuries and reflected in art-forms, dress-codes, cultural symbols and linguistic norms. The dynamics of historical progression and paradigmatic forms constitute a moving frame of reference.

The Muslim settlements of the western and southwestern parts of India, subsequent to the Arab irruption and political convulsions of the early 8th century, reveal a dynamic pervasive cultural mosaic. However, to view these through categories of a 'frontier zone'[1] or 'peripheral culture' marginalizes the particularity of the regional cultural ethos and robs it of the dignity of the autonomy of its internal dynamics.

No mass migration of Arab tribes occurred after the military excursion in Sind in 711 AD, unlike Persia between 638 and 656 AD. Works like *Kitab ul Masalik wal Mamalik* of

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Ibn Khordadba and others[2] mention vibrant Muslim colonies with mosques, regular Friday congregations etc.[3] The military men of the Arab armies congregated in military colonies called *junud* and *amsar* around the principal urban centres and never returned. Masudi mentions large Muslim settlements which became permanent by the 10th century and included heterogeneous ethnic groups from Siraf, Oman, Basra, Baghdad etc.[4] Following the initial Umayyad conquest of Sind a number of Arab families had settled in the various towns of Sind. These Arab settlers were appointed to ecclesiastical positions in the urban centres of Sind and Multan. These positions were hereditary. Ibn Batuta, who visited Sind in 1333 AD, met an Arab named Shayban whose family had held the office of *khatib* of Siwistan (speaker at the Friday muslim congregational prayer) since 771 AD. The post was hereditary till the time Ibn Batuta met him.[5] Baladhuri, Ibn Haukal and Al-Masudi mention independent Arab chiefs of Sind, indicating that by the 10th century local Arab or Muslim rulers had replaced the Abbasids and displaced the independent governors of Sind. Their forceful assertion earned them the title of *mutaghalliba* (having seized power). Gradually the sway of these numerous Arab chieftains, who were not appointed by the Caliph, increased in Sind. Kazwini (a famous writer from Kazwin in Persia, also called the Pliny of the East, who wrote travel accounts based upon the works of Ibn Haukal, Istakhri etc. in the latter half of the 13th century) quoting Istakhri (who was from Istakhr or Persepolis located in the province of Fars) writes of Multan:

Mis'ar bin Muhalhil (who had travelled to China and India in about 942 AD) says that it is the last city of India. It is a large fortified and impregnable city, and is held in high esteem by the Hindus and Chinese, for it contains a temple

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which is for them a place of worship and pilgrimage, as Mecca is for the Muhammadans. The inhabitants are Musulmans and infidels, but the government is in the hands of the former. The infidels have a large temple there and a great idol (budd). The chief mosque is near this temple. Islam prevails there, and its orders and interdicts are obeyed. All this is related by Mis'ar bin Muhalhil... The author says that the summit of the temple is 300 cubits and the height of the idol is 20 cubits. The houses of the servants and devotees are around the temple, and there are no idol worshippers in Multan besides those who dwell in these precints... The ruler of Multan does not abolish this idol, because he takes the large offerings which are brought to it, and disburses certain sums to the attendants for their maintenance.[6]

Instead of a peripheral insular existence these Muslim settlements reveal a participative pluralistic vibrancy. The pervasive milieu of the region provided the impetus. Spatial proximity to the regional cultural ethos bound them to a set of peculiar rules based on social realism. Zakariya al Kazwini writes in his *Asar ul Bilad*:

> Saimur, a city of Hind near the confines of Sind. The people are very beautiful and handsome, from being born of Turk and Indian parents. There are Musulmans, Christians, Jews and Fire worshippers there. The merchandise of the Turks is conveyed hither, and the aloes called Saimuri are named from this place. The temple of Saimur is an idol temple, on the summit of a high eminence, under the charge of keepers. There are idols in it of turquoise and bajjadak (stone like ruby), which are highly venerated. In the city there are mosques, Christian churches, synagogues, and Fire temples. The infidels do not slaughter animals, nor do they eat flesh, fish, or eggs; but there are some who will eat animals that have fallen down precipices, or that have been gored to death, but they do not eat those that have died a natural

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death. This information has been derived from Mis'ar bin Muhalhil, author of the *Ajaibul Buldan*, who travelled into various countries and recorded their wonders.[7]

This social realism was diverse and pervasive with blurred boundaries. Hiuen Tsang referring to the great idol (*sanam*) of the sun-temple at Multan, the famous Aditya temple, writes that it is said to have been made 'in the last krtayuga' and had Zoroastrian antecedents and Buddhistic features. 'The idol has the shape of a human being, sitting cross-legged on a dais made of plaster and baked bricks...stretching its forearms over its knees.'[8] This was a new colour which was rooted in localism. It also provided space and refuge to diversity and heterodoxy. The nomadic and semi-nomadic culture has had a blurred pattern. The presence of the strongly Persianized tribe of Azdi Arab merchants from Al-ubulla and Oman amongst others, had resulted in the infusion of Persian features as evident in the depiction of Sasanid Surya and Shiva images, dress forms of Jats and Gujars, and 'anthropological pecularities' in the folk motifs.[9] The Persian philosopher Jamasp, often confounded with Zoroaster, is regarded as the founder of the Hindu system of astrology. The dominance of Persian-Zoroastrian features in the pre-conquest Makran, Sind and beyond is evident.[10] Many from the Azdi tribe of Oman were transplanted to Fars and to the Kirman-Makran coast, among others who were seafaring Arab merchants, Zoroastrians and Nestorians. Due to the increased 'foreign influence' of Zoroastrian priests coming from Persia, Multan (old Mulastana) had become an important centre of the cult of the sun. Vedic Sindhu was adapted by the Persians to be called *Hind* or *Hid*, later to become *Ind* in classical Greek literature. The *Chachnama* mentions the reinforcement of the Persian

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elements in Sind on the eve of the Muslim conquest by an invasion of the 'king of Nimroz'.[11]

The dynamics of this pervasive milieu reveal a 'substratum culture'. Hiuen Tsang 'noticed the receding Sindhian Buddhism in 630 and 643 AD. However it percolated and persisted as a substratum, superseded of course by the 'Hindu' elements under the Gupta hegemony. This persistent Buddhistic substratum 'diluted and etiolated' the Brahmanical culture which deviated widely from the Gangetic model, and appeared extremely Buddhistic. The imprint of the Buddhist practices in Sind was replicated in the Brahmanical practices, as evident in the absence of caste-based ritualistic social divisions, lack of widow-burning and the sacred-thread etc.[12] Hiuen Tsang also mentions:

> In *Sin-tu* (Sind), by the side of the river...of (Sind), along the flat marshy lowlands for some thousand *li*, there are several hundreds of thousands (a very great many) families settled... They give themselves exclusively to tending cattle and from this derive their livelihood. They have no masters, and whether men or women, have neither rich nor poor.[13]

Similarly Ibn Hauqal mentions:

> In the region which extends between Mansura and the Makran, the waters of the Mihran form lagoons, in the midst of which live the people of Sind who are called the *Zutt*. Those of them who are near the river inhabit huts which are like those of the Berbers; their food normally consists of fish and water-birds... By contrast those *Zutt* who live far from the banks of the river lead an existence like that of the Kurds, who live on dairy produce, cheese and millet-bread.[14]

Idrisi speaks:

> Again (the region extending) from it (Multan) up to the boundary of Mansura is (inhabited by) a wandering people

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called *al-Buddha.*They are (many) tribes and a great number of people called *al-Buddha.* They are (many) tribes and a great number of people, scattered and wandering about between the boundaries of Turan, Makran and Multan and the towns of Mansura. They resemble the Bedouins of the Berber tribe. They have huts made of reeds, and thickets, in which they take shelter, and swamps of water wherein they live.[15]

Evidently these pastoral or semi-pastoral populations were barely integrated into Hindu society, lacking a rigid social make-up, having minimal or no stratification amongst themselves. The *Chachnama* refers to them as 'of wild nature of brutes (*wahshi mizaj*) and always refractory'. Various mobile predatory groups of the Sindhian wastes, encountered by the Arab conquerors were generally designated as 'detestable people' (*makruh khalqan*) and 'highway robbers', 'thieves' or 'pirates'. The Muslim conquest chronicles notice concentrations of Jats in towns and fortresses throughout Lower and Central Sind: in Debal, Sadusan, Brahmanabad.[16] Chach appointed them to 'respectable positions'. Tribes like Lohana, Lakha, Samma, Sahtah, Chand, Machhi, Halah, Kurejah etc. find reference in various sources.

New forces swayed and swirled this region. The Muslims representing the hegemonic commercial civilization and the new cosmopolitan religion of Islam, ensured India's increased involvement in global trade. This meant increased urbanization and intensified regional economies, which in turn created clusters of agricultural villages around towns. Masudi mentions 420,000 hamlets and villages (which seems to be an exaggeration). However, it set into motion the process which sedentarized the pastoral nomadic groups of the Sindhian wastes between the 8th and 11th centuries.

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On the other hand, numerous dissidents (*khawarij*), free-thinkers (*zanadiqa*), atheists (*malahids*), escapists, Ismailis, Fatimids, etc. entered this area. They represented heterodox ideological sects.

Maxime Rodinson, rightly observes:

> The development of Islam's theological interpretation during the Middle Ages bears principally the mark of the impact of a certain system of ideas, namely, Hellenic philosophy. The theologians, philosophers and mystics carried on their reflections around themes that were emphasized by the Koran, by Greek thought, and to a smaller extent by the Hindu thought, and were subjected to other influences as well, in the domain of ideas. It is clear, nevertheless that, these problems were dictated by man's particular situation in Medieval society. Some problems were of general kind. The ideological choices made were taken, too, in the course of an extremely hard and vigorous struggle, violent and non-violent, among politico-religious parties and philosophical tendencies, a struggle that found expression in an astonishing swarm of what are described as Muslim sects. It is clear that Islam as it was understood in the tenth century was not exactly the Islam of the Koran, that the Islam of eighteenth century was not that of the tenth century and so on, and that this is not without some connections with social evolution.[17]

Towns like Qudsar offered shelter to Kharjites. The pre-Fatimid Ismailiya movement of the late 9th century gained ground here. Ibn Khordadba mentions that 'in Hind there are forty-two religious sects, part of them believe in a Creator and Prophets (blessings of God be upon them); part deny the mission of a Prophet and part are atheists.'[18]

Branded as 'deviants', these heterodoxies—relocated in the midst of a pervasive cultural milieu—found fresh ground. Interaction in such a diverse socio-religious cultural milieu,

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necessitated by co-habitation and coexistence, and dictated by social realism, emphasized the sanity of 'adaption', which of course is a two-way process. While discussing the pluralistic Muslim society, Maxime Rodinson observes that:

> The political fragmentation of the Muslim world meant that with different choices being made by different governments, the tendencies that were most strongly combated in certain areas could always find a place of refuge somewhere.[19]

Rodinson further notes that these choices were

> ...an expression of tendencies emanating from social life as a whole...interpretation unconsciously inspired by the contemporary life, reduces the 'distancing' without doing away with it altogether.[20]

The Ismailis, who were an organized sect in India as early as the second half of the 9th century, retained their hold in Sind and western India after they were suppressed elsewhere. The revolt of Nafs-al-Zakiya during the reign of the Abbasid caliph Al Mansur with centres in Medina, Basra and Sind, lasted the longest in Sind. After Mohammad Nafs-al-Zakiya was killed at Medina in 762 AD, Governor Umar bin Hafs advised his son Abdullah al Ashtar to shift his base of operation and suggested, 'I have an idea, one of the princes of Sind has a mighty kingdom with numerous supporters. Despite his polytheism, he greatly honours the family of the Prophet of God, on whom be peace. He is a reliable man. I will write to him and get the agreement concluded between the two of you.'[21] Maqtisi who visited Multan in 985 AD observes that the people of Multan are Shi'ite. They add *hayya alal khair al-amaal* (hasten to do the righteous deeds) in their call to prayer and call *taqbir* (*Allah-u-Akbar*, God is great) twice while standing up to pray.[22] The late 9th-century pre-Fatimid Ismailiya movement and its doctrines cannot be

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traced with certainty, but deductions can be made from subsequent Ismailiya or anti-Ismailiya writings. The Ismailis emphasized the *zahiri* or exoteric and *batini* or esoteric aspects of religion and the mystical significance of a gnostic system of cyclical cosmology. They believed that Ismail, the son of the sixth *imam* (hereditary spiritual leader) Jafar as-Sadiq (d. 148/765) was the seventh imam and that he would reappear as the *mahdi* (messiah). The Ismailiya movement gained ground in the 9th and the 10th centuries.

The imprint of the socio-cultural fabric of Sind and western India is evident in the expansion of Ismailism here. Andre Wink mentions 'an epistle' of 1033 AD which while addressing the 'unitarians' of Hind in general and Shaikh ibn Sumra Raja Bal in particular, seems to indicate that the Sumra tribe had by now affiliated itself to Ismailism. In Sind, the Ismaili movement succeeded in establishing an Ismaili principality under Fatimid sovereignty, which was a 'singular political success'. The *dai* (missionary) in charge of Sind 'deviated from normal Ismaili practice by tolerating new converts to keep many of the un-Islamic practices of their former religion and relaxed the rules for Muslims who became Ismailis concerning dietary laws and laws concerning forbidden degrees of marriage'.[23] This established the imprint of sociological and purely circumstantial factors. Persistence of local traditions resulted in the success of the Fatimid *da'wa* in Sind. The Ismaili principality in Multan, survived the destruction by Mahmud of Ghazna (a city in central Afghanistan) and again by Muhammad Ghuri. After the conquest of Multan by Mahmud in 1010–11 AD, the Ismaili leaders supported the Sumra tribal chieftains of Uchch, Aror, Mansura and Bhakar to establish independent regimes thus ensuring popular support to the Ismailis here.

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The so-called 'heretics' of the Arab world were perceived differently in their relocated environment. Their esoteric syncretic mystical content appealed to the kaleidoscopic culture here. Typically local and syncretic emphasis resulted in doctrinal and ritual concessions. Also socio-economic changes redesigned identities. As A.R. Saiyed rightly puts it, 'It is a sociological axiom that mere cultural transfer seldom succeeds. What is needed is cultural translation.'[24] Endogenous little traditions provided the vocabulary for this translation.

This 'readaption' and 'reinterpretation' got woven into mysticism, gradually merging the Ismailis into the Sufi school of Shaikh Zakariya (d. 1262 AD), the founder of the Suhrawardiya *silsila* (tradition) in Multan, while others became Isna Ashari Shias.[25] Numerous disciples of Shaikh Shihabuddin Suhrawardi had migrated from Iran and Trans-Oxiana. The ancestors of Shaikh Zakariya arrived in Sind along with the army of Muhammad bin Qasim. Shaikh Zakariya was born at Kot Karor, near Multan in about 1182–83 AD. Shaikh Shihabuddin Suhrawardi initiated him into the Suhrawardi order and made him his *khalifa* (vicegerent) after just 17 days of training. His elevation to this rank was objected to by Shaikh's other disciples who were annoyed at an Indian being elevated to a high status in such a short time. After Shaikh Shihabuddin Suhrawardi learnt of their dissatisfaction he told them that when they had first come to him they had been like green wood which would not catch fire, whereas Shaikh Bahauddin Zakariya had been like dry wood, which had begun to burn with a single breath.[26] This also reveals the socio-cultural imprint of Sind and Multan on Shaikh Bahauddin Zakariya.

The letters of esoteric symbols spoke the language of this kaleidoscopic culture. The Sufis believed in the attainment

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of the state of ecstasy, which led to *tawajjuh* (spiritual telepathy). In contemplating the union of temporal and eternal their individuality dissolved. This is best expressed in the following verse:

> *My heart has become the receptacle of every 'form';*
> *It is the pasture for gazelles and a convent for Christian monks.*
> *And a temple for idols, and pilgrims' Ka'bah,*
> *And the Tablets of the Torah, and the Book of the Quran.*
> *I follow the religion of love whichever way its camels take,*
> *For this is my religion and my faith.*[27]

When read along with what Zakariya al Kazwini wrote in his *Asar ul Bilad*—'In the city there are mosques, Christian churches, synagogues, and Fire temples'—the appeal of the batin (esoteric) element becomes apparent. Before reaching India, the movement of Tasawwuf had reached the highest point of its development in the 12th century. After the conquest of northern India by the Muslims, various Sufi orders were established, in particular the Chishti and Suhrawardi orders. They were hugely successful on Indian soil. Ibn Arabi spoke of five stages of descent from *Wajibul Wujud* (Necessary Being), i.e.: *Ahadiyya* (Essence of the Primal One), *Wahdaniyya* (Unity of God), *Arwah* (sphere of Infinite Forms), *Misal* (sphere of Similitude or Angelic Forms), *Ajsam* (sphere of Bodies of the Physical World). He says:

> God, glory to him, in respect of His most beautiful names, which are beyond enumeration, willed to see their *ayan* (realities), or if you wish you may say, His (own) *ayn*, in a Universal Being which contains the whole affair—inasmuch as it is endowed with all aspects of existence—and through which (alone) His mystery is revealed to Himself: for a vision which consists in a thing seeing itself by means of itself is not the same as that of the thing seeing something else which

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> serves as a mirror... Adam was the very essence of the polishing of this mirror, and the spirit of this form (i.e., the form in which God has revealed Himself: which is man.[28]

As stated at the outset, the infusion of culture and ideas is a complex phenomenon spread over many centuries. The language of cultural communication is written in multiple scripts such as art-forms, dress-codes, cultural idioms and symbols, linguistic norms etc., all reflecting the changing choices of the evolving social situation. It is tyrannical to mark certain areas as 'peripheral' or 'frontier zones' for they get defined not by invasive categories but by pervasive identities rooted in localism.

NOTES

1. See Richard M. Eaton, *The Rise of Islam and the Bengal Frontier* 1204–1760. Berkeley, CA: Oxford University Press,1993.
2. Works like *Kitab ul Akalim* by Abu Ishak al Istakhri, *Muruj ul Zahab* by al-Masudi, *Ibn Askhalul Bilad* by Haukal, *Nuzhat ul Mashtak* by al-Idrisi, *Futuh ul Buldan* by Ahmad ibn Yahya ibn Jabirand and others.
3. See H.M. Elliot and J. Dowson, *History of India as told by its own Historians*, Vol. I, reprint, Allahabad: Kitab Mahal publishers, 1969.
4. Cf. Andre Wink, *Al-Hind: The Making of the Indo-Islamic World*, Vol. I, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1990, p. 69.
5. S.Z.H. Jafri, 'Islam', in R.S. Sharma and K.M. Shrimali (eds.), *A Comprehensive History of India*, Vol. IV, part 2, New Delhi: Manohar Publishers and Distributers, 2008, p. 173.
6. Cf. Elliot and Dowson, *History of India as told by its own Historians*, Vol. I, p. 96.
7. Ibid., p. 97.
8. Wink, *Al-Hind*, Vol. I, p. 187.

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9. Idrisi writes that 'in Mansura the dress of the common people consists of tunics while the merchants and people of eminence wear shirts with long sleeves, and cloaks and use long pieces of cloth and kerchiefs of gold lame as their turbans, in the style of the merchants of Iraq and Fars.' (Idrisi who was from Morocco, wrote on geography, including of India.)
10. Hiuen Tsang mentions the blurred linguistic pattern in Makran where the script 'was much the same as that of India' but the spoken language 'differed a little from that of India'; Idrisi mentions 'Persian and Makrani' were in use.
11. Wink, Vol. I, p. 148.
12. The Brahman king Chach defying his 'dharma' publicly married a widow.
13. Cf. Wink, Vol. I, p. 157.
14. Cf. ibid., p. 160.
15. Ibid., p. 160.
16. Ibid., pp. 424–5.
17. Maxime Rodinson, *Islam and Capitalism*, London: Allen Lane, a division of Penguin Books, 1974, p. 189.
18. Cf. Elliot and Dowson, *History of India as told by its own Historians*, Vol. I, p. 17.
19. Rodinson, *Islam and Capitalism*, p. 101.
20. Ibid., p. 102.
21. Jafri, 'Islam', p. 182.
22. Ibid., p. 183.
23. Ibid.
24. A.R. Saiyed, 'Saints and Dargahs in the Indian Subcontinent: A Review', in Christian W. Troll (ed.), *Muslim Shrines in India*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989, p. 252.
25. See S.A.A. Rizvi, *A Socio-Intellectual History of the Isna Ashari Shiis in India*, 2 vols., Canberra: Marifat Publishing House, 1986.
26. S.A.A. Rizvi, *A History of Sufism in India*, Vol. I, Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 1978, p. 190.
27. M.M. Sharif, *A History of Muslim Philosophy*, Vol. I, Delhi: Low Price Publications, 1989, p. 414.
28. Ibid., p. 416.

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Ahmad argues the case for the extension of the benefits of reservation to the Scheduled Caste converts to Islam.

19

Recognition and Entitlement: Muslim Castes Eligible for Inclusion in the Category 'Scheduled Castes'*

IMTIAZ AHMAD

One of the issues the Commission on Religious and Linguistic Minorities appointed by the Government of India is trying to deal with is the extension of affirmative action to Scheduled Caste converts to Islam. 'Scheduled Castes' is a legal and administrative term denoting castes among Hindus, Sikhs and Neo-Buddhists which possess three principal attributes: engagement in traditionally defiling occupations, exclusion from the main residential areas within localities, and untouchability practised against them by other castes on account of a presumed superiority of ritual status. There are other diacritical distinctions and restrictions that reinforce their distinctly low status. This limits the discussion to only those Scheduled Caste converts to Islam who embraced that faith after the 'Scheduled Castes' became a legal and administrative entity. No doubt, cases of

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members of the Scheduled Castes converting to Islam are known (Meenakshipuram conversions are a case in point), but such cases have been few and far between.[1] Once such conversion occurs, the proselytes are denied recognition and entitlement as the 'Scheduled Castes'. No useful purpose is likely to be served by concentrating on this limited section because the number of such cases is small and the more substantial question is that of those Muslims castes which share the characteristics of the castes currently included in the category 'Scheduled Castes' but are denied recognition and entitlement as 'Scheduled Castes'. There is, therefore, need to extend the discussion to those Muslim castes which share the attributes of the Scheduled Castes but are denied recognition and entitlement as 'Scheduled Castes'.

Several issues require discussion for an understanding of the situation of these Muslim castes. This article discusses these issues before reflecting on their situation in contemporary India.

CONVERSION TO ISLAM

Broadly speaking, there are two views about conversion to Islam, and attitudes on this issue have been greatly coloured by the rise of nationalism and the political discourse as it evolved during and after British rule. One view, which enjoys widespread uncritical acceptance because of the communalist interpretation of history during the 19th century, is that conversion to Islam was forced by Muslim rulers who were fired by the zeal to spread Islam. It is this view that has contributed towards interpretations of the sack of Somnath by Mahmud Ghazni, and other temples by other rulers, as acts aimed at conversion. This view was harnessed

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in mobilizing Hindu sentiments during the Ayodhya movement where Babar was portrayed as a Muslim zealot. The other view is that conversion to Islam took place through the efforts of Sufi saints who sanctified and legitimized folk religious and cultural practices making it possible for intermediate and low castes, whose culture was greatly imbued with folk religious and cultural elements, to be drawn into the Islamic fold.

There is no need for our present purpose to go into this controversial question, but one point ought to be made in passing. It is that the heaviest concentrations of Muslim populations are to be found in areas where Muslim political power was never effectively established or was established much later. On the other hand, these areas had been the strongholds of Buddhism before the revival of orthodox Hinduism. The theory that conversions to Islam were limited to the lower castes among the Hindus cannot thus explain the heavy concentration of Muslims in those areas.[2] What appears more plausible is that large segments of the Buddhist population in those areas embraced Islam as the Buddhist faith receded into the background. Under constant threat of religious persecution at the hands of resurgent Hinduism, Islam may have provided an escape to this erstwhile Buddhist population. Sufi missionary activities may have played a part in this process as the institutional framework of the Sufis was highly communitarian and, after the decline and abolition of the Buddhist Sangha, the Sufi shrines and hospices may have further served as a source of attraction to the Buddhist groups to convert to Islam.

This had a decisive influence in shaping the caste demography of the Muslim population. Muslim high castes comprised foreign immigrants who had accompanied the invading armies or who emigrated during subsequent

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peaceable times, and account for a small proportion of the Muslim population. The artisan, menial and peasant castes constitute the largest segment accounting for roughly between 82–64 per cent of the Muslim population, depending upon the region and its early cultural history. The lowliest Muslim castes, comparable to 'untouchable' castes among Hindus, constitute a small fraction of the total Muslim population. Furthermore, they are not uniformly distributed throughout the length and breadth of the country. There are no known cases of such Muslim castes in south India, except perhaps in Andhra Pradesh,[3] but several such Muslim castes are known to exist in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Maharashtra, Gujarat and the Kashmir Valley. This peculiar Muslim caste demography is accounted for by a number of factors: the presence of dominant Muslim castes, the presence or absence of 'untouchable' Hindu castes to perform scavenging and other demeaning functions, the prosperity levels of Muslims of the area, etc.

CASTE AMONG MUSLIMS

Caste has been the organizing principle of Hindu society,[4] though its rigidity and contours changed greatly through the different historical periods. Perhaps, as has been asserted often, caste was not quite as rigid and fixed during Vedic times as it became during the period following the articulation of the *Manusmriti.* Nonetheless, caste early became the defining basis of status, economic resources and political power. It was almost natural that converts to Islam who had earlier operated within the caste system brought their pre-conversion conceptions of the social system, and retained their earlier caste identities. It is also almost natural

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that conversion to Islam, a sudden turning to a new light, would have automatically introduced some changes in their social organization as a result of interaction with the principles of the Islamic faith.[5]

Early Muslim rulers as well as intellectuals, including the Ulama, did not see anything wrong with the persistence of such pre-conversion orientations. Actually, they rationalized and legitimated them as the natural order of things. Ziauddin Barni elaborated a theory that the 'merits' and 'demerits' of all people have been 'apportioned at the beginning of time and allotted to their souls'. People's actions are not of their volition, but rather an expression and result of 'Divine Commandments'.[6] Muhammad Habib and Afsar Umar Salim Khan, translators of Barni's work, painfully admit, 'Barni's God, as is clear from his work, has two aspects—first, he is the tribal deity of the Musalmans; secondly, as between the Musalmans themselves, he is the tribal deity of well-born Muslims.'[7] Subsequently, the Ulama employed the Islamic juridical concept of *kafa'a* to provide legitimacy to the existing social divisions in society.

Empirical studies which initially took the form of a decennial census adduced considerable evidence that castes (or caste-like groupings, which are a much later categorization) existed among Muslims and could be identified through a hierarchy of status orders that had several significant attributes: source of descent so that those claiming to be the descendants of the Prophet or one of his Companions enjoyed precedence over local converts, and association with an occupation leading to each caste confining marriages to its members. Using evidence from decennial censuses, Ghaus Ansari[8] argued that Muslims in India were divided into three broad categories whom he called the *ashraf* (noble born), *ajlaf* (mean and lowly) and

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arzal (excluded). Each of these categories was further divided into a number of groups which, following the practice of the decennial censuses, he chose to designate as castes. Since Ansari was relying on the evidence supplied by the enumerations conducted as part of the decennial censuses, he could not examine the process of mutual interaction among these subcommunities whom he designated as caste. He generally suggested that the three broad categories he had identified constituted a hierarchy in which the subcommunities called castes were ranked in order of social precedence. How this hierarchy was constituted and what was the basis on which the rank order was settled were questions that Ansari could not discuss on account of the limitations of the data he used. This deficiency was met by Ahmad who brought in evidence from castes in close mutual interaction and also noted the differences that existed between the Hindu and Muslim caste systems.[9]

While Muslims admit that caste or caste-like groupings exist among them, as a rule they display a high degree of ambivalence on the subject of caste. This ambivalence has many expressions and has resulted in two distinct tendencies among Muslims. Many Muslims, who admit that caste differences obtain among them, often come up with the plea that rather than caste some other term should be used to designate Muslim castes. Ethnic groups, *biradaris* or caste-like groupings have been considered and used as substitutes. Others deny the existence of caste among Muslims altogether, arguing that Islam is an egalitarian religion and does not recognize distinctions of caste and status honour. These Muslims refuse to recognize that Islam and Muslims are not necessary one and the same and that there might be a gap between Islamic beliefs and ideology and actual social behaviour.

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Both tendencies arise from Muslim anxieties about their position in India. Those Muslims who argue that rather than caste some other word should be used to designate social divisions among them are guided by the anxiety that if caste was used it would betray affinity with the Hindus. The Muslim community was very substantially formed through conversion from the indigenous groups and the fear that it might relapse into Hinduism has prompted it all through history to clearly distinguish itself from Hindus through evolving diacritical distinctions that are felt to be more Islamic and set Muslims apart from Hindus. Accordingly, while Muslims are willing to admit that caste-like formations exist among themselves, they would much rather that some other word be used to designate Muslim castes.

On the other hand, those Muslims who are prone to denying the existence of caste among Muslims altogether do so out of an anxiety to project the community as a monolith in the context of its standing as a minority in India. Benur traced this dimension in the context of the rise of the nationalist movement in India. He writes: 'The Hindu nationalists, using religion and culture as the bases of nationalism, tried to push only the Hindus as the "national" community, and the Muslims as the "illegitimate" residents of India. The Muslim elite also tried to project the Muslims as religious monolith and advanced the theory of distinct "Islamic" identity of the Muslims. But because caste hierarchy divided the Muslims, it was inconvenient for them to project the Hindus as monolith. Hence, they put forward the theory of "unity in diversity" and argued that the Hindu culture was the "unifying force" behind the so-called diversity of the Hindus. The Hindu elites, i.e. the Brahmanical upper classes pushed its value system and philosophy as the "essence" of so-called Indian culture. The Muslim elite adopted a similar

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view about the Muslims, reducing everything to Islam... So, it was contended that the Indian Muslims are without any caste system and they are one homogeneous community.'[10]

This tendency[11] has percolated down to sociologists who display a remarkably uncanny ambivalence towards caste among Muslims. At the behavioural level, they are willing to concede that there are elements of caste in Indo-Muslim society. However, as soon as the discussion shifts from behaviour to ideology they recoil from their position, seeking to add caveats or hedge around the issue by admitting unabashedly that when they apply the term in the context of a Muslim group they are using it in a loose sense. Two recent writings by Husnain[12] and Nazir[13] exemplify this tendency. Husnain locates his discussion in the context of the question whether the concept of caste can be applied to the system of social stratification of a community professing a faith other than Hinduism. His conclusion is bold and simple: 'It is true that the egalitarian social order of Islam stands in sharp contrast with the ideology of caste yet the "Indian Islam" and "Hindu Caste System" have been able to achieve a substantial compatibility.'[14] He then goes on to offer a host of explanations for why this should be the case. He writes: 'Hutton sounds convincing when he says that when Muslims and Christians came to India, the caste was in the air and the followers of even these egalitarian ideologies could not escape the infection of caste. Moreover, the overwhelming majority of Indian Muslim population comes from the lower Hindu castes who have been coming into the fold of Islam to escape from social persecution and the oppressive socio-economic disabilities. They were also attracted and lured by the social egalitarianism of Islam but the search for equality proved a mirage. In many cases there were improvements in their socio-economic condition yet

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the goal of social equality remained illusive. Moreover, in most of the cases the people embracing Islam gave up their religious faith but not the caste that was brought forward even to a new socio-religious milieu. Thus, it would be apt to say that while Islam may not be having castes or caste-like groupings, the Indian Muslims do have (these).'[15]

No sooner than he has made this sociological formulation, Husnain becomes uncomfortable. As if fearing that he might have committed an almost sacrilegious act by declaring that there is caste among Indian Muslims, he wishes to retract his statement. Cryptically, he adds: 'But in the present paper an attempt is being made to stay clear of the issue whether the model of social stratification among the Indian Muslims is the replica of the Hindu caste system or not. The author, in this paper, shall be using the term caste and caste system among the Indian Muslims in a conveniently loose manner. It is undisputed that there are groups of people among the Muslims who are organized more or less like the Hindu castes but this is also true that many of them are less rigid because Islam, theoretically at least, permits marriage between different classes of believers.'[16] Not only that. He looks for crutches that would enable him to perform this somersault. He finds one in the following statement of Nazir, which he quotes approvingly: '... It is necessary to make a distinction between a caste system and caste labels: the former refers to a local system of hierarchically ordered corporate groupings involving division of labour, occupational specialization, unequal dependence, and recruitment by birth only; the latter refers to a set of non-local, non-corporate named groups which provide a ranking hierarchy, and which do not involve occupational specialization, unequal dependence, and recruitment by birth only.'[17] 'Perhaps,' concludes Husnain, 'the "caste system" and "caste like

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groupings" among the Indian Muslims with all its fluidity may be better analysed and better understood through this observation.'[18]

This assumes that Hindus live under 'the caste system'; Muslims only use caste labels. Several theoretical and empirical questions are raised by this assumption. First, how is this assumption made? Is it made on the basis of a piece of empirical research? Or, is it made on entirely a priori grounds? As far as I am aware, there has to date been no empirical research which can be said to have established beyond the shadow of a doubt that Muslims do not live under a caste system and only use caste labels. Indeed, if such empirical research existed, the dilemma these authors (and others) face over how to characterize Muslim social stratification in India would not exist. It exists because available empirical research has demonstrated that Muslim social stratification in India and beyond is marked by features of the caste system. It is, therefore, clear that the assumption is made on a priori grounds. As believing Muslims committed to upholding the widely proclaimed Islamic egalitarianism as axiomatic, they cannot face up to the behavioural reality that Muslims live under a caste system. They not only assume the distinction between 'the caste system' and 'caste labels' but go on to suggest that the latter constitutes a viable framework for analysing and understanding Muslim social stratification in India. It is used as a smokescreen to avoid facing the harsh behavioural reality of caste among Muslims in India.

Second, is there an empirical basis to the assertion that Muslim social organization in India is 'a set of non-local, non-corporate named groups which provide a ranking hierarchy, and which do not involve occupational specialization, unequal dependence, and recruitment by birth only'?[19] Nazir

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does not make explicit the level at which he is talking. Is he talking about the categorization of Muslims into the broad groups of ashraf, ajlaf and arzal? If that is his point of reference, then his characterization of Muslim social organization as a set of non-local, non-corporate groups can be said to have some validity. However, it would invalidate the distinction between 'the caste system' and 'caste labels' since similar broad divisions exist in the form of *varna* categories in 'the caste system'. Ansari used the three broad categories of ashraf, ajlaf and arzal in the collective sense but clearly recognized that they were divided into smaller named groups that were distinguished from one another by occupation, endogamy and sociability. Thus, if Nazir's reference is to the groups at this level, then his description of Muslim groups is wholly erroneous. A close look at the empirical evidence would help to determine whether the distinction he posits between 'the caste system' and 'caste labels', and by implication between Hindu and Muslim modes of social organization, is confirmed by available studies.

Sociological research on Muslims in India as opposed to lay and impressionistic writings continues to be thin. Evidence brought together by Ahmad[20] and subsequent research demonstrates that Muslim groups, which are the point of reference here, for which words biradari and zat are commonly used, are local and corporate entities. Even biradaris or zats such as Saiyyid, Sheikh and Ansari, which are dispersed widely and found in different parts of a district, state or the country, are identified by their affiliation to a particular territory and restrict their marriages to members within that territory. Of course, how that territory is distinguished varies widely. For Sayyids, Shiekhs and Pathans, who resent being characterized as biradaris and prefer to be described as zats, the association to territory is expressed

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through appending the name of the territory to its name. Thus, one hears of Sayyids of Satrikh, Sheikhs of Allahabad, Kidwais of Baragaon or Kasauli and Pathans of Malihabad. In the case of biradaris that have an internal organization of government and social control (called biradari or zat panchayat) this territorial association is defined by the jurisdiction of the biradari panchayat. The Ansaris in Rasulpur, where my fieldwork was carried out, were divided into thirteen villages. They confined their marriages to these thirteen villages though Ansaris existed in neighbouring areas as well.

This is not all. Considerable evidence exists to show that the biradaris or zats are associated with particular occupations are interdependent (tied into patron-client relationships of the *jajmani* type), and are endogamous. This does not mean that all members of a biradari or zat necessarily practise the occupation with which their group is traditionally associated. There has been much variation throughout history among biradaris and zats, as indeed there has been within castes, in the extent to which their members remain tied to the practice of their traditional occupation. Biradaris and zats higher up in the social hierarchy did not usually have a traditional occupation and there was no close association between biradari or zat and traditional occupation. On the other hand, biradaris and zats further down the social ladder had traditional occupations and their association with occupation was strong. This was not significantly different from the picture of groups in what Nazir would characterize as 'the caste system'. Risley's observation makes this explicit: 'In theory each caste has a distinctive occupation, but it does not follow that this traditional occupation is practised by its members... The traditional occupation of the Brahmans is the priesthood,

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but in practice they follow all manner of pursuits. Many are clerks or cooks, while some are soldiers, lawyers, shopkeepers and even day-labourers, but they remain Brahmans all the same. The Chamars of Bihar are workers in skin, but in Orissa they are toddy-drawers. In Orissa and the south of Gaya the Dhobi is often a hewer or splitter of wood. In Bihar and Bengal the Dom is a scavenger or basket maker, but in the Orissa states he is a drummer or basket maker and has nothing to do with the removal of nightsoil: in Chittagong and Assam he is a fisherman, in Cashmere a cultivator and in Kumaon a stone mason.'[21]

The argument that Muslim groups, biradaris and zats, are not based on recruitment by birth only is equally fallacious. Like the groups in what Nazir would call 'the caste system', Muslim biradaris and zats are based on recruitment by birth only. There is no process by which one can become a Saiyyid, Shiekh or Julaha except that of birth. It is for this reason that when someone marries into another biradari or zat, he is not integrated into it but retains his or her original biradari or zat association. There exists a possibility in the case of biradaris and zats to attempt social mobility and end up becoming a Saiyyid, Shiekh or Pathan in course of time through inventing a rationale and a genealogy. Where such social mobility occurs, the basis of recruitment to the biradari or zat does not change. The biradari or zat just ends up becoming another one, and comes to be known by another name, to which recruitment continues to be based on the principle of birth. This is again not significantly different from the situation in 'the caste system' where castes have the possibility of changing their antecedents and name through the process of social mobility. Thus, the point that both biradaris and zats are 'less rigid because Islam, theoretically at least, permits marriage between different

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classes of believers'[22] is not empirically established. It is asserted without a substantial basis in any empirical research.

This raises fundamental questions. Why are Husnain and Nazir as well as a host of other researchers who have worked on the sensitive question of the existence of caste among Muslims so strongly persuaded that there are significant differences between 'the caste system' and the system of biradaris and zats? Is it that these differences actually exist but empirical research has so far failed to unearth them? Or, is it that they are persuaded into asserting these differences contrary to empirical evidence out of extraneous considerations? Is it that they are prone to emphasizing these differences because as believing Muslims they are familiar with the Islamic discourse that asserts that Islam preaches social equality and are afraid to take a contrary position? Or, is it that asserting these differences is a defence mechanism whereby they can simultaneously adhere to their disciplinary obligation as social scientists as well as their religious obligation to uphold what is commonly considered the Islamic view on social stratification? My own view has been that the tendency to emphasize differences between 'the caste system' and the system of biradaris and zats arises from some such considerations, but I would refrain from making any such point here. I would like, instead, to explore whether their starting point—that Islam is an egalitarian religion and preaches social equality—is theologically and sociologically valid. This is central to understanding their standpoint.

ISLAM AND SOCIAL EQUALITY

There is need to ask three different questions of the Islamic text to understand Islam's position with respect to social

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stratification and social equality. First, whether Islam is opposed to social stratification as such or is merely opposed to social inequality. Second, what is truly the Islamic attitude towards social inequality that existed in the society in which Islam evolved and took root? Finally, whether the social equality that it proclaims, and to which reference is always made when it is suggested that Islam is an egalitarian religion, is a description of an existing state of affairs in society or is merely an ideal that is given to mankind as a direction in which it should strive. It is necessary to ask these questions in order to understand the nature of the emphasis on egalitarianism and social equality in Islam. Basic to these questions is the sociological dictum that no society beyond the most primitive can be truly egalitarian. This was the point at the heart of Veblen's *Theory of the Leisured Class* (1932) wherein he argued that as societies generated economic surplus there almost always developed some form of social stratification. Pitirim A. Sorokin articulated this point as a general statement: 'Any organized social group is always a stratified social body. There has not been and does not exist any permanent social group which is "flat", and in which all members are equal. Unstratified society, with a real equality of its members, is a myth that has never been realized in the history of mankind. This statement may sound paradoxical and yet it is accurate. The forms and proportions of stratification vary, but its essence is permanent, as far as any permanent and organized social group is concerned.'[23]

On even the most casual reading of the Islamic scriptural text one is struck that quite irrespective of the emphasis it places on equality of human beings Islam's orientation is remarkably hierarchical. Its hierarchical orientation comes in a wide variety of fields. First, the relationship of the believers with non-believers is conceived in hierarchical terms

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with the believer (*dhimmi*) and the non-believer (*kafir*) constituting a clear hierarchy. Second, the relationship of Allah to the believer is conceived in hierarchical terms. It is a relationship of subordination and subservience so much so that the individual believer must prostrate before Allah in daily prayers and must at the same time see himself as utterly powerless in relation to Him. Any number of passages exist in the Islamic scriptural text endorsing the relatively lowly standing of the believers, whether as individuals or as a collective entity, in relation to Allah. Third, the relationship of the wife to her husband is clearly conceived in hierarchical terms even if the text does not distinguish between them in terms of the religious duties enjoined upon them. This is sometimes cited by Muslim feminists and Muslim modernists to argue that Islam guarantees equality of gender and does not place a Muslim woman in an inferior position to a man. However, in reality a woman is subordinate to a man and the relationship between them is seen as constituting a hierarchy wherein the woman stands in relation to a man in the same position as the individual stands in relation to the community and the community stands in relation to Allah. Fatima Mernissi characterizes this orientation of Islam in relation to women by the concept of *nusuz*, which implies an unequal relationship. Finally, the relationship between master and slave is conceived in clearly hierarchical terms even if the master is called upon to deal with the slave with kindness and merit is assigned to those who free their slaves. Thus, it is clear that the framework of Islamic thinking is deeply imbued with the notion of hierarchy and social stratification.

It is true that the Arab society in which Islam evolved did not possess great differences of wealth, but economic differentiation between ordinary Bedouins and the trading

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classes did exist. One can easily imagine that they would have differed with respect to their wealth, material possessions and lifestyles and Islam could not have brushed these differences under the carpet. It would have been required to deal with them, as they would have been reflected in the people's behaviour and mutual attitudes. As far as the Islamic scriptural text is concerned, it clearly recognizes such distinctions in society and prescribes appropriate forms of behaviour for each. It asks those deprived in social and economic terms to be content and to live according to their means. It is repeatedly said in the text that Allah is all-seeing and will reward the poor for their poverty on the day of judgement. At the same time, the wealthy and rich, while they are allowed to live with their riches and to spend according to their economic standing, are warned not to be too proud of their material possessions. Moreover, they are asked to show kindness to those who are deprived and poor and to part with a portion of their wealth and income for the poor. Even the poor are conceived in hierarchical terms: first come the near ones followed by orphans and then the destitute and the deprived. If some kind of social stratification had not existed in society, Islam's scriptural text would neither have referred to those differences, nor indicated appropriate forms of behaviour for them. It would also not have sought to devise an economic framework for the redistribution of wealth in a manner that the poor would be able to meet both ends meet. It is, thus, clear that the emphasis that the Islamic scriptural text places on social equality does not describe an existing state of affairs.

If the worldview of the Islamic scriptural text is hierarchical and it admits social and economic differences in society, then how should we interpret its emphasis upon social equality? One way to interpret this can be to ignore that Islamic

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orientation is hierarchical and that it recognizes social and economic differences in the society in which it originated, and to argue that it stands for egalitarianism as an absolute value. I would argue that those who maintain that Islam contemplates no social stratification are interpreting Islam in precisely this way. Even when they encounter social differentiation and stratification, they glibly ignore it and flag the proclaimed egalitarianism of Islam as a social reality. The other way of interpretation can be to recognize a fundamental difference. This is the difference between society as it exists and as it ought to exist, and to maintain that the Islamic proclamation in favour of social equality is more in the nature of an ideal for the future than a description of an existing state of affairs.

This distinction should not be entirely unfamiliar to us in India. As is well known, Indian society has been the most unequal society, social inequality being institutionalized in the caste system. India's Constitution went on to declare India to be a casteless and classless society. In so doing, the Constitution was not proclaiming that the social inequalities of the past had entirely disappeared and that society was egalitarian from the time the Constitution was promulgated. The only sensible way would be to recognize that, while social inequalities persist, the ideal that the Constitution provides is that of egalitarianism. This is also true of Islam. It proclaims social equality to be an ideal, but recognizes that social inequalities exist in society. By this token, there is no contradiction between Islamic support for an egalitarian society as a future goal and the presence of caste or class differences as a social reality.

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DALIT MUSLIMS

The expression 'Dalit Muslims' has been finding increasing mention in the discourse of traditionally backward Muslim communities in recent years. However, there does not yet exist any clear understanding of what this expression actually means or which castes or groups it is supposed to denote. On the one hand, it has been used to denote a whole range of Muslim castes that are currently included in the category of the Other Backward Classes (OBCs). On the other hand, it has been used to denote those Muslim castes or groups which converted from the 'untouchable' Hindu castes or are so severely stigmatized and are subjected to such extreme forms of social exclusion that would render them comparable to the Scheduled Castes.

The Mandal Commission compounded and reinforced this confusion. As is already well known, the Commission's task was to identify OBCs and to determine whether they should be eligible for reservation along the lines of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. There was no difficulty in this with respect to Hindu castes because administrative policy clearly recognized a distinction between Scheduled Castes and OBCs. Because the Presidential order of 1950 clearly and arbitrarily laid down that 'No person who professes a religion different from the Hindu religion shall be deemed to be a member of a Scheduled Caste', the Mandal Commission lumped the severely stigmatized and extremely excluded among the Muslims with Muslim OBCs for purposes of affirmative action. Therefore, when the urge for equality and social justice seized the imagination of the lowest social groups in other religious traditions and the word Dalit came to be seen as a short-cut carrier of that aspiration, the expression 'Dalit Muslims' came to be used for a wide

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variety of groups other than those severely stigmatized and excluded and on that ground comparable to the Hindu 'ex-untouchable' castes for whom the term 'Scheduled Castes' was reserved.[24]

One can arrive at an assessment of the extent of confusion that prevails at present with respect to the expression 'Dalit Muslims' by reading between the lines in the statements of those claiming to speak on their behalf as well as by considering the castes that they have been tempted to include under that category.

N. Jamal Ansari writes: '...it is an established fact that Indian Muslim community is divided into castes and has a large deprived section... Before discussing constitutional provisions in respect of Dalits and exclusion of all "Dalit Muslims" from those provisions, I think we must define "Dalit Muslims". Dalit means downtrodden, oppressed, suppressed and backward. Also, Dalit stands for untouchable and depressed classes. The term "Dalit" applies to members of those menial castes that have been graded lowly which they have inherited by accident of birth.'[25] Likewise, Ali Anwar uses the words '*pasmanda*' (meaning downtrodden and backward) and Dalit interchangeably and includes under 'Dalit Muslims' castes like Bhatiyara, Tikyafarosh, Itafarosh, Halalkhor, Khakrob, Mogalzada and Chirimar, only some of which can be said to be severely stigmatized and excluded.[26] Clearly, in all such statements and lists, as their reading suggests, the expression 'Dalit Muslims' has been used as a generic term to denote all Muslim castes that are educationally and socially backward.[27]

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CONCLUSION

There are roughly about 17 Muslim castes distributed in different parts of India who would qualify to be eligible for inclusion in the category 'Scheduled Castes'. On what basis are they distinguishable from the Muslim OBCs? Ghaus Ansari did suggest in his early work that the relationships between the ashraf and ajlaf on the one hand and the arzal on the other were shaped by considerations of social distance taking on the characteristics of untouchability. He mentioned that the members of the category called arzal were excluded both physically and socially. From a physical point of view, they tended to inhabit excluded localities and did not mix with the members of the other two categories. When it came to social intercourse, their relationship was characterized by strict maintenance of social distance and deference so that the members of the arzal castes had minimal and limited interaction with the members of the other castes. Once again, Ansari was constrained into not saying anything more than this by the nature of the evidence that came out of the enumerations of the decennial censuses and some stray observations the census authorities offered in their reports from time to time.

More focused research on social stratification among Muslims in the early 1970s and subsequently relied upon empirical methods, painstakingly collecting information on actual, day-to-day interactions among Muslim castes. This research succeeded in providing a more grounded picture of the situation of the castes that Ansari had called arzal. It demonstrated that in terms of day-to-day social interactions the arzal existed on the margins of society. Even so, the range of dimensions of interaction that this research explored was restricted to areas of commensality, endogamy and sociality.[28]

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It showed that the arzal engaged in the lowly occupation of scavenging, confined their marriages within the group and were excluded in separate residential quarters in the villages as well as the towns, in which members of the other categories did not live. This research also noted the existence among the arzal castes of a system of internal government and social control with a hereditary official who regulated the life of group members and punished any transgressions of group norms besides settling domestic or intra-group disputes. Since much of this early research was focused on local communities, villages and towns, and covered groups that fell into what Ansari had designated as arzal and ajlaf, the information on the arzal castes does not go beyond this limited range. For example, it is silent on the exclusion of the arzal castes in the ritual and religious spheres[29] as well as on whether the religious specialists who cater to the ashraf and ajlaf castes also minister to them.

Considering the severely stigmatized and extremely excluded so-called arzal castes, two questions need to be disposed of. One is whether these castes should be recognized and entitled to benefits currently given to the 'Scheduled Castes'. An argument often advanced is that Muslims do not have castes and therefore the benefit of reservation for 'Scheduled Castes' cannot be extended to them. This is a fallacious argument to say the least. Public policies are not based on ideologies, which are an extremely contested arena, with no ground for believing that the State's understanding of the Islamic ideology is necessarily correct. Public policies are based on objective realities and seek to address social problems, as they exist at the ground level. If extremely excluded and severely stigmatized castes exist among Muslims, there is no reason why the strategy of ameliorating such groups should not be applied to them.

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There exists a strong case for extending the benefits of the 'Scheduled Castes' to severely stigmatized and extremely excluded Muslim castes, and any attempt to shy away from this obvious action would expose the State to the allegation that it is indirectly seeking to prevent the depletion of the 'Hindu community' by ensuring that the Scheduled Castes stay within the Hindu fold. If they hanker for those benefits they will have to change over to Hinduism or one of the other religions of Indian origin whose deprived sections are included in the category 'Scheduled Castes'. The State's secular credentials will remain in doubt so long as this argument is adhered to.

The second question is whether these Muslim castes should be recognized as 'Scheduled Castes' only when there is demonstrable evidence that they had earlier converted from one of the Scheduled Castes. This was also the test applied in the determination of Sosai's claim to be granted concessions being extended to the 'Scheduled Castes'. Among other things, his claim was rejected as he could not demonstrate beyond the shadow of a doubt that he or his ancestors had descended from one of the 'Scheduled Castes'. It is necessary to remember that in most cases we are dealing with castes whose histories are wholly unrecorded. Moreover, where is the basis for presuming that all such castes in other religious traditions are necessarily descendants of 'Scheduled Castes'? It is possible that they may have come into existence autonomously as a result of subsequent colonization under Muslim domination. Muslim elites may have forced some groups, irrespective of whether they earlier belonged to the 'Scheduled Castes' or not, to perform certain functions for them and their current stigmatization may not be the result of their conversion to Islam but may owe itself to their subsequent domination. Under the circumstances, requiring

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the severely stigmatised and extremely excluded castes, whether among Muslims or Christians, to pass the test of originating from 'Scheduled Castes' would amount to failing them on a priori grounds. This would militate against the spirit and intentions of the Constitution.[30] The scale of justice has to be balanced to ensure that similarly placed social groups are treated equally and evenly without religion (an anathema in a secular state) being brought into play to deny some of them equal treatment under the law.

The caveat in Shukla is worthwhile mentioning in this context. He writes: 'The general rule is that conversion operates as an expulsion from the caste because caste is predominantly a feature of the Hindu society. But ultimately it depends on the structure of the caste and its rules and regulations whether a person would cease to belong to the caste on his abjuring Hinduism. If, having regard to its structure, a caste may consist not only of Hindus but also persons belonging to other religions, conversion from Hinduism to other religion may not necessarily involve loss of caste because persons belonging to other religions can as well be members of that caste. This might happen where caste is based on economic and occupational characteristics. Therefore, the correct test to be applied in such cases is to determine what are the social and political consequences of such conversion and that must be decided in a common-sense practical way rather than on theoretical and theocratic grounds.'[31]

NOTES

* This is a revised version of the paper presented at the workshop on 'Conferment of Scheduled Caste Status to "Untouchables"/Dalits converted to Christianity/Islam: Issues

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and Challenges' held at the Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai, on 18–19 August 2006.

1. Contrary to popular perceptions and State eagerness to enact legislation seeking to regulate conversions on the premise that large-scale conversion to Islam is indeed taking place, Muslim proselytization efforts virtually ceased after Independence. Some Muslim groups continue to hold on to the concept of *dawat* (invitation to Islam), but are conscious that the political climate is too hot and problematic to attempt proselytization on a large scale. Unless castes come forward for reasons of their own (as happened in Meenakshipuram), conversions to Islam are now mostly individual and sporadic. For a discussion of the dynamics of the Meenakshipuram conversions, see Imtiaz Ahmad, 'Threats and Responses: Conversions in Tamilnadu', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 17, No. 43 (1982), pp. 1737–9 and 'The Tamilnadu Conversions, Conversion Threats and the Anti-Reservation Campaign: Some Hypotheses', *New Quest* 34 (1982), pp. 219–26.
2. For a more detailed discussion on this point, see Imtiaz Ahmad, 'Exclusion and Assimilation in Indian Islam', in Attar Singh (ed.), *Socio-Cultural Impact of Islam in North India*, Chandigarh: Punjab University, 1976.
3. One explanation for the presence of Muslim scavengers in Hyderabad appears to be the presence of a sizable Muslim elite, which needed scavengers to clean family toilets. Outside of Hyderabad, particularly in the outlying districts where an elite class did not exist, Muslim scavenging castes are not to be found. Because Uttar Pradesh and Bihar had a sizable elite class, the largest number of Muslim lowest castes is found in these areas. Again, while they are found in and around Kolkata, they are almost non-existent in rural West Bengal.

4–5. See K.M. Pannikar, *Hindu Society at Cross-Roads*, London: Allen and Unwin, 1961. There is an interesting debate on caste among Muslims according to which the Muslim system of social stratification is claimed to have evolved independently and is seen as having no relationship with the

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Hindu caste system. Charles Lindholm has argued that many of the features found in Muslim society are similar to those found among Muslims in other parts of South Asia and on that basis has argued that the Muslim social stratification found in India is an extension of the system found elsewhere (see Charles Lindholm, 'Paradigms of Society: A Critique of Theories of Caste among Indian Muslims', *European Journal of Sociology*, 1965, pp. 131–40). Many Muslims are themselves inclined to take a similar line of argument. This argument would have been tenable if Islamic scriptural sources had provided a blueprint for an Islamic social stratification system. This not being the case, the argument fails to sustain itself. It is plausible that Islam did modify certain social practices including that of caste. Whatever practices were not sanctified by Islam but existed in India were attenuated. Practices existing in India which were in conformity with the Islamic ethos became more rigid. Thus, purdah practices, which already existed even in India, were rendered more rigid and strict, and caste principles were relaxed or made less restrictive.

6. For a more detailed treatment of Barni's as well as other contemporary scholars' views on social divisions in medieval Muslim society, see Yoginder Sikand, *Islam, Caste and Dalit-Muslim Relations in India*, Delhi: Global Media Publications, 2005.
7. Quoted in Sikand, 2005.
8. Gaus Ansari, *Muslim Castes in Uttar Pradesh*, Lucknow: Ethnographic and Folk Culture Society, 1959.
9. Imtiaz Ahmad, 'Introduction', in Imtiaz Ahmad (ed.), *Caste and Social Stratificaion among Muslims*, Delhi: Manohar Book Service, 1973.
10. Fakruddin Benur, 'The Dynamics of Caste Problems of the Indian Muslims', paper presented at a seminar on Dalit Muslims organized by Deshkal Society, New Delhi, 2004.
11. This tendency is, incidentally, not limited to Muslim elites, but is also reflected by leaders who claim to represent the cause of lower Muslim castes. Ali Anwar, president of the

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Pasmanda Muslim Mahaz, Bihar, notes, 'In Islam in principle caste and conceptions of high and low or touchable and untouchable do not exist. I want to state this right in the beginning because whenever this question is discussed some people immediately start citing the Quran and the Hadith. I want to state that the discussion is not about Islam but on adherence to it' (paper presented at a seminar on Dalit Muslims organized by Deshkal Society, New Delhi, 2004).

12. Nadeem Husnain, 'Muslims in India: Caste Affinity and Social Boundaries of Backwardness', in H.S. Verma (ed.), *The OBCs and the Ruling Classes in India*, Jaipur: Rawat Publications, 2005.
13. Parvaiz Nazir, 'Social Structure, Ideology and Language: Caste among Muslims', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. xxviii, No. 52, 25 December 1993, pp. 2897–900.
14. Husnain, 'Muslims in India', p. 2.
15. Ibid., pp. 207–8.
16. Ibid., p. 207.
17. Nazir, 'Social Structure, Ideology and Language', p. 2898.
18. Husnain, 'Muslims in India', p. 208.
19. Nazir, 'Social Structure, Ideology and Language', p. 2898.
20. Ahmed, *Caste and Social Stratification among Muslims.*
21–22. Hutton, *Census of India*, 1902, pp. 350–1. Husnain, 'Social Structure, Ideology and Language', p. 208.
23. Pitirim A. Sorokin, *Social and Cultural Mobility*, New York: The Free Press, 1959, pp. 13–14.
24. On what grounds the Presidential order of 1950 took this decision, opposite to the explicit wording of the Constitution, remains an enigma and has not been adequately researched. It is clear that the distinction arose out of the strong Hindu undertones of nationalism as it took shape in India. Since the idea of nationalism simultaneously propagates the notion of a national community which in this case was seen as the 'Hindu community', there was fear that if the extremely stigmatized and excluded castes in other religious traditions were allowed eligibility as Scheduled Castes there would remain no check on conversion of lower groups to them

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(already the idea that the lower groups had converted to Islam because of their lowly position in Hindu society was widespread). The idea that the term 'Scheduled Castes' should be restricted to Hindu 'ex-untouchables' was introduced to prevent conversion of lower-caste Hindu groups to other religions and thereby to prevent any subsequent depletion of the 'Hindu community'. What role the presence at that time of Dr Rajendra Prasad at the helm of affairs played in this process is also worth investigation in the context of his subsequent strong opposition to the passing of the Hindu Code Bill.

25. 'Oppression of Dalit Muslims through Constitution of India', paper presented at a seminar on Dalit Muslims organized Deshkal Society, New Delhi, 2004.
26. There are some who question the tendency to denote backward and downtrodden Muslim castes as Dalit Muslim. Benur writes, 'A question can be asked at this juncture. How it is appropriate to call these bahujan Muslims or backward Muslim masses as Dalit Muslims? By calling these Muslims as Dalit Muslims, what (do) we aim to achieve? Creation of awareness among the Muslim masses? Removal of marginalization? Generating (a) sympathy wave? Calling these Muslims as Dalit Muslims are we radicalizing caste politics?' (Fakruddin Benur, 'The Dynamics of Caste Problems of the Indian Muslims', paper presented at a seminar on Dalit Muslims organized by Dehskal Society, New Delhi, 2004.)
27. Perhaps the reason for this is their desire to consolidate a wider constituency. Shabbir Ansari, leader of the Mahrashtra Backward Castes Federation, and Ibrahim Qureshi, convener, National Coordination Council, Muslim OBCs of India, Bhopal, have maintained a distinction between Muslim OBCs and Dalit Muslims. Qureshi lists 8–10 Muslim castes that are eligible for inclusion in the Scheduled Caste category (see his paper presented at the Muslim OBC Conference organized by the PM's High Level Committee, New Delhi, 5–6 September 2005). Eajaz Ali has been very clear and his

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movement focuses exclusively on severely stigmatized Muslim castes.

28. From my observations of growing up in a Muslim family I am able to recall a number of instances of both open and silent discrimination practised against these castes. We had a Lalbegi woman come to clean the toilets in our house. She was on the best of terms with my mother and would sit for hours together gossiping with my mother. Whenever my mother would offer her paan, she would wrap her hand with her dupatta to receive it. My mother used to drop the paan in her hand, making sure that her hand did not touch the Lalbegi woman's hand. On occasions of marriage the Lalbegi family would come and sit in a corner and wait until all guests had eaten and left. They would then be given food in vessels they had brought with them. They did not eat the food there, but instead took it with them to be eaten at home. On sacrificial Eid the family was not given any portion of the meat. They were given the intestines which were kept aside for them. It is possible that some of these forms of discrimination have changed, but there is no evidence to show that they have disappeared. The Commission on Religious and Linguistic Minorities should sponsor studies to evaluate the discrimination and its changing forms in a few areas to find out the current state of these castes.
29. Some evidence exists to show that there is discrimination against these Muslim castes in the religious sphere. I found during fieldwork in eastern Uttar Pradesh that members of these castes did not go to the mosque for prayers and if they went they had to stand in the back rows. It has been mentioned by many observers that such groups often have their own mosques. N. Jamal Ansari notes that 'in certain areas of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar there are separate mosques and burial grounds' for these castes (paper presented at the seminar on Dalit Muslims organized by Deshkal Society, New Delhi, 2004). Establishment of their own mosque would call for a level of prosperity for the group as a whole. Whether

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they have anywhere attained such a level of prosperity is something on which very little information exists.

30. In Parasram V. Shivchand case it was held that in order to determine whether a particular caste is a Scheduled Caste one has to look at the notification issued by the President on that behalf. This questionable view calls for a review. This view was indeed reviewed in the Palghat Jilla Thandan Samudhaya Samrakshana Samithi vs. State of Kerala [(1994) 1 SCC 359]. It was ruled in that case that it is not open to the court to scrutinize any evidence whether a person who is described as of one caste also falls within a specified caste. Therefore, in the absence of the public notification issued by the President, a person described as 'Mochi' in Punjab does not fall within the caste of 'Chamars' as included in the said order of 1950 issued by the President. The courts, it was explained, would not scrutinize the gazetteers and the glossaries on the Punjab castes for this purpose. Any change in the presidential order by the state government is also impermissible and unconstitutional. After this position, any caste wishing to be included in the category 'Scheduled Caste' would have no avenue of appeal against a presidential order no matter how arbitrary it might be.
31. V.N. Shukla, *Constitution of India*, 10th edition, Lucknow: Eastern Book Company, 2001, p. 826.

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When Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya was asked about the position of the inmates of the dargah after his demise, he stated that they were free to leave or stay. However, he also said that for those who chose to stay, he would entreat God to provide enough for their sustenance. On further being asked as to who would collect and distribute this income, he replied that one who surrended his own share would do this job.

20

The Dargah of Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya: References in the Revenue and Judicial Records (1859–1973 AD)*

SAMEENA HASAN SIDDIQUI

While one enters the premises of the *dargah*[1] of Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya, one encounters people who claim themselves to be the *sajjadanashin*,[2] *mutawwali*[3] or *pirzada*[4] of the dargah. They try to impress the visitor by their genealogies. One is naturally tempted to learn about the management and control over the affairs of the dargah in the historical context. Since these questions relate to the hereditary rights enjoyed by the people associated with the dargah, rarely, if ever, do they come out with any substantial evidence of their claims. In the absence of such help one

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has to consult other sources, such as files of litigation of civil courts, records of the Delhi *wakf*[5] board, Delhi archives, revenue records of erstwhile *tehsil*[6] Ghiyaspur, apart from tit-bits scattered among historical and semi-historical sources.

When Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya was asked about the position of the inmates of the dargah after his demise, he stated that they were free to leave or stay. However, he also said that for those who chose to stay, he would entreat God to provide enough for their sustenance. On further being asked as to who would collect and distribute this income, he replied that one who surrendered his own share would do this job.[7] These words of Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya reveal three crucial aspects: First, that the Shaikh was not in favour of compelling or forcing any one from amongst his relatives, companions, disciples, *khalifas*,[8] *khadims*[9] or others known to him, in or outside his *khanqah*[10] to stay on at the khanqah after his demise. Lineage or proximity to the Shaikh were not regarded as compelling factors. Even during his lifetime he practised what he said. He certainly did not deem it necessary to ascertain the desire of his disciples nor grant any one of them exclusive rights over others. Secondly, it seems that he expected *futuh*[11] to continue to flow into his dargah to support and sustain its inmates. This, however, provides the first clue to the question as to who would manage the khanqah after his demise. He chose not to choose a person but a quality—that is, the quality of *faqr*[12]—as the controller and manager of the affairs of his khanqah. This fact alone was enough to simultaneously qualify or disqualify any one of the inmates from handling the affairs of the khanqah.

It is important to note here that the Shaikh did not consider the affairs of the khanqah to be mere chores but equated them with the spiritual discipline of the Chishtiya[13]

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tradition. *Qiwam-ul-Aqaid* elaborates the details for the collection of futuh. Strict rules were followed in the acceptance of futuh and everything was to be distributed. Stipends were sent regularly. Jamal Qiwamuddin records: 'The people in general received stipends daily or every week or in a month or in four months or half-yearly or yearly. Those who lived in the vicinity got it daily; those living in the city got it on a weekly basis. Those who came from the neighbourhood received monthly stipends. Six monthly or yearly stipends were given to those who came from distant places like Uchh, Multan, Gujarat or Deogir. Whoever came after the morning prayers till the Shaikh retired for mid-day rest, got *jitals*,[14] gold and silver *tankas*[15]—ten, twenty, fifty or hundred—according to his needs.'[16] No immovable property or guaranteed payment was accepted as futuh. However, examples of the corrupting influence of futuh over the inmates of the khanqah abound. 'When the Shaikh was ailing and was on his death-bed, he summoned all his relatives, friends and servants and said: "Be a witness if this man (turning to Iqbal)[17] would hold back a single thing from being distributed to the people, he would himself be responsible before God on the Day of Judgement."' On this Syed Husain Kirmani informed the Shaikh that Iqbal had saved some corn. The Shaikh said to Iqbal: 'Why have you kept this dead sand?' He then ordered the poor people and mendicants to break open the doors of the granaries and take away everything. This probably explains the insistence of the Shaikh on the centrality of faqr in the management of the affairs of such a large establishment where, as mentioned by Shaikh Nasiruddin Chiragh, futuh flowed like a tributary of the Jumna.[18]

Many disciples and families were close to Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya. Amir Khurd[19] gives a separate account

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of the disciples of the Shaikh under three categories, viz, khalifa, *yaran-e-Ala*[20] and 19 disciples. However, he does not specify the basis for such a categorization.

Mirat-ul-asrar[21] (1613 AD) and *Maarij-ul-walayat*[22] (1666–67 AD) do not differentiate between the disciples of the Shaikh. Amir Khurd also mentions some *aqarba* or close relatives of the Shaikh, viz. Khwaja Rafiuddin Haroon, Khwaja Taqiuddin Nuh, Khwaja Abu Bakr, Maulana Qasim and Khwaja Azizuddin. Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya had one elder sister Bibi Zainab, who had one son, Khwaja Mohammad and one daughter Bibi Ruqaiya. Khwaja Mohammad had two sons, Rafiuddin Haroon and Taqiuddin Nuh. Patricia Jeffery[23] has presented the four families—Naberegan, Haroonian, Qazizadgan and Hindustanian—and their relationship with Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya.

While looking for that quality of faqr in the final manager of the dargah, the sketchy records which I searched revealed interesting details. To begin with, searching through the land revenue records, I found the *Misal Bandobast*[24] for the year 1880 AD which contains two documents: (1) *Shijra-tul ansab*[25] and (2) *Wajib-ul arz*[26] of *mauza*[27] Ghiyaspur, *pargana*[28] and tehsil and *zila*[29] Dehli. The *Shijra tul ansab*, besides mentioning the proprietary rights (*bayan-e-malikan*), carries a column detailing the previous account of the village [Ghiyaspur] (*dar bab-e-halat-e-sabiqa deh)*. It reads thus:

> Length of period and year is not known, but it has been heard from elders that prior to Sultan Amir Timur, one Sultan named Ghiyasuddin established this village Ghiyaspur, and during the lifetime of Hazrat Sultan Nizamuddin Auliya (*ba zamana-e-hayat*), this village was ear-marked for the expenses of the *langarkhana*[30] of the Shaikh. After the demise of Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya, the khadims continued to draw the expenses of the dargah of the above

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> mentioned Auliya from this village. Because the expenses of the dargah were more, the amount of debt due to the *baqqalan*[31] increased so much that this village became the *milkiyat*[32] of the baqqalan in lieu of this debt. And from the baqqalan it was later bought by Messers Abdullah and Hayat and Qalandar Bakht...

The other document, that is, the *Wajib-ul-arz* states:

> At the dargah [of Hazrat Amir Khusrau], a yearly fair (*mela*) for the *Urs*[33] is held and at the dargah No. 2 [of Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya] a fair is held twice in a year, the first one on the seventeenth Rabi ul awwal[34] and the second on Basant Panchmi,[35] a mela of Basant is held...the khadims of the shrine of Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya take their share of the offerings made at the shrines according to custom... The masjids and *shivalas*[36] of the area are in the possession of their Muslim and Hindu custodians according to their customs...

The British records[37] of the second half of the 19th century mention khadims, both as a category and also as named individuals. There is no reference to a pirzada or a sajjadanashin. Reference may be made to the letter of Carr Stephen Esquire, Judge of Small Cause Court, Delhi, addressed to the Commissioner of Delhi dated 16 December 1872, which states:

> The greatest defaulters of all are the khadims of the different shrines. I am told that they recently sold two marble tombs to a Nawab of Rampur for two thousand rupees. These guardians of sacred property are in the habit of removing tombs from their graves and of occupying the mortuary as dwelling places... Some of the buildings herein mentioned are in the custody of khadims. It would be necessary to ascertain the nature of their charge and to impose such terms on their possessions as would admit of the inspection of these buildings by a responsible official visitor.

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A letter of December 1859 mentions:

> ...a piece of rent-free ground in *mauza* Mubarakpore Kotla, measuring 78 *bighas*[38] and 5 *biswas*.[39] This piece of ground was granted to Khair Alee (?), a khadim of the shrine of Nizamoodin for taking care of the tomb of Prince Jehangir, son of Ackbur Shah II and Mumtaz Mahal and was confiscated by me on the ground that Ackbur Shah II and Mumtaz Mahal could only alienate this *nuzoo*[40] land during their own tenure. This grant escaped my notice when replying to your reference regarding the shrine of Nizamoodin.

Another undated letter written by one Alam Ali records thus:

> Papers regarding a lapsed *mafi*[41] granted to the khadims of Nizamuddin for the support of the tomb of Prince Jehangir, son of Akbar Shah II (1824). The mafi was resumed in 1864. It is worthless to preserve such papers after so long a time especially when there is no dispute of any kind regarding these mafis.

In addition to this, land records of the year 1864 AD (*misal haqiyat*) record the land ownership rights of a khadim of the dargah of Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya in the village of Ghiyaspur.[42]

Khevat[43] *number*	*Nam malik maye waldiyat*	*Nam muzaara maye waldiyat*	*Khasra number*
71	*Mir Hussain wa Muneer Hasan wa Ghiyas Hussain wa Jafar Hussain pisraan Bi zauja Dakhani Begum wa Roshan Ara Begum wa Jahan*	*Harnam wald Mansukh quam Brahman ghair maroozi deh.*	144 145 146 255 256

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Ara Begum
dukhtaraan warisan
Mir Babi (?) khadim
dargah Nizamuddin
dawam hissa bamojib
hissa shariye

Records of the early 20th century seem to make repeated assertions of the relative position of the khadims of the dargah. What is important, however, is that these assertions and reassertions do not remain within the confines of the dargah but enter the legal arena. It surely tells a story of changing times and its redefining compulsions on the affairs and the management of the dargah.

(i) Case File No. 20/4, filed on 13 January 1907,[44]
decided on 13 January 1907, G-20
Known as the judgement (*faisla*) of Jacob Sahab, District Magistrate, Delhi Province, Mutual consent, dated 1 January 1907:

'There is nobody specially appointed as the mutawalli or sajjadanashin. All members are equal to the sons of the sister of Hazrat Sultan Ji.'

(ii) Case File No. filed in August 1912
Decided in June 1914, statement of late Sahibzada Ghulam Moinuddin
In the Court of the District Magistrate, *suba*[45] Dehli
In the capacity of the Defendant:

'In this shrine there is no sajjada or mutawalli. Every claimant gets his turn every week. He controls the management. He also divides the income.'

(iii) Petition addressed to the senior Superintendant of Police, suba of Dehli
Report Register No. 4
Written on 3 December 1938

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> 'There is no sajjadanashin or mutawalli and pirzade are all equal.'

The rumbling of these assertions is evident in the formation of a Management Committee in 1932 which was set up for the administration of the shrine by the Magistrate of the suba of Delhi, and which continued to function till 1947.[46] However, complaints continued which were sorted out by S.N. Rasheed, Class I Resident Magistrate. The *Jamabandi Mufassil*[47] of 1943–44 of mauza Aliganj tehsil and zila Dehli mentions the granting of *patta*[48] rights to Khwaja Hasan Nizami on 28 June 1940 by the Deputy Commissioner of the suba of Dehli. Again, the Jamabandi Mufassil of 1947 of Mauza Aliganj tehsil and zila Dehli mentions a Dehli Improvement Trust which was placed under the care of Khwaja Hasan Nizami, s/o Syed Ashique Ali, resident *sakin* of Nizamuddin. This was to function till 31 March 1949.[49]

Some official clarification of the position and status of the so-called khadims was attempted by the Commissioner of the Wakf Board on 26 October 1966 who cited the leading case of Piran vs Abdul Karim No. 19, p. 203 in the following words:

> As is well known these dargahs are the tombs of celebrated *dervishes*[50] who in their lifetime were regarded as saints. When they died their mausolia became shrines or dargah. The endowment is maintained by grants of land to the shrine by pious Muslims. The property of the shrines is wakf, tied upon the ownership of God.

The Wakf Commissioner, after giving an opportunity to all the pirzadas to present their claims, submitted the following report to the state government:

(1) The land of the shrine of Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya is not private, nor is it owned by any of his [Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya's] ancestors. All the pirzadgan,

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Pir Zamin Nizami, Ashfaq Ali, Zahoor Hasan, Mohammad Saeed, Hasan Sain [sic], Safdar Ali and Pir Syed Hasan Musanna accept the dargah and the masjid (Case No. 1083) as a wakf.

(2) The dargah is being managed by the four branches of the pirzadgan, viz, Naberegan, Haroonian, Hindustanian and Qazizadgan, in accordance with the centuries-old tradition and custom and each branch manages it by rotation and that during the said period it receives all donations, offerings, and presents, renders all services and performs all the ceremonies of the shrine falling during that period, including the Urs ceremony of Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya and/or that of Amir Khusrau, incur all expenses of the dargah of the said branches. Therefore no particular pirzada or branch has any preferential status and/or right over the other, both in status and authority. This system is what they call the *baridari*[51] system.

(3) No question of inheritance exists. Any pirzada belonging to the four branches does not succeed Hazrat Nizamuddin as the saint died issueless, even if it is considered for a moment that sajjadanashini goes by succession.

This, however, was challenged by Dewan Peer Syed Hasan Musanna. A suit was filed challenging the notification issued by the Delhi Wakf Board showing 'all the four branches are pirzadgan on the basis of the baridari system as the mutawalli of the shrine of Hazrat Khwaja Nizamuddin Auliya'.

On 11 December 1970 a suit (No. 177) was filed in the High Court of Delhi, in the court of the Honourable Justice Mr Vyas Dev Misra, viz. Dewan Peer Syed Hasan Musanna

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Nizami, Plaintiff vs The Delhi Wakf Board. The plaintiff submitted that:

(a) He is the owner of the land on which the famous dargah of Nizamuddin Auliya is situated. The land forms part of Khasra No. 93 Khevat No. 43 of mauza Ghiyaspur, Delhi. The plan of the property in suit was filed along with it. That the said land is ancestral. The revenue entries to this effect were filed.

(b) Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya had created certain positions which were known as *dawami ohde* or perennial posts. Previously the father and grandfather of the plaintiff were mutawallis of the dargah. The plaintiff is the head of the *majlis*,[52] head of the family, *choudhary*[53] and *jaanashin*[54] of Khwaja Nizamuddin Auliya. He is also the owner of *tarka-warsa*[55] of Khwaja Nizamuddin Auliya.

Dewan Peer Syed Hasan Musanna produced historical documents to support his claim.[56] The High Court judgement was pronounced on 17 September 1973 by the Honourable Justice thus:

> The notification, in my opinion suffers from the vice of vagueness as it does not show who the mutawallis are... Mr. A.C. Ghambir, the learned counsel for the plaintiff, contends that the property in dispute is a public wakf. He categorically stated that the plaintiff does not claim the ownership, but claims to be the mutawalli of the dargah... In view of the ex-parte evidence produced by the plaintiff, the defendant's notification, which is published in the Delhi Gazette dated December 31, 1970 in Part IV[57] is hereby quashed and set aside and declared to be not binding on the plaintiff. The plaintiff is declared the mutawalli of the said Hazrat Khwaja Nizamuddin Auliya.

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This seesaw of claims and counter-claims still continues, which makes the whole issue vexed and sensitive. However, what is lost sight is the final 'judgement' of Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya himself who desired his khanqah to be run by one who surrendered his own share! In the words of the Shaikh:

> God Almighty has in His wisdom given a special characteristic to every age and the people of that age develop their customs, habits and traditions accordingly in a distinct way, so much so that the temperament of the people (of one generation) and their nature does not agree with that of the preceding generation.[58]

NOTES

* This survey is in no way based upon all the records pertaining to the concerned period. It presents a selection of documents which were available. The sole purpose of this paper is to highlight the importance and availability of such data.

1. Literally means a threshold and refers to the abode of a holy man on the tomb of a saint.
2. Literally means a person sitting on a proper mat in adoration and is applied to the spiritual heir on successor of a saint, who tends the grave and cares for the devotees. A spiritual superior at a shrine.
3. Trustee.
4. Literally means the son or disciple (spiritual son) of a saint.
5. A board which administers Muslim trusts and charities.
6. Administrative division in a district, its headquarters (revenue).
7. Syed Muhammad Mubarak Kirmani, known as Amir Khurd, *Siyar-ul-Auliya*, p. 153. Lithographed: Chiranji Lal, Muhibb-i-Hind Press, Delhi, 1885 AD. Urdu tr. Ghulam Ahmad Binyan, Muslim Press, Delhi 1320 AH.

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8. Spiritual successor.
9. Literally means a servant and refers to those who serve at the shrine.
10. A convent for Sufi recluses.
11. Income received gratuitously.
12. Ascetic mortification.
13. Name of a Sufi school or *silsila.*
14. Currency coin.
15. Currency coin.
16. Muhammad Jamal Qiwamuddin, *Qiwam-ul-Aqaid,* pp. 204–6. Cf. K.A. Nizami, *The Life and Times of Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya,* Delhi: Idara-i-Adabiyat-i-Delli, 1991. MS: Osmania University Library, Hyderabad, Urdu tr. Nisar Faruqui, Rampur.
17. Iqbal supervised the affairs of the khanqah.
18. Hamid Qalandar, *Khair-ul Majalis,* p. 59. Ed. by K.A. Nizami, Aligarh, 1959. Urdu tr: *'Siraj-ul-Majalis'*, Delhi, 1315 AH.
19. *Siyar-ul-Auliya,* p. 203.
20. Literally means those associates who are superior.
21. Abdul Rahman Chishti, *Mirat-ul-Asrar,* Cf. Nizami, *The Life and Times of Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya.* MS: personal collection.
22. Ghulam Muinuddin Abdullah, *Maarij-ul-walayat.* Cf. Nizami, *The Life and Times of Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya.* MS: two volumes, personal collection.
23. Cf. Patricia Jeffery, 'Creating a Scene: The Disruption of Ceremonial in a Sufi Shrine', in Imtiyaz Ahmed (ed.), *Ritual and Religion among the Muslims in India,* Delhi, 1984.
24. Land Records.
25. This is the official recording of land ownership rights and a brief sketch of the history of the concerned area on a five metre long cotton cloth. It is available in the Sadar Qanungo Office, Revenue Department, Tis Hazari Courts, Delhi.
26. Document of actual measurement of land. It is also available in the Sadar Qanungo Office, Revenue Department, Tis Hazari Courts, Delhi.
27. Village, township.

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28. Administrative subdivision of a zila or district (about the size of a barony).
29. A district.
30. Free kitchen attached to the khanqah.
31. Moneylenders.
32. Property ownership.
33. Literally means a marriage—See J. Platts, *A Dictionary of Urdu, Classical Hindi and English,* London, 1911, p. 760; and *Encyclopedia of Islam,* Vol. IV, p. 1038. *Urs* refers to the death anniversary of a saint.
34. Name of a month in the Muslim calendar.
35. Festival of Spring.
36. Referring here to temples of the Hindus.
37. From the Delhi archives, D.C. Office, Register No. 1, M-34, 1857, p. 8; Residency Register No. 2, Misc. documents, 1829 to 1876, p. 369; 1895 S/II/2/46 General old no. B/VIII/ 3.P.I. Residency Register no. 2, Misc.documents, 1829 to 1876, Index no. 19.
38. A land measure equal to about five-eighths of an acre.
39. A measure of land, the twentieth part of a bigha.
40. Government land.
41. Rent-free land.
42. Translation:

Khevat number	*Name of the owner and his parentage*	*Name of tenant and his parentage*	*Khasra number*
71	Mir Hussain and Muneer Hasan and Ghiyas Hussain and Jafar Hussain, the sons of Bi (wife) Dakhani Begum, and daughters Roshan Ara Begum and Jahan Ara Begum,. the inheritors of Mir Babi (?) the khadim of the dargah of Nizamuddin in perpetuity as per the shariat division	Harnam wald Mansukh quam Brahman, uncultivated village	144 145 146 255 256

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43. Records the distribution of lands and rights of the occupants.
44. Cf. Allama Akhlaq Husasain Dehlavi, *Hayat-i-Taiyyaba: Sultan-ul-Mashaikh Hazrat Mehboob-i-Ilahi Khwaja Mohammad Nizamuddin Auliya*, Fazal Brothers, Lal Mahal, Hazrat Nizamuddin, New Delhi, 1964.
45. A province.
46. Cf. Allama Akhlaq Husasain Dehlavi, *Hayat-i-Taiyyaba.*
47. Land records.
48. A title deed to land.
49. Sadar Qanungo Office, Revenue Department, Tis Hazari Courts, Delhi. The land records mention mauza Ghiyaspur from the year 1842 till 1903–4,then Imperial Delhi from 1915 till 1920–1,and finally Aliganj from 1927 till 1947.
50. Religious mendicants.
51. 'Bari' refers to a turn of duty or service and 'dari' refers to its acquisition. See Platts, *A Dictionary of Urdu*, pp. 120–1 and 500–1).
52. Congregation, an assembly of Sufis.
53. Headman.
54. Successor.
55. Inheritance including proprietary rights.
56. The list of documents produced are: (1) Extracts of Shijra Nasab from *Tabqat-e-Akbari* and *Sair-ul-Aktab* and *Nizami Bansar'i* and *Tarikhi Hindustan.* (2) Extracts of Shijra Nasab Tughlak from the book *Tarikhe-e-Hindustan,* statement of *Hakumat-e-Islamia,* second edition regarding the *Jamat Khana.* (3) Extract of book *Bazm-e-Sufia,* writer Syed Sahabuddin Abdul Rehman MA, printed in 1949. (4) Extracts of the history of Khwaja Moosa Sahab from the book *Siyar ul auliya,* printed in 1302 Hijri. (5) Document: 1869 mortgage deed dated 21.08.1969. (6) Extract from Nabesa Hazrat Ganj-e-Shakar Khwaja Syed Hasan Musanna agreement of 1933. (7) Extract of the copy of the book *Tarikh-e-Firozshahi* 1357 Hijri Fasli 1938 AD, page 230. (8) Extract of the description of the historical facts about the mutawallis of the dargah of Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya, pp. 140 and 141 from the book *Tarikh-e-Firozshahi.* (9) Extract from the book *Tarikh-e-Auliya,* edition

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II, p. 495. (10) Copy of the affidavit of those present pertaining to the dargah Hazrat Khawaja Syed Nizamuddin Auliya Mehboob-e-Illahi, dated 11.01.1948. (11) Document 1157 Hijri Mohammad Shah Badshah. (12) True copy of the document executed in 1217 Hijri, handwritten record no. 19, *nabera zada Ganj Shakar umra-e-mwazi*, Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya. (13) Extract from the book *Nizami Bansari* written by Khwaja Hasan Nizami, printed at Kamal Press, Delhi, second edition in 1945, pp. 492–3. (14) Copy of the extract from the book *Tarikh-e-Firozshahi*, printed in Calcutta in 1862. (15) Book *Siyar-ul-Auliya*, p. 236. (16) Translation from *Tazkira-e-ulema-e-hind*. (17) Extract in Roman script from the book *Tazkira-e-ulema-e-hind*. (18) Extract from *Salatin Dehli ke Rujhanat*(?), history of Qazi Mohiuddin Kashani, printed in 1330 (?). (19) Copy of Naksha Khevat Khatauni of the village Ghiyaspur, year 1880 AD. (20) Copy of Shajra Nasab Malikan of the Village Ghiyaspur, Mashmoola. (21) Copy of the Revenue Department, Delhi for 1903–4. (22) Copy of the Revenue Department, Delhi for 1912–13. (23) Copy of the record of the Revenue Department, Ghiyaspur, for the year 1880 AD. (24) Copy of extract from *Mazarat-e-Auliya-e-Dehli*. (25) Copy of the Shajra nasab 1908–9 AD. (26) Extract from the Delhi Gazette published by the authorities, on 31.12.1970, entry no. 43 on pp. 1334–5.

57. Delhi Gazette, Government of India, published Thursday, 16 April 1970/26 Chaitra 1892, Part IV, pp. 1334–7.
58. *Siyar-ul-Auliya*, p. 346.

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In some films a Hindu hero, filled with nationalistic fervour, is depicted waging a crusade among Muslim villains who pose a threat to society and national security. And in most of these films the villain's Pakistan connection provides a justification for the hero's jingoistic discourse.

21

Perceptions of Muslim/Islamic Identity in Popular Hindi Cinema

MOHAMMAD ASIM SIDDIQUI

Cinema affects our life in a much more fundamental manner than we perhaps realize. As possibly the most popular, if not the most effective (though very effective nevertheless) means for articulating cultural practices, cinema plays a significant part in the construction of identity. It has an important role in constituting the common sense of millions of Indian cine-goers. In a way cinema is a medium for imposing identity on people because it incorporates various discourses, some innocent but mostly not so. The effect of these discourses in shaping the perceptions of common people cannot be underestimated. And because of its wide reach and commercial compulsions it tends to perpetuate stereotypical notions about gender and religious identity. Jasbir Jain and Sudha Rai rightly say that 'stereotypes become a language of their own and the message awaits to

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be decoded'.[1] Unlike literature which often presents the idiosyncratic in a more complex manner, the medium of cinema, more often than not, thrives on simplistic presentations of 'reality'. Contrary to all that talk about clichés like universal themes, timeless subjects, perennial problems, cinema is integrally bound to its context. The context in its turn is subject to many different kinds of readings. Close readings of the kind supported by deconstructive criticism can reveal the hidden assumptions of society which draw their operative force from some dominant ideology. Sometimes the filmmaker deliberately conforms to an ideology but often she may be in the grip of some ideology without her realizing it.

The role of ideology in imposing identity is a subject which can be probed further by looking at perceptions of Muslim identity in some popular Hindi films.

Though the history of cinema in India dates from the early 20th century—initially only foreign films were shown, that too in metropolitan cities—a new beginning was made in 1930s with the coming of sound to Hindi cinema. With sound came songs and Urdu made its entry in Hindi cinema. It is common knowledge that Urdu is the mother-tongue of the majority of Muslims in India. However, conversational, informal Urdu has rarely been identified with only Muslim characters in Hindi cinema. In the '50s and '60s the film dialogues used to have Urdu words and the Hindu characters would speak their lines in chaste Urdu. But the liberal use of Urdu in film scripts and the mannerisms identified with Muslim culture do point to the significance of Muslim presence in Hindi films.

Usually Muslim characters figured in Indian films made in the '50s and '60s as marginal figures, with the exception of some historical movies like *Tajmahal*, *Anarkali* and of

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course *Mughal-e-Azam*. This paper is confined to an analysis of some popular Hindi films of the last three or four decades or so, to be precise the period dating from the Indo-Pak war in 1971 and the creation of Bangladesh.

There are some issues which have haunted the Muslim community since Partition. Their complaint that they are considered second-grade citizens is not totally baseless. Right-wing parties have systematically questioned their loyalty to the country. They are charged with harbouring extra-territorial loyalty to Muslim countries in general and Pakistan in particular. M.S. Sathyu's *Garam Hawa* (1973), financed by the Film Finance Corporation, was possibly the first Hindi movie to tackle this issue realistically. Film director Shyam Benegal is of the view that the sensitive and awkward subjects related to Partition and the Muslim experience could be taken up after 1970 for two reasons:

> The creation of State-established institutions like the Film and Television Institute and the Film Finance Corporation that enabled the emergence of the 'new cinema'; and secondly, the second Partition of the subcontinent in 1971 that led to the creation of Bangladesh... While the first two decades after Independence continued to be a period of migrations for Muslims since Pakistan was still an option, this option effectively disappeared after the creation of Bangladesh...this new Partition...along linguistic lines also aided in containing *some* (emphasis added) of the anxieties around Indian Muslims.[2]

It is a known fact that Partition affected most Muslim families in north India in one way or the other. Even in the present time there are any number of Muslim families whose close family members live on the other side of the border. The Muslim family in *Garam Hawa*, based in Agra, decides to stay on in India after Partition. However, the communally

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charged atmosphere following Partition makes it extremely difficult for them to live their life in a normal manner. They are made to feel alienated and apart in the country of their birth. Salim Mirza, the protagonist in the film, played by Balraj Sahni, faces another predicament in the form of family pressure to migrate to Pakistan, as gradually his family members succumb to their real fear for security and leave for Pakistan one by one. In the last scene of the movie, surely a very poignant episode, Salim Mirza's will is broken and he makes the painful decision to leave India and is travelling to the station by tonga, when he sees a Hindu-Muslim solidarity march organized by the Left. Mirza is suddenly swayed by the moment, more so by his convictions, and decides to reverse his decision, forgetting his immediate problems. In fact, Mirza's predicament was the predicament of a lot of Indian Muslim families. The film indirectly makes a comment on the circumstances which can alienate an entire community from the so-called mainstream.

Garam Hawa could sensitively handle the issue of Partition and the Muslims' alleged extra-territorial loyalty not only because the new cinema or the parallel cinema, as it was called, was an appropriate medium for tackling this delicate issue, but also because the 1970s' political situation differed in context from the two decades that followed it. Following the rise to power of the right-wing Hindu element in Indian politics, the movies made in the last two decades are marked by Pakistan-bashing and often perpetuate the discourse of the right-wing parties. Pakistan-bashing is an important part of the strategy of the Sangh Parivar as it identifies Pakistan with Indian Muslims in a mischievous way. It has been a part of the malicious propaganda systematically sustained by the Sangh Parivar. A quote from an article in the *Organiser*, written in 1983 when the Sangh Parivar was a relatively

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marginal player in the electoral politics of India, illustrates this:

> The ninety seven per cent of Pakistan-supporting Moslems continue to live in India. They have compromised nothing of their religion or culture...the behaviour makes it quite clear that these people have their loyalty elsewhere and not in this country of ours.[3]

Even when a leader like Advani has to woo Muslim voters he thinks it is necessary to praise Pakistan and Jinnah. The controversy following Advani calling Jinnah secular can be recalled. Not only Advani, but even Ram Jethmalani thought it necessary to begin his extension lecture in Aligarh Muslim University by singing the praises of Pakistan because of the popular perception that this way he would possibly strike a rapport with the predominantly Muslim audience in Aligarh.[4] More examples of this nature can be quoted from real life.

When it comes to films some relatively recent blockbusters like *Border* and *Ghadar* present a very jingoistic discourse directed against Pakistan. Such hatred-filled propaganda often undermines the people-to-people contact regularly organized by responsible citizens from India and Pakistan to create goodwill between the two countries. Amitava Kumar—who is married to the niece of Pakistani human rights activist Asma Jahangir—notes that when he interacted with Pakistani children, he found that though most of them could recite the song '*Sandeshe aate hai*' from the film *Border*, they were hurt by the hatred hurled at Pakistan in the film.[5] *Ghadar* was also remarkable for presenting this same emotion in a very crass and vulgar manner. Way back in 1983 Akbar S. Ahmad had noted:

> The fortunes of Pakistan, the emergence of Arabs and the mood of revivalism in these countries complicate life for

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> Indian Muslims...the greater the perceived threat from Pakistan the more vulnerable is the Muslim community to local majority suspicion.[6]

This observation is true even in today's context. Many instances in the recent past—the cartoon controversy, the veil issue, the execution of Saddam Hussein etc.—have been used to raise the bogey of Muslims' global identity, displacing the real issues outlined by, among others, the Sachchar Committee Report. To give a concrete example, the reaction of Muslims to Saddam's execution was more of an expression of protest against imperialist forces rather than an outpouring of feeling for a global Muslim leader. Of course the needless rhetoric of some illiterate mullahs, whose offensive remarks draw unnecessary media attention, makes the life of ordinary Muslims very difficult. They appear to represent the entire community which is certainly far from true.

Films can be gainfully studied in the light of other texts of the period. In this context it will be pertinent here to refer to the 'Dr Gopal Singh Committee Report on Minorities' submitted to the Government of India on 14 June 1983. In his report Dr Singh writes:

> Unfortunately, a great psychological barrier exists today between the majority and the minorities. Some religions are considered 'extraterritorial' not only by the masses but also by some of our state Governments... Riots have taken place over small scale conversions, and the communal elements had a field day to emit venom about the minority religions and cultures... It (history) is not even a true or faithful history but just a selective one, out to malign millions of our co-citizens whose only fault is that they own the same religion as did some occasional invaders or bigots who ruled over us centuries ago. Pakistan is quoted always against the Muslims... If the minds of the masses as well as the elite

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> (including the bureaucrats) continue to be inflamed against particular communities on this account, we cannot expect them to integrate emotionally with the nation.[7]

Gopal Singh's observation about the bias in the minds of the masses and the bureaucrats against some communities is substantiated by the almost total exclusion of Muslims from India's intelligence agencies. According to an article titled 'Muslims and Sikhs Need Not Apply' published in *Outlook*, there is an unofficial code regarding the recruitment of Muslims in intelligence agencies despite the good record of Muslim officers in Kashmir whenever they have had a chance to handle sensitive operations. The article says:

> From 1969 till today—RAW's current staff strength is about 10,000—it has avoided recruiting any Muslim officer. Neither has the National Technical Research Organization (NTRO), a crucial arm of external intelligence. The Intelligence Bureau (IB) with 12,000 personnel has been a little more open. It has a handful of Muslim officers, the seniormost is a joint director.[8]

The distrust in the minds of officers in relation to their Muslim colleagues becomes a motif in some of the recent Hindi films. Sanjay Dutt, playing a Muslim police officer in *Mission Kashmir*, is not trusted by his superior to handle a sensitive case involving a terrorist plot. Amir Khan, a Hindu superintendent of police, expresses his misgivings about the intensity, or lack of it, of patriotic feelings of his junior Muslim officer in *Sarfarosh*. In *Apharan*, Anwar Khan, the thoroughly honest police officer tracking the illegal activities of Tabrez Alam, the criminal-politician played by Nana Patekar, says in a moment of disgust: 'I am tired of paying the double price of being a Muslim'.

As for quoting Pakistan against Muslims, there are many ways in which the identification of bad Muslims with Pakistan

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is driven home on the unsuspecting audience. Film is a medium in which dialogues 'tend to use symbols, myths and inferences which are easily recognizable and names carry a resonance within them.'[9] The bad guy is often named after famous Pakistani cricketers and singers, it being well known that cricket and music capture the popular imagination of Indians like no other cultural forms. In a Mithun Chakravarty starrer of the 1980s titled *Avinash*, the villains are called one after the other Imran, Javed, Qadir and so on. In *Hukumut*, a Dharmendra starrer of almost the same period there is a line which goes like this: 'whatever (bad) has happened is due to Javed Miandad'. In *Angaar* the relatively good don played by Kadar Khan is named Jahangir Khan, and his son, the bad don, played by Nana Patekar, is named Majid Khan. Cricket lovers may recall that Jahangir Khan and Majid Khan were father and son and played international cricket with distinction for Pakistan. In *Sarfarosh* Naseeruddin Shah plays a distinguished Pakistani singer who has come to India on a secret mission to spread insurgency. In a very vulgar manner he is named Ghulam Hasan in the movie, a mix of the names of Ghulam Ali and Mehdi Hasan, the two most respected names in the world of classical ghazal singing. The idea of using a singer villain puts the entire question of cultural exchange and people-to-people contact in a very negative light.

Another recurrent motif in Hindi cinema is that of a Muslim don being a devout Muslim and not given to the usual vices associated with bad characters. Lotia Pathan in *Tezaab* (1989), played by Kiran Kumar, is pitted against a very patriotic Munna Deshmukh, in other words an outsider against a 'son of the soil' kind of Maharashtrian. He sports a beard, wears Pathan dress, does not smoke or take drugs, does not gamble, respects personal honour and the

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proverbial Pathan valour and is not interested in womanizing. In fact, he regrets the fact that his brother is the only person in his family, and by implication in his *khandan* (the extended family), who became addicted to drugs when he was put in jail after being convicted in a case of robbery. But Lotia Pathan does not have any qualms about looting banks, abducting people and even killing them. In *Roja* the terrorist played by Pankaj Kapoor is shown offering his prayers regularly. He also appears very cultured, suave, refined and ironically even humane. In *Vastav* the underworld don played by Paresh Rawal wears a typical skull cap, offers his prayers regularly and has a reputation for his honest dealings. Predictably he does not find anything wrong with his 'profession'. In *Maine Dil Tujh Ko Diya*, a Sohail Khan movie, Sanjay Dutt also plays a don who is a devout Muslim. In one long scene he is shown offering prayers while his henchmen stand on guard. In another recent movie *Apharan*, Nana Patekar plays politician don Tabrez Alam. He also is shown offering his prayers and is always accompanied by his number-two man Usman Bhai. Predictably Usman Bhai too wears Muslim dress with the ubiquitous cap and is seen offering prayers. Both of them are shown unscrupulous, cruel and trigger-happy.

In some of the more recent films a Hindu hero filled with nationalist fervour is depicted waging a crusade against Muslim villains who pose a threat to society and national security. Often the hero is handicapped by a corrupt police force, up-for-sale politicians and a gullible society. The hero in such situations does not mind use of extra-judicial powers; rather he becomes a law unto himself. Sunny Deol has starred in quite a few movies belonging to this genre. In *Farz* Deol has to contend not only with Gama Firozi and Sikandar but also with a corrupt system. The hero mouths jingoistic

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expressions and is considered a bit eccentric though his actions and words affect the audience profoundly. In most of these films the villain's Pakistan connection provides justification for the hero's jingoistic discourse. Some films of Sunny Deol in which this pattern is repeated include *Maa Tujhe Salaam* (the villain played by Arbaaz Khan has a Pakistan connection), *The Hero* (pitted against Amrish Puri who has a Pakistan connection), *Indian* (the villain named Wasim Khan has a Pakistan connection), *Jaal the Trap* (most of the Muslim characters have a Pakistan connection). *Qayamat* has Ajay Devgan and Sunil Shetty pitted against two Muslim terrorists with Pakistan connections, played by Arbaaz Khan and Sanjay Kapoor. *16 December* featuring Danny and Gulshan Grover and *Garv* starring Salman Khan also exploit the theme of Pakistan hatred by presenting a terrorist villain. *Sarfarosh,* which became a blockbuster, also shows a very determined police officer, played by Amir Khan, pitted against not only a Muslim villain but also his own corrupt people. Interestingly when a Hindu terrorist is shown as in *Diljale* and *Qayamat,* both played by Ajay Devgan, he is forced to take arms because of the machinations of a Muslim terrorist. Often he is led astray to become a terrorist, sometimes by his family circumstances and at other times by his bad company, but is reformed later and joins hands against the real terrorists.

What these kinds of representations unmistakably do is to strengthen the stereotypes of a fiery and violent Muslim and a Hindu fighting in defence. The message is sent very subtly, sometimes very crudely too, that there is a relationship between Muslims and violence and that Islam encourages violence. This kind of reductionism highlights only one kind of Islam: the essentially fundamentalist and political variety of Islam. It simply presents the Taliban's reading of Islam ignoring the pietistic and peaceful nature of the Islamic

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ethos. The everyday life of Muslims, their problems of living and their poverty is glossed over by presenting them as a threat to the nation. In his media image analysis of Islam in the West, Douglas Pratt says:

> [T]o all intents and purposes the Western perception of Islam is media shaped; politically dominated; contextually loose; religiously skewed; ideologically oppositional; and sociologically misrepresented.[10]

Some other commentators on Islam and Muslims—Akbar S. Ahmad, Asghar Ali Engineer and Laila Lalami, to name a few—have also voiced the concern about the spread of stereotypical notions about Muslims, which has a very serious consequence, as Pratt continues:

> Consequently, the behaviour and beliefs of the majority of Muslims who peacefully practice their faith are largely neglected within media presentations, public perceptions and even much academic analysis. These Muslims generally have no connection or empathy with the highly politicized terrorists, yet the popular perception within the West is that terrorists and demands for Islamic states are representative of large numbers within wider Muslim communities.[11]

Most of these observations appear true in the case of some films that Bollywood has been regularly churning out (some of them are discussed above). Pratt also discusses three modalities of Western ignorance—innocent, blind and culpable—with regard to the misrepresentations of Muslims in the media. The movies in question, particularly the ones in which Sunny Deol has acted—Sunny incidentally has a big following in the communally sensitive Hindi belt—deliberately establish the link between Muslims and violence. It is a case of culpable ignorance to name all villains Muslims and to represent Muslims as the Other.

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Another problem with this kind of representation is that it ignores the plurality of identity. Religion is just one of the markers of identity. There are other, possibly as important, markers of identity. Amartya Sen rightly says that 'violence is fomented by the imposition of singular and belligerent identities on gullible people, championed by proficient artisans of terror.'[12] Though it cannot be said that filmmakers are artisans of terror, or for that matter, violence, their role in constituting singular identities cannot be condoned.

The kind of conflict shown in the hatred-filled movies under discussion is very different from the conflict between a Hindu officer/hero donning the role of a citizen soldier and a Muslim don played in the movies of 1970s and early 1980s. Sher Khan of *Zanjeer* played by Pran, the good don in *Dada* played by Amjad Khan, and a principled and brave Dilawar Khan (Amjad Khan) in *Muqaddar ka Sikandar* were not shown as anti-national because terrorism was not identified with Muslims at that time. Often a name which would not give away the religious identity of the anti-national villain would be used. A Mogambo (*Mr India*) would nurture the ambition of conquering the world. A Dr Dang (*Karma*) would like to believe that he could buy any Indian. In the end they would be defeated by ordinary Indians. Often it would be the result of the united efforts of Indian characters, the main Hindu character being assisted by an honest and determined Muslim character. At that time it was considered safe to give a Christian-sounding name to the villain. Roberts, Alberts, Johnnies, Monicas and Lilys were the bad men and women of the screen. Thus *Amar Akbar Anthony* has a villain named Andy Roberts played by Jeevan. This movie particularly stands out in employing the community stereotypes and replicating the power dynamics of community relations. Amar, the eldest of three brothers, is

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not only properly educated (he is seen reading in a scene), he is also a family man and a responsible police officer. In other words he is the upholder of order both at the level of society (his duties as a police officer) and family (a firm believer in the institution of marriage in a traditional manner). Anthony fits the Indian stereotype of the Christian—a drinking, fun-loving, happy-go-lucky, devil-may-care type of person. Akbar, on the other hand, represents the decadent aspect of Muslim society. He is interested only in love and predictably Urdu poetry, in *qawwali* to be precise.

Amar Akbar Anthony, or for that matter, other movies with Christian characters, could present Christians as happy-go-lucky drunks because in Christianity there is no restriction as such on drinking. However, when it came to other minorities the Government's Censor Board exercised some control over the negative representation of any community. Shyam Benegal argues that after Independence the depiction of Muslim characters had a lot to do with political correctness and a desire to not offend the community. To quote Benegal:

> Muslim characters were routinely shown as sane, sensible, good and devout. During the Nehruvian era, many films, especially those written by progressive writers, strived to create the image of a secular Muslim... There was a great deal of tokenism as well with Muslim characters playing walk-on parts in attempts to represent the diversity of Indian society in cinema... Communal harmony thus became a kind of signature in a large number of films during the 50s and 60s. Hindi Cinema soon came to be seen as a socially integrating force and the National Awards instituted for films by the Government of India included one that was given for promoting National Integration.[13]

It can be added that at that time there were no multiplexes and the theatre-going public included a good percentage

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of Muslims, which could also be a factor in giving a positive image to Muslims.

The tokenism mentioned by Benegal can also be seen in films belonging to the 1970s and early '80s. In a lot of films, especially those written by Salim-Javed, the presence of minor Muslim characters can be explained by the desire to show the religious plurality of Indian society and the need to attract a cross-section of Indians to theatres, it being a well known fact that commercial reasons govern the composition of a story and plot in Hindi cinema. The token Muslim characters endowed with a very secular outlook which readily come to mind include Dr Faridi (Iftikhar) in *Dulhan Wohi Jo Pia Man Bhae*, Rahim Chacha (Yunus Parvez) in *Deewar*, Imam Sahib (A.K. Hangal) in *Sholay*, Inspector Khan (Kader Khan) in *Adalat*, Fakir Baba (Kader Khan) in *Muqaddar ka Sikandar*, Inspector Amjad Khan (Amjad Khan himself) in *Qurbani*, Inspector Ahmed (Deepak Parashar) in *Sharabi*, and more recently Doctor Uncle (Satish Shah) in *Hum Apke Hai Kaun*.

The inclusion of Muslim characters to represent the diversity of social set-up can also be read as an aspect of the marginalization of Muslims. In fact, the process of marginalization is gradually giving way to the reality of pauperization of Muslims and other weaker sections of society. Quite a few reports (e.g. Gopal Singh and Sachchar Committees) speak of Muslims' poor representation in jobs, big business, and other important public spheres. Some of the recent films made in India especially for NRIs and the upwardly mobile class with no economic worries are marked by the absence of even the 1970s kind of tokenism. These movies—the kinds of films made by Yash Chopra and Karan Johar and others of their ilk—have been termed as designer romances and they show the world from the angle of the rich in whose worldview Muslims or for that matter other

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marginalized sections of India are represented by their absence. In his reviews of such designer romances Zia ul Salam has often elaborated on the exclusion of the weaker classes. Such classes are at best an irritant in the vision of 'India on the move' or 'India shining' or the globalized India, but this vision is marked by the exclusion of the poorer classes and a sharp divide between the rich and the poor. Yes, the marginalized Muslim figures and other sections can make the life of the rich comfortable by working as domestic helps or by doing other menial jobs. One hears so much about this part or that part of India trying to secede from the nation. But there is another kind of secession—Arundhati Roy terms it vertical secession—which divides India vertically.[14] There is the India of Ambanis, Saharas and Tatas which has seceded from the rest of India. The designer romances capture the ethos and values of this India, and Muslims and other traditionally backward classes are at best irritants in the scheme of things, working as unimportant craftsmen and artisans.

The presentation of Muslim women characters in Hindi films also raises some disturbing issues. Often they are presented as courtesans, prostitutes or dutiful wives hidden behind veils. Though their depiction in Hindi cinema could be the subject of an entirely new paper, here the motif of interreligious marriage may be analysed to shed some light on the power dynamics in Indian society. Interestingly in most of the interreligious marriages shown in Hindi films the man happens to be a Hindu and the girl a Muslim. The pattern, obviously guided by the demands of political correctness and market forces, reveals a deep-rooted sexual anxiety about protecting and preserving 'our women' from defilement. The pattern is repeated in film after film— the more recent ones include *Bombay*, *Zakhm*, *Ghadar*, *Zubaida*

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and *Veer Zara*. If, in some rare cases, the boy happens to be a Muslim married to a Hindu girl, his identity poses a problem for the filmmaker. In *Halla Bol* Ashfaqullah, played by Ajay Devgan, has to be called Ashu by his Hindu wife, played by Vidya Balan, and his son named Rohit. Amitava Kumar, who married a Pakistani girl while the Kargil war was being fought, very sensitively handles the issue of interreligious marriage in his book titled *Husband of a Fanatic*. He narrates an incident when he was particularly horrified to listen to the reaction of one Mr Barotia, a Manhattan-based BJP leader. Though Barotia first abused him, he was later pacified and told Kumar: 'It is okay. You fuck her. And you tell her that she is Muslim, and that you keep fucking her! And through her, you keep fucking Islam.'[15] What interests Amitava Kumar about the words of Barotia is 'their violence and ferocity (which)...carry the threat most visible in the rhetoric of rioters in India today. The rhetoric leaves no place for the middle-class gentility of Nehruvian liberalism.'[16] Not that the reaction of any Muslim fundamentalist to a Muslim girl marrying a Hindu would be less vehement, the same possibly is difficult to show in Hindi movies. In the patriarchal set-up marriage is identified with possession and control. The depiction of Hindu-Muslim marriages in Hindi cinema replicates the power structure of our society. In feminist discourse marriage is spoken of in terms of class, race, slavery and colonization.[17] Consequently men become the ruling class, the master race, metaphorically white and colonial masters. In the context of popular Hindi cinema, which uses the language of stereotypes and which depends on market forces, it would be politically incorrect to show a matrimonial alliance between a Muslim boy and a Hindu girl. It would also be considered an unsafe subject to handle, given the sexual anxiety of a particular section of society.

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NOTES

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13. Benegal, 2005, pp. 10–11.
14. Arundhati Roy, 'How Deep Shall We Dig', I.G. Khan Memorial Lecture, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh, 6 April 2004.
15. Kumar, 2004, p. xix.
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The riot had started in our city as it usually does in most small cities, that is, a parcel of meat had been found inside a mosque and without so much as inspecting the meat, it had been decided that just because the parcel was flung inside the mosque it must necessarily contain pork.

22

I Am a Hindu

ASGHAR WAJAHAT
TRANSLATED FROM HINDI BY RAKHSHANDA JALIL

A scream to make the dead stand on their toes... The sound came from somewhere close by. In these times... I sprang up in my bed. The sky was still studded with stars...it was, perhaps, three past midnight. Abbajan had gotten up too. The scream came again. Saifu was lying on his coarse string cot and screaming. Beds had been laid out in the courtyard from one end to the other.

'*Laahoulvillaquwwat*[1]...' Abbajan muttered.

'God knows why this boy screams in his sleep,' Amma said.

'Amma, the other boys rag him mercilessly all night...' I tried to explain.

'Don't those fellows have anything better to do... here we are cowering for our lives, and they can only think of their fun and games,' she said.

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Safiya poked her head out from beneath the sheet and said, 'Tell him to sleep on the roof.'

Saifu had still not woken. I went up to his bed and peered to look closely at him. His face was bathed in sweat. His breath was coming fast and shallow and his body was trembling. His hair was dripping wet and some strands were plastered across his face. As I looked at poor Saifu, a terrible anger gathered inside me against those wretched boys who terrified him so.

Those days, the riots were not like they are now. There has been a sea change in the politics, pace, perspective and policy of riots. Till about twenty-five to thirty years ago, people were not burnt alive during riots, neither were entire neighbourhoods laid to waste. Nor did rioters have the blessings of Prime Ministers, Home Ministers and Chief Ministers. Riots were usually orchestrated by small-time, local leaders with short-term, immediate greeds and concerns. Business rivalries, land grabbing, garnering the Hindu or Muslim vote in the municipality elections—these were the usual compulsions behind most riots. Now, communal riots have become a means of staking claim to the throne in Delhi. Only those who can cause rivers of blood to run in the name of communal violence and hatred can bell the cat of the world's largest democracy.

Saifu was woken up. He looked all around like a lamb searching for its lost mother. The youngest child of Abba's stepbrother, Saifuddin, aka Saifu, saw himself surrounded by all the other family members and jumped to his feet in abject consternation.

I still remember the postcard with its bitten-off corner that came with news of Saifu's father's, Uncle Kausar's, death. People from his village had given not just news of his death but had also informed us that Uncle Kausar's youngest child, Saifu, was now all alone in the world. His elder brothers

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had refused to take him with them to Bombay. They had made it abundantly clear that they could do nothing for him. And now, save for Abbajan, there was no one for him in the whole world. Abbajan had sat silently for a long time, holding the postcard with the bitten-off corner. After many bitter quarrels with Amma, he had left for his ancestral village, Dhanvakheda, sold off the pitifully few acres of land left and returned with Saifu in tow.

How we had laughed at our first sight of Saifu! But then, how else would you expect a boy studying at the Aligarh Muslim University school and a girl like Safiya from the Abdullah Girl's College school to react? It was clear on the first day itself that Saifu was not just an uncouth village lad; he was simple to the point of being a half-wit, almost a moron. We would tease him and pull his leg in a hundred different ways each day. This had one unexpected fallout: he made a place for himself in Amma's and Abba's heart. The boy was a veritable model of hard work. He would never tire of hard, physical labour. It especially endeared him to Amma. So what if he ate an extra roti or two; he worked like a slave all day long.

As the years went past, Saifu became a part of our lives. Gradually, we softened towards him. If some boy from the *mohulla*[2] called him mad, I would be ready to claw his face. 'He's my brother;' I would say, 'how dare you call him mad?' But inside the house, it was another matter; we alone knew what Saifu's standing was in our family.

* * *

The riot had started in our city as it usually does in most small cities, that is, a parcel of meat had been found inside a

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mosque and without so much as inspecting the meat, it had been decided that just because the parcel was flung inside the mosque it must necessarily contain pork. In direct retaliation, a cow was slaughtered in Mughal Tola and a full-fledged riot was stoked. A few shops were burnt; most were simply looted. Seven, maybe eight, people were knifed to death in scattered incidents but a sensitive administration had immediately clamped a curfew. It wasn't like today when even after thousands of people have died the Chief Minister goes around smirking and saying whatever happened was right and just.

Since the riots had spread to the neighbouring villages, it was considered best to extend the curfew. Mughalpura was the biggest Muslim ghetto and so the curfew was at its strictest best here as was the jihad-like fervour among its youth. The mohulla was crisscrossed by a labyrinth of narrow, snake-like *gullies*[3] but the experience of many recent riots had decreed the need for interconnecting passageways through the houses. Emergency exits, as they were called. And so, routes were planned over rooftops, inside homes, across walls that could take you safely from one end of the mohulla to the other. The mohulla was prepared for battle. It had been decided that even if the curfew extended for as long as a month, the necessities of daily life could be found inside the besieged neighbourhood.

Riots were a time for the neighbourhood boys to display a peculiar sort of excitement and valour. 'Arre, we will make the Hindus bite the dust; what do those dhoti-wearers think of themselves?' ... 'Cowards, that's what they are!' ... 'One Musalman can outdo ten Hindus' ... 'Winning Pakistan was a Laugh/Now we will fight to win India.' All this was inside the mohulla; once outside they became timid as lambs. The PAC[4] picket was posted at both ends of the mohulla. At some

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point or the other, most had known the taste of the PAC's boots and rifle butts, so idle talk inside the safety of the mohulla was one thing; outside it was quite another matter...

Crisis teaches unity, unity creates discipline and discipline leads to practicality. Every household was instructed to give one boy for night patrol. I could no longer qualify as a boy, since I had already crossed the age of twenty-five, and so Saifu was the only one eligible for night duty. The nightly vigil was maintained on the rooftops. Since Mughalpura was on a relatively elevated spot, you could see the entire city from our roofs.

Saifu started going for these nightly vigils, which was actually quite good for us, for Abbajan, Amma, Safiya and me. If Saifu hadn't been a part of our household, perhaps I would have had to volunteer for those wretched patrols. Because of his nightly duty, Saifu was granted certain 'concessions', for instance, he was allowed to sleep till eight o'clock. He was exempted from the sweeping and swabbing jobs; these fell to the lot of Safiya who hated them.

Sometimes, I too would join the gang on the rooftops. The boys from the mohulla ruled the roost on this sprawling kingdom. Bamboo poles, sticks, staves and bricks were kept in neat piles. A few boys could even boast of country-made firearms; most had knives. The majority of the boys were small-time daily wagers. Several worked in the lock factories nearby; the rest were apprentices with tailors or carpenters. Since the bazaar was closed these days, they were—almost every single one of them—without work. For most, the home fires were burning on loans from petty loansharks. But they were happy. Perched on the safe haven of the roofs, they would either pass 'expert comments' on the riots or hurl abuses at the Hindus. The choicest invectives were saved for the PAC. They would listen to Radio Lahore at low volume

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and could reel off entire programmes aired by Pakistan Radio from memory. A few who had travelled to Pakistan were treated with the reverence that is usually reserved for those who have made the Haj pilgrimage. Going by their stories about Pakistan's super-fast train 'Tezgaam' and the 'Gulshan-e-Iqbal Colony', one would be forgiven for thinking that if ever there is heaven on earth, surely it is in Pakistan! When they had had their fill of singing paeans in praise of Pakistan, they would turn to teasing poor Saifu. One day, Saifu who had been listening ad nauseum to the glories of Pakistan, finally plucked the courage to ask: 'Where is Pakistan?' Gleefully, they pounced on him and teased him mercilessly for this innocent query. Saifu still wasn't sure where Pakistan was.

The patrolling boys would take turns pulling Saifu's leg and scaring the wits out of him: 'Look here, Saifu, do you know what will happen to you if the Hindus catch you? First, they will strip you naked.' The boys knew that despite being a half-wit, Saifu considered nakedness as something awful and 'bad'. 'Then, they will rub oil all over you.'

'Why? Why will they rub oil over me?'

'So that when they beat you with canes, your skin will come off. Then they will scorch you with burning rods...' 'Noooo,' Saifu couldn't believe this. The nightly stories of violence and terror preyed on his mind. Sometimes, he would come to me with his garbled stories. I would snap with irritation and tell him to shut up, but his questions didn't go away. One day he asked me, 'Do they have dirt in Pakistan?'

'Why? Why wouldn't they have dirt in Pakistan?''Because roads aren't like roads...you can get terylene there... everything is so inexpensive...'

'Look here, some one has been feeding you a lot of rubbish. Don't listen to everything that Altaf and the others

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tell you,' I tried to explain. 'Do the Hindus pluck our eyes out?' 'What rubbish! Who told you this?' 'Bachchan did.' 'He's wrong.' 'You mean, they don't even skin us alive?'

'Uffffff...what is this...go away...'

He fell silent but a hundred questions swarmed in his eyes. I went out and he went to badger Safiya with his questions.

The curfew was extended. The nightly vigils continued. Saifu continued to represent our household. And, then, a few days later, Saifu began to scream in his sleep. The first time it happened, we had been startled and worried, though it didn't take us long to figure out that the nightly terror spiels were behind all this. Abbajan was furious. He had even spoken to a few of the mohulla elders, but nothing came of it. Boys—that too, mohulla boys, starved of fun—were not likely to let go of easy game such as Saifu.

I hadn't realized that things had gone so far till the day Saifu asked me with complete earnestness, 'Shall I become a Hindu?'

The question left me stunned, but I quickly gathered that it had been caused by the nightly terror sessions. My first reaction was anger, then I rationalized that little purpose would be served by getting angry with my dull-witted cousin. I tried to make him understand. I asked, 'Why do you want to become a Hindu?'

'I will be saved,' he said.

'That means, I won't be saved?' I asked.

'You too become one,' he answered.

'What about your Uncle?' I asked, referring to Abbajan.

'No, he, he...' He stopped; perhaps he got tangled in Abbajan's flowing white beard.

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'Look here, the boys have been telling you a lot of tall tales. They want to mislead you. They have been telling you nothing but lies. You know Mahesh, don't you?'

'Yes, he comes on a scooter...' he cheered up a little.

'Yes, yes, the same.'

'Is he a Hindu?'

'Yes, he is,' I said and watched a frisson of disappointment flicker across his face as he became quiet.

'All this is the handiwork of hoodlums...it is not Hindus or Muslims who fight with each other in these riots...the hoodlums do the looting and the killing. Do you understand?'

* * *

The riots stretched on and on like the devil's entrails and people began to tire—Yaar, if you count the Hindu and Muslim thugs in the city, how many would there be? A thousand, all right, two thousand at the most. And these two thousand people have managed to make the lives of thousands upon thousands of god-fearing law-abiding citizens a living hell. And what are we doing about it? Nothing. We are sitting in our homes like scared mice. Doesn't it remind you of the time when ten thousand Englishmen ruled over millions of Indians? And who is the beneficiary in these riots? Beneficiary? Why, who else but Haji Abdul Karim who is fighting the municipality election and will bag all the Muslim votes. And Pandit Jogeshwar who will mop up all the Hindu votes. But what about us? What are we? You are a voter—a Hindu voter, Muslim voter, Harijan voter, Kayasth voter, Sunni voter, Shia voter. Will it always be like this in this country? Yes, why not? Where

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people are illiterate, where you can get guns on hire, where politicians orchestrate riots to keep their seats of power, what else do you expect? Yaar, can't we educate the people... bring about greater awareness? Ha-ha-ha-ha. Who are you to educate the people? The Government will do it—if it wants to. You mean, if the Government doesn't want to, nothing will ever get done in this country? Yes...that is what the English have taught us... That is what we are used to... All right, let it be... So, the riots will go on happening for ever... Yes, they will... Suppose, all the Muslims in this country became Hindus? ... *Lahoulvillaquwwat*! What are you saying! ... All right, then, suppose all the Hindus in this country became Muslims? ... *Subhanallah*![5] ... *Wah*! *Wah*! What a thought! ... Will that stop the riots? ... It's worth a thought! ... Look at Pakistan—the Shias and Sunnis are forever at each other's throats! ...And in Bihar, the Brahmin shrinks away from the Harijan's shadow. ...Maybe Man as a species is destined to fight with its own kind... Look at Maiku and Jumman—they are such close friends. Shall we also become Maikus and Jummans? ...I mean...I mean...

* * *

I was twisting the radio's ears early one morning and Safiya was sweeping the courtyard when Raja's younger brother, Akram, came running. Half out of breath, he blurted, 'The PAC-wallahs are beating Saifu.'

'What? What are you saying?'

'The PAC-wallahs are beating Saifu,' this time he spoke clearly.

'Why? What has happened?'

'I don't know... There...at the corner...'

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'At the corner picket post?'

'Yes.'

'But why...' I knew that the curfew was relaxed between eight and ten in the mornings and Amma had sent Saifu at eight to fetch the milk. Even a halfwit like Saifu knew that he had to return as soon as possible, but it was almost ten by now.

'Come, let's go and see...' I left the house without bothering to fix the crackling radio. Why are the PAC-wallahs beating a halfwit? What could he have done? What can he possibly do? He is so scared himself that he can't hurt a fly. Why beat him? For what possible reason? Money? Amma had given him two rupees. Would the PAC-wallahs beat him for two rupees?

At the corner, beside the police picket on the main road, people were clustered on their rooftops, watching the spectacle below. Saifu was standing before a clutch of PAC-wallahs. He was screaming at the top of his lungs, 'Why did you hit me? I am a Hindu...a Hindu...'

I stepped forward. Saifu saw me but didn't stop shouting, 'Yes, yes...I am a Hindu...' He was trembling and wavering on his feet. A drop of blood had oozed from his mouth and come to rest on his chin.

'Why did you hit me? ... I am a Hindu...' 'Saifu, what are you saying... Come on, let's go home...' 'I...I am a Hindu...' I was stunned... Was this the same Saifu? What had come over him? I could feel the people gathered on the rooftops tittering among themselves. It made me angry. Didn't they know he was mad?

'How is he related to you?' one of the PAC-wallahs asked me. 'He is my brother...he is a little off...a mental problem...' 'Then take him home,' a soldier said. 'He has been driving us crazy,' another spoke up. 'Come on, Saifu, let's go home...

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The curfew has begun...' 'I won't go... I won't... I am a Hindu...a Hindu...' Suddenly, he began to cry like a baby, 'They hit me...beat me... I am a Hindu...a Hindu...' Then he slumped to the ground. Perhaps he had fainted. Now it was easier for me to lift him and carry him home.

NOTES

1. A phrase used variously to express disgust or dissatisfaction, loosely translated it means, 'I turn my face from Evil'.
2. Old-fashioned neighbourhood with closely built houses; usually very congested and crowded.
3. Extremely narrow alleys.
4. Provincial Armed Constabulary, part of the UP state police force; notorious for its 'bias' during riots, it is both loathed and feared by Muslims.
5. Praise be to Allah!

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