THE AHLE SUNNAT MOVEMENT IN BRITISH INDIA

1880 - 1921

EDITED BY

Prof. Dr. Allah Bukhsh

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بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيْمِ

PREFACE

This book is the best and fullest book ever published in English on Imam Ahmad Raza Khan Barelvi. The book is packed with details, is written on a high level, and should be carefully studied by the reader. The footnotes published here provide a goldmine of valuable information on many aspects of Islam and Islamic history.

It is difficult to pick out particular details for comment, as so much of the book is valuable but the book is especially interesting when it deals with Wahhabism, Bida, and the writings of Imam Raza on the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him).

The book is very useful also because it gets rid of many myths. The author dismisses the idea that Imam Raza was pro-British. The author also shows that it is ridiculous to accuse Imam Raza of being a Shia ofcourse those who accuse Imam Raza of being a shia only show their grotesque ignorance of Islam, but we live in an age of the decay of Islam, and such ignorance is widespread. The author helps to get rid of such frightful ignorance.

Above all this book makes it possible to make a rounded assessment of Imam Raza. His whole life and work can be seen in the context of the history of India, and also of Islam in the Nineteenth and Twentieth centuries.

The book shows clearly that imam Ahmad Raza Khan Barelvi was a model Sunni Muslim, totally and faithfully following in the great Sunni tradition which goes back right to the start of Islam. He was also a valuable and important member of the World Sunni Islamic community, and was a great Alim in the classical tradition which goes back to Imam Ghazzali, Imam Abu Hanifa (may Allah be pleased with them) and many others. There can be no doubt that Imam Raza was the leading representative in the modern age of the genuine and true Islam which for over one thousand years was the centre of World Culture.

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Imam Raza was the Renewer of the Islam of his time, and this book makes it possible to see clearly how a True Sunni Muslim responded to the challenge of the Modern Age, and of the West which came to challenge Islam in the Modern Age.

The central problem of Islam in Imam Raza's time was the collapse of the Muslim Community. Many Muslims were moving away from Islam, and seeking to make a new life in the society brought by the West. And the old Islamic Community was being attacked, with tradition, institutions and beliefs being undermined.

This collapse of the Community took many ideological forms. Some, like Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan, became worshippers of Modern Science, and wished the Muslims simply to Westernise completely. Others, like the Wahhabis, attacked central beliefs and institutions of Islam, such as the whole practice of Sufism. All of these saw the Muslims as simply just one more group which would assimilate into modern colonial society, and, towards the end of Imam Raza's life, they were working for the Muslims to work, alongside the Hindus, in creating a secular society in which the Muslim community would cease to exist completely.

This Kind of situation was not new in the history of Islam. At several times in Muslim history the community has lost political power, and been threatened with assimilation into the wider community. The whole history of Islam in India has been the attempts to solve the problem of holding the community together in the storm of events.

Imam Ahmad Raza Khan Barelvi drew on the full tradition of Sunni Islam to solve this problem. He used the classic responses which Sunni Muslims have been making to these questions for over one thousand years. He drew on the traditions of people like Imam Ghazzali, and also on the work of great Indian Muslims such as Sirhindi, Shaikh Abdul Haqq Dehlvi and Shah Wali Ullah.

And his response was simple. Ideologically there must be no surrender. The Muslims who were changing Islam into something new were all condemned, whether they be the

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Necheries of Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan, or the Qadianis, or the Wahhabis. And socially the Muslim Community must be held together to live its Islamic life under the Sharia as an island in the wider society. In 1913 Imam Raza laid out a programme by which the Muslim community could survive as an island in the wider colonial setting. The Muslims, firstly, were to stay away from British courts and form their own Sharia community. The British allowed the Muslims the free practice of Islam, so it was perfectly possible to have a full Sharia society as an island in the wider society. Imam Raza himself boycotted English courts. Imam Raza also thought the community should appoint its own judges, and in 1921 appointed a Sharia Qazi for the entire Indian nation, in case a time should come when such an appointment would be difficult.

Secondly in 1913 Imam Raza thought that the Muslims should form a separate economic community. Muslims should, he said, buy and sell as much as possible to each other so that money would be kept in the community and the community could be self-reliant. And also rich Muslims should finance interest-free banks so that the community would be independent in finance and capital.

Thirdly in 1913 Imam Raza thought that the Muslims should study Islam, rediscover it, and act upon it.

The Muslims, having become an independent island in society in law and economics, should fully develop their Islamic life. On the island in society a beautiful Umma should grow!

So Imam Raza saw the revival of Islam as the consolidation of the community as an economic unity, and the revival of the Sharia and the Traditions, so that the Umma would be kept alive regardless of the turmoil in the wider World. This was the very same response Islam always made , from the time of the weakening of the Caliphate, right through the years of the Mongol invasions, the age of Tamburlane, and so on.

Imam Raza had the genius to see the relevance in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries of the great Sunni Tradition of one thousand years.

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Imam Raza's solution to the problems of the Modern Muslim is still relevant. The Modernist seeks to modernise Islam, but only destroys the Umma, and gets rid of the Sharia, and in the end produces societies which are neither Islamic nor modern. The Wahhabi destroys all the traditions of the Islamic past, and produces a narrow, bigoted, puritanical community which appeals to no-one. The Fundamentalist produces a cheap and nasty copy of equally nasty and unpleasant Communist and Fascist experiments.

Imam Ahmad Raza Khan Barelvi shows us how to really solve the problems of Islam, without giving up tradition, and without copying the West in any way at all. And Imam Raza, in doing this, preserves all the treasures of the Islamic past.

Imam Ahmad Raza Khan Barelvi is totally deserving of the title of Renewer of Islam in his age. Guided by him we can preserve the great civilisation of Islam, which is not only the greatest of all civilisations, but also Humanity's path to Almighty Allah and to Paradise.

This book helps us study Imam Raza's work in the greatest possible detail.

DIRECTOR

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INTRODUCTION :

This study examines the formative period of the "Ahl-e Sunnat wa Jama'at's renewal movement in late nineteenth and early twentieth century British India. Concerned primarily with the intellectual dimensions of this movement in the context of socio-economic and political factors as these impinged on its members, the study also explores the Ahl-e Sunnat wa Jama'at's distinctiveness from contemporary heretical Muslim movements. Lastly, it seeks to relate understanding of Ahl-e Sunnat wa Jama'at's thought to positions taken by the movement's leadership on wider social and political issues as these presented themselves in the early twentieth century.

The study proceeds largely by focusing on the writings of Imam Ahmad Raza Khan (1856-1921), and on debates between the Ahl-e Sunnat and contemporary heretical Muslim movements. In his works, Imam Ahmad Raza set out with great learning and clarity of argument. His views on a wide range of topics being debated within Indian Muslim circles at the time. *By the 1880s and 90s, his writings had attracted a number of followers who contributed in a variety of ways toward the formation of the Ahl-e Sunnat wa Jama'at movement.*

South Asians, and South Asianists, may be more familiar with the more commonly used name "Barelwi" for this movement. "Barelwis" are today to be found in Pakistan, Bangladesh, India, and in all countries, 85 per cent of the total Muslim population, as well as in Britain and USA, home to a large South Asian immigrant population. The term Barelwi is, however, rejected by those who identify themselves with the movement, and has therefore not been used here. Before we discuss the historical context for the emergence of the movement, it may be useful to clarify what is at issue in this particular disagreement over nomenclature.

The reason for calling Imam Ahmad Raza's followers "Barelwi" is that Imam Ahmad Raza was a resident of the town

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of Bareilly, in Rohilkhand (as the western portion of the North-Western Provinces and Oudh, today called the United Provinces).[1] The word Barelwi, appended to Imam Ahmad Raza's name, indicates simply that he belonged to Bareilly. It is common practice for Muslims in South Asia (as elsewhere) to identify themselves by place name, or by profession, association with a sufi order (e.g. Qadri, Chishti, or other), or family lineage (such as Qureshi or Usmani), so as to distinguish between individuals whose personal names are the same.[2] As Imam Ahmad Raza was the central figure who defended and protected Sunni beliefs, around which the movement sharing his views took shape, the name Barelwi has come to stand not simply for him but the movement itself.

We deliberately use the words "central figure" rather than "founder" to describe Imam Ahmad Raza's relationship to the movement, because followers consider the term founder misplaced. It is their belief that Imam Ahmad Raza was reviving the prophetic *sunna* as embodied in the Quran and the literature of the traditions, *hadis* and the past fourteen centuries of Islamic traditions. In their view, because Muslims had become forgetful of the Prophet's message and had fallen away from it, Imam Ahmad Raza had assumed the task of "reminding" them of it, and of trying to bring them back to the ideal way. The Ahl-e Sunnat looked upon him as a *mujaddid* or renewer, a term with specific meaning in Islamic jurisprudence.[3] Seeing it, then, as their collective purpose to return to the prophetic way - certainly not to found a new group - they called themselves the "Ahl-e Sunnat wa Jama'at", "people of the Prophet's way, and the majority community". Simply stated, they regarded themselves as "Sunnis", part of the worldwide Sunni community.

To use the term "Ahl-e Sunnat wa Jama'at" (or "Ahl-e Sunnat", for short) in reference to the movement, as we do in this study, is helpful as a means of grasping the self-perception of those being described. It allows one to recognise the centrality of the figure of the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) to the movement, and to understand the

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internal logic of the positions taken by Imam Ahmad Raza on various issues in consequence of his Prophet-centred vision. In other words, it enables one to see the movement in its own terms rather than those imposed on it from the outside. On the positive side, however, the term "Sunni" has a very wide application (standing in opposition to the other major Muslim categories of Wahhabi and Shii).

The Ahl-e Sunnat movement was one of several British Indian movements led by Ulama in the nineteenth century. Scholars have characterized these in several different ways, using terms such as "fundamentalist" or "orthodox" to describe some movements, or, speaking of those that seem to have roots in "popular religion" as "syncretist", "traditional", or (in Bengal) "sabiqi", among other things.[4]

Most recently, Kenneth Jones has spoken of movements led by the Ulama (and certain Hindu movements, led by Hindu religious figures as well) as "transitional". He defines this term as follows:

> "Transitional movements had their origins in the pre-colonial world and arose from indigenous forms of socio-religious dissent, with little or no influence from the colonial milieu, either because it was not yet established or because it had failed to affect the individuals involved in a particular movement. The clearest determinant of a transitional movement was an absence of anglicized individuals among its leaders and a lack of concern with adjusting its concepts and programmes to the colonial world."[5]

It is plain from the above definition that Jones's point of reference is British colonialism. The movements that come under this rubric are seen as transitional between a pre-colonial past and - where the movements concerned survived the colonial era - a post-colonial present. While necessarily shaped by the reality

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of political rule by the British, Jones sees these as definably different from movements that sought to "acculturate" to that reality, to use his term for movements whose members sought to take advantage of the changed situation and opportunities created by colonial rule.

While this conceptualization may be useful as a means of thinking about movements originating in a variety of religious traditions (Jones examines several Hindu and Sikh movements in addition to Muslim ones), for our purposes it seems best to describe the Ulama-led movements of the nineteenth century with reference to their own terms of discourse. Because the self-proclaimed goal of the Ahl-e Sunnat and several other Ulama-led movements of this period was *tajdid* (renewal), the most appropriate way to describe them would seem to be as renewal movements. The related term, "reform" though usually is used in the context of a desire to improve "worldly" conditions of some sort, such as education or living standards, rather than to effect religious change. In this study we have used the word "reform" as synonymous with"renewal", as it is close in meaning to the intent of the word tajdid. Reform in our context should not be understood, however, to mean either "reformulation" of the Islamic message, considered by Muslims to be immutable, or "reformation" in the Christian sense of restructuring of ecclesiastical authority. Rather, it implies restatement of that message with the purpose of recreating in an existing society or community of Muslims the moral climate thought to have existed in the Prophet Muhammad's (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) day. As will become evident in the course of this study, the Ahl-e Sunnat conception of tajdid and of the Prophet's role as Allah's Messenger differed considerably from that of other Ulama-led movements of the period.

The question remains, who were the Ahl-e Sunnat wa Jama'at? And how did they relate to the British colonial framework, and to the other renewal movements of the nineteenth century?

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Defining the Subject of Study

To the extent that the Ahl-e Sunnat have been subject to scholarly investigation thus far, a certain amount of confusion exists about who they were and the social background they came from. They are generally said to have been influential in the rural and urban areas. There is no reality in what Hamza Alavi, for instance, writes:

"Historically, Deobandis have tended to be mainly urban and from middle and upper strata of society whereas Barelvi influence has been mainly in rural areas, with a populist appeal... . Traditionally Barelvi influence has been weaker in the UP (with the exception perhaps of the peasantry of South-Western UP) than in the Punjab and to some degree in Sind."[6]

Ulama such as Imam Ahmad Raza were sympathetically inclined toward sufi pirs (we shall discuss this aspect of the movement below), it is the case - as is suggested by Alavi's account - that all sufi pirs necessarily regarded themselves as, or were regarded by Ahl-e Sunnat Ulama as, members of the Ahl-e Sunnat movement. Most self-consciously "reformist" pirs of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century period were actively involved in the Ahl-e Sunnat movement in a leadership role. It is in fact true that all rural and urban shrines were "Barelwi" that the movement was therefore made up of a large, undifferentiated mass of Muslim peasants. In this view, in fact, everyone who was not a Deobandi or a Nadwi or an Ahl-e Hadis (or member of some other distinct movement) appears by definition to be "Barelwi". This is the Ahl-e Sunnat claim that as "Sunnis", they represent all South Asian (and other Sunni) Muslims, other than a small number of "deviant" groups such as the Deobandi, Ahl-e Hadis Nadwi, and other.

In order to clarify who we are talking about, then, we shall use the yardstick of self-conscious identification with the Ahl-e Sunnat as a means of delimiting our group. It will not be

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assumed that every late nineteenth and early twentieth century visitor to a shrine was a member of the Ahl-e Sunnat movement simply because the Ahl-e Sunnat looked upon shrine favourably. We have no way of knowing whether the term "Ahl-e Sunnat" (or even "Barelwi") had any meaning for people of the rank and file in the period being studied here, nor whether, in the event that people had heard of the name, they thought of themselves in those terms.[7]

Consequently, we confine ourselves in this study to the leadership of the movement centred around Imam Ahmad Raza. Based on family histories and tazkiras (biographical dictionaries) of the Ulama, we know that the core Ahl-e Sunnat leadership in the late nineteenth century consisted of Ulama and pirs from well-to -do families, living in small agricultural towns,[8] or, as in Imam Ahmad Raza's case, in larger urban milieux. In one way or another, they all had a close intellectual relationship with Imam Ahmad Raza.

The Colonial Context

Like other renewal movements of the nineteenth century, the Ahl-e Sunnat movement under the leadership of Imam Ahmed Raza, took shape and grew in the context of British rule. Loss of political power by the Mughal emperors (who were Ahl-e Sunnat) to the East India Company had started in the late eighteenth century and continued unabated until after the "Independence War" of 1857, when the British crown proclaimed itself ruler of almost the entire subcontinent. A few princely states continued to be ruled by Indians, though the British exercised considerable indirect control over their administrations finances and armies.

In the 1880s, the Ahl-e Sunnat movement emerged under Imam Ahmad Raza's leadership in opposition to the other movements. The Ahl-e Sunnat centred their vision of Islam on the Prophet, saw themselves as "reformist", and traced their intellectual heritage to the Shah Wali Ullahi traditions.[9]

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Nevertheless, differing interpretively from the Tariqa-e Muhammadia, the Deobandis, the Ahl-e Hadis and other Ulama groups about the significance to Muslims of the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), but also on other matters, the Ahl-e Sunnat came by the 1880s to speak with a voice distinctly their own.

Because the Ahl-e Sunnat Ulama were actively engaged in a network of relationships with certain sufi families in the Ulama were actively engaged in a network of relationships with certain sufi families in the United Provinces and elsewhere, we must turn finally to intellectual developments in north Indian sufi circles in the period of Ahl-e Sunnat influence. These currents constitute the third element (along with British colonial rule and the rise of reformist movements among the Ulama) which shaped the direction taken by the Ahl-e Sunnat movement in the late nineteenth century.

Reformist Currents in Nineteenth Century Sufism in India

Pir families closest to Imam Ahmad Raza and his circle, such as the Barkatia pirs of Marahra and the Usmani pirs of Badayun, were proud of their ancestors for having at all times accorded precedence to the Sharia over tasawwuf. They considered the latter to be a necessary complement to the sharia, enriching it but not superseding it in any way. This attitude, which accorded well the Ahl-e Sunnat emphasis on following the sunna, was what defined a sufi as "reformist".[10] The Ahl-e Sunnat contrasted it to the " excesses" of "false" sufis who thought they had attained such spiritual heights that they need not fulfil the daily ritual prayers and other prescribed duties. In his daily conversations with followers, Imam Ahmad Raza frequently condemned such sufis, saying they were inspired by Satan.[11]

While Ahl-e Sunnat Ulama were affiliated with all the major sufi orders current in British India, most emphasized their

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ties to the Qadiri order as well as the Chishti and the Naqshbandi.[12] Nevertheless, their respect for the other orders was evident in several ways. For one thing some of Imam Ahmad Raza's followers belonged to the Chishti and Naqshbandi orders. Furthermore, the Ahl-e Sunnat regarded Shah Abdul-Aziz Dihlawi, son of Shah Wali Ullah, whose affiliation was primarily Naqshbandi, as the mujaddid of the thirteenth Hijri century.

In each of these three orders - Qadiri, Naqshbandi, and Chishti - Certain key figures in the subcontinent were thought to have been particularly associated with the attempt to subordinate sufi "excesses" to shari sobriety. Two of these, Shaikh Abdul-Haqq Muhaddis Dihlawi (1551-1642) and Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi (1564-1624), lived during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, a period which coincided with Emperor Akbar's (d. 1605) reign. It is generally assumed that the hostile attitude of these two shaikhs toward Akbar's religious policy, including their objection to the occupation of important positions of state by Hindus and Shiis, was representative of the views of many Sunni Muslims in Akbar's day.

For Imam Ahmad Raza, Shaikh Abdul-Haqq Muhaddis Dihlawi, of the Qadiri order, is the more important of the two men. In part, this is related to Shaikh Abdul-Haqq's valuable contributions to hadis scholarship. Imam Ahmad Raza cites him frequently in his fatawa. Additionally, Shaikh Abdul-Haqq contributed to Qadiri intellectual discourse through his writings on sufi themes. According to S.A.A. Rizvi,

"[his] writings on sufism are generally an attempt to reconcile the Sharia with the Tariqa. nevertheless they also assert the superiority of Shaikh Abdul Qadir Jilani and the Wahdat al-Wujud. His celebrated Akhbaru'l-akhyar, relating to Indian sufis . . . emphasizes the belief that Shaikh Abdul Qadir was superior to all his predecessors and that his precedence over all future generations of saint of God was also guaranteed. To Shaikh Abdul-Haqq, the Ghausul-Azam's claim, 'My foot is on

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the neck of every saint of God' was a well- considered statement."[13]

Imam Ahmad Raza shared in these views completely. He too revered Hazrat Shaikh Abdul-Qadir Jilani (d. 1166), the founder of the Qadiri order in Abbasid Baghdad, over and above all other saints. He also affirmed his belief in the sufi doctrine of wahdat al-wujud (ontological or existential monism) against that of wahdat al-shuhud (phenomenological monism) which came to be associated with the Qadiri order after Hazrat Shaikh Abdul-Qadir Jilani's death.[14] In part because he believed that discussion of this doctrine should be confined to the learned, and in part perhaps because he was not particularly interested in the debate, the occasional references to this issue in Imam Ahmad Raza' writings are (to our knowledge) rather brief.[15]

Imam Ahmad Raza - and the Ahl-e Sunnat generally - were also drawn to Shaikh Abdul-Haqq's approach to the Prophet. In Madarij al-Nubuwwa, a Persian "biography of Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) in five . . . parts," Shaikh abdul-Haqq defended the belief that Hazrat Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) had performed miracles.[16] He also wrote in praise of Faqr al-Muhammadi, a book by al-Wasiti, an Arab sufi, on love of the Prophet and the excellence of the "Muhammadia Tariqa". al-Wasiti exhorted sufis to regard the Prophet as their "Shaikh and Imam", and to strive to attain mystical union with him.[17] In outward behaviour, they were enjoined to be chaste, emotionally restrained, and faithful to the sharia.

Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi, a Naqshbandi sufi who was Shaikh Abdul-Haqq's contemporary, was widely accepted by the nineteenth century Ulama as the renewer of the eleventh Hijri century, and perhaps even as "Renewer of the Second Millenium" (mujaddid-e alif-e sani), whose task was of particular significance because it happened to inaugurate the start of a new millenium.[18] Imam Ahmad Raza respectfully refers to

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him on many occasions as "Hazrat Shaikh Mujaddid", and approvingly cites his work Mabda o Ma'ad and Maktobaat.[19]

Debate about Sirhindi appears to have tapered off in the eighteenth century. Perhaps Shah Wali Ullah's acceptance of Sirhindi's claim to be the renewer of the eleventh Hijri century (though not the Renewer of the Second Millenium) set the tone for later Ulama, who do not appear to have interested themselves in the controversy. Metcalf writes that the Naqshbandi order, increasingly influential in eighteenth-century north India due to the contributions of mystics and poets like Mirza Mazhar Jan-i Janan (1700-80) and Mir Dard (1721-85), both of Delhi, "was to shape the views of many Ulama toward sobriety in spiritual experience and rigourous adherence to the religious Law".[20] In this their position resembled Shaikh Abdul-Haqq Muhaddis Dihlawi's insistence that tasawwuf be guided by sharia.

The same trend is also associated with the Chishti order, though along somewhat different lines than the Qadiri and Naqshbandi orders. The Chishti has probably been the most popular of all the orders in India historically, both circles and among the population, since its inception in the thirteenth century.[21] Founded by Hazrat Muin ud-Din Chishti of Ajmer (d. 1235), the order quickly spread to Sind, the Punjab and the Deccan through a network of disciples tracing their spiritual genealogy to Hazrat Muin ud-Din.[22] In time it branched into two distinct silsilas, the Chishti Nizami and the Chishti Sabiri.

In the Punjab, Chishti influence apparently suffered a subsequent decline until the eighteenth century. A renewed emphasis on obedience to the sharia then formed part of the Chishti attempt to regenerate the order spiritually.[23] Historically prior, however, was the order's revival in Delhi during the years of Mughal decline, under the leadership of Shah Kalim-Ullah (1650-1729). Given "declining central power (by Muslims), he reorganized the Chishti order and emphasized the central importance of tabliqh, or the active propagation of Islam, as its fundamental mission."[24]

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At the initiative of Shah Fakhr ud-Din of Delhi, a khalifa (successor) of Shah Kalim-UIlah, the Chishti resurgence spread to the Punjab, where the Muslims' political situation was shaped by their subjection to the Sikhs. Working through the sufi mediational institutions of khanaqa (hospice) and darqah (tomb-shrines), leading Chishtis such as Khwaja Nur Muhammad Maharwi (1630-91) and Khwaja Suleman of Taunsa (1770-1850) extended Chishti influence in the western Punjab.

During British rule, some Chishti pirs in the Punjab were drawn into association with the British government.[25] Reformist pirs such as Hazrat Pir Mihr Ali Shah of Golra (1856-1937), a disciple of Khwaja Suleman, however, distanced themselves from such ties. As Hazrat Pir Mihr Ali was directly associated with the Ahl-e Sunnat movement in the Punjab,[26] it seems important to quote Gilmartin on his career and intellectual orientation at some length:

> Like many Punjabis who sought and advanced religious education in British India, Mihr Ali Shah travelled to the United Provinces,where he studied hadis and tafsir (Quranic exegesis) with leading Ulama in the reformist tradition. Returning to Punjab with a concern for reform, he became the disciple of important khalifa of Khwaja Suleman . . . ; under his influence Mihr Ali Shah transformed Golra into a major Chishti centre . . .
>
> He refused to be drawn into direct association with the British government. He maintained his deep reformist concern with the personal instruction of his disciples in the individual obligations of Islam, issuing numerous fatawas (rulings) on points of religious law and gaining a reputation for religious learning among a section of Ulama.[27]

As Gilmartin goes on to say, Hazrat Mihr Ali illustrates two major aspects of the Chishti revival. One was its concern for obedience to the sharia, the other its continued commitment to the mediational ties of the "piri-muridi bond, the shrine, and the

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Urs".[28] In Gilmartin's view, sufi reformist pirs of the Punjab such as Hazrat Mihr Ali were helped by the emergence of the Ahl-e Sunnat movement in north India and Punjab.

"Ahl-e Sunnat Ulama championed a religious outlook in which religious mediation and custom had a continuing and central place . . . The arguments of the Barelvi Ulama aimed at legitimizing the religious authority of all the sufi revival pirs, but according to the standards of religious education and debate developed by helped to justify the entire movement of rural sufi revival."[29]

While the Ahl-e Sunnat Ulama would probably not have defined their purpose as the desire to "justify the entire movement of rural sufi revival" (they would have said they were reviving and following the sunna), Gilmartin's comments are useful in the connections he makes between the Ahl-e Sunnat, other nineteenth-century Ulama, and the movement of Sufi reform.

The study follows focuses, as we said at the outset, on Imam Ahmad Raza's formulation of Ahl-e Sunnat thought. In Chapter I, we set out the broad outlines of his personal life and intellectual career in late-nineteenth century Bareilly. The chapter thenS surveys the range of Ahl-e Sunnat activities and influence in north India during his lifetime, examining educational, publishing, and other organizational aspects of the Ahl-e Sunnat movement. We learn from this of Ahl-e Sunnat areas of influence, and Imam Ahmad Raza's close circle of followers.

Chapters II examine sufi belief and practice among the Ahl-e Sunnat. This is done first from the perspective of the Barkatia Sayyids of Marahra, Etah district, then, in Chapter III, from Imam Ahmad Raza's. Seeing him in his capacity as pir to followers of his own, we assess the importance to the Ahl-e Sunnat of mediation as an organizing principle of belief and practice. Imam Ahmad Raza's conception of the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) as

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Allah's beloved, and head of the hierarchy of saintly intercessors, is examined.

Chapters IV through VI turn to Imam Ahamd Raza's fatawa in order to understand what he, and fellow-Ulama in the movement, meant when they used the classic term "Ahl-e Sunnat wa Jama'at" to describe themselves. Chapter IV looks at a debate among Ahl-e Sunnat Ulama on a matter relating to the second azan, with particular attention to use of terms such as sunna and bida. Chapters V and VI continue to explore the meaning of contemporaty Ulama groups (such as Wahhabis, Deobandis, Ahl-e Hadis and Nadwis), to which the Ahl-e Sunnat were opposed on shari grounds. At the heart of the Ahl-e Sunnat's differences with Ulama such as the Deobandi and the Nadwi lie different conceptions of the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). Chapter VI concludes with an extended discussion of Ahl-e Sunnat prohetology.

In Chapter VII, we look for continuities between Imam Ahmad Raza's "religious" and "political" perspectives by examining his fatawa on the Khilafat movement and his attitude to British rule. Finally, Ahl-e Sunnat attitudes to the Pakistan movement by studying the biographies of two of Imam Ahmad Raza's closest followers.

A Note on Sources

The central source-material for this study has been the fatawa of Imam Ahmad Raza Khan. We do not claim to have made a complete study of all the fatawa he wrote: their volume alone (said by some to number over Forty Volemes thousand) precludes this as does the fact that they are not all published. Nevertheless, on the basis of those that are known to have been important to an understanding of his thought, as well as several less-known ones, it has been possible to establish a pattern of thought and belief that is for the most part consistent.

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Imam Ahmad Raza also wrote a diwan or collection of poems, on themes such as his love for the Prophet. Known as na'ats, these poems give us a glimpse of Imam Ahmad Raza's "softer, gentler" side as "lover of the Prophet". Verses from these poems have been quoted in Chapters II and III, which deal with the sufi aspects of the Ahl-e Sunnat movement. We have not attempted to study Imam Ahmad Raza's translation into Urdu of the Quran, though this would undoubtedly have added to our understanding of his thought. Nevertheless, we do not think it would have materially altered the picture that emerges from his fatawa.

Among the other sources that have been important are the full-length tazkirs of Ahl-e Sunnat Ulama. The main biography of Imam Ahmad Raza is Hayat-e A'la Hazrat by his disciple Maulana Zafar ud-Din Bihari. The work tells us a great deal about Ahl-e Sunnat ideal of personal conduct, which Imam Ahmad Raza of course exemplified to his followers, but only tangentially about personal experience, the sequence of historical events or the larger social and political context. Such details have to be put together (to the extent possible) by consulting other tazkiras, cross-referencing between them, and, most importantly, by consulting newspapers and journals published by Ahl-e Sunnat Ulama in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Of these, the Dabdaba-e Sikandari published from Rampur has been the most valuable. To a large extent, we have been able to date events and learn of calendrical rituals such as Urs and Milad meetings in different north Indian towns and cities by reading the columns of this weekly paper. One would have liked to know more about the internal organization of schools, papers and journals themselves, but our sources are for the most part silent about such details. Where available, secondary sources in English have helped to provide a picture of similar activities in comparable settings.

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We should add perhaps that there is a vast secondary of literature on the Ahl-e Sunnat movement which has only very occasionally been consulted in the course of this study. The movement is currently in the midst of an intellectual revival in Pakistan and other parts of the World, and some of Imam Ahmad Raza's fatawa are being published for the first time. While this has been enormously helpful to us in the attempt to locate original Ahl-e Sunnat sources, we have ignored present-day judgements on Imam Ahmad Raza's achievements and chosen to form our own by reading his fatawa and other work directly. This course was dictated partly by the practical difficulties of reading all that has been written about him in recent years.

Note.

1. Bareilly, in Rohilkhand, is not to be confused with Rae Bareilly, in Awadh. Imam Ahmad Raza and the Barelwi movement have no relationship to Sayyid Ahmad Barelwi (Wahhabi) (d. 1831), from Rae Bareilly.

2. Such names are called nisbat or nisba. See Mohammed Haroon, Cataloguing of Indian Muslim Names (Lahore: Islamic Book Center, 1986, for a useful introduction to Indian Muslim names and the technical terms for different kinds of names.

3. We discuss the concept of tajdid and the Ahl-e Sunnat claim in Chapters IV and V.

4. For a critical essay on the interpretive implication of imposing categories on the data, in the Southeast Asian context, see William R. Roff, "Islam Obscured? Some Reflections on studies of Islam and Society in Southeast Asia," Archipel (1985), 29, 7-34. Also see Roff, "Islamic Movements: One or Many?" in William R.Roff (ed.), Islam and the Political Economy of Meaning: Comparative Studies of Muslim Discourse (Berkeley:

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California University Press, 1987), pp. 31-52, for a related discussion of the analytical difficulties associated with the term "Wahhabi".

5. Kenneth W. Jones, Socio-Religious Reform Movements in British India, The New Cambridge History of India, III: 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p.3.

6. Hamza Alavi, "Pakistan and Islam: Ethnicity and Ideology," in H. Alavi and F.Halliday (eds.), The State and Ideology in the Middle East and Pakistan (Basingstocke, Hampshire: Macmillan, 1988).

7. Knowlege of affiliations of this sort is probably easier to gauge for the post- colonial period, given the emergence of political parties among the Ulama. We doubt we can talk of "Barelwi" or Ahl-e Sunnat influence at all precisely for our period, other than from knowledge of schools, journals, or organizations established where the term "Ahl-e Sunnat" was specifically invoked. We have attempted to do this in Chapter I.

8. For a discussion of the qasba and its eighteenth-century history in north India, see C.A.Bayly,"The Small Town and Islamic Gentry in North India: the Case of Kara," in Kenneth Ballhatchet and John Harrison (eds.), The City in South Asia: Pre-Modern and Modern (London: Centre of South Asian Studies, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 1980), PP.20-48; and C.A. Bayly, Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars: North Indian Society in the Age of British Expansion, 1770-1870 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), paperback edition, Chapter 9.

9. The Ahl-e Sunnat regarded Shah Wali Ullah as a great alim of Ahl-e Sunnat and his eldest son, Shah Abdul-Aziz, to be the mujaddid of the thirteenth Hijri century.

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Their attitude to some of the next generation of scholars in the family (who had deviated from the family because of their corrupt beliefs), that represented by the leaders of the Tariqa-e Muhammadia, was different again, for they rejected the Tariqa's legitimacy entirely. For discussion of the Ahl-e Sunnat and the mujaddid issue, see Chapter V of this study; for the Ahl-e Sunnat on the Tariqa-e Muhammadia, see Chapter VI.

10. The term reformist is widely used in the scholarly treatment of sufism, though it is not a translation of any single word in Arabic or Urdu by which the sufis may have described themselves. The word "orthodox" is also frequently used in the scholarly literature to describe sufis who put the sharia above tasawwuf.

11. See, e.g., Imam Ahmad Raza Khan, Malfuzat-e A'la Hazrat (Gujarat, Pakistan: Fazl-e Nur Academy, N.D.), vol. 3, pp. 22-23.

12. The Suhrawardi order, though usually included as one of the four major Indian tariqas, is mentioned relatively infrequently in the lists of different orders into which individual Ulama were initiated.

13. Hostility to the emperor is particularly associated with Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi. See, e.g., S.A.A. Rizvi, Muslim Revivalist Movements in Northern India in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries (Agra: Agra University, 1965), pp. 210-24, and passim. Yohanan Friedmann, however, cautions against the tendency in modern scholarship on Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi to make more of this aspect of his work than is justified. See Yohanan Freidmann, Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi: An Outline of His Thought and a Study of His Image in the Eyes of Posterity (Montreal and London: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1971), pp. 106-11

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14. S.A.A. Rizvi, A History of Sufism in India, vol. 2(Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 1983), p. 90.

15. This important but complex philosophical debate among sufis has been frequently dealt with in the scholarly literature. The wahdat al-wujud position is associated with lbn al-Arabi (1165-1240), and takes a pantheistic view of creation. This is the Qadiri position as well, though it is opposed by the Naqshbandis. For details, see, e.g., Burhan Ahmad Faruqi, The Mujaddid's Conception of Tawhid (Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 1940).

16. See, e.g, Imam Ahmad Raza Khan, Al-Ataya an-Nabawia fi'1 Fatawa al-Rizwia, vol. 6(Mubarakpur, Azamgarh: Sunni Dar al- Isha'at, 1981),. 132; Malfuzat, fol. 1, p. 48 . In the Malfuzat reference, Imam Ahmad Raza specifically told someone who asked him to explain the doctrine of wahdat al-wujud that if he went into the details his explanation would not be understood by the questioner.

17. Rizvi, Muslim Revivalist Movements, p. 171; and A History of Sufism in India, p. 89.

18. A History of Sufism in India, p. 94.

19. Shah Wali Ullah accepted Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi's claim to the title of renewer of the eleventh Hijri century, but makes no mention of the larger claim. See friedmann, Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi, pp. 1034; Deobandis and Ahl-e Hadis looked upon him as a reformer, and presumably acknowledged him as renewer of the eleventh Hijri century, though Metcalf does not mention this specifically. Metcalf, pp. 183,277,353.

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20. The context for this reference to Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi was an argument about the second azan (call to prayer) on Fridays. Imam Raza supported his position against some Naqshbandi Mujaddidis on this issue by attempting to prove that their position was in oposition not only to him, Imam Ahmad Raza, but also to Sirhindi, founder of their own line of Naqshbandi sufis. Dabdaba-e Sikandari (Rampur), 50; 16 (March 16, 1914), 5 (Question 18). Sirhindi's work Mabda'o Ma'ad was apparently every popular in the seventeenth century. See Friedmann, Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi, pp. 5-6.

21. Metcalf, p. 28.

22. The most recent study of the order is P.M. Currie, The Shrine and Cult of Mu'in al-din Chishti of Ajmer (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989). Currie attempts to disentangle the Mu'in ud-Din of legend from the historical figure, and also gives a detailed picture of the current social and economic organization of the shrine. On this, also see Syed Liyaqat Hussain Moini, "Rituals and Customary Practices at the Dargah of Ajmer", in Christian W. Troll (ed.) Muslim Shrines in India (Delhi: Oxford University Press. 1989).

23. The early spread of the order has been studied by, among others, Simon Digby, "The Sufi Shaikh as a Source of Authority in Medieval India", in Marc Gaborieau (ed.) Islam and Society in South Asia (Paris:Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociences, 1986). Digby has an illuminating discussion, on pp. 67-69, of the inherent contradictions between the "professed aims and necessary practice in the pursuit of the role of a great Shaikh". One of the greatest of these contradictions related to the order's ideal of poverty and independence from the state, as against its record of landownership, patronage by the state, and territorial jurisdiction.

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24. M. Zameeruddin Siddiqi, "The Resurgence of the Chishti Silsilah in the Punjab during the Eighteenth Century," Proceedings of the Indian History Congress, 1970 (New Delhi: Indian History Congress, 1971), 1, 409

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Chapter I

Imam Ahmad Raza Khan Barelwi (1856-1921), and Institutional Aspects of the Ahl-e Sunnat Movement.

(His) exalted presence, Imam of the Ahl-e Sunnat, Renewer of the present (fourteenth Hijri) century, Strengthener *(mu'aiyid)* of the pure *millat,* Maulana Maulwi Haji, Reader of the Quran *(Qari),* Hafiz, Shah Muhammad Ahmad Raza Khan Sahib Qadiri Barkati Barelwi, May his grave be hallowed...Maulana Zafar Ud-Din Bihari, *Hayat-e A'la Hazrat.*

Introduction

During the late nineteenth century, the Ahl-e Sunnat movement was dominated by the personality of one man, Imam Ahmad Raza Khan Barelwi (1856-1921). It is a measure of the depth of his influence on Ahl-e Sunnat followers that their opponents have called them "Barelwi" implying thereby that Imam Ahmad Raza was the founder of a new school of thought.[1] His followers, while rejecting this view, nevertheless looked up to him with great reverence. They frequently referred to him as A'la Hazrat," "His most eminent presence." It is both fitting and important, therefore, that we devote a part of this first chapter to a biographical sketch of his life.

Following this, we shall attempt to survey briefly the movement's range and influence during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries by examining some of the most important institutions, chiefly *madrasas* (schools), publications, and societies in defense of particular causes. There was also an oral aspect to the spread of Muslim reform movements in the nineteenth century, that of the *munazara* or public debate, which will be referred to briefly in the Ahl-e Sunnat context. We hope to demonstrate in the institutional section of the chapter that in its organizational aspects, the Ahl-e Sunnat movement shared many

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of the characteristic features of rival movements. Like the Deobandis, for instance, the Ahl-e Sunnat created organizations modelled on British forms, and made wide use of the printing press. The Ahl-e Sunnat, like other movements, were not "anti-modern in the sense of anti-technological in their concerns."[2] A second goal of this review of the institutional aspects of the movement is to see who its supporters and followers were; in other words, what the social context of its emergence was in the late nineteenth century.

Imam Ahmad Raza Khan: Portrait of a Scholar

Imam Ahmad Raza Khan was of Baraich Pathan (or Rohilla) ancestry.[3] Biographical sources are vague about when his ancestors first came to India: Perhaps it was the seventeenth century that a branch of his family left its home in Qandahar in present-day Afghanistan for India, joining the Mughal imperial bureaucracy as soldiers and soldier-adminstrators.[4] A family ancestor eventually settled in Bareilly, Rohilkhand, where he was awarded a *jagir*, or land grant, for military service. Then followed a brief interlude during which Ahmad Raza's great-grandfather, Hafiz Kazim Ali Khan, served the Nawad of Awadh in Lucknow.[5] This may have occurred in the second half of the eighteenth century, when Mughal fortunes were in considerable decline and north Indian politics in a state of flux as a result of Maratha incursions as well as growing British power.[6] Rohilkhand had become subject to Awad's suzerainty in 1774; service under the Nawabs may thus have seemed promising to a soldier. The Nawab is said to have granted Hafiz Kazim Ali two revenue-free jagirs, which remained in the family's possession until 1954.[7]

But by the end of the eighteenth century Hafiz Kazim Ali probably returned to Bareilly, for Imam Ahmad Raza's grandfather, Raza Ali Khan (1809-65/66), is said to have grown up in that town. Making a break with the family tradition of military service, he became well known as a *faqih* (jurisconsult) and sufi gnostic in the Qadiri order.[8] He was educated at Tonk,

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the only Muslim state in Rajputana, completing his study of the *dars-e nizami* syllabus at twenty-three.[9] After his time, the warrior's profession became a thing of the past, as succeeding generations came to enjoy a reputation for Islamic scholarship and/or saintliness.

Historically speaking, this switch from the military to the scholarly life was a reflection in part of changing times, for one of the great changes brought about by British rule was the fact that large numbers of soldiers came to be unemployed in the mid-nineteenth century.[10] Fortunately for Raza Ali, the family economic base was secure, for it owned several villages in Bareilly and Badayun, adjoining Bareilly to the southwest. The properties were looked after by Naqi Ali Khan (1831-80), Ahmad Raza's father, who was known as a scholar and as a local notable *(ra'is)*.[11]

By the time Imam Ahmad Raza's education began in the 1860s, thus, the family already had a reputation for scholarship. Its inclination was toward rationalist studies *(ma,qulat)*, particularly *fiqh* (jurisprudence), a specialty also of the Ulama of Badayun and Khairabad, the latter due east of Bareilly in Awadh. This was in contrast to the *hadis* (prophetic traditions) scholarship of the descendants of Shah Wali Ullah (d. 1762), the well known Alim of seventeenth-century Delhi who had taught at his father's Madrasa Rahimia.[12] Imam Ahmad Raza grew up in this intellectual climate.[13] Imam Ahmad Raza was mostly taught by his father and grandfather. An early teacher was one Mirza Ghulam Qadir Beg, for whom Imam Ahmad Raza is said to have retained a lifelong affection, sending him Fatawa whenever he requested.[14] Later Imam Ahmad Raza studied the dars-e nizami under his father's direction. He had a few other teachers as well, notably Maulana Abu'l Husain "Nuri Miyan" Maraharwi.[15] But like many others in his day, he had no madrasa education. This is surprising, given the presence of well-known centers of learning in the Rohilkhand area such as Rampur's Madrasa Alia and Badayun's Madrasa Qadiria, which shared his own inclination for ma' qulat.[16] The biographical

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sources, emphasizing Imam Ahmad Raza scholarly abilities, are keen to make the point that much of his knowledge was self taught and was to be seen as a blessing from Allah.[17]

The biographies are replete with stories of Ahmad Raza's precociousness as a child: Thus, when learning the Arabic alphabet, he instinctively knew, his biographer Maulana Zafar ud-Din Bihari writes, the significance of the Arabic compound letter *la* (composed of *lam* and *alif*), the word with which the Muslim attestation of the faith or *kalima* (also *shahada*, lit. witness) begins. Ahmad Raza's grandfather, in explaining the significance of the word to him, is said to have simultaneously communicated to him the secrets of gnostic knowledge.[18] Stories such as these indicated to Ahmad Raza's followers his lifelong and intuitive obedience to the *shari'a* (the law) as well as his eminence as a sufi pir (master).[19]

Imam Ahmad Raza is also reported to have accomplished extraordinary intellectual feats: As a child, for instance, he completed reading the Quran by the time he was four, and addressed a large audience from the pulpit *(minbar)* of a mosque at age six on the occasion of a *milad* (birth anniversary of the Prophet).[20] Later, when studying the dars-e nizami from his father, he quickly demonstrated that he had outstripped the latter in knowledge, as when he rewrote parts of a complicated text to answer a criticism noted on the margins by his father.[21] On another occasion, he solved in five minutes a complex mathematical puzzle brought to his attention by a mathematics professor at Aligarh College (Later Aligarh Muslim University), which the latter had been grappling with for months.[22] These are but a few of the intellectual achievements credited to Imam Ahmad Raza. The telling and retelling of such exemplary *stories* assured Ahl-e Sunnat followers of the special favors bestowed by Allah on their leader Ahmad Raza, and consequently of the righteousness of their vision of *din* (the faith), opposition from their critics not withstanding.

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An important landmark in Imam Ahmad Raza's early life was his assumption of responsibility from his father for writing *fatawa* (non-binding jurisprudential rulings) in 1869, when he was about fourteen.[23] Fatawa-writing was to be his primary occupation for the rest of his life, the main medium through which he personally expressed his vision of din, engaged in controversy with other Ulama i.e. Deobandi and Ahl-e Hadis, who were Wahhabis, and defended his views with "an armoury of erudition" based on quotation from Quran, hadis and Hanafi authorities of fiqh.[24]

Writing in scholarly solitude from his home in Bareilly, surrounded by books and a few devoted followers, was characteristic of Imam Ahmad Raza personal style and temperament. Modeling his own life on the prophetic sunna ("way," or "custom") as he interpreted it, he was attentive to the details of comportment, dress, and etiquette in daily life, and corrected those about him if they were not likewise attentive.[25] Both teacher and patron to his followers, he was also personally generous, indeed lavish, in his periodic gifts to his students and disciples.[26] As Metcalf says, his style was "aristocratic"[27] This characteristic was also evident in his relations with fellow-Ulama. As later chapters show, he seldom participated in large-scale organizational endeavours other than those associated with ritual observances or the annual graduation ceremonies at the Madrasa Manzar al-Islam started by him in 1904.

If Imam Ahmad Raza's scholarship and attentiveness to the details of personal conduct were among his sources of moral authority, another important source was the approval of authoritative figures, gained in the course of journeys he undertook at various junctures in his life. Although the biographies, presenting him fully-formed from childhood (and therefore a "born" Leader), give us a sense of this growth of stature as a leader of the Ahl-e Sunnat movement, we do get some perspective on this by focusing on important journeys made by him, in the chronological order of their occurrence.

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Thus, his second *Hajj* (pilgrimage to Makkah) was very different, we find, from his first.

But before going to Hajj, Imam Ahmad Raza went, in 1877, to Marahra, in order to receive discipleship *(bai'a)* from an elderly pir of the Barkatia Sayyid family resident there. Marahra is a *qasba* (rural town) in Etah district, about 120 kilometres southwest of Bareilly. Imam Ahmad Raza, about twenty-one years old at the time, was accompanied by his father, for both wanted to become *murids* (disciples) of Hazrat Shah Al-e Rasul (d. 1878-79).[28] The sources tell us that this visit was preceded, for Imam Ahmad Raza, by a period of painful spiritual longing during which his grandfather appeared to him in a dream and assured him that relief would soon be forthcoming. [29] This came to pass as prophesied when a revered friend and mentor of his father's Maulana Abd ul-Qadir Badayuni (1837 - 1901), came to their house and advised father and son to seek bai'a from Hazrat Shah Al-e Rasul of Marahra.[30]

According to the biographical accounts of this occasion, when Imam Ahmad Raza and his father arrived at Marahra they were welcomed with unusual honours. Hazrat Shah Al-e Rasul accepted them both as his disciples right away, although a forty-day period of waiting (and training), called *chilla,* was customary. Ahmad Raza and his father received permission to accept disciples in all the sufi orders.[31] The sources suggest that Imam Ahmad Raza and Hazrat Shah Al-e Rasul shared an intuitive bond: While Imam Ahmad Raza had experienced an internal longing, Hazrat Shah Al-e Rasul had been waiting the last several days to see him. Now that he had done so, he said he could die in peace, knowing that when Allah asked him what he had brought Him from the world, he could offer Him Ahmad Raza in reply. [32]

Imam Ahmad Raza was Hazrat Shah Al-e Rasul's most valued disciple, it must be remembered that he was accompanied by his father and by Maulana Abd ul-Qadir Badayuni. Both

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revered elders, and that Hazrat Shah Al-e Rasul had been approached at Abd ul-Qadir's behest.

Shortly after his journey Imam Ahmad Raza accompanied his father in 1878 on another important voyage, to the Haramain to perform hajj. At the time the hajj from British India, in contrast to that originating in the Dutch East Indies for instance, was relatively unregulated by government. [33]

Imam Ahmad Raza's first hajj was thus conducted in circumstances quite different from those surrounding his second in 1905, about twenty-five years later. [34] In personal terms, and in those of the Ahl-e Sunnat movement as well, both pilgrimages had important but very different meaning. The first hajj was important because by performing it Imam Ahmad Raza fulfilled one of the fundamental duties of a Muslim. Additionally, while in the Haramain he obtained certificates (*sanads*) in several fields of knowledge (hadis, fiqh, *usul-e fiqh* [principles of the law], and *tafsir* [Quranic exegesis]) from two well-known *muftis* (jurisconsults).[35] Muftis, as expounders of the sharia, were appointed by the Ottoman government. Sayyid Ahmad Dahlan (d. 1886) the then mufti of the Shafiis, and one of the two who are said to have given Imam Ahmad Raza a sanad on this occasion, was the "Shaikh al-Ulama" of Makkah. He issued fatawa in his capacity as mufti, and taught at the Haram mosque.[36] The other alim was one Abd al-Rahman Siraj. the mufti of the Hanafis; the holder of this position was consulted by the government whenever it wished to issue new rules or laws in Makkah.

Yet more honours were awarded to Imam Ahmad Raza. If the bestowal of sanads by the above-mentioned muftis had enhanced his stature as a scholar, the following incident seems to bear primarily on his spiritual role: It is said that Husain bin Saleh, the Shaffii Imam of the Kaba noticed him one day when he had gone there to offer his evening (*maghrib)* prayer. Although they had not been introduced, the Imam gazed at him intently, seized him by the hand, and took him home. There he

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held his forehead for a long time, saying at length that he saw Allah's light in it. He then gave him a new name, Zia ud-Din Ahmad, and a sanad in the six collections of hadis,[37] as well as one in the Qadiri order, signing it with his own hand. In this sanad there were only eleven names intervening between those of Husain bin Saleh and al-Bukhari.[38] Finally, while at Medina Ahmad Raza received another sign of spiritual favor, being blessed with a vision one night at the Hanif mosque that he had been absolved of all his sins.[39]

These and other spiritual honours bestowed on Ahmad Raza on his first hajj point us toward the rite de passage symbolism of hajj. At the end of his journey, Imam Ahmad Raza returned to India imbued with the moral authority required to become the pre-eminent leader of the Ahl-e Sunnat movement. Having earlier been accepted as disciple by the Qadiri pir Shah Al-e Rasul, now he had also received the blessings of the Ulama of the Haramain in the forms described. His new identity was symbolized by his new name.[40] In Ahl-e Sunnat terms, the significance of Imam Ahmad Raza's first hajj was that he was Allah's chosen instrument for the task of punishing the heretic Ulama of the subcontinent in this era of *bid'a* (reprehensible innovations). Allah had called him to the pure land of the Haramain before he embarked on his lifelong mission (as leader of the Ahl-e Sunnat) in India. The Ulama of the Haramain loved him, blessed him with wealth of their knowledge in many fields, including gnosticism, and sent him back to India.[41]

Acknowledgment of Imam Ahmad Raza's moral leadership of the Ahl-e Sunnat movement was publicly made in 1897, when he undertook another journey. This was to Patna, where he went to attend a meeting of the Majlis-e Ahl-e Sunnat wa Jama'at, an anti-Nadwa organization of Ahl-e Sunnat Ulama founded by Qazi Abd ul-Wahid Azimabadi.[42] It is reported that in the course of the week-long meetings Imam Ahmad Raza was unanimously declared to be the *mujaddidd* (renewer) of the fourteenth Hijri century.[43] The proclamation of Imam Ahmad Raza was an important landmark not only in his career, but in

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the history of the Ahl-e Sunnat movement itself. An unambiguous statement of the Ahl-e Sunnat's self perception as a (indeed the only) movement of renewal among contemporary Muslims, it was simultaneously a measure of the Ahl-e Sunnat's self-confidence and a challenge to rival movements (such as the Deobandi, which is a group of Wahhabis).

Returning, however to Imam Ahmad Raza's growth of moral standing as seen through the lens of his travels, we must attend to his second hajj in 1905. Unlike the first, made almost thirty years previously, in which his position was that of a seeker and humble recipient of honours, the second was akin to a triumphal tour with important consequences back home. Imam Ahmad Raza had already corresponded with many of the Ulama he met in the Haramain on this occasion. In 1879 he had sought and received the confirmation of Makkan Ulama on a judgment made by him in certain fatawa condemning the Nadwat al-Ulama.[44] But during this visit the roles were to some extent reversed. He had again sought and received several Ulama's confirmation of a fatawa (this time an anti-Ahmadi and anti Deobandi one).[45] But more than this, many Ulama had sought sanads *from* him this time, bearing *his* signature.[46] These were in hadis and tafsir, among other things.[47]

This is only the most dramatic of many events said to have occurred on the 1905 visit to Haramain, in which Imam Ahmad Raza is portrayed as teacher rather than learner or pupil. For instance, when in the library of the Haram mosque in Makkah, he overheard some Ulama debating whether or not it was lawful to throw stones at the pillars of Satan in Mina before dusk. One Makkan Alim had apparently said that it was lawful to do so. Imam Ahmad Raza, asked his opinion, dissented with this judgment. A book was consulted, and Imam Ahmad Raza opinion was confirmed as the right one.[48] It is also related in his *Malfuzat* that he received a warm and hospitable welcome from a number of Ulama in Makkah. Another mark of their respect for him was the fact that two Ulama asked him for a fatawa, posing a series of questions on the status of the paper note.[49] As one

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alim reportedly said of him "(Although) he was a Hindi (an Indian), his light was shining in Makkah."[50]

The immediate result of his approximately three-month stay in Makkah and Medina was that Imam Ahmad Raza was able to establish close relations with a number of leading scholars in the Haramain, and secure their support in his anti-Deobandi efforts at home. The Deobandis of course responded with fatawa of their own rebutting his. But whatever the merits of the arguments made, he was seen by Ahl-e Sunnat supporters as having scored a major victory against the Deobandi side.[51] From their point of view the events at the Haramain confirmed them in their belief that Imam Ahmad Raza was a leader of "Sunnis" world-wide, not merely in India.

There is one last journey we would like to refer to here, in which we see how Ahl-e Sunnat followers venerated him towards the end of his life. Unlike the hajj pilgrimages described above, Imam Ahmad Raza's visit to Jabbalpur in 1919 was a very personal one. It was undertaken to please a dear and devoted follower, Maulana Burhan ul-Haqq Jabbalpuri (d. 1984), and to perform the latter's *dastar-bandi* (tying of the turban, a ceremony marking the end of a student's career).[52]

This was no simple visit, quietly undertaken. Imam Ahmad Raza's Stature within the movement by this time was far too elevated for such a possibility. Because his health was poor, elaborate arrangements were made all along the way to ensure his comfort. It was a long (perhaps two-day) journey by train, following an eastern route to Allahabad and then a southern one to Jabbalpur, a distance of perhaps 800 kilometres. Arriving at the head of a large party of people, he was received like a royal visitor: Great crowds greeted him not only at the Jabbalpur train station, but even at smaller stations preceding it. Thronging to touch and kiss the feet, they lined the streets all the way home.[53]

The royal metaphor, implicitly invoked by the sufis in their own use of vocabulary,[54] is apt in describing Imam Ahmad

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Raza's relationship to the people who gathered about him daily during his month at Jabbalpur. Like royalty, he bestowed lavish gifts on all around him. Maulana Zafar ud-Din Bihari (1876 - 1951?), his biographer, comments on the amazement of those who witnessed his generosity on this occasion: out of a box he pulled out money, gold ornaments, clothes - something for every household servant, not just for the hosts, as well as for important merchants (*seths*) and their families.[55] The gifts were reciprocated in the form of *nazar* (gift to a sufi pir), as well as frequent feasts.

Most remarkable, however, is the unfortunately brief report of a series of public meetings in which large numbers of people did *tauba* (sought pardon) at Imam Ahmad Raza's hands. A list of seventy-nine names is given in the *Malfuzat*, though perhaps even this is incomplete.[56] Those whose omissions related to deeper spiritual ("hidden") matters, however, spoke to him about them in private.

This incident, which occurred about two years before Imam Ahmad Raza's death in October (or November) 1921, shows the moral authority he enjoyed among those who called themselves the "Ahl-e Sunnat wa Jama'at." In their eyes, his eminence was a gift from Allah, reflected in his depth of learning, piety and personal rectitude. Above all, the certainty of his convictions, and his insistence that unlike those he accused of "disrespect" to the Prophet, his own views were "correct," provided psychological reassurance in a time of great social change. To his followers, he was their saviour in a dark world.

Ahl-e Sunnat Institutions: Dar-al-Ulum, Publications, Associations, and Debates

As noted above, Imam Ahmad Raza had founded a Dar-al-Ulum in 1904, called the Dar-al-Ulum Manzar al-Islam, though known more often as the Madrasa Ahl-e Sunnat wa Jama'at. The Ahl-e Sunnat were in fact late starters in the educational field, and the reason was that Ahl-e Sunnat fought

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against the British in Independence War in 1857, and thus had lost everything in the war. All the major late-nineteenth century Muslim movements in north India were centered around madrasas or colleges. Deoband had its Dar-al-Ulum, founded in the late 1860s, Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan centered his educational reforms around the Anglo-Muhammadan College he started in 1875, and the Nadwat al-"Ulama, founded in the 1890s, established their madrasa of this name at Lucknow in the early twentieth century.

Anyhow, when Maulana Zafar ud-Din Bihari first came to Bareilly in 1904-5 desiring to become Imam Ahmad Raza's student, the latter advised him to study at an existing madrasa, the Madrasa Dar al-Isha'at, and help out in his spare time in the work of the Dar al-Ifta.[57] Thus, Zafar ud-Din Bihari took the initiative in establishing the Dar-al-Ulum Manzar al-Islam, with help from Hasan Raza (1859-1908), Imam Ahmad Raza's brother, and Hamid Raza (1875-1943), his elder son. Imam Ahmad Raza's consent to the creation of the Dar-al-Ulum was obtained by asking a Sayyid to recommend the idea to him.[58] A local ra'is donated space.[59]

In subsequent years, it was Hamid Raza who was most closely associated with Dar-al-Ulum in his capacity of chief administrator. In fact, the position became hereditary, being passed on from father to eldest son.[60] Imam Ahmad Raza was the *sarparast*, rector or patron, helping the Dar-al-Ulum financially to some extent. Once a year, he addresses the gathering of Ulama, pirs, and wealthy residents of the town who graced the Dar-al-Ulum annual dastarbandi ceremonies. Zafar ud-Din and Amjad Ali the first students to graduate, also taught at the Dar-al-Ulum for some time. Lists of the names of participants in some of the early dastar-bandi ceremonies tell us something of the Dar-al-Ulum's range of influence during these years. In 1908, those attending included Ulama from Haidarbad, Pilibhit, Muradabad, Badayun, Allahabad, and Rampur and many other towns and cities of the country.[61] Many of the Ulama and sufis named were personally close to Imam Ahmad Raza.

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Among them were Maulana Wasi Ahmad (1836-1916) of Pilibhit, known as "Muhaddis Surati" who taught hadis at the Madrasa al-hadis founded by him in Pilibhit; Sayyid Didar Ali Alwari (1856-1935), founder of the Dar-al-Ulum Hizb al-Ahnaf in Lahore in 1924; Sayyid Irshad Ali Rampuri (1862-1910), nephew and son-in-law of Sayyid Irshad Husain Rampuri (1832-93), a longtime associate of the family(r. 1865-87);[62] Abd ul-Muqtadir Badayuni (1866-1915), from the family of Usmani Ulama and pirs who had close and long-standing ties to Imam Ahmad Raza's family; and Sayyid Muhammad Miyan Kachhochhawi (1893-1963), the *sajjada-nishin* (caretaker) of a shrine in Kachhochha, district Faizabad. These pirs and Ulama were among the inner circle of the Ahl-e Sunnat leadership in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Indeed, in 1922 the Dar-al-Ulum's annual dastar-bandi ceremonies were held in the Khanaqa-e Alia Razwia, as Imam Ahmad Raza's home came to be known, no longer in the Masjid Bibiji as before.[63]

Several years later, in 1937, Mustafa Raza Khan (1892-1981), Hamid Raza's younger brother founded another school called Dar-al-Ulum Mazhar al-Islam attached to the Masjid Bibiji, which followed the same syllabus (the dars-e nizami) as Manzar al-Islam.

One of the oldest of the Ahl-e Sunnat's madrasas was Rampur's Madrasa Alia. It was an eighteenth-century institution funded by a *waqf* (endowment) based on landed income from two villages, which enjoyed state patronage under the Nawabs.[64] In the politically disturbed conditions of the eighteenth century, it attracted scholars and students from all over India. Maulanas Fazl-e Haqq Khairabadi (d. 1861) and Abd ul-Haqq Khairabadi (d. 1899), specialists in Ma'qulat, were among its teachers and office-bearers.[65]

Organizationally, the Madrasa Alia (as originally conceived) was probably very different from Madrasas set up by

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the Ahl-e Sunnat a century or so later.[66] In Badayun, Maulana Abd ul-Qayyum (d 1900) founded the Madrasa Shams al-Ulum in 1899. His son, Abd ul-Majid (d. 1931), enabled it to grow and prosper by securing an annual grant from the Nizam of Haidarbad which continued until 1948, and others from wealthy families in Bombay, Aligarh and elsewhere.[67]

Individual donations from the people of Badayun were collected for a new building. Students were taught the dars-e nizami syllabus. Many then went on to pass exams at Panjab and Allahabad Universities, qualifying for the titles of Maulwi Alim and Munshi Fazil (Persian) which were held to be equivalent to the BA degree.[68] The Madrasa had its own writing and publishing offices which published the works of different Ulama.

In Pilibhit, Maulana Wasi Ahmad Muhaddis Surati founded the Madrasa al-Hadis in 1893. As its name suggests, the madrasa specialized in hadis studies. It owed its reputation in this field largely to the teaching of Muhaddis Surati himself. Many of Imam Ahmad Raza's closest followers were Muhaddis Surati's students before they came to Bareilly and joined his circle. [69] Muhaddis Surati's position was rather special in the Ahl-e Sunnat movement on account of his close relations, established early in his career, with Ulama outside the movement, notably Nadwa leaders Lutf Ullah Aligarhi (d. 1916) and Muhammad Ali Mongiri.[70] These early contacts also included men such as Sayyid Didar Ali Alwari, and Pir Sayyid Jamaat Ali Shah Alipuri.[71]

In Patna, Maulana Qazi Abd ul-Wahid Firdausi Azimabadi (d. 1908), the moving spirit behind the Ahl-e Sunnat's anti-Nadwa meetings and conferences in the 1890s, [72] founded the Madrasa Hanafia in 1900. The school building[73] was a large house given in Waqf by Abd ul-Wahid's father. A staff of six or seven teachers served a student body of about a hundred, many of them boarders.[74] Financed in part by voluntary contributions and in part from collections designated

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as *zakat* (mandatory alms-tax on accrued wealth), the school was apparently short of funds in its early years. However, Abd ul-Wahid was a splendid organizer and had access to well-to-do patrons, being himself a wealthy notable.[75] The School most likely prospered under his management.

Two other madrasas of importance must be mentioned: the Jamia Naimia in Muradabad founded by Sayyid Naim ud-Din Muradabadi in the early 1920s, and the Dar al-Ulum Hizb al-Ahnaf started by Sayyid Didar Ali Alwari in Lahore in 1924. The latter was particularly important in terms of providing leadership for the Ahl-e Sunnat movement in the Panjab.

The Jamia Naimia, apparently first known as the Madrasa Ahl-e Sunnat wa Jamaat, Muradabad, was administered in 1919-20 by an association *(anjuman)* headed by influential local patron. After the death of the patron, the *anjuman* ceased to exist, and the madrasa came to be associated solely with Sayyid Naim ud-Din. Its name changed to the Madrasa Naimia. In time, it acquired local fame and grew larger, until in 1933-34 it became big enough to merit the title of Jamia (a university). It had a Dar al-Ifta (office for the issuance of fatawa) and several teachers. [76] The Jamia, located in the heart of the city of Muradabad amidst narrow lanes and bustling commerce, presently consists of a large handsome building surrounding a central courtyard. A mosque and Sayyid Naim ud-Din's mausoleum occupy a prominent position in one corner of the square.

Sayyid Naim ud-Din and many of Imam Ahmad Raza's students were associated in various ways with the Dar al-Ulum Hizb al-Ahnaf of Lahore, several of the Jamia Naimia's students going on the Hizb al-Ahnaf as teachers.[77] Its founder, Sayyid Didar Ali Alwari (1856-1935), belonged to the Chishti Nizami order.[78] His teachers included eminent Ulama and sufi shaikhs such as Sayyid Irshad Husain Rampuri and Shah Fazl-e Rahman Ganj Muradabadi. Imam Ahmad Raza also gave him sanad in fiqh, hadis and other disciplines. [79] From 1912 to 1916 he was in Lahore as Shaikh al-Hadis at the Dar-al-Ulum Numania

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(founded in 1887), the oldest Dar-al-Ulum in Punjab. After a period at Agra, he returned to Lahore in 1920, this time as khatib of the Wazir Khan mosque in that city. In 1924, he began the Markazi Anjuman Hizb al-Ahnaf (Central Association of the Hizb al-Ahnaf). This body set policy and administered the Dar al-Ulum Hizb al-Ahnaf, which began initially at the Wazir Khan mosque itself. Sayyid Didar Ali was joined by several fellow Ulama in teaching the dars-e nizami syllabus. The Dar al-Ulum later acquired buildings of its own, and began specialized departments in preaching (*tabligh*) and debate (*munazara*), for example, in addition to the regular classes. There was ample financial support for the Jamia from influential Panjab pirs such as Pir Sayyid Jamaat Ali Shah Alipuri, [80] with whom Sayyid Didar Ali had a close relationship. As one writer says, "hundreds of thousands of Ulama and teachers were born here, and today [1993] there is probably no town in Pakistan, Bengladesh, South Africa, South America and Britain which does not have Ulama trained at the Hizb al-Ahnaf."[81] Another Ahl-e Sunnat Alim said of Sayyid Didar Ali that had he not taught and preached in Lahore, the whole Panjab would today be full of "Wahhabis."[82]

This last remark draws attention to the competitive atmosphere in which the Hizb al-Ahnaf and other Ahl-e Sunnat Dar-al-Ulum were established and operated in the early twentieth century. A new emphasis on tabligh or preaching at this time is directed against Wahhabis, Deobandis, Ahl-e-Hadis and other heretical sects, but also against Hindus and others as well, as during the anti-Shuddhi campaigns of Ulama of all persuasions in the United Provinces.[83] Even the addition of a Dar al-Ifta to madrasas of the time was competitive, for it was through the fatawa produced by the Ulama of different movements that they made known their stand on issues under debate, and rebutted those of their rivals. Imam Ahmad Raza, for instance, expressed his views for the most part in a daily stream of fatawa going out to people throughout British India, and beyond. The standard of education in the sunni Dar-al-Ulum was so high that students

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from the rival groups used to come after completion of their education.

To sum up: The early twentieth century saw a proliferation of new madrasas and Dar-al-Ulum being founded by Ahl-e Sunnat Ulama throughout British India. Like other renewal movements of the time, however, the Ahl-e Sunnat had many central institutions to compare. Individual Ulama took the initiative in founding madrasas in their towns with help from wealthy patrons where possible. Often small and ephemeral, these madrasas and Dar-al-Ulum were nevertheless instrumental in creating a network of personal links between Ulama and in producing new leaders. As with rival movements, the Ahl-e Sunnat madrasas and Dar-al-Ulum used novel organizational methods to varying degrees, as in their use of fixed syllabus, annual examinations, the awarding of prizes to students with the best records, the publication of an annual report, and the institution of specialized departments for preaching publication, and debate, among other things.

The Ahl-e Sunnat were self-consciously opposed to existing heretic Muslim renewal movements. The context of debate and rivalry among the Ulama, central to the formation of the Ahl-e Sunnat's ideology, becomes particularly apparent when we look at Ahl-e Sunnat publications, oral debates, or voluntary associations (anjumans, *majlises)* in defense of particular causes. We turn now to a selective survey of some of these institutions so as to illustrate the context of debate referred to and the sources of Ahl-e Sunnat support.

Printing Presses and Publications

Although a number of Indian businessmen had owned their own printing presses as early as the 1820s and 30s, the 1880 saw a dramatic increase in the number of presses under private Indian ownership, with a consequent spurt in Indian-language publishing. Until this time, printing technology had been controlled, for the most part, by Christian missionaries and

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other Europeans who used it for the promulgation of Christian doctrine or to publish small editions of scholarly translations in English of Indian classical texts.[84] With the dramatic increase of Indian -owned presses in the 1880s, however, the Indian Ulama began to make full use of the printing press to spread their ideas and reach out to a wider audience. As the Ulama wrote and published in Urdu, the language of the Indian elite their writings contributed to the creation of a new corpus of Urdu literature.[85] In so far as religious debate was concerned, the printed word became *the* most important medium through which late nineteenth-century Muslims argued with others. Because of the wide practice of reading aloud, a single copy of a book or pamphlet in the hands of a literate member of a community was sufficient to ensure that the ideas expressed therein became known to a widening circle of people about that person.[86]

In Bareilly, the Ahl-e Sunnat had two major presses in the late nineteenth century: Hasani Press, owned by Imam Ahmad Raza's nephew Hasnain Raza, and the Matba Ahl-e Sunnat wa Jamaat managed (but probably not owned) by Amjad Ali Azami (d. 1948), a close follower of Imam Ahmad Raza. Between them they appear to have published all Imam Ahmad Raza's important fatawa in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The earliest works date to the late 1870s. Books varied in length from as little as fifteen pages to several hundred, though fifty or sixty was probably closer to the average. The front cover, bordered on the corners and sides with a floral design, generally gave a brief resume of the contents of the work at the top and advised the public to read it for the spiritual benefit to be derived thereby. Then followed the title, chosen with great care: not only did the middle and the end usually rhyme, but it was also frequently a means of poking fun at an opponent.[87] In addition, the numerical values of the letters (in accordance with the *abjad* system whereby each letter of the alphabet is assigned a number had to add up to the year of the work's writing.

Print runs at the Hasani Press and Matba Ahl-e Sunnat ranged from five hundred to a thousand copies. Occasionally a

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book ran to three editions or more. This was the case, for instance, with Imam Ahmad Raza's *Al-Kaukab al-Shahabia,* printed in 1894, in which he argued that although Shah Isma'il Dihawi (d. 1831), leader of the Indian Wahhabis i.e. Deobandi, Ahl-e Hadis, and Jamat-i-Islami, was a kafir, it was best to refrain from calling him (Shah Isma'il) a kafir.[88] The popularity of writings against the Deobandis (among those called "Wahhabi") is indicated by the printing history of another fatawa by Imam Ahmad Raza entitled *Ihlak al-Wahhabiin ala Tauhin Qubur al-Muslimin* (Ruin to the Wahhabis for the disrespect towards Muslim graves). Originally written in 1904, it went through its fourth printing in1928, with a print run (on this occasion) of a thousand copies. The topic, the alleged disrespect of Deobandis toward graves, was obviously of interest to Ahl-e Sunnat followers, while at a price of less that a rupee the reading public must have found the book affordable.[89]

In the late 1890s, both presses published a large number of fatawa by Imam Ahmad Raza against the Nadwat al-Ulama - it is estimated that he wrote about two hundred fatawa on this theme alone. In 1920, Husain Raza started editing a monthly journal called Al Raza', containing articles by Imam Ahmad Raza and other Ulama on a variety of topics. Some of Imam Ahmad Raza's writings were serialized in the journal. It also contained *naats* (verse in praise of the Prophet), articles in defense of milad and urs, as well as others decrying the shortage of madrasas and Dar-al-Ulums. The annual cost of the journal was two rupees.

Such information is available, however, for another Ahl-e Sunnat journal, the *Tuhfa-e Hanafi*a (also called *Makhzan-e Tahqiq).* This was started in 1897-98 by Qazi Abd ul-Wahid Azimabadi of Patna. Founder as noted earlier of the Madrasa Hanafia) in the context of the Ahl-e Sunnat's campaign against the Nadwat al- Ulama. A monthly consisting usually of forty-four pages, its stated purposes were to strengthen Islam and the "*mazhab*" of the Ahl-e Sunnat, and to rebut their enemies. It contained articles on *aqaid*, fiqh and hadis stories from the lives

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of the prophets and the first caliphs, and of course those in rebuttal of rival groups, particularly the Nadwa. There were many scholars and writers who wrote the articles among them were well known Ulama such as Maulana Abd ul-Qayyum Badayuni (founder of the Madrasa Shams al-Ulum) Sayyid Naim Ud-din Maulana Amjad Ali and many others.[90]

Regular list of buyers and donors published by the Tuhfa-e Hanafia reveal that the journal had a subscription list of about two thousand people in its early years, growing slowly but steadily, due to the recommendations of its subscribers, to approximately ten thousand. Both the geographic spread and the social composition of the subscribers are indicated in these lists. Geographically, the *Tuhfa* reached out to the people in an impressive diversity of places throughout India. An early published list includes large cities such as Ahmadabad, Bombay and Haidarabad, as well as district towns in the United Provinces (mainly the western districts of Bareilly, Badayun, Etah, and Bulandshahr), and of course Bihar (districts Muzaffarpur, Darbhanda, Mongir, Patna Shahabad, and Gaya in north Bihar, Punjab Sind and Sarhad.) [91] In social terms, we find a heavy representation by the educated and well-to-do, not surprising for subscribers to a journal emanating from a selection of the Ulama. Nevertheless, the number of those holding positions of authority in the British administration or possessors of landed title is noteworthy. There were persons in all walks of life i.e. legal representatives of various descriptions (barristers, subjudges, legal agents. There were also station masters, doctors, students in western-style colleges, and revenue collectors. In addition, writers and secretaries, qazis, muhtamims of madrasas and Imams of mosques were among the subscribers.[92]

It would probably be mistaken to assume on the basis of this and similar lists of subscribers and donors to the *Tuhfa* that all these people self-consciously identified themselves with the Ahl-e Sunnat movement. Keeping in mind the strong anti-Nadwa platform of the *Tuhfa*, conceivably some of its

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subscribers were interested in the journal because its views coincided with their own on this issue. Nevertheless, we can identify a certain core group of Ulama and others whose involvement in Ahl-e Sunnat affairs was prolonged and multifaceted. These included the Ulama of Badayun, Bareilly, Pilibhit (listed as buyers in subsequent issues of the *Tuhfa*),[93] and Patna.

A publication of a different kind, and one that is an important source for the late nineteenth and early twentieth century history of the Ahl-e Sunnat movement, was a newspaper "the *Dabdaba-e Sikandari*". It began weekly publication around 1864 in Rampur.[94] Its editor and sub editor in the early twentieth century, Maulanas Muhammad Faruq Hasan [95] and Muhammad Fazl-e Hasan respectively, were followers of the Chishti Sabiri line of sufis, though also of the Qadiri order. They appear to have had a Dar al-Ishaat, or distribution centre, in a khanaqa at Rampur, the Khanaqa-e Sabiria.[96]

Its range of reporting was broad, covering events both primarily "political" (such as the process of constitutional devolution of power to Indians in the early 1920s) and "religious" (descriptions of periodic urs celebrations, for example), though of course much that was newsworthy fell between those two categories. On the political front, it covered news events in Rampur, British India, in the Muslim world generally, and in Europe as well. In the early 1900s, for instance, it reported constitutional changes in the Ottoman empire and the building of the Hijaz Railway.[97] In the teens of the new century, it carried articles about the fate of Ottoman possessions in the Balkans, and efforts by Indian Muslim groups such as the Anjuman-e Khuddam-e Kaba (Society of the Servants of the Kaba) to protect the Hijaz from non-Muslim aggression, among other things.[98] In short, it kept its readers well-informed on local and world events, particularly those of concern to Muslims. The editor's interest in issues relating to din was evident in numerous ways, ranging from periodic urs announcements, whether Chishti, Qadiri, or other, to more

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substantive coverage of dispute and debate. Its respect for Imam Ahmad Raza and other Ahl-e Sunnat Ulama was considerable. This was most dramatically reflected in November 1910 in the decision by Muhammad Fazl-e Hasan, the paper's sub-editor, to start a column called "Chashma-e Dar al-Ifta-e Bareilly" (Fount of Bareilly's Dar al-Ifta) in which questions (*istifta)* from the public to the Ahl-e Sunnat Ulama at Bareilly were reproduced with their corresponding answers (fatawa).[99] In addition, the *Dabdaba-e Sikandari* regularly reported Ahl-e Sunnat events, whether convocations at the Dar-al-Ulum Manzar al-Islam at Bareilly, an urs at Marahra, or a newly formed anjuman of the Ahl-e Sunnat elsewhere. Imam Ahmad Raza himself sometimes contributed a na'at to its columns. Before Ramazan, the paper also annually published a detailed chart worked out by Imam Ahmad Raza and Zafar ud-Din Bihari, indicating the exact times of sunrise, sunset, and the daily evening prayers on each day of the fasting month, for people in several different U.P. towns.[100]

Voluntary Associations: Given its sympathetic interest in Ahl-e Sunnat argument and debate, the *Dabdaba-e Sikandari* is a helpful guide in mapping the movement's range and diversity of organizational activity in fields other than education during the early twentieth century. One of these, common to reform and renewal movements across the religious spectrum in British India at this time, was the creation of voluntary group interests. All were organized along "modern" lines, with presidents, secretaries, annual reports. Among early-twentieth century Muslims, the proliferation of such societies is clear from the array of names appearing in the Dabdaba-e Sikandari,[101] in 1910, Muslims from Panjab, the U.P., and Bengal gathered at Badayun for their first Urdu Conference; [102] in 1913, Maulana Abd ul Bari who was an Alim of Ahl-e Sunnat and associated Ulama started the Anjuman-e Khuddam-e Ka'ba noted above.

The Ahl-e Sunnat too had their anjumans and conferences. In 1909, a pir of the Barkatia family issued an invitation to "sufi pirs *(masha'ikh)* of the Ahl-e Sunnat" to attend a two-day planning committee *(intizami committee)* meeting to

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be held during the forthcoming urs for Muin ud-Din Chishti (popularly known as Khwaja Gharib Nawaz) at Ajmer.[103] As he pointed out, this urs was always well-attended, and holding the meeting there would therefore result in the new organization of pirs quickly becoming well known. The purpose of the proposed organization was very broadly formulated as the need to instil a "new spirituality" (*taza ruhaniat*) in Islam, which the writer described as currently "oppressed".[104] This brief announcement in the *Dabdaba-e Sikandari* tells us something about an important new function of the annual urs, as a forum for sufis to meet in associations whose agendas were entirely distinct from devotion to the particular pir whose death anniversary was being commemorated.[105]

During the teens of the twentieth century, the Dabdaba-e Sikandari reported annual meetings of organizationally distinct associations called the "Anjuman-e Ahl-e Sunnat" in Karachi,[106] Bareilly and Muradabad.[107] In each case the anjumans seem to have been related to the Ahl-e Sunnat madrasas in their respective towns. The report of the Bareilly anjuman tells us that the meetings consisted of na'ats, sermons, and speeches - proceedings which also marked such occasions as urs and annual dastar-bandi ceremonies at the Dar-al-Ulum Manzar al-Islam.[108] In Muradabad, on the other hand, the anjuman meeting included a debate with some Arya Samajis, a field in which Sayyid Naim ud-Din's skills were highly regarded among the Ahl-e Sunnat.[109]

In 1916, the *Dabdaba-e Sikandari* announced the formation of a "Halqa-e Ahl-e Sunnat" in Sikandra Rao, a town in Aligarh district about 40 Kilometres southwest of Marahra.[110] The term "halqa" (circle) suggests a group of sufis in *dhikr* (repetition of religious formulae).[111] However, this Halqa, while expressly stating its respect for sufis and sufi institutions,[112] also sought to defend the Ahl-e Sunnat vision of din against its critics, both heretical Muslim and Hindu. The *nazim-e ala* (chief administrator) of the Halqa was one Sayyid Muhammad Ghulam Qutub ud-Din, a preacher from Sahaswan, Badayun district.[113]

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Not surprisingly, therefore, the Halqa displayed a particular interest in preaching: Thirty-five preachers *(Waezin)* were said to have undertaken to do tabligh on the "duties (ahkam) of Islam."[114] Their preaching tours were reported periodically in the *Dabdaba* during 1917.

Much more ambitious in scope, and more far-reaching in influence than any of the activities mentioned so far, were two organizations created in the early 1920s by Ulama at the centre of the Ahl-e Sunnat movement. In 1921 they created the "Ansar al-Islam" or "Helpers of Islam", an organization dedicated to helping the Ottomans in their post-World War defeat at the hands of the Allied powers.[115] In 1924, though perhaps earlier the Jamaat Raza-e Mustafa (Society Pleasing to the Prophet Muhammad, (peace and blessing of Allah be upon him)) was formed with the immediate purpose of reconverting to Islam large groups of people who had recently embraced Hinduism under the influence of the Arya Samaj.[116]

It would serve little purpose to describe the Jamaat Raza-e Mustafa in any detail here. Suffice is to say that in it we see, as in other Ahl-e Sunnat endeavours above, both the element of organized compartmentalization of different activities (preaching, publication, debate, finance, and so on), and of competition with rival groups.

Oral Debates Competition between rival Muslim movements was also expressed in oral debate "munazara" a phenomenon well documented in the scholarly literature.[117] As Metcalf has indicated, most oral debates in the mid-nineteenth century had taken place between Muslims and Christian missionaries (whose methods of preaching were a model for the tabligh efforts of later Muslims).[118] As early as the 1830s, however, the Ulama were debating one another. The debate between Shah Ismail and Maulana Fazl-e Haqq Khairabadi (1797-1861) on the subject of *imkan-e nazir* ("the possibility of an equal"), that is to say, whether Allah had the power to create another prophet like Hazret Muhammad (peace and blessings of

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Allah be upon him), was famous in Ulama Circles.[119] It foreshadowed later debates along the same lines between the Ahl-e Sunnat and the Deobandis who represent the Wahhabis in India in the late nineteenth century and thereafter.

By the 1880s and 90s, the issue debated by the Ahl-e Sunnat had become quite standard. Against the Deobandis, they frequently argued that the Prophet had knowledge of the unseen (*ilm-e ghaib)*, or "proved" the *kufr* (unbelief) contained in several books by Deobandi Ulama.[120] With the Ahl-e Hadis, they argued on the absolute necessity of *taqlid* (following one of the four major Sunni law schools), and with the Nadwa, on the Impermissibility of associating with "bad" Muslims.[121] They also debated with the Arya Samaj on the subjects such as the createdness of the Quran, Hazrat Muhammad's (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) personal excellence, or the "falsity" of the Hindu doctrine of transmigration (*tanasukh).*[122]

While Imam Ahmad Raza never engaged in oral debates (preferring to do so in writing instead), some of his followers were known for their skill as debaters. Among them, notably, were Maulana Sayyid Naim ud- Din Muradabadi and Maulana Hashmat Ali (d. 1960). Of Sayyid Naim ud-Din, it was said that whenever a well-known opponent challenged the Ahl-e Sunnat to debate, Imam Ahmad Raza would send him a telegram, asking him to be Ahl-e Sunnat representative *(wakil)* on the occasion.[123] His debating skills were said to be so good that even Swami Shraddhanand, leader of the Arya Samaj's Shuddhi movement, shied away from testing his skills against Sayyid Naim ud-Din's:

When Shraddhanand began his *fitna-e irtidad* (mischief of apostasy, i.e., the Shuddhi movement) . . . Hazrat Sayyid (Naim ud-Din) invited him to a debate. He accepted the invitation. Hazrat went to Delhi (to debate with Shraddhanand). He ran from there and came to Bareilly. Hazrat went to Bareilly and challenged him to debate. He ran from there to Lucknow. When Hazrat went to Lucknow, he went to Patna. Hazrat

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followed him to Patna, but he went to Calcutta. Hazrat went there too, and caught him. He then clearly refused to debate.[124]

As to Maulana Hashmat Ali, known in Ahl-e Sunnat circles as an eminent *munazir* or debater, his biography gives the following account of his first debate:

> In 1919-20, (Imam Ahmad Raza) sent this young man to debate with (a Deobandi alim), khalifa of Ashraf Ali Thanawi, at Haldwani Mandi, all by himself. He was only nineteen years old. He harrassed his opponent and silenced his argument in favor of Thanawi's kufr-laden *Hifz al-Iman*, a book written by Ashraf Ali. And on the question of ilm-e ghaib, (the opponent) was left astounded. This was his first debate . . . After successfully defeating his opponent, he returned to Imam Ahmad Raza, who was very pleased with his report, embraced him, and prayed for him. He gave him the name *(kunyat)* "Abu'l Fath" (the father of success), as well as a turban and tunic *(angarkha)*, and five rupees. He also said that henceforward Maulana Hashmat Ali would get five rupees every month. In this way he honored him. And, by the grace of Allah, Imam Ahmad Raza's favor was always with him, and he won a debate on every occasion.[125]

These debates, being social events often attended by large public audiences, were characterized by an element of competitive showmanship and theater. Ahmed describes the atmosphere surrounding a late nineteenth-century bahas in a Bengali Muslim village as that of a "fair... as if suddenly a city had sprung up in the middle of a jungle."[126]

While written and oral argumentation did not always have such dramatic consequences, there is no doubt that the combined effect of extensive publication efforts, the creation of voluntary organizations, preaching tours in small towns and villages, sermons delivered at mosques and elsewhere, and the oral debates, together created a self-consciousness about religion that was new in late nineteenth-century British India.

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The Colonial Context of the Ahl-e Sunnat Movement

Implicit both in the biographical sketch of Imam Ahmad Raza's life and in the discussion of institutional aspects of the Ahl-e Sunnat movement that have been outlined in this chapter, is the context of British colonial rule in the subcontinent. Colonialism set the framework for what could and could not be done: while appropriating political power to itself.

In addition, the Ulama accepted the British presence because of British non-interference in religious practice. The Ahmadis in the Panjab were notably pro-British, because the British, as Ghulam Ahmad saw it, "allowed everyone not only to profess and practice but also to preach and propagate his own religion."[127] In the United Provinces, both Deobandis and the Ahl-e Sunnat ruled for the same reason that late-nineteenth century British India was *dar al-Islam* (a land of peace).

Nevertheless, for the former acceptance of British rule was whole-hearted, and the latter pragmatic.

Emerging in this political context, then, the Ahl-e Sunnat fashioned a movement centred around one alim in particular, Imam Ahmad Raza Khan. Although the movement's self-perception denies the applicability of the concept of founder to Imam Ahmad Raza (an important self-statement to be examined in subsequent chapters), the sources make clear the centrality of his life and work in formulating the Ahl-e Sunnat's particular interpretation of din - seen within the movement as a restatement of an original pristine "Islam" going back to Hazrat Muhammad's (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) day.

If the movement's message was perceived by its followers as timeless and unchanging, some of the same element of timelessness clings to the picture of Imam Ahmad Raza himself, as presented in the hagiographies of his life. The best summary of this kind of image we can give is by Valensi,

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describing the image of the ideal scholar embedded in a fifteenth-century biographical dictionary from the Maghreb. The ideal learned man, she says, had the following qualities: The learned man must also have mystic knowledge of God, and discharge an important function in his community. Most important, he must be both "cosmopolitan," in touch with the sources of high religious tradition, and embedded in his society. This permits, him through his voluminous writings, to mediate between the universal and the local, for his corpus is the product as much of his local milieu as it is of a universalistic Islamic tradition.[128] Reading Valensi, one has the impression that she is describing Imam Ahmad Raza himself!

Giving concrete shape to Imam Ahmad Raza's vision of din - a vision set forth in his fatawa, commentaries, glosses, and malfuzat - were the Ulama, students, and devoted followers who disseminated his thought through the teaching, publishing, debating and related activities described above. Together, they constituted what we here call the "Ahl-e Sunnat movement." In the chapters that follow, we turn to Imam Ahmad Raza's writing to understand what was distinctive about his thought in relation to other renewal movements in late nineteenth-century British India. The sufi dimensions of his life are examined first, then the scholarly aspects as exemplified in his fatawa. Whichever way we look at it, the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) occupies centre stage in his thinking.

NOTES:

1. The Ahl-e Sunnat reject this perception of their movement, and do not consider Imam Ahmad Raza to have been the founder of a new group. For details, see Introduction and Chapter V of this study.

2. Barbara D. Metcalf, *Islamic Revival in British India: Deoband, 1860-1900* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), p. 6.

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3. An excellent biographical outline of Imam Ahmad Raza's life and work is available in ibid., pp. 296-313. Rather than duplicate Metcalf's account, we shall attempt in the following pages to supplement it by highlighting certain events in his life, and pointing out their significance to his biography.

4. Zafar ud-Din Bihari, *Hayat-e A'la Hazrat*, vol. 1 (Karachi: Maktaba Rizwia, 1938), p. 2; Hasnain Raza Khan, *Sirat-e A'la Hazrat* Karachi: Maktaba Qasimia Barkatia, 1986), p. 40. The sources give no dates for these events beyond the fact that the move to India occurred during Mughal times. As it is implied that the Mughal empire was flourishing at the time, it seem plausible to suggest that the event may date to the sixteenth or seventeenth centuries.

5. *Sirat-e A'la Hazrat*, p. 41. The move to Lucknow is not mentioned by Zafar ud-Din Bihari in his *Hayat-e A'la Hazrat*.

6. On eighteenth-century politics in north India, see Richard B. Barnett, *North India Between Empires: Awadh, the Mughals, and the British, 1720-1801* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980).

7. *Sirat-e A'la Hazrat*, p. 41.

8. Zafar ud-Din Bihari refers, in this context, to numerous miracles performed by Maulana Raza Ali, as well as his fondness for a majzub or ascetic. See *Hayat-e A'la Hazrat*, pp. 4-5. Also see Metcalf, p. 298.

9. Maulwi Rahman Ali, *Tazkira-e Ulama-e Hind*, tr. Muhammad Ayub Qadiri (Karachi: Pakistan Historical Society, 1961), p. 193. The course of studies is described as *Ulum-e darsia*. For the books included in the dars-e Nizami course, see G.M.D. Sufi, *Al-Minhaj*,

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Being the Evolution of Curriculum in the Muslim Educational Institutions of India (Delhi: Idarah-i Adabiyat-i Delli, 1941), pp. 73-75.

10. Metcalf writes, "The greatest change (resulting from British rule) took place in military service, as successive princes were brought under British control and their armies, both formal and informal, were disbanded." *Islamic Revival*, p. 49.

11. *Sirat-e A'la Hazrat*, p. 36.

12. Metcalf, *Islamic Revival*, p. 298. On Shah Wali Ullah, see, e.g., J.M.S. Baljon, *Religion and Thought of Shah Wali Allah Dihlawi 1703-1762* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1986).

13. It is important to note, however, that the Ahl-e Sunnat movement which Imam Ahmad Raza was later to lead so effectively considered itself to be a follower of the teachings of Shah Abd ul-Aziz (d. 1824), eldest son of Shah Wali Ullah and Shah Wali Ullah himself.

14. *Hayat-e A'la Hazrat*, p. 32. Opponents of the Ahl-e Sunnat have alleged that the Mirza was a brother of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, founder of the Ahmadi movement. However, Mirza Qadir Beg was a resident of Bareilly who later moved to Calcutta. He had no connection with the Ahmadis.

15. See Chapter II for more on Nuri Miyan, and on Imam Ahmad Raza's relationship with the Barkatia pirs of Marahra generally.

16. See Chapter II for details on Imam Ahmad Raza's relationship with the Badayun Ulama.

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17. *Hayat-e A'la Hazrat*, p. 35. As Zafar ud-Din writes, "By (God's) grace, it was through his own efforts and his own intelligence that he (Imam Ahmad Raza) mastered so many different fields of knowledge that his books cover as many as seventy two different fields."

18 *Hayat-e A'la Hazrat*, pp. 31-32.

19. On the sufis' interpretations of the kalima, see Annmarie Schimmel, "The Sufis and the *Shahada*," in Richard G. Hovannisian and Speros Vryonis, Jr. (eds.), *Islam's Understanding of Itself* (Malibu: Undena Publications, 1983), pp. 103-25.

20. *Hayat-e A'la Hazrat*, pp. 32-33.

21. This elicited the comment by Maulana Naqi Ali that Imam Ahmad Raza was teaching him, rather than the other way around. Ibid., p. 137.

22. Ibid., p. 151; *Sirat-e A'la Hazrat*, pp. 72-74; Maulana Burhan ul-Haqq Jabbalpuri, *Ikram-e Imam Ahmad Raza* (Lahore: Markazi Majlis-e Raza, 1981), pp. 58-60. This incident is believed to have occurred sometime between 1914 and 1917. Metcalf also refers to it in *Islamic Revival*, p. 299.

23. *Hayat-e A'la Hazrat*, p. 11.

24. The phase within the quotes is from Metcalf, p. 304. Chapters IV through VI of this study examine Imam Ahmad Raza's fatawa in some detail.

25. *Hayat-e A'la Hazrat*, pp. 27-28, 68, 177-79. Among the many examples of Imam Ahmad Raza's attention to the details of comportment are these: when reading or writing he sat with his knees drawn up together, never stretching his legs out in the direction of the *qibla* in

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Makkah; he always entered the mosque with his right foot first and left it with his left foot first. See Francis Robinson, "The Ulama of Farangi Mahall and their *Adab*," Barbara D. Metcalf (ed.), *Moral Conduct and Authority: the Place of Adab in South Asian Islam* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), pp. 152-83, for an account of similar attention to the details of personal conduct among the Ulama of Firangi Mahal. As he says on p. 178, this was a source of moral authority.

26. *Hayat-e A'la Hazrat*, pp. 50-54.

27. Metcalf, *Islamic Revival*, p. 306.

28. Chapter II deals with the Barkatia family of pirs to which Shah Al-e Rasul belonged. Also see Chapter III for the significance to Imam Ahmad Raza of this tie of discipleship to Shah Al-e Rasul.

29. *Sirat-e A'la Hazrat*, p. 55.

30. Maulana Abd ul-Qadir Badayuni (1837-1901), son of Maulana Fazl-e Rasul Badayuni, studied under a number of well known teachers. Among them were Maulana Fazl-e Haqq Khairabadi (d. 1861), who was imprisoned by the British in the Andaman Islands for anti-British activities during 1857. Maulana Abd ul-Qadir Badayuni was active in opposition to the "Wahhabis", and in opposing the Nadwat al-Ulama in the 1880s. See Rahman Ali, *Tazkira-e Ulama-e Hind* pp. 311-313. Imam Ahmad Raza was to involve himself forcefully in these concerns as well. For details, see Chapters V and VI below.

31. Multiple affiliation into a number of sufi orders *(tariqas)* was the norm in the subcontinent in the nineteenth century. For discussion, see Metcalf, *Islamic Revival,*

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pp. 158-59, and passim. As she notes, usually one order was emphasized over others by different sufis. In Imam Ahmad Raza's case, his primary affiliation was to the Qadiri order.

32. *Sirat-e A'la Hazrat*, pp. 55-56.

33. See William R. Roff, "Sanitation and Security: The Imperial Powers and the Nineteenth Century Hajj," *Arabian Studies* (Cambridge, 1982), VI, 146.

34. A vivid account of this second pilgrimage is in Imam Ahmad Raza Khan, *Malfuzat-e A'la Hazrat* (Gujarat, Pakistan: Fazl-e Nur Academy, n.d.), vol. 2, pp. 2-4.

35. *Tazkira-e Ulama-e Hind*, pp. 98-99.

36. C. Snouck Hurgronje, *Makkah in the Latter Part of the 19th Century: Daily Life, Customs and Learning - The Muslims of the East-Indian-Archipelago*, tr. J.H. Monahan (London: Luzac and Co., 1931), pp. 173, 175, 187.

37. Known by the names of their compilers, these are: the *Sahih Bukhari* by al-Bukhari (d. 256/870); the *Sahih Muslim* by Muslim (d. 261/875); and the *Sunan* by Abu Da'ud (d. 275/888), al-Nasa'i (d. 303/915), al-Tirmidhi (d. 278/892), and Ibn Maja (d. 273/886). The first two are collectively known as the *Sahihain*, and are the most authoritative.

38. *Tazkira-e Ulama-e Hind*, p. 99.

39. Tazkira-e Ulama-e Hind, p. 99. This last detail is significant in that it assured Imam Ahmad Raza of an after life in heaven.

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40. See Victor Turner, "Pilgrimages as Social Processes," in his *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors: Symbolic Action in Human Society* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1974).

41. Akhtar Shahjahanpuri, Introduction, in *Rasa'il-e Rizwia* (Lahore: Maktaba Hamidia, 1396/1976), p. 6.

42. See Chapter V below.

43. Chapters IV and V discuss the concept of the mujaddid and the circumstances in which Imam Ahmad Raza was so proclaimed.

44. See Chapter V.

45. See Chapter VI.

46. Muhammad Masud Ahmad, *Fazil Barelwi Ulama-e Hijaz ki Nazar Men* (Mubarakpur, Azamgarh: Al-Majma al-Islami, 1981), pp. 70-72, lists the names of some of the Ulama to whom Imam Ahmad Raza gave sanads. To many he reportedly promised that he would send them their sanads after he returned to Bareilly.

47. Ibid., p. 72.

48. *Malfuzat-e A'la Hazrat*, vol. 2, p. 8. The question related to part of the hajj rituals, in which the pilgrim "stones three pillars (at Mina, a few miles outside Makkah) in memory of the way Hazrat Abraham, Hazrat Hagar and Hazrat Ismael rejected Satan's temptings to disobey God's command." Francis Robinson, *Atlas of the Islamic World since 1500* (New York: Facts on File, 1982), p. 194.

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49. The fatawa was entitled *Kafl al-Fiqih al-Fahim fi Ahkam Qirtas al-Darahim*. Chapter IV below discusses some of the issues involved in this particular debate.

50. *Malfuzat*, p. 17. This brief quotation well expresses the reversal of relations between the center (the Haramain) and the periphery (the subcontinent) that is implicit in the above description of Imam Ahmad Raza's second hajj.

51. See Chapter VI for a discussion of the Ahl-e Sunnat's differences with the Deobandi Ulama.

52. The Epilogue at the end of this study contains some biographical information about Maulana Burhan ul-Haqq, with reference in particular to his stand on the Pakistan issue.

53. For a description of this journey, see Maulan Burhan ul-Haqq Jabbalpuri, *Ikram-e Imam Ahmad Raza*, pp. 83-98.

54. See Chapter II for some discussion.

55. *Hayat-e A'la Hazrat*, pp. 56-57.

56. *Malfuzat*, vol. 2, pp. 98-101.

57. The Ahl-e Sunnat Dar al-Ifta was not attached to a madrasa, as was usually the case, but operated out of Imam Ahmad Raza's home. On Zafar ud-Din Bihari's early experiences regarding the Madrasa Dar al-Isha'at, see Muhammad Ahmad Qadiri, "Malik al-Ulama Maulana Muhammad Zafar ud-Din Bihari aur Khidmat-e Hadis," *Ashrafia* (Mubarakpur, Azamgarh, April 1977), 29. Chapter IV discusses the work of the Dar al-Ifta and the manner in which fatawa-writing was taught.

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58. *Ashrafia* (July 1977), 15. For Imam Ahmad Raza's respect for Sayyids, see Chapter III below.

59. Ibid.

60. It was later held by Hamid Raza's eldest son Maulana Ibrahim Raza "Jilani Miyan" (1907-65), and after him by Maulana Rehan Raza, Jilani Miyan's eldest son and now by Maulana Akhtar Raza. Ibid.

61. *Dabdaba-e Sikandari*, 44: 38 (October 26, 1908), 3-5.

62. Maulana Irshad Husain and other members of his family, unlike others mentioned in this paragraph, were followers of the Naqshbandi Mujuddidi order of sufis. Most Ahl-e Sunnat Ulama were primarily (though not solely) followers of the Qadiri order. It should also be noted that Kalb Ali, the Nawab of Rampur, was a Sunni.

63. *Dabdaba-e Sikandari*, 58: 36 (May 8, 1922), 4.

64. Kalb Ali Khan Fa'iq Rampuri, "Madrasa Alia Rampur," in *Ilm o Agahi* (Karachi: Government National College, 1974-75), pp. 29-32.

65. Ibid., p. 32. Also see Desai, *Centres of Islamic Learning*, p. 35.

66. Madrasas of the older style would have resembled that at Firangi Mahal, described as follows by Metcalf: "In . . . the famous Farangi Mahall in Lucknow, family members taught students in their own homes or in a corner of a mosque. There was no central library, no course required of each student, no series of examinations. A student would seek out a teacher and receive a certificate, a *sanad*, listing the books he had read, then move on to another teacher or return home." Metcalf, *Islamic Revival*, p. 94.

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67. Muhammad Ayub Qadiri, "Madrasas Shams al-Ulum Badayun," in *Ilm o Agahi*, pp. 94-95; Mahmud Ahmad Qadiri, *Tazkira-e Ulama-e Ahl-e Sunnat* (Muzaffarpur, Bihar: Khanaqa-e Qadiria Ashrafia, 1391/1971), pp. 146-49.

68. *Ilm o Agahi*, p. 96. The Panjab University exams which had to be passed to qualify for these titles were in grammar, literature, rhetoric, logic, the law of inheritence, prosody, and moral philosophy. See G.M.D. Sufi, *Al-Minhaj*, pp. 115-19.

69. Among them were Maulana Zafar ud-Din Bihari, Maulana Amjad Ali Azami, and Sayyid Muhammad Kachhochhawi. See Khwaja Razi Haidar, *Tazkira-e Muhaddis Surati* (Karachi: Surati Academy, n.d.), pp. 266, 269, 275-77.

70. Muhaddis Surati was a disciple of Shah Fazl-e Rahman Ganj Muradabadi (1797-1895/96). For details, see Chapter V below.

71. Sayyid Didar Ali and Sayyid Pir Jamaat Ali Shah later played leading roles in the Ahl-e Sunnat movement. See Khwaja Razi Haidar, *Tazkira-e Muhaddis Surati*, p. 55, and below.

72. See Chapter V.

73. This also served as the office of the *Tuhfa-e Hanafia* journal, discussed below, and the new printing press, Matba Hanfia.

74. *Rudad-e Majlis-e Imtihan-e Madrasa Hanafia 1320* (Patna: Matba Hanafia, n.d.), pp. 2-3.

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75. Unfortunately we have been unable to learn anything of Qazi Abd ul-Wahid's biography, as he is not included in the standard tazkiras. A recent book by an Ahl-e Sunnat follower states that Qazi Abd ul-Wahid spent over fifty thousand rupees in publishing and distributing anti-Nadwa materials in the late 1890s. Badr ud-Din Ahmad Gorakhpuri, *Sawanih-e A'la Hazrat*, 4th reprint (Ahmadnagar, Bihar: Madrasa Ahl-e Sunnat Gulshan Raza, 1986), p. 147. Whatever the truth of this estimate, his wealth is evidently understood to have been considerable.

76. Sayyid Muin ud-Din Naimi, "Tazkira al-Maruf Hayat-e Sadr al-Afazil," *Sawad-e Azam* (Lahore: Naimi Dawakhana, 1378/1959), pp. 20-21. See Epilogue for a biographical sketch of Sayyid Naim ud-Din Muradabi.

77. In 1948, when Sayyid Naim ud-Din visited Pakistan, he was the guest of Ulama associated with the Hizb al-Ahnaf. Ibid., p. 29. A list of his students, including those who taught at the Hizb al-Ahnaf, is given on pp. 20-21.

78. Sayyid Mahmud Ahmad Rizwi, *Sayyidi Abu'l Barakat* (Lahore: Tabligh Department, Hizb al-Ahnaf, 1979), p. 117. The author is Sayyid Didar Ali's grandson.

Sayyid Didar Ali belonged to a family which had migrated from Mashad, Iran, probably in the eighteenth century, and settled down in Awadh. After some time in Bilgram and Farukhabad, the family moved to the Hindu princely state of Alwar in Rajputana. Ibid., p. 117.

79. Ibid., pp. 121-24.

80. David Gilmartin writes of Pir Sayyid Jamaat Ali that he donated "hundreds of rupees to the *madrasa* Naumania and the *anjuman* Hizb al-Ahnaf." David Gilmartin,

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Empire and Islam: Punjab and the Making of Pakistan (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), p. 61.

81. *Sayyidi Abu'l Barakat*, p. 127.

82. Quoted in Khwaja Razi Haidar, *Tazkira-e Muhaddis Surati*, p. 309.

83. This was directed against the Arya Samaj, which in the 1920s began a movement for the reconversion of Hindus who has become Muslim back to Hinduism. For details, see G.R. Thursby, *Hindu-Muslim Relations in British India: a Study of Controversy, Conflict and Communal Movements in Northern India 1923-1928* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1975).

84. These remarks are based on Frances Pritchett's discussion of the history of mass printing in India in her *Marvelous Encounters: Folk Romance in Urdu and Hindi* (Delhi: Manohar, 1985), pp. 20-25.

85. See Metcalf, pp. 199-210.

86. See ibid., p. 201. On the orality of religious texts in the Hindu and Muslim contexts, see William A. Graham, *Beyond the Written Word: Oral Aspects of Scripture in the History of Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 68-77, 88-92, and passim. Also see Dale F. Eickelman, "The Art of Memory: Islamic Education and its Social Reproduction," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 20 (1978): 485-516, for a related discussion on the importance of memory and of oral repetition in the learning process in Muslim societies.

87. For example, in 1314/1896 Hasan Raza (Imam Ahmad Raza's brother) wrote an anti-Nadwa work entitled *Nadwe ka Tija - Rudad Som ka Natija* (The Nadwa's

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Tija - the Result of its Third Report). Here, not only do *tija* and *natija* in the title rhyme, but there is a play on the word *tija*, which is the third day after a person's death. Hasan Raza clearly implies that in light of the Nadwa's third report it is "dead" as an institution. Most of Imam Ahmad Raza's workd had titles in this style, with or without the implied irony, and usually with heavy use of Arabic.

88. The Ahl-e Sunnat position on "Wahhabis" generally, is the subject of Chapter VI of this study.

89. Imam Ahmad Raza Khan, *Ihlak al-Wahhabiin ala Tauhin Qubur al-Muslimin* (Bareilly: Hasani Press, 1928). In those cases where the price of a book or pamphlet is stated on the bottom left-had corner of the title page it is generally in the range of one to ten annas. Sixteen annas made up a rupee.

90. The foregoing paragraph is based on a perusal of early volumes of the journal. See, e.g., *Tuhfa-e Hanafia* (Patna: Matba Hanafia), 1: 4-5 (Shaban and Ramazan 1315/Dec. 1897-Jan. 1898).

91. Ibid., appendix at end of volume. The pages are numbered 1-4, though they follow page 44.

92. Ibid.,

93. *Tuhfa-e Hanafia*, 1:6 (Shawwal (?) 1315/1898), 2 (of appendix at end of journal).

94. The year 1864 is indicated by a remark in one of the issues dated 1910, that the paper had been in continuous operation for forthy-six years. *Dabdaba-e Sikandari*, 46:18 (May 16, 1910), 1.

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95. Described also as its owner *(malik)*. See *Dabdaba-e Sikandari*, 52:13 (February 7, 1916), 3.

96. *Dabdaba-e Sikandari*, 49:31 (July 14, 1913), 3.

97. See, e.g., *Dabadaba-e Sikandari*, 44: 26 (August 1-3, 1908), 9-10, 12-13; 44: 35 (October 5, 1908), 6; 45: 22 (June 12, 1909), 3-5, on Sultan Abd ul-Hamid.

98. See, e.g., *Dabdaba-e Sikandari*, 49: 36 (August 18, 1913), 12-13, on the Balkan wars; 50: 44 (September 28, 1914), 3, for a fatawa by the Ahl-e Sunnat on the Anjuman Khuddam-e Ka'ba. The Anjuman was founded by Maulana Abd ul-Bari Firangi Mahali in 1913, but was opposed by Imam Ahmad Raza on specific grounds. See Chapter VII below for details.

99. See *Dabdaba-e Sikandari*, 46: 43 (November 7, 1910), 3, for the first occurrence of this column. It was generally accorded two full pages out of the paper's total of sixteen, and consisted of brief replies to the questions asked. From November 1910 to February 1912, two hundred questions had been answered in this section of the *Dabdaba-e Sikandari*. The answers were given for the most part by one "Ubaid un-Nabi" Nawab Mirza Ali, not by Imam Ahmad Raza.

100. See, e.g., *Dabdaba-e Sikandari*, 44: 35 (October 5, 1908), 14; 46: 35 (September 12, 1910), 8.

101. *Dabdabe-e Sikandari*, 46: 13 (April 11, 1910), 10.

102. *Dabdaba-e Sikandari*, 46: 12 (April 4, 1910), 6.

103. *Dabdaba-e Sikandari*, 45: 23 (June 28, 1909), 3-4. For a recent study of the Ajmer shrine and urs, see P.M. Currie, *The Shrine and Cult of Muin al-din Chishti of Ajmer* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989). Also see

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Syed Liyaqat Hussain Moini, "Rituals and Customary Practices at the Dargah of Ajmer," in Christian W. Troll (ed.), *Muslim Shrines in India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 60-75.

104. *Dabdaba-e Sikandari*, 45: 23 (June 28, 1909), 3. The announcement was made by one Sayyid Irtiza Husain Qadiri Barkati, of Marahra and Sitapur.

105. This development is not too well documented, though we have some passing references to the urs as an occasion for public statements or meetings on matters of current concern. Gilmartin, e.g., cites an instance when "a radical *alim* of strong reformist leanings . . . issue(d) a public challenge at the Sial *urs* for a debate with the Pir of Golra, who opposed the radical phase of the Khilafat agitation." *Empire and Islam*, p. 64.

106. The founder of this anjuman, and of the associated madrasa, was one Ghulam-e Rasul, an imam in the Jame Masjid at Karachi. In a letter by him addressed to the *Dabdaba-e Sikandari*, he referred to Imam Ahmad Raza as the Mujaddid of the fourteenth century, thereby indicating that he considered himself a follower. A visit to the madrasa by a disciple of the Barkatia pirs in May-June 1912 signalled the approval of the leaders of the Ahl-e Sunnat. See *Dabdaba-e Sikandari*, 48: 20 (May 6, 1912), 7-8; 48: 24 (June 3, 1912), 7; 59: 22 (May 12, 1913), 5-6.

107. *Dabdaba-e Sikandari*, 49: 31 (July 14, 1913), 6; 50: 32 (July 6, 1914), 3; 52: 32 (June 19, 1916), 4.

108. *Dabdaba-e Sikandari*, 49: 31 (July 14, 1913), 6.

109. See the biographical sketch of Naim ud-Din in the Epilogue for more details.

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110. *Dabdaba-e Sikandari*, 53: 2 (November 6, 1916), 3.

111. See Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1975), p. 176.

112. For instance, one of its purposes was "to follow the *tariqa* (way) of the sufi masters." Among its principles were the following: "It is incumbent on every member (of the Halqa) that he be a follower of the tariqa of the sufis," and "No one will have the right to criticize the old tariqa of the derwishes and the customs of the khanaqa." *Dabdaba-e Sikandari*, 53: 2 (November 6, 1916), 6.

113. Ghulam Qutub ud-Din Brahmachari played a leadership role in various Ahl-e Sunna activities. For instance, in 1920 he presided over the fourth annual meeting of the Madrasa Ahl-e Sunnat wa Jamaat, Muradabad (precursor, presumably, to the Jamia Naimia). *Al-Sawad al-Azam* (Muradabad), 1: 4 (Rajab 1338/April 1920), unnumbered page facing p. 32; in 1924, he was involved in the work of the Jamaat Raza-e Mustafa.

114. *Dabdaba-e Sikandari*, 53: 2 (November 6, 1916), 6.

115. The collapse of the Ottoman empire after World War I and its impact on Indian Muslims of various persuasions is dealt with in some detail in Chapter VII of this study. The Ansar al-Islam is discussed in that context, in relation as well to other Indian Muslim organizations of relief such as the Anjuman-e Khuddam-e Kaba, mentioned earlier in this chapter.

116. See note 80 above. The date of the Jamaat Raza-e Mustafa's founding is in some doubt because a letter dated April/May 1920 by Imam Ahmad Raza Khan suggests that he had blessed the new organization at that time. The letter is reproduced in *Rudad-e Jamaat Raza-e*

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Mustafa (1342/1924), "Khutba," pp. 21-22. No publication details are indicated.

117. See Rafiuddin Ahmed, *The Bengal Muslims 1871-1906: a Quest for Identity* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1981), pp. 74-76, and passim, for discussion of the institution of *bahas* or debate among Bengal Muslims; Metcalf, *Islamic Revival,* pp. 215-34, has an illuminating discussion of debate in all its aspects, with reference to the north Indian Ulama.

118. Metcalf, pp. 215-18.

119. See ibid., pp. 65-66, for an account of the two positions taken. The issues involved were Allah's transcendence and power on the one hand and the Prophet's uniqueness on the other. Imam Ahmad Raza's father, Maulana Naqi Ali Khan, participated in debate on the same issue in the 1870s against an alim of the Ahl-e Hadis. See Rahman Ali, *Tazkira-e Ulama-e Hind,* p. 531.

120. See Chapter VI below.

121. On this, see Chapter V.

122. On debate with the Aryas, see, e.g., Ghulam Muin ud-Din Naimi, "Tazkira al-Maruf Hayat-e Sadr al-Afazil," *Sawad-e Azam,* 2 (Lahore: Naimi Dawakhana, 1378/19-26 June 1959), 7-9; Zafar ud-Din Bihari, *Hayat-e A'la Hazrat,* pp. 218-19 (in which Imam Ahmad Raza reportedly converted an Arya Samaji).

123. "Tazkira al-Maruf Hayat-e Sadr al-Afazil," pp. 10-11.

124. Ibid., p. 9.

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125. Muhammad Mahbub Ali Khan, *Buland Paya Hayat-e Hashmat Ali* (Kanpur; Arakin-e Bazm-e Qadiri Rizwi, 1380/1960-61), pp. 7-8.

126. Ahmed, *The Bengal Muslims*, p. 79.

127. Friedmann, *Prophecy Continuous*, p. 34.

128. Ibid., p. 17-20.

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Chapter II

Love and Obedience: religious life among the Barkatia Sayyids of Marahrah in the late nineteenth century

People seek *bay'a* as a matter of course. They do not know its (true) meaning. Bay'a is as Hazrat Yahya Muneri's disciple understood it to be: he was drowning in a river, when Hazrat Khizr (upon him be peace) appeared and asked him for his hand, so that he could pull him out. The disciple replied, I have already given my hand (in discipleship) to Hazrat Yahya Muneri. I can no longer give it to anyone else. Hazrat Khizr (upon him be peace) disappeared, and Hazrat Yahya Muneri appeared and pulled his disciple ashore to safety.

Imam Ahmad Raza Khan, *Malfuzat*, vol. 2, p. 41.

In the previous chapter, we attempted to understand something of Imam Ahmad Raza's life and personal career in terms of his passionate desire to follow the *sunna* of the Prophet in every aspect of his life, and to ensure to the extent possible that other Sunni Muslims were influenced to do likewise. In order to know the sunna, mastery over *fiqh*, *hadis*, and other Quranic sciences was vitally necessary; in these, Imam Ahmad Raza's knowledge was supreme, and acknowledged even by his enemies. For Imam Ahmad Raza, the Prophet was not merely a law-giver; he was also the model of the perfect sufi, one who had had the unique privilege of communicating with Allah, and learning from Him mystic secrets revealed to no other human being.[1] Following the Prophet thus entailed emulating both his outward behaviour and seeking to be close to him intrinsically and spiritually, by following the teachings of one's sufi preceptor *(pir)* as also of the founder of one's preferred sufi order (*tariqa*, or, in the subcontinent, *silsila*). *Shari'a* and *tasawwuf* were complementary, though it is frequently emphasized in Imam Ahmad Raza's writings that the Shari'a is

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at all times primary, and must on no account be trangressed in favor of esoteric beliefs or practices.

Imam Ahmad Raza was thus simultaneously an *alim* and a sufi, and he himself was bound by a relationship of bay'a to Hazrat Shah Al-e Rasul of Marahrah, as already noted. In this chapter we would like to look closely at the well-known family of Barkatia sufi pirs of Marahrah, of whom Hazrat Shah Al-e Rasul was one, and at the network of social and spiritual relationships that bound them to Imam Ahmad Raza, and to others around them. By focusing on this particular sufi family in the North-Western Provinces (modern-day Uttar Pradesh) in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, a picture can be formed of its ritual practices and traditions, as also of its interaction with the wider society.

The Barkatia Sayyids of Marahrah

The Barkatia family of Marahrah traces its descent to certain Zaidi [2] Sayyids who were descended from the Prophet through his daughter Hazrat Fatima and her husband Hazrat Ali. In the course of time, they settled in Iraq. In the eleventh century A.D., a branch of the family went to Ghazni, joining the army of Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni (r. 998-1030), and accompanied it on one of the Sultan's incursions to India. However, it was in a later reign, that of Sultan Shams ud-Din Altamash (r. 1211-36), that a member of the family first acquired a *jagir* (land grant) in Bilgram, a small rural *qasbah* (town) in Western Awadh, as reward for a successful military campaign against a Hindu King.[3]

This ancestor of the Barkatia Sayyids was one of many such Muslims to settle in the North Indian plains during the reign of the Dehli Sultans, and later that of the Mughals, as landowners. Encouraged by the Mughal policy of granting land in return for state service, the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries saw the Muslim gentry *(ashraf)* putting down roots in the countryside, and creating small agriculturally-based towns

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around them. During Aurangzeb's time, land grants were made heritable, thus encouraging settlement on the land even further; under earlier Mughal rulers, they had been for the lifetime of the grantee only.[4]

Bayly describes the notable features of a town as a place with a distinct urban status which possessed a mosque, a public bath and a judicial officer *(Qazi)*. It was, however, an inward sense of cohesion which was important.[5]

As he points out, a "sense of pride in home and urban tradition" was characteristic of the way the gentry felt about their qasbah, from the mid-eighteenth century. They stood at the center of a literate, Perso-Islamic culture, rooted in agricultural dependence. Frequently, Bayly adds, the presence of a Muslim saint's tomb, or hospice, further enhanced the sense of corporate unity and pride. All of these features appear to have been present in the case of the Barkatia Sayyids of Bilgram.

The name "Barkatia" adopted by the family probably refers to Hazrat Shah Barkat Ullah (1660-1729), who founded the hospice *(khanqah)* around which later generations of the family have lived and grown up. Although Hazrat Shah Barkat Ullah was not the first in the family to move to Marahrah (his paternal grandfather had made that move sometime in the seventeenth century),[6] he was in many senses the "founder" of the Marahrah branch of the family; their present settlement, known as "Basti Pirzadagan", was founded by him. The reasons for Hazrat Shah Barkat Ullah's grandfather's initial move from Bilgram are not clear; the sources mention his restless piety and search for spiritual truth. Whatever the reason, it was probably beneficial to later generations to be close to the center of power at Delhi. Marahrah, in Etah district, is located beyond Aligarh, about a hundred miles south-east of Delhi.

Hazrat Shah Barkat Ullah is reputed to have been specially drawn to the Qadiri order of sufis, although he was also initiated into other orders, such as the Chishti, Suhrawardi,

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and Naqshbandi.[7] He was a learned man, with many books on mysticism and poetry to his credit, and enjoyed a reputation for piety which attracted a large number of disciples to him, many of them from the ruling classes. It also attracted the patronage of the Mughal rulers at Delhi, including Emperor Aurangzeb (r. 1658-1707); during the eighteenth century, revenue-free grants of whole villages were made to the khanqah by rulers attracted to the pirs of Marahrah.[8]

In the course of succeeding generations, the family traditions of learning and sufi piety continued to be handed down from father to son, and the family's reputation spread. After Shah Barkat Ullah's death, the family divided into two "Sarkars" "branches" the descendants of Shah Barkat Ullah's elder son constituted the "Sarkar Kalan", or "Great House", while those of his younger son constituted the "Sarkar Khurd" or "Small House". The Sarkar Khurd had its own khanqah and mosque; and its own jagirs provided the revenue for their upkeep - as, of course, did the Sarkar Kalan, which was the better endowed of the two. The branches maintained their separate identities in terms of marriage alliances, each tending to have its own networks, though marriage across the two sarkars was not ruled out.[9]

In the Sarkar Kalan, on the other hand, the mid-eighteenth to the mid-nineteenth centuries shone with several illustrious personalities: notably, in the eighteenth century, the three brothers Shah Al-e Ahmad "Achhe Miyan", Shah Al-e Barakat "Suthre Miyan", and Shah Al-e Husain "Sache Miyan".[10] Achhe Miyan is said to have been so wise and popular that he probably had close to two lakh (200,000) disciples *(murids)* ! In 1783, the Mughal King, Shah Alam, granted him a jagir of several villages for the upkeep of the khanqah.[11]

Suthre Miyan was a great builder; he was also a great sufi devotee and ascetic, and a poet. The youngest brother, Sache Miyan, was adopted by his mother's brother at the age of six, and grew up on a jagir in Bihar, never again to return to

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Marahrah. As his uncle was a *nawab*, he inherited the *nawabi* after the latter's death.

Hazrat Shah Al-e Rasul (1794-1879), Suthre Miyan's second son (and Imam Ahmad Raza's pir), received his education from his father and his uncle, Acche Miyan; he was taught, as well, by Shah Abd ul-Aziz Dehlawi (son of the famous Shah Wali Ullah), and Maulana Nur ul- Haqq Firangi Mahali of Lucknow. He received bay'a, and *khilafat* and *ijazat*, from Achhe Miyan; his father also gave him khilafat. After his father's death, he and his two younger brothers jointly became Suthre Miyan's *sajjada-nishins* (successors as pir). All three brothers got equal portions of the inheritance from the khanqah.[12]

Finally, in this list of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century luminaries in the Barkatia family, must be mentioned Shah Abu'l Husain Ahmad "Nuri Miyan" (1839-1906), a grandson of Shah Al-e Rasul. Having being orphaned as a young boy, he was brought up by his grandparents, and Shah Al-e Rasul was extremely fond of him. Nuri Miyan received bay'a and khilafat from his grandfather. In addition, he was taught by a vast array of teachers from within the family and outside; among the latter were Maulana Shah Abd ul- Qadir Badayuni and Fazl-e Rasul Badayuni, who were confidants and close associates of the family. Nuri Miyan wrote a large number of books on sufi-related themes as well as fiqh, and poetry. After Shah Al-e Rasul's death, he became his sajjada-nishin, jointly with Shah Al-e Rasul's son (brother of Nuri Miyan's deceased father; hence Nuri Miyan's uncle). He had many *khulafa*, and thousands of murids.[13]

Religious life at Basti Pirzadagan

The heart of the settlement of the Barkatia Sayyids was the *dargah* or cluster of tombs in which the ancestors were buried. Muhammad Miyan carefully documents the place of burial of each member of the family, including women, who

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were interred in a separate part of the dargah. Shah Barkat Ullah's tomb, which was the most important of them all, was built in 1729 by one Nawab Muhammad Khan Bangash of Farrukhabad. Some years later, Nawab Ahmad Khan Bangash made an annual grant of Rs. 450 to Shah Barkat Ullah's grandson, for the upkeep of the tomb. This sum was still being disbursed in the early twentieth century by the state government of the United Provinces.

The importance of these tomb-shrines to the family and to their followers may be understood in terms of the concept of *baraka* (or, more popularly, *barkat*). All sufi pirs, and particularly Sayyids, are held by believing Muslims, and indeed by some Hindus as well, to possess spiritual efficacy or grace caused by their closeness to God and the Prophet. Some believe that when a saint dies, his spirit is so powerful and so dominant over the body that the body itself does not die or decay but is merely hidden from the living. The *baraka* of the saint is not dissipated at the saint's death. It is both transmitted to his successors and remains at his tomb, which becomes a place of Zayarat for later followers. The pir does not actually die in the ordinary sense of the term. He is "hidden", and over time he continues to develop spiritually, so that his *baraka* increases, as does the importance of his shrine.[14]

The concept of *barkat,* thus, is central to the popular sufi practices associated with Zayarat to shrines, and to the institutions of sajjada-nishini, overseeing the shrine of one's pir, as well as *urs,* the three- or four-day annual ceremony commemorating the death-anniversary of a pir. Religious life at Basti Pirzadagan was dominated by these concerns and the annual cycle of ritual observances.

The khanqah was where the family lived, amidst mosques, and other buildings built over the centuries by various ancestors; for instance, a Divan Khana (Hall of audience, in which important visitors would be received) and a Haveli (home for sajjada-nishins) were built by shah Haqqani in the eighteenth

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century, and subsequently rebuilt, while Suthre Miyan built numerous houses and rebuilt another *haveli* (the Haveli Mahal Sar'i). Thus, one gets the picture of male descendants of the family living separately, each of them heir to his father's personal property and frequently to his Sajjada-nishini. At the same time, together they constituted a core of closely related males living in proximity to one another, within Basti Pirzadagan. The Basti is set off from the main township of Marahrah by its location outside it, and by the boundary wall which encloses it.

The strong sense of family unity that pervades Muhammad Miyan's history, the *Khandan-e Barakat,* is reflected in Basti Pirzadagan's obvious physical unit. As the Barkatia sufis were Sayyids with a genealogical memory that reaches right back to the Prophet himself, marriages, not surprisingly, were carefully regulated, and almost invariably contracted either with other family members, or in the absence of a suitable mate, with Sayyids from other khandans. The occasional marriage to a non- Sayyid is strongly disapproved of, though the children of such unions seem to have been recognized as being part of the family.[15] The family's consciousness of its Sayyid ancestry is most vividly reflected in the choice of personal names: sons would be called "Al-e Muhammad", "Aulad-e Rasul", or "Al-e Husain",[16] for instance, while daughters' names would invariably consist of some compound of the name "Fatima", such as "Khairat Fatima", of "Ihtiram Fatima". While such names were by no means limited to Sayyid families, their ubiquity in the Barkatia khandan is remarkable.

More importantly, however, family unity was expressed in the religious realm. The family owned, either collectively or individually, a large number of *tabarrukat,* sacred relics (literally, "objects filled with barkat"); these were an important part of the inheritance that a father passed down to his sons. Tabarrukat contain barkat by virtue of their previous association with a saint; they are imbued with the spiritual qualities of the

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saint himself, consequently they are accorded great reverence. The Barkatia khandan was fortunate in having some specially prized relics. Chief among these were some hairs of the Prophet. One of them came into the family's possession during Shah Barkat Ullah's lifetime; it is kept in a pewter or silver needle-case, and viewed by Zairs during urs ceremonies. Other valuable tabarrukat, also dating from Shah Barkat Ullah's time, are a robe belonging to Hazrat Ali *(khirqa-e Murtazvi)*, and hairs of Hazrat Hasan (may Allah be pleased with them) and Hazrat Husain (may Allah be pleased with him).[17] Hazrat Ali's robe, thus, is said to have been worn after him by Shaikh Hazrat Abd ul-Qadir Jilani (may Allah be pleased with him), founder of the Qadiri order. Thereafter it passed through the hands of a succession of famous sufi mystics: Khwaja Muin ud-Din Chishti of Ajmer ("Sultan ul-Hind"), the Qutub ud-Din, Baba Farid Ganj-e Shakkar of Punjab, Nizam ud-Din Aulia of Dehli, Chiragh-e Dehlwi (May Allah be pleased with them all), and so on, ultimately reaching Shah Barkat Ullah.[18]

Shah Barkat Ullah acquired, and passed on to his descendants, a **turban** *(dastar)* which had originally belonged to Hazrat Abd ul- Qadir Jilani (May Allah be pleased with him).[19] It is said to have come to Shah Barkat Ullah through Hazrat Bu Ali Qalandar (May Allah be pleased with him). Shah Barkat Ullah believed it was Hazrat Abd ul-Qadir Jilani's gift to him for his devotion and love for the shaikh and the Qadiri order.[20] In succeeding generations, the number of tabarrukat in the family's possession grew quite large; in the eighteenth century, Shah Hamzah, a son of Shah Barkat Ullah, received another hair of the Prophet, and a pair of the Prophet's shoes.[21] These and other relics are viewed by Zairs during the annual urs ceremonies.

Apart from tabarruket, the family also had certain special *du'a* which were passed down from father to son, or sufi preceptor to disciple, and were part of the family's secret lore of mystic prayers and practices. Hazrat Nuri Miyan, for instance, received special permission (ijazat) from one of his teachers to recite (and to pass on to his disciples) the *Hirz-e Yamani*, a name

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given to certain verses from the Quran, "written cabbalistically and sewn up in leather for carrying on the body for protection".[22] There were several such prayers which were closely guarded secrets within the family, considered so important that the dates on which a disciple acquired his teacher's permission to recite or use them, were recorded, and considered part of his progress on the sufi path.[23] Undoubtedly, these constituted part of the Barkatia sufis' barkat. The possession of such barkat, in turn, attracted disciples to the holy man. Thus Hazrat Nuri Miyan, because of his reputation for piety and wisdom, had attracted "several thousand" helpers *(khuddam)* to the dargah, and was responsible for their material and spiritual welfare.[24]

In terms of practice and tradition, there were certain shared institutions which also bound the family together. These included the institution of sajjada-nishin. The sajjada-nishin, (or caretaker of a tomb-shrine), was appointed or designated by his pir to succeed him at his death. As his spiritual successor, he inherited his pir's barkat. Usually a son succeeded his father as his sajjada-nishin (thus creating a double link of spiritual as well as biological succession). In exceptional cases, a person chose to nominate a brother or nephew, or other relative, as in Shah Al-e Rasul's case, where he nominated his grandson jointly with his son. Muhammad Miyan's family History also records cases in which several brothers became their father's sajjada-nishins jointly; these are instances, undoubtedly, of uncommon family unity and amity, for the position was a highly coveted one.

At Marahrah, the installation ceremony for a new sajjada-nishind took place on the fortieth day of his pir's death, a day known as the *chehlum*. Family members, and important guests drawn from the elite of the town and neighbouring areas, and Ulama close to the family, would be invited to attend. At the appointed time, the new incumbent-to-be, and a small group of elders, would together go to the dargah, taking with them some tabarrukat such as a khirqa, turban, or *tasbih* (rosary). There, they would halt at the recently deceased pir's grave, and lay the

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tabarrukat on it. Then they would pray to the elders of the silsila (or tariqa) for union *(tavassul)* and guidance *(isti'anat)*, and read the Fatiha. This done, the new sajjada-nishin would be bedecked with the tabarrukat, and they would leave the dargah.[25] This would be followed by speeches on the *sanad* (certificate of authority) of the sajjada-nishini in question, at the sajjada-nishin's house, and followers would offer gifts or *nazar*. It was also an occasion when believers sought bay'a from the new incumbent, and became his disciples.

The Urs-e Nuri at Marahrah

The largest, and most important, ceremony in the Barkatia khandan, which affirmed the family's corporate unity most forcefully, was the annual urs for one of the ancestors.

Early twentieth-century accounts of one of the annual urs ceremonies at Marahrah in the *Dabdaba-e Sikandari*,[26] a Rampur- based weekly newspaper, reveal that it was held in honour of Nuri Miyan, who had died in 1906. The urs lasted between four and six days.[27] As Nuri Miyan had had no male heirs, he had appointed his young first cousin, Sayyid Ali Husain, known as "Iqbal Hasan" (1873-97), as his sajjada-nishin. When the latter died in Nuri Miyan's own lifetime, he chose Iqbal Hasan's son, Hafiz Sayyid Aulad Husain, "Safi Miyan" (1893-1910), for this position of honor. Unfortunately, Safi Miyan, who would have been a youth of thirteen at Nuri Miyan's death, also died young, at the age of seventeen or so.[28] In the circumstances, Nuri Miyan's urs was organized and managed by another first cousin, Sayyid Mahdi Hasan (b. 19870). He appears to have been an able organizer, and to have commanded great respect among the Ulama.

Each year, Mahdi Hasan put a notification in the papers some weeks prior to the urs, extending a public invitation to all to attend, informing people of the location of Marahrah on the railway route, and assuring them that their food and lodging needs would be looked after for the duration of the event. If they

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informed him beforehand of their arrival, he said, they would be met at the railway station. As to the urs itself, he emphasized that it was always conducted with full regard for, and within the limits of, the shari'a. Attendance at the urs-e Nuri would consequently be a source of merit (sawab).[29]

Although no detailed report exists of any single urs at Marahrah, much less of the subjective experience of participating in one, the major events must have approximated those set out for the urs-e Nuri in the *Dabdaba-e Sikandari* in June 1912, in the form of a chart. In the course of five days, the first two were devoted to *khatma* of the Quran, or recital of the entire Quran which protects and guides man.[30] It was this emphasis on Quran reading, together with the sermons of the Ulama, that formed the basis for the claims of the Marahrah pirs - as also of the pirs and Ulama of Badayun and Bareilly - that they followed the shari'a at all times. *Naat-khwani* (the recitation of poetry in praise of the Prophet), and *qasida-khwani* (recital of praise verse of religious figures generally) were also an integral part of these shari'a-inclined urs celebrations.[31]

The scale of the organization on the part of the sajjada-nishin and his helpers appears to have been impressive. At arrival, each guest was met at the railway station. The road from the station to the khanqah was especially lit for the occasion with gas lights. Police were deputed to keep law and order, and ensure that nothing went wrong. The khanqah was brilliantly lit with lights and mirrors.[32] Each person who attended the urs, regardless of social standing, was given a straw mat *(chattai)* to sleep on, earthenware water-containers *(qhara, lota)* for bathing or drinking, and food, drink, betel *(pan, challi)*, twice a day - all delivered to their lodgings from the start of the urs until the very last day.[33]

As is well known, the Barkatia pirs were Sayyids of standing, the urs-e Nuri was attended by numbers of people of distinction, apart from ordinary folk from the surrounding countryside. Among the nobility were, at least occasionally, a

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nawab or *ra'is;* [34] in addition, Ulama and sufi pirs sometimes came from places as distant as Bombay, Calcutta, Bhopal, Gwalior, Ajmer, Pakpattan, and Bankipur, apart from districts in the North-Western Provinces themselves.[35] The core group, however, consisted of men whose principal allegiance was to the Qadiri order. Apart form the Ulama of Marahrah, these were form Bareilly, Badayun, Pilibhit, and Rampur, with a sprinkling from other towns in the North- Western Provinces (such as Kachhochha) and the Punjab. In several reports of the urs-e Nuri, Imam Ahmad Raza Khan's presence and his delivery of a sermon are singled out for mention.

Most importantly, it becomes clear at the outset that the urs is a pilgrimage. The Arabic term *ziyara* (from the root zara), which means "to pay a visit", is commonly used in the Urdu in the specific sense of visiting a saint's tomb. The Urdu word *mazar*, meaning tomb or shrine, is likewise derived from the same Arabic root. Whether one visits a tomb during an urs or at any other time of the year, such a visit is respectfully termed *ziyarat.*

Unlike the hajj, the urs is attended only by men. Women are strongly discouraged from visiting graves, and various ill-effects are believed to occur to them if they do so.[36] When Imam Ahmad Raza Khan was asked whether women could attend the urs at Ajmer, his reply was unequivocally negative: such a woman would be cursed by Allah and by the person whose grave it was from the moment she resolved upon making such a visit, until she returned home. The only grave which women may visit, and indeed *must* visit (such an act being *sunnat*, and almost *wajib*) is the Prophet's grave at Medina, should they go on hajj, or her parent's grave.[37]

Beliefs about the dead are clearly central to what takes place at an urs. Imam Ahmad Raza wrote at some length on the subject, citing *hadis* to support his arguments. When asked whether it was permissible to dig up an old graveyard of Muslims and build residential houses on the land, he responded

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in a fatawa in 1904-5 that this would be an act of disrespect toward the dead buried there, and was not permitted in the Hanafi school.[38] Citing proofs from hadis, *rivayats* from the *sahaba* (companions of the Prophet) and *tabi'un* (those who followed the Prophet's companions), in addition to proofs from fiqh, he argued first that the bodies of the highest categories of beings (prophets, sufi saints, and martyrs) do not disintegrate after death. Further, after death the spirits of the aulia become even more powerful than before. When someone reads the Fatiha at the grave of a *wali,* the wali's spirit *(ruh)* recognizes him. Similarly, if someone acts disrespectfully towards his grave, he is troubled by it. Nuri Miyan related the following incident:

> Close to our home in Marahrah, in a jungle, there is a graveyard of martyrs *(ganj-e shahidan).* Someone used to take his buffalo there. In one place the ground was soft. Suddenly, the foot of the buffalo went in. It was discovered that there was a grave at that spot. A voice came from the grave, "O you! you have caused me great discomfort. The foot of your buffalo hit me in the chest."[39]

As for ordinary Muslims, although their bodies decay over time, their spirits continue to inhabit their graves, and must be respected. The fatawa continues:

> Dear God! when the Prophet has told us not to sit on graves, or lean against them, or put our feet on them, and when the Ulama have warned us against walking on new paths in a graveyard, or sleeping near a grave, it is incumbent on us, when we go to pay our respects and do ziyarat at a grave, to do so from a (respectful) distance. ... we have been told that dead Muslims and living ones both derive honor from the same things.

In his *Malfuzat,* Imam Ahmad Raza also said that the dead can hear better than the living, and can communicate with

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the living, just as the living, in turn, can intercede for the dead and be instrumental in changing their fate in the hereafter.[40]

This interactive relationship between the living and the dead helps us understand the concept of *isal-e sawab*, or transfer of merit, in which the prayers of the living act as a kind of intercessionary factor in changing the fate of the dead person for whom one is praying. This was what Haji Imdad Ullah has referred to in his defence of the urs, when he said that the prayers of the living could help the dead man answer the questions of the two angels correctly, and thereby ensure his ultimate entry into heaven. Equally, however, ordinary folk approach a shrine in the hope that the dead man will intercede for them. The chain of intercession starts at the grave of the local pir, and goes right up to the Prophet, who is closest to God, and whose intercession on one's behalf will never be denied.[41]

To return now to the urs-e Nuri itself, we can agree with Victor Turner that there was a sense in which "communitas" was created in the course of the Ziyarat. For a week, perhaps more, a large number of men had left their homes and families, and their ordinary occupations, to attend the urs. Although there was no communal eating at the Marahrah urs, each person being served at his own lodging-place, fellow-feeling was created in the course of the all-night sessions of khatm, na'at-khwani, and sermons. Starting at about 8 p.m., the prayers and other events continued until the early morning, and the day wound up after the *zuhr* (mid-day) prayer. One gets a sense that the zairs approached the occasion with joyousness and eager anticipation, rather than a mood of penitence. There was splendour *(raunaq)* in the large crowds, the ornamentation of the shrine, and the decoration of the route leading to the dargah from the railway station. We could say, with Turner, that when setting out for Marahrah the pilgrim had begun a long sacred journey, voluntarily undertaken, and had arrived at a threshold, a place and moment "in and out of time" (where he hoped) to have ... direct experience of the sacred, invisible, or supernatural order, ... and (where he) participated in symbolic activities which he

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believed (were) efficacious in changing his inner and, sometimes, hopefully, outer condition from sin to grace, or sickness to health.[42]

Relations of the Barkatia Sayyids with the Outside World.

The Sayyids of the Barkatia khandan lived, as noted, just outside the qasbah of Marahrah. They were *zamindars*, or landowners, in what was agriculturally the best *pargana* (subdistrict) [43] of Etah district. By the 1870s, irrigation had become available through a branch of the Ganges Canal, and sugar and indigo were widely grown.[44] That the Barkatia khandan had been affluent by the standards of its time in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is therefore probably a reasonable assumption. By the early twentieth, however, one senses that an economic decline had set in, for Muhammad Miyan suggests that the family had lost much of its landed property in sales or mismanagement by the mutawallis.[45] Bayly's analysis of economic change in the qasbahs during colonial rule also points to a decline in the fortunes of the agriculturally-dependent Muslim gentry.[46]

Apart from their role as landowners, the Barkatia Sayyids naturally came into daily contact with a large number of people in their capacity as pirs. Maulana Ghulam Shabbar Qadiri describes a typical day in Nuri Miyan's daily life as follows:

When not reading the *namaz*, praying *(vaza'if)* or meditating, (Nuri Miyan) would enquire into the affairs of (his) *khuddam* (helpers) and those who came to him with petitions *(sa'ilin)*, reply to letters received, visit the sick, write amulets *(nuqush, ta'viz)*, take a break and get some rest, then spend some time with his books, reading or writing. ...He also paid his respects to Shah Al-e Rasul, presenting himself at his *darbar*, learning of various affairs and receiving advice. (In addition,) he was responsible for the well-being of hundreds of thousands of khuddam. Everyday a variety of problems presented themselves

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before him, and he could deal with them. Never did he put off dealing with something till the next day on the plea that he was too busy, or fail to do something at its proper time. In everything he did, the spirit of the shari'at and the rules of tariqat reigned.[47]

As Ewing points out, "*pirs* interact with their followers in a wide variety of ways."[48] Most people come with everyday problems to be solved, problems such as illness, barrenness, marriage, and business, which require a minimum amount the pir's time, and are dealt with by writing amulets, giving some advice, and admonishing the person to perform his or her prayers regularly. In addition to this "outer circle" of followers, a pir may have a smaller number of serious disciples who constitute his "inner circle", and in whose training he takes a great interest. A large part of this training, Ewing says, has to do with interpreting dreams.[49]

The relationship between a pir and his murid has frequently been described in the literature. Its main feature is its authoritarianism, modelled on the father-son relationship, in which the pir's authority over his murid, though absolute is mediated, his pir is his model in everything he does. Ghulam Shabbir Qadiri describes how Nuri Miyan's lifestyle reflected Shah Al-e Rasul's:

> (Nuri Miyan) loved and respected his Shaikh; indeed he loved everyone who was associated with him, and all the members of his family. He followed his shaikh's commands; he presented himself before him at his darbar; he sought his company; he was completely absorbed in him. His face had the same radiance (as his shaikh); his personality had the same stamp (hal); he walked with the same gait; when he spoke, it was in the same tone. His clothes had the same appearance; he dealt with others in the same way. In his devotions and strivings, he followed the same path *(maslak)*. The times set apart for rest in the afternoon and sleep at night were times when

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he went to his shaikh particularly, receiving from him guidance in every matter and warning of every danger.[50]

Among the Ulama, the Marahrah pirs had close relations with other families of the Qadiri silsila in particular. Their relations with the Usmani khandan of Badayun went quite far back in time, to the time when someone in the Usmani family became a disciple of Achhe Miyan's in the eighteenth century.[51] Both the Barkati and Usmani families had produced several generations of gifted, learned and eminent scholars or sufis, and the relationship between them had thus been one of mutual learning and respect. To cite a few examples, Shah Al-e Rasul had attended classes given by Shah Abd ul-Mujid Badayuni at the Madrasa Qadiria at Badayun, and Muhammad Miyan's paternal grandfather, Shah Muhammad Sadiq (1833-1908), had studied *tibb* from the famous alim Shah Fazl-e Rasul Badayuni (1798-1873). Nuri Miyan used to consult Maulana Abd ul-Qadir Badayuni on matters of fiqh.[52]

Notes

1. This issue, and its background in the history of sufi thought, will be a major concern in chapters V and VI.

2. "Zaidi": def.?

3. This family history is based, unless otherwise indicated, on Maulana Aulad-e Rasul "Muhammad Miyan" Qadiri's *Khandan-e Barakat* (c. 1927).

4. The foregoing is based on C. A. Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars: North Indian Society in the Age of British Expansion, 1770-1870* (Cambridge, 1983), pp. 189-93, and chapter 9.

5. *I bid.*, pp. 191-92

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6. Shah Abd ul-Jalil, Shah Barkat Ullah's paternal grandfather, lived there during the last years of his life. He had a hospice *(khanqah)*, a mosque and a well built, and lived there with his family until his death in A.D. 1647 *Khandan-e Barkatia*, pp. 4-5

7. *Ibid.*, pp. 8-9

8. *Ibid.* See, e.g., 9, 15, 18.

9. These comments are culled from the family history as a whole. See, e.g., *ibid.*, pp. 10, 69-70, 82; on p. 82, the author,who belonged to the Sarkar Kalan, specifically distanced himself from certain trends of belief which he associated with the Sarkar Khurd.

10. The words within double quotes at the end of each name are affectionate nicknames by which the person was colloquially known. "Achhe Miyan" means "Good man"; "Suthre Miyan" is something like "Handsome man"; and "Sache Miyan" is "Honest man"; the word "miyan," here rendered as "man" is practically untranslatable, for it is an affectionate diminutive not conveyed by the English. However, since these are the styles by which these seventeenth-century sufis are referred to, we will use them here as well.

11. *Khandan-e Barkatia*, pp. 18-19.

12. *Ibid.*, pp. 29-36

13. *Ibid.*, pp. 30-31

14. Katherine Pratt Ewing, "The *Pir* or Sufi Saint in Pakistani Islam", p. 29. Unpublished Ph.D dissertation, University of Chicago, 1980. This view is consonant with Ahl-e Sunnat wa Jama'at views on the subject, as will be clear further.

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15. See, e.g., *Khandan-e Barakat,* pp. 40, 59, 65, 72, and 76. The reason for saying the children were accepted as part of the family is simply that they are mentioned in the family history at all, and their own marriages and offspring are also recorded.

16. In translation, Prophet "Muhammad's (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) family", "son of the Prophet", and "Hussain's family".

17. *Khandan-e Barakat,* pp. 10-11

18. *Ibid.,* p. 11

19. Richard M. Eaton, "Court of Man, Court of God: Local Perceptions of the Shrine of Baba Farid, Pakpattan, Punjab", in *Contributions to Asian Studies,* vol. XVII, p. 57 describes the symbolism of the turban as follows: "One symbol in particular, the turban, perhaps transcended all others in point of its repertoire and importance. Associated with traditional Sufi lore but also having ambiguous associations with the crown and thereby with royalty, the turban served as a vehicle both for religious legitimacy and for the distribution of (the pir's) grace."

20. *Khandan-e Barakat,* p. 11.

21. For a rather negative view of such relics, and their veneration in India especially, see Ignaz Goldziher, *Muslim Studies,* vol. 2, trans. by S.M. Stern, pp.327-32.

22. Constance E. Padwick, *Muslim Devotions" a Study of Prayer- Manuals in Common Use* (London, 1961), p.25. *Khandan-e Barakat,* p..30.

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23. Thus, the dates on which Nuri Miyan was given permission by Shah Al-e Rasul to recite particular prayers are separately recorded (together with the names of the prayers) in a biography of Nuri Miyan. See Maulvi Ghulam Shabbir Qadiri Nuri Badayuni, *Tazkira-e Nuri* (La'ilpur, 1968), p. 59.

24. *Ibid*., p. 60

25. This account is based on *Khandan-e Barakat*, pp. 84-85.

26. We consulted issues between the years 1909 and 1921 of this paper. Although Munshi Muhammad Fazle-e Hasan, the editor, was primarily a follower of the Chishti Sabiri line of Sufis, he was also a Qadiri and regularly reported their activities.

27. Urs ceremonies for other Barkatia ancestors, particularly Shah Barkat Ullah, presumably also took place on their death anniversaries, though they were not reported in the *Dabdaba-e Sikandari*. Thus, Maulana Zafar ud-Din Bihari records various anecdotes in his *Hayat-e A'la Hazrat* which occurred when Ahmad Raza Khan had gone to Marahrah to attend an urs for Shah Barkat Ullah. *Hayat-e A'la Hazrat*, pp. 39, 40, 131.

28. *Khandan-e Barakat*, p. 31.

29. See, e.g. *Dabdaba-e Sikandari*, 26 July 1909 (vol. 45, no. 27) pp. 6-7; 3 June 1912 (vol. 48, no. 24), p. 7; 10 June 1912 (vol. 48, no. 25), p. 3.

30. Frederick M. Denny, "Islamic Ritual: Perspectives and Theories", p. 76, in Richard C. Martin, ed., *Approaches to Islam in Religious Studies* (Tucson, 1985). See also William A. Graham, "Quran as Spoken Word: An Islamic Contribution to the Understanding of Scripture",

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in the same volume, for a discussion of Quran recitation, or *qira'a*.

31. It must be added, however, that qawali and sama were reported to have taken place one year, as a separate part of the urs. See *Dabdaba-e Sikandari*, 7 June 1915 (vol. 51, no. 29), p. 7.

32. *Ibid*., 7 June 1915 (vol. 51, no. 29), p. 6.

33. *Ibid*., 4 April 1921 (vol. 57, no. 29), p. 4. As may well be imagined, the costs of the urs must have been of a very high order. Unfortunately, we have no figures as to the expenses incurred for any single year, nor of the nazar (voluntary gifts of money or in kind) collected from the pilgrims.

34. See, e.g., *ibid*., 15 June 1914 (vol. 50, no. 29), p. 18.

35. *Ibid*., 7 June 1915 (vol. 51, no. 29), pp. 6-7.

36. See, for example, Mrs. Meer Hassan Ali, *Observations on the Mussulmauns of India: Descriptive of their Manners, Customs, Habits, and Religious Opinions. Made during a Twelve Years' Residence in their Immediate Society* (London, 1832), reprinted by Idarah-i Adabiyat-i Delli, 1973, vol. 2, p. 321.

37. *Malfuzat*, vol. 2, p. 107.

38. Imam Ahmad Raza Khan, *Ihlaq ul-Wahhabiyin ala Tauhin Qubur il- Muslimin* (A.H. 1322/A.D. 1904-5).

39. *Ibid*., p. 18.

40. *Malfuzat*, vol. 2, pp. 73-74. Also see vol. 3, pp. 29-30.

41. The question of intercession, and of the Prophet's intercession with God in particular, will be more fully

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dealt with in the next chapter in the context of Imam Ahmad Raza's life.

42. Turner, "Pilgrimages as Social Processes", p. 197.

43. Several *parqanas* made up an administrative district.

44. Whitcombe, *Aqrarian Conditions in Northern India*, p. 72.

45. See, e.g. *Khandan-e Barakat*, pp. 9, 15, 18.

46. Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars*, pp. 354-58.

47. *Tazkira-e Nuri*, pp. 59-60.

48. Ewing, op. cit., p. 108.

49. *Ibid.*, pp. 109-110.

50. *Tazkira-e Nuri*, p. 91

51 *Ibid.*, Introduction, pp. 4-5.

52 *Ibid.*, p. 72. As mentioned in chapter 1, Imam Ahmad Raza Khan also respected Shah Abd ul-Qadir's opinion a great deal, and the two men cooperated closely on the anti-Nadwah issue.

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Chapter III

Pir, Shaikh, and Prophet: the Personalization of Religious Authority in Imam Ahmad Raza Khan's Life.

When a Muslim seeks help from an alim-*e din* it is not because the alim is well-born or powerful, but because the Muslim seeks (help from) Allah. It is the same (when he seeks the help of) the pious *(Sulha)* right up to the saints and the prophets, and to the chief of the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). Whoever seeks their help is in reality seeking Allah. If the Wahhabis understood this they wouldn't call everyone who seeks and calls for help a kafir or a mushrik.

Imam Ahmad Raza Khan, *Malfuzat*, vol. 4, p. 18.

Having examined the social and cultural milieu of life among the Barkatia Sayyids in the previous chapter, we may return to Imam Ahmad Raza himself now, with increased understanding of the world in which he moved. His relations with the pirs and Ulama of Marahrah, Badayun, and other towns of India drew him into a network of social, economic, and ritual relations with other learned and pious Muslims, and through them, as in his own capacity as alim, into relations with the non-Muslim world of nineteenth-century British India as well. In this chapter, we approach the discussion of religious authority in his life from three perspectives: Imam Ahmad Raza's devotion to his pir, and his views on the nature of a pir's relationship with, and authority over, his disciples generally; his devotion to Hazrat Shaikh Abd ul-Qadir Jilani, (may Allah be pleased with him), the founder of the Qadiri order of sufis, with which he identified more closely than with other orders, though he was also learned in the esoteric practices of the Chishti, Naqshbandi, and Suhrawardi orders; and finally, the place of the Prophet as a pivotal figure in his life.

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Devotion to the three figures of pir, shaikh,[1] and Prophet was central to Imam Ahmad Raza as believer and to his perception of what it meant to be a "good Muslim". Nor were they unrelated to each other in his life: his writings make clear that each is a pathway, and a guide, to the next. The culmination of religious authority, in the world of men, is the Prophet.

One of the chief sources we will be drawing upon in this chapter are Imam Ahmad Raza's *Malfuzat*, the collection of orally delivered homilies and responses to questions posed by followers, that was compiled by his son, Maulana Mustafa Raza Khan. Important, too, in this context, is Imam Ahmad Raza's *diwan*, or anthology of poetry, entitled *Hadaiq-e Bakhshish*. The poems, which deal for the most part with the qualities of the Prophet, often have a simplicity and directness that give us additional insight into Imam Ahmad Raza as believer. There is also an extensive collection of fatawa by him on these themes. Indeed, this genre constituted Imam Ahmad Raza's hallmark. In this chapter, some of the relevant fatawa will be drawn upon as necessary, though detailed examination of the fatawa literature will not be attempted until a later time.

The Role of the Pir in Imam Ahmad Raza's Life

As mentioned in Chapter I, Imam Ahmad Raza received bay'a, or initiation into discipleship, from Shah Al-e Rasul of Marahrah, in 1877, two years before the latter's death. Imam Ahmad Raza's own personal recollections and record of his pir are rather limited in content, which is understandable in the circumstances. Imam Ahmad Raza was about twenty-one at the time; Shah Al-e Rasul, in his eighties. Nor does Imam Ahmad Raza appear to have spent any length of time studying under his direction; indeed, it is related in the *Sirat-e A'la Hazrat* that he was ready for discipleship immediately he met Shah Al-e Rasul, and did not need the forty-day period of instruction which was customary prior to an initiation.[2] There is a mention, in Imam Ahmad Raza's *Malfuzat* or in the biographies of him, of dreams

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in which his pir appeared to him, although he reported having seen a wide variety of people in his dreams, over time including his father, his grandfather, and the Prophet.[3] As an adult, Imam Ahmad Raza was to receive instruction from, and seek the advice of, Nuri Miyan, Shah al-e Rasul's sajjada-nishin and grandson, who was about fifteen years his senior. Imam Ahmad Raza respected Nuri Miyan as his pir's sajjada-nishin and reportedly had a close personal relationship with him,

Despite the fact that Imam Ahmad Raza did not have such a relationship with Shah Al-e Rasul, (the reason is given earlier), the latter held a special place of honour and regard in his life. This is clear from the fact that from about 1905 or 1906, until his death in 1921, Imam Ahmad Raza held an annual urs for Shah Al-e Rasul on the latter's death-anniversary, at his home in Bareilly. For three days each year, from the 16th to the 18th Zil Hajj, the occasion was commemorated with milad, khatm of the Quran, recitation of Na'at poetry, and sermons (wa'z, bayan) delivered by Imam Ahmad Raza,[4] in which he spoke feelingly and eloquently (so the reports tell us) on a particular *ayat* (verse) of the Quran, Hazrat Shaikh Abd ul-Qadir Jilani, and the Prophet. Evidently, he was an effective and powerful speaker, for the reports never fail to mention the religious transport and ecstasy of his listeners. One writer reported:

> Everyone was completely captivated (by his wa'z). Sometimes he makes you laugh, sometimes he makes you cry, sometimes he makes you feel agitated.
> He continued:
>
> If you want to hear the true praises of the Prophet, you must hear them from the lips of A'la Hazrat (Ahmad Raza). The qualities with which he has been blessed by God make it clear that he is the Mujaddid of the present century. . . . And at a time when such turbid fissures are opening up, A'la Hazrat (Ahmad Raza) is a shield and a chisel.[5]

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Others have reported, as well, on the eloquence of Imam Ahmad Raza's sermons, and the huge crowds he drew.[6]

It is noteworthy, in view of the fact that Shah Al-e Rasul died soon after Imam Ahmad Raza became his disciple, that Imam Ahmad Raza did not consider his relationship with his pir, or with the Barkatia family, to have ended with this event. His relationship of discipleship appeared instead to embrace the Barkatia ancestors of Shah Al-e Rasul, and Nuri Miyan his sajjada-nishin, and to continue in time beyond his death. In a sense Imam Ahmad Raza's relation with Shah Al-e Rasul transcended Shah Al-e Rasul himself, reaching beyond him to the chain of spiritual (and actual) ancestors who were the source of his spiritual authority. The source of their authority, in turn, was in the final analysis their descent from the Prophet. The *shajra* or family tree, in which one's ancestors were listed by name down to oneself, was an important testimonial of authority linking its bearer to the Prophet. Imam Ahmad Raza has a poem in his diwan or anthology, giving his pir's shajra.

In his *Malfuzat*, Imam Ahmad Raza illustrated the point that a person's relationship with his (or her) pir reaches back to the pir's own pir, and so on, with a story about a poor man who asked a shopkeeper for alms. When the shopkeeper refused, the beggar began to shout at him, and threatened to turn his shop upside down. This caused a crowd to gather around them. One man in the crowd was a man of vision who pleaded with the shopkeeper to accede to the beggar's demands. He told the crowd that he had looked into the beggar's heart to find out whether there was anything there. I found it empty. Then I looked into the heart of his shaikh, and found that empty as well. I looked at his shaikh's shaikh. I found him to be a man of Allah. And I saw that he was standing by and waiting, wondering when the faqir would finally carry out his threat. What had happened was that the faqir was holding on tightly to his shaikh's garment.[7]

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The story conjures up an eloquent picture of a continuous chain of sufi pirs watching over the affairs of their disciples' disciples, many generations removed from them. Clearly, Imam Ahmad Raza did not believe that the relationship of a murid to his pir ended at the latter's death.[8]

On one occasion, Imam Ahmad Raza was asked for a fatawa in answer to the question, why should a Muslim who has grown up in a Sunni home, and had the Quran and the hadis to guide him in his daily affairs, seek a pir?[9] This was an important question, for it raised doubts about the very need for discipleship to a human being. Imam Ahmad Raza responded by saying that the Quran and hadis contain everything: shari'at, tariqat, and *haqiqat* (truth), the greatest of these being the shari'at. However, knowledge of the shari'at has been handed down from one generation of scholars (*mujtahids*, those qualified to interpret the shari'at, and Ulama) to another; had this not been so, ordinary people would have had no way of knowing right from wrong action. This being the case with matters related to the shari'at, it is even more vital that there be a similar chain (silsila) for the transmission of gnostic knowledge (ma'rifat), for this cannot be extracted from the Quran and hadis without a teacher *(murshid)*. To try to do so is to embark on a dark road, and be misled along the way by Satan.[10]

But even if one is not seeking gnostic knowledge for its own sake, Imam Ahmad Raza continued, one needs a pir for a different, and more fundamental, reason: without a pir one cannot reach Allah. The Quran commands one to seek a means *(wasila)* to reach Him. This means is the Prophet. And the means to reach the Prophet are the *masha'ikh* (sufi shaikhs). It is absurd to imagine that one can have access to God without an intermediary; as for the Prophet, access to him is difficult without one. Imam Ahmad Raza added that ahadis prove that there is a chain of intercession to God that starts with the Prophet interceding with God Himself. At the next level, the masha'ikh intercede with the Prophet on behalf of their followers; they do this in all situations and circumstances,

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including the grave *(qabar)*. It would be foolish in the extreme, therefore, for one not to bind oneself to a pir and thus ensure help in times of need.[11]

Finally, Imam Ahmad Raza argued that union with the Prophet (through the succession of pirs to which one is related by means of one's own pir) is a matter of grace (barkat), in itself no small thing. If one's chain of transmission is through pirs and masha'ikh of eminence, this is all to the good in terms of the barkat that accrues to oneself. In this regard allegiance to Hazrat Shaikh Abd ul-Qadir Jilani (may Allah be pleased with him), (founder of the Qadiri order of sufis) is better than allegiance to other sufi founders, for he is said to protect the welfare of his murids in no matter what situation.

Imam Ahmad Raza's *Malfuzat* also contain references to the relationship that should obtain between a pir and his murid, and the conditions which should guide a person in choosing a pir. He emphasized the importance of having the right intention of inner desire *(iradah)*, for without this the relationship would be sterile, and "nothing would happen". The pir's ability to guide his disciple was thus in part dependent on the disciple's purity of intention and his faith in him. The tie between them was indissoluble, and irreplaceable.[12] As Imam Ahmad Raza put it memorably on once occasion, "the fact is that the Ka'ba is the *qibla* of the body, and the pir is the qibla of the soul."[13]

A disciple attains supreme closeness to his pir in the condition of *fana fi'sh-shaikh*, or total absorption in one's pir. Once a disciple has attained this, Imam Ahmad Raza explained, he will never be separated from his pir, regardless of the circumstances. The pir is there to guide and admonish him at all times. Imam Ahmad Raza related the story of one such case to his followers:

Hafiz ul-Hadis Sayyid Ahmad Sujalmasi was going somewhere. Suddenly his eyes lifted from the ground, and he saw a beautiful woman. The glance had been inadvertent (and so no blame attached to him). But then he looked up again. This

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time he saw his pir and murshid, Sayyid Ghaus ul-Waqt Abd ul-Aziz Dabagh.[14]

Given the importance of one's pir, Imam Ahmad Raza advised his followers to choose carefully. A pir should fulfil four exacting standards. He must be a Sunni of good faith *(sahih aqidat)*. Further, he must be an alim or scholar, one who has sufficient knowledge of the Law to solve his own problems and answer his own questions without having to ask someone else to interpret the shari'a for him. Third, the chain of transmission (silsila) should reach back from him, without a single break, to the Prophet. And finally, he should lead an exemplary life, and not be disobedient or wicked in his personal habits.[15]

One sees here, as in other writings by Imam Ahmad Raza, the emphasis on following the shari'a which we argued was also characteristic of the pirs of Marehrah. In his *Malfuzat*, he related several stories pointing out that ignorant sufis, who have no knowledge of fiqh, mistake Satan for God without knowing that they do so:

There was a wali who made large claims for himself. An ascetic heard about him. He called the wali and asked him what he could do. The Wali said he saw God every single day. Every day God's canopy (Arsh) spread itself on the ocean, and God appeared on it. Now, if he had knowledge, he would have known that it is impossible (muhal) in this world to see God, that this was something given only to the Prophet. At any rate, the ascetic called someone and asked him to read the hadis in which the Prophet said that Iblis spreads his throne over the ocean. (When this had been done, the so-called wali) understood that all this time he had mistaken Satan for God, had been prostrating himself before Satan, had been worshipping him. He rent his clothes and vanished into a forest.[16]

Imam Ahmad Raza himself, while primarily an alim, specifically a *mufti* whose opinion was frequently sought on a wide range of

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issues, was a pir to a large number of disciples.[17] He founded the Razvia silsila,[18] and in November 1915 ensured its continuity by appointing his elder son, Hamid Raza Khan, as his sajjada-nishin. The ceremony took place on the last day of the annual urs celebration that year for Shah Al-e Rasul.[19] Imam Ahmad Raza placed his khirqa (robe), received from Shah Al-e Rasul, on Hamid Raza's shoulders, and his own amama (turban) on his head, before reading the sanad (authority) of the sajjada-nishini in Arabic and Urdu. At his death in 1921, his disciples and followers reaffirmed Hamid Raza's position as his sajjada-nishin.[20]

In addition to his large circle of murids, Imam Ahmad Raza had a larger circle of *khalifas* too. These included the most prominent leaders of the Ahl-e Sunnat wa Jama'at movement in the 1920s, men such as Maulana Zafar ud-Din Bihari, Sayyid Naim ud-Din Muradabadi, Maulana Amjad Ali Azmi, Sayyid Didar Ali Alwari, and Maulana Burhan ul-Haqq of Jabbalpur.[21]

All came to him from different parts of India, in the case of Maulana Burhan ul-Haqq toward the end of their course of studies, attracted to him by his growing reputation for scholarship and for the particular point of view he espoused. The term "khilafat" as it applied to these and other men, did not necessarily denote a relationship of discipleship to Imam Ahmad Raza. Granting khilafat was an individual and public act, undertaken from time to time. Thus the *Dabdaba-e Sikandari* reported in January 1910 that on the third and last day of the urs for Shah al-e Rasul at Imam Ahmad Raza's house that year, Imam Ahmad Raza bestowed the title of Khalifa on Maulana Zafar ud-Din Bihari by tying a turban (the *dastar-e Kilafat*) on his head.

Imam Ahmad Raza explained the difference between a khalifa and a murid by saying that there are two kinds of khilafat, the ordinary (amm) and the special (khas).[22] The first kind obtains when a mushid (teacher) chooses to make someone he considers worthy, whether a student of his or a follower, his

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khalifa and deputy. The teacher guides his khalifa in matters related to sufism *(azkar, ashqhal, aurad, aimal)*. The "position" *(masnad)* is of religious *(dini)* significance alone, and there is no limit to the number of khalifas that he may choose to have. This relationship ceases upon the death of the teacher. By contrast, in the second kind of khilafat, the khas or special one, the khalifa continues in this role even after his murshid's death. The relationship is special because the khalifa in this case is his murshid's sajjada-nishin, a position to which only one person may be appointed. In contrast, again, with the first kind, here the role carries worldly responsibilities for the maintenance of properties. Imam Ahmad Raza went on to say that this position usually devolves upon the murshid's eldest son, though various shar'i conditions may obtain to alter the situation.[23]

On a day-to-day basis, Imam Ahmad Raza interacted with a diffuse set of people who sought his advice on all kinds of matters, great and small. Some hours in the late afternoon were set aside for this purpose. We have already seen that Nuri Miyan too allotted some time each day to meeting people and advising them on their problems. As with Nuri Miyan, an important function Imam Ahmad Raza performed vis-a-vis this wide circle of followers was that of curing or healing. A man who came to him asking for a prayer (du'a) because he was beset with problems, was told:

A sahabi went to the Prophet and said, the world had turned its back on me. He said, Don't you remember that *tasbih* (prayer of praise) praising of the angels, by the barkat of which we receive our daily food? Good fortune will come to you after your distress. After the time of the fajr prayer at sunrise, repeat this prayer ("Subhan Allahi Wa bi-hamdihi subhan-Allah-il-azim wa bi-hamdihi astaghfir-ul-Allah"). Seven days after the Prophet had given the sahabi this advice, the sahabi returned. His fortune had changed so much, he said, that he didn't know how to describe it. You too (Imam Ahmad Raza addressed the man) should repeat this prayer. If you miss the time of sunrise, say it in the morning after joining the congregation at the fajr prayer.

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And if some day you miss saying it even them, say it before sunrise (of the following day).[24]

And when a man came to him saying that after many years of childlessness, he had had six children only to lose five of them, and that he now had only a three-year old daughter left, Imam Ahmad Raza gave the following detailed advice:

Next time you are expecting a baby, come here and tell me within two months of conception. Also tell me your wife's and her mother's names. Thereafter, insha Allah, arrangements will be made. Make sure everyone in your household is punctilious in offering namaz, and after every namaz the Ayat al-Kursi should be repeated. . . . And apart from namaz, the Ayat al-Kursi should be repeated thrice a day - before sunrise, before sundown, and at bedtime. Even women who don't have permission to say the namaz (i.e., are menstruating) should repeat this ayat. But on such days they should say it with the intention not of repeating an ayat of the Quran but of praising Allah. And on the days that they are not permitted to read the namaz, they should also read the *qul* three times thrice a day (before sunrise, before sunset, and before sleeping). (Detailed instructions on the position of the hands follow.) There is an elderly man here who makes large lamps *(chiragh)*. Get him to make you one, and light it from the time conception takes place right until the time of birth. As for the daughter you already have, if she gets ill, light a lamp for her as well. That lamp will guard against sorcery *(sihr)*, misfortune *(aseb)* and disease. And as soon as a new child is born the azan should be repeated in its ear seven times, four times in the right ear and three times in the left. There should be absolutely no delay in doing this. If you delay, Satan enters (the child's body). For forty days after birth, the child should be weighed against grain, and (the equivalent weight of grain) given in alms. After that, this should be done once a month until it's a year old; once every two months until it is two years old, and once every three months until it is three. In its fourth year, this should be done once every four months, and so too in its fifth year. In its sixth year, it should be done every

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six months. And from its seventh year on, once a year. Do this for your daughter as well. Since she is in her fourth year, weigh her every four months. Repeat the azan out loud in her ear for seven days at maghrib, seven times on each occasion. And for three evenings, the Surah Baqr should be read by a qualified reader in a loud voice that will reach every corner of the house. At night the door of the house should be shut while saying "Bism'illah", and the same when opening the door in the morning. When going to the bathroom, one should say the Bism'illah outside the door and enter with one's right foot first. And when leaving, one should extend one's right foot first. When taking off one's clothes or bathing, one should say the Bism'illah first in the heart. And when approaching one another, both husband and wife should remember to say this first. If you observe all this advice, insha-Allah, no harm will befall you.[25]

This was very clear when, on another occasion, Imam Ahmad Raza was asked whether one can receive grace (barkat) only after one dies, or whether one may begin to do so during one's lifetime. In the course of his reply that grace may accrue to one both before and after death, Imam Ahmad Raza alluded to the Surah Tabarruk (p29), which, he explained, intercedes for the person who prays to it. The surah was portrayed anthropomorphically in the female gender:

Nothing exceeds this surah's ability to save (the dead) from the punishment of the grave and to convey peace and tranquillity. If the punishing angels wish to come to the reader of this surah, it (the surah) stops them from doing so. If they try to come from another direction, it hinders them from there. "He was reading me," it says. the angels say, "We have come at His command, whose kalam you are." Then the surah says, "Wait then, don't come near him until I return." And the surah puts up such a fight on behalf of the reader at Allah's court, pleading for his pardon. . . . If there is a delay in the pardon being granted, it argues, "He used to read me, and You haven't forgiven him. If I am not Your kalam, tear me out of Your Book." The Lord replies, "Go. I have forgiven him." The sura immediately goes

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to heaven. It collects silk cloths, pillows, flowers and perfumes from there, and brings them to the grave. "I got held up coming here," it explains. "You didn't get worried, I hope?" And it spreads out the cloths and the pillows, while the angels, commanded by God, go away.[26]

While he attached considerable importance to the cure to problems, Imam Ahmad Raza also emphasized on numerous occasions the role of individual effort, and of internal "purity of heart" and purpose in achieving the desired result.[27] Just as a pir could not by himself ensure the progress of the disciple unless the latter had the right "intention", so also with the removal of obstacles. If the seeker was pure of heart, God never failed him. Imam Ahmad Raza cited a *hadis qudsi* (divine saying) in which God is reported to have said, ". . . And if he draws nearer to Me by a handsbreadth, I draw nearer to him by an armslength; and if he draws nearer to Me by an armslength, I draw nearer to him by a fathom; and if he comes to Me walking, I come to him running."[28] Clearly, though, the onus was on the individual to make the first move toward God before he could be helped.

In the same vein, Imam Ahmad Raza cautioned his listeners not to undertake the fast or the hajj, or go into seclusion toward the end of Ramzan *(itikaf)*, for the wrong reasons: they must perform these deeds for Allah, not for themselves, although good would come to them as a result of having done them.[29] And when judging the actions of others, they must be careful not to entertain doubts about others' sincerity as long as a possibility existed that they were well-intentioned.[30] One had constantly to be watchful over one's heart, which was ever given to disobedience and bid'at. A time could come when a person became completely blind to the truth.[31]

The *Malfuzat* reveal the wide range of questions that Imam Ahmad Raza dealt with in these daily conversations. Some questions related to personal appearance, such as the permissibility or otherwise of dyeing one's hair black, wearing one's hair long if one were a man, or wearing rings of various

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metals.[32] Others related to ritual practice, such as the correct manner of performing *wuzu* (ablution) before salat, the performance of the salat itself, or the *adab* (etiquette) to be observed in a mosque.[33] Sometimes conversation turned to marital relations, or to relations with non-Muslims.[34] Beliefs about the dead, their intercession with the Prophet on behalf of the living, the Prophet's knowledge of the unseen: all these and other matters were discussed repeatedly. These daily conversations with people in the neighbourhood, town, and region in and around Bareilly must have been an important factor in Imam Ahmad Raza's growth of influence and stature over the years. Although we have no way of knowing, his audience probably included Ulama, Mu-Shaikhs, Muftis, Western educated and some who were illiterate, on whom Imam Ahmad Raza's verbal advice and display of learning may have had a particularly powerful impact (as they would not have had direct access to books).[35]

In this examination of the nature of religious authority in Imam Ahmad Raza's life, particularly in reference to the role of the pir that we have looked at so far, it is clear that Imam Ahmad Raza himself exercised considerable personal religious authority over his followers, as his pir and other scholarly and saintly men did over him. What were the likely sources of this authority?

Simon Digby has addressed this question in relation to the Chishti shaikhs in the Sultanate period (twelfth and thirteenth centuries).[36] Digby looks at a range of personal attributes which, as sources of prestige, enhanced the reputation and standing of a pir at that time. These could include: "learning and orthodoxy in conjunction with descent from the Prophet and . . . rank as a Sufi Shaikh," :poetic sensibility", and "the ability to construct, extend and organize a *Khanqah* ; to feed, accommodate and attend to the material and spiritual needs of disciples and often numerous dependents; and to accommodate travellers according to Muslim precept and the expectations of hospitality."[37] Most of these personal attributes (and Digby mentions others), with the exception of Sayyid ancestry, accurately describe Imam Ahmad

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Raza as pir. Maulana Zafar us-Din Bihari, Imam Ahmad Raza's biographer, enumerates his qualities in a series of subheads throughout the *Hayat-e A'la Hazrat*, including, among others: Islamic equality, kindness towards the poor, generosity toward others, depth of learning, and vigilance in the observance of din.[38]

It should be pointed out, however, that these values applied in the particular context of Imam Ahmad Raza's vision of right belief and conduct. Zafar ud-Din sees no contradiction between "Islamic equality", by which he means that Imam Ahmad Raza treated people of low social status at par with those of high social standing, and Imam Ahmad Raza's proverbial respect for Sayyids, whom he treated with a deference accorded to no one else on account of their descent from the Prophet.[39] A small example of this was that Sayyids were given twice as much food at a *milad* celebration as other guests at Imam Ahmad Raza's household. Likewise, Imam Ahmad Raza's refusal to have anything to do with Shi'is is interpreted as a sign of his uncompromising attitude in matters related to "mazhab"; Zafar ud-Din comments that people ignorant of din mistook Imam Ahmad Raza's mazhabi firmness for rudeness or harshness.[40] "Wahhabis" of various descriptions, whose views Imam Ahmad Raza devoted a lifetime rebutting, were also understood to be outside the circle of people to whom he extended a courteous welcome. In all that Imam Ahmad Raza said and did, he drew a clear line of difference between right and wrong belief and action. This unambiguity, backed by his unquestioned erudition, was perhaps his greatest source of prestige and authority in his followers' eyes.

Significance of Hazrat Shaikh Abd ul-Qadir Jilani, founder of the Qadiri order, for Imam Ahmad Raza

The Qadiri order named after Hazrat Shaikh Abd ul-Qadir Jilani Baghdadi (may Allah be pleased with him) (d. A.D. 1166) is popular throughout the Muslim world. Ewing writes that "Abdul Qadir Gilani . . . is regarded as the patron of all the

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sufi orders in South Asia."[41] Zairs to his tomb in Baghdad, outnumber those from all parts of the world.

Hazrat Abd ul-Qadir Jilani (may Allah be pleased with him), who was born at Jilan in Iran, migrated to Baghdad as a young man. After spending several years in solitude as an ascetic, in the latter half of his life he became a preacher. As a follower of the Hanbali school, he taught and preached at a madrasa of Hanbali law, and also at a *ribat* or monastery. Both institutions were famous in tenth-century Baghdad, and Hazrat Abd ul-Qadir was by all accounts very popular. His efforts as a preacher gained him the title "Muhi ud-Din" or "reviver of the faith".[42]

To the Qadiris in the subcontinent, the founder of their order is known among other things (he has over ninety-nine names) as the "Ghaus-e Azam", or "Greatest Helper".[43] He occupies a pre-eminent position in the hierarchy of saints. In this respect, Imam Ahmad Raza's views on Hazrat Abd ul-Qadir's status vis-a-vis the Prophet and the other saints of the sufi hierarchy were very clear. He definitely ranked him below the Prophet, but exalted him above all other saints. In one of his poems, he addressed Abd ul-Qadir with these words:

Apart from the divine essence of prophecy you encompass all perfections, O Ghaus
(uluhiyat-e nabviyat ke siva tu tamam afzal ka qabil hai ya ghaus)[44]

and elsewhere he described how spiritual authority flows from God to the Shaikh:

From Ahad to Ahmad, from Ahmad to you in this order your command "Be" or "Don't Be" is followed, O Ghaus
(ahad se ahmad aur ahmad se tujh ko kun aur sab kun makun hasil hai ya ghaus)[45]

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As this verse suggests, Hazrat Abd ul-Qadir is seen to occupy the apex of spiritual authority below that of prophethood. Echoing the Shaikh's famous saying that "My foot is on the neck of every saint", Imam Ahmad Raza writes:

Who is to know what your head looks like as the eye level of other saints corresponds to the sole of your foot
(sar bhala kya koi jane ki hai kaisa tera auliya milte hain ankhen vo hai talua tera)[46]

For Qadiris he is the Ghaus or Qutb, "on (whom) the government of the world is believed to depend".[47]

Imam Ahmad Raza explained the invisible hierarchy of saints as follows:

Every ghaus has two ministers. The ghaus is known as Abd Ullah. The ministers on the right is called Abd ur-Rab, and the one on the left is called Abd ul-Malik. In this (spiritual) world, the minister on the left is superior to the one on the right, unlike the worldly *sultanat*. The reason is that this is the sultanat of the heart and the heart is on the left side. Every ghaus . . . (has a special relationship with) the Prophet.[48]

Imam Ahmad Raza went on to name the succession of ghaus and their ministers since the time of the Prophet, down to Shaikh Abd ul-Qadir Jilani. The first ghaus in this list was the Prophet, followed by the four *khulafa-e rashidun* (Hazrat Abu Bakr, Hazrat Umar, Hazrat Usman and Hazrat Ali) (may Allah be pleased with them all), each of whom was in turn first the minister of the left hand to the current ghaus, and at the latter's death, replaced him in that position. They were followed by Hasan and Husain, until Shaikh Abd ul-Qadir Jilani. The latter was the last occupant of the "Ghausiyat-e Kubra;" those who have followed have been, and will continue to be, deputies *(na'ib)*. Ultimately the Imam Mahdi will receive the Ghausiyat-e Kubra.[49]

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It is to be noted that in this scheme of things, the Prophet and the first four khalifas stand at the head of the spiritual hierarchy which ends in Shaikh Abd ul-Qadir Jilani. In this way the lines of succession by which spiritual, gnostic knowledge is handed down coincide with the ultimate sources of authority for knowledge of shar'ia which, of course, also culminate in the Prophet.[50] Imam Ahmad Raza explicitly made this connection in one of his poems addressing the Shaikh:

Your are mufti of the shar, qazi of the millat and expert in the secrets of knowledge, Abd ul-Qadir
(mufti-e shar bhi hai qazi-e millat bhi hai ilm-e asrar se mahir bhi hai abd ul-qadir)[51]

Hazrat Abd ul-Qadir Jilani's relationship with the Prophet was not merely one of spiritual lineage, however. It was also one of genealogical descent, for the Shaikh's mother was a descendant of Hazrat Imam Husain, and his father of Hazrat Imam Hasan. This double genealogical link with the Prophet earned the Shaikh one of his many names, that of "Hasani ul-Husaini."[52] For Qadiri followers this genealogy was of great importance for, as S.A.A. Rizvi notes, "as a direct descendant of the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) (through his daughter, Hazrat Fatima), Hazrat Shaikh Abdu'l Qadir was believed to have inherited every one of his ancestor's spiritual achievements."[53]. Imam Ahmad Raza's poetry is again helpful in understanding the importance of this factor to him personally. In the verses below, Imam Ahmad Raza uses metaphors from nature to describe the Shaikh. It should be understood that the words "pure", "beautiful", and "lovely", stand for Hazrat Fatima, Hazrat Hasan, and Hazrat Husain respectively:

Prophetic shower, Alvi season, pure garden
Beautiful flower, your fragrance is lovely
Prophetic shade, Alvi constellation, pure station
Beautiful moon, your radiance is lovely
Prophetic sun, Alvi mountain, pure quarry

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Beautiful ruby, your brilliance is lovely
(Nabvi menh, Alvi fasl, batuli gulshan
Hasani phul Husaini hai mahakna tera
Nabvi zil, Alvi burj, Batuli manzil
Hasani chand Husaini hai ujala tera
Nabvi khur, Alvi koh, Bauli ma'adun
Hasani la'l Husaini hai tajalla tera)[54]

These verses indicate that Imam Ahmad Raza saw Hazrat Shaikh Abd ul-Qadir as the repository of the virtues of each one of his illustrious ancestors, not only that of the Prophet. This is the clearest indication we have had so far of his belief that religious authority flows both spiritually and genealogically. Imam Ahmad Raza's choice of Sayyid as his own pir had already indicated the importance he attached to genealogical descent from the Prophet. Further evidence that spiritual authority is handed down genealogically was his nomination of his eldest son for the sajjada-nishini.

As with other holders of religious authority, Hazrat Abd ul-Qadir Jilani was a very real presence in Imam Ahmad Raza's personal life as lived from day to day. He told his followers of a time when the shaikh had answered his appeal for help during a visit he had made to Nizam ud-Din Aulia's tomb in Delhi. The tomb was surrounded by musicians and singers, making what seemed to him "a great commotion" and causing him much distress. Invoking Shaikh Abd ul-Qadir's help with the words "Ya Ghaus," he also addressed Nizam ud-Din, saying, "I have come to your court. Release me from this noise." As he entered the tomb suddenly silence reigned. He thought the musicians had gone away, but as soon as he left the tomb, the noise returned in full swing. Then he knew that the Shaikh had answered his prayer.[55]

Hazrat Abd ul-Qadir was also a constant presence in his life in terms of ritual practice. This included saying the Fatiha in the Shaikh's name when a wish was granted, and celebration of the Shaikh's birth date on the eleventh of every month, a

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ceremony known as *gyarahwin*. Maulana Zafar ud-Din Bihari, Imam Ahmad Raza's biographer, records an occasion when someone asked Imam Ahmad Raza to conduct the Fatiha over some food, offered in the Shaikh's name in thanksgiving:

Imam Ahmad Raza first had everyone do *wuzu* (ritual ablution). The food was placed in a room and everyone gathered together in it. They faced the direction of Baghdad which is eighteen degrees north of Bareilly. Imam Ahmad Raza directed everyone to say Bismillah, and to follow this up with the *durud Ghausia,* seven times. Then they were to read a formula (in praise of the Prophet) once, the al-Hamd Sharif (Sura Fatiha) once, the Ayat al-Kursi once, and repeat "Qul huwa-Allah" seven times. After reading the *durud Ghausia* thrice, they should offer *nazar* (the food) to the sarkar-e Baghdad (Abd ul-Qadir Jilani). (After completing the reading) everyone said Bismillah (once more), and sat down to eat. When they had finished, Imam Ahmad Raza told them not to wash their hands immediately, but to turn in the direction of Iraq and raise their hands to do *dua* (prayer of supplication for Abd ul-Qadir). He said, the *sadat* (pl. of Sayyid) are in the front row, in front of everyone else. After they had said the *dua*, everyone washed their hands carefully, as he instructed, and he moved the used water to a safe place, commanding each one to drink a little of it rather than rinse it out.[56]

It remains only to highlight once again the significance of the Qadiri order and its founder, Hazrat Shaikh Abd ul-Qadir Jilani, to Imam Ahmad Raza in terms of religious authority. Most importantly, the Shaikh was a means *(wasila)* of intercession with the Prophet and thence with God, and he was seen, consequently, as a kindly, caring saint who has his petitioners' interests at heart. His Sayyid ancestry, moreover, made him a perfect intercessionary agent, as religious authority was seen to flow through both spiritual and genealogical lines.

Indeed, it appears to us that we are now in a position to better understand the significance to Imam Ahmad Raza of

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Sayyid ancestry. In the previous chapter, we saw that Sayyids are generally considered, by a large number of Muslims, to be imbued with *barkat*, or grace, by virtue of their descent from the Prophet, and that this quality may be passed on to others through contact with relics associated with them. When one considers that barkat is itself a source of expression of religious authority, it becomes apparent that Sayyids "automatically" embody religious authority - though personal spiritual worth is of course also of great importance in determining how a man, or a pir or shaikh, are evaluated. Maulana Zafar ud-Din Bihari wrote in his biography that Imam Ahmad Raza always looked upon Sayyids primarily as a "part of the Prophet", and only secondarily at their personal qualities. Consequently, it was inconceivable to him that a Sayyid could be placed in the socially inferior role of servitor: Sayyids were to be served, regardless of material or social standing.[57]

A second, and rather different, point that emerges from this examination of the place Hazrat Shaikh Abd ul-Qadir Jilani occupied in Imam Ahmad Raza's thought. The evidence from Imam Ahmad Raza's own life, his sayings as recorded in his *Malfuzat*, and his writings, together with what we know of the nature of the ritual activities he participated in, all indicate (as noted previously) that esoteric beliefs and practices had to be within the bounds of the shari'a, or, as Muslims would say "with" shari'a.

Imam Ahmad Raza as a "Lover of the Prophet" (Ashiq-e Rasul)

In all that has gone so far, we have seen how the Prophet was the focal point and apex of religious and spiritual authority for Imam Ahmad Raza, the goal to which devotion to pir and shaikh lead. As the quotation at the start of this chapter indicates, for him all such forms of devotion are undertaken ultimately in order to reach God. His writings on the Prophet are extensive: numerous fatawa deal with the Prophet's attributes, as do his divan of na'at poetry and his *Malfuzat*. In the discussion that

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follows, we intend to highlight the main themes addressed by Imam Ahmad Raza's poetry and *Malfuzat* insofar as they concern the Prophet. We do not attempt an exhaustive treatment of the subject, for that would be more appropriate to a study of sufism per se and thus would fall outside the limitations of this enquiry.

Veneration of the Prophet has a long history in sufi and popular devotionalism. It goes back to al-Hallaj (d. 922), Sana'i (d. 1131), Ibn Arabi (d. 1240), Rumi (d. 1273), and among many others.[58]. Imam Ahmad Raza's *Malfuzat* indicate his familiarity with the lives and writings of a range of sufis, such as Junaid Baghdadi (d. 910), the Persian poet Rumi, the Egyptian poet al-Busiri (d. 1298) who wrote the *Burda* in praise of the Prophet, and the Egyptian Abd ul-Wahhab Sharani (d. 1565), for example.[59] Given his vast erudition, it is likely that his vision of the Prophet and of the latter's place in the life of the believer was shaped by this rich sufi tradition of veneration of the Prophet. Schimmel points as well to the popularity of na'at poetry in the subcontinent since the Mughal period, written first in Persian and later in Urdu and in regional languages such as Sindhi.[60] Much of this poetry would have been familiar to Imam Ahmad Raza.

The resemblance in the themes touched on in the devotional poetry of the Muslim world generally, and those that Imam Ahmad Raza writes about, indicates that he was, indeed writing within the context of this larger tradition. Schimmel describes the poets' concerns as follows:

> From earliest times, Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), the Messenger of God, had been the ideal for the faithful Muslim. His behaviour, his acts, and his words served as models for the pious, who tried to imitate him as closely as possible even in the smallest details of outward life . . . All the noble qualities of his body and his soul were described in terms of marked admiration.[61]

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Schimmel places the beginning of a "genuine Muhammad mysticism" in the early eighth century A.D., with the first formulation of the "Nur-e Muhammadi" concept that Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was created from God's light and preceded the creation of the world and of Adam. In the tenth century Hallaj took the idea a step further, writing that the Prophet is both the "cause and goal of creation." Proof of this belief was cited from the hadis, "If thou hadst not been, I would not have created the universe."[62] In subsequent centuries the concept of the "Muhammadan light" was further developed until the theory of *fana fi'r-Rasul* "annihilation in the Prophet" emerged in later .sufism. The Prophet had by now definitely become an intermediary between man and God.[63]

Imam Ahmad Raza's writings, whether in his capacity as a mufti writing fatawa, as a sufi perceptor giving guidance to his followers in his *Malfuzat*, or as a poet expressing his personal longings and passions, all indicate that he held views such as those described by Schimmel. One of his ideas about the Prophet which is worth exploring here is that of the relationship between God and the Prophet, for clarification on this point will help us understand one of the major areas of difference between Imam Ahmad Raza and his followers Ahle-Sunnat on the one side and Wahhabis on the other. Imam Ahmad Raza's own relationship of "love" for the Prophet should consequently also become clearer.

In his *Malfuzat*, Imam Ahmad Raza responded to a query about the Prophet's intercession with God as follows:

> Only the Prophet can reach God without intermediaries. This is why, on the Day of the Resurrection, all the prophets, Walis, and Ulama will gather in the Prophet's presence and beg him to intercede for them with God. . . . The Prophet cannot have an intermediary because he is perfect *(kamil)*. Perfection is concomitant on *(mutafara)* existence *(vujud)*: and the existence

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of the world is dependent upon the existence of the Prophet (which in turn is dependent on the existence of God). In short, faith in the preeminence of the Prophet leads one to believe that only Allah has existence, everything else is his shadow.[64]

The hierarchy, then, is clear: God, the Prophet, the other prophets, the saints, and so on. Within this framework of the Prophet's essentially dependent relationship to God, however, there are no limits to the qualities that may be ascribed to him. Imam Ahmad Raza quotes Allama Abd ul-Haqq Muhaddis Dehlawi, and the Egyptian poet Hazrat Allama al Busiri, in support of his view that:

> setting aside the claim that Christians make (about Jesus being God and God's son), you can say whatever you wish in praise of the Prophet for there was no limit to the Prophet's qualities, except that he is not God.[65]

This belief in the practically limitless virtues and abilities of the Prophet, given him by God of His own will, is the basis for Imam Ahmad Raza's assertion that the Prophet had knowledge of the unseen *(ilm-e qhaib)*. This knowledge was said by Imam Ahmad Raza to include (though by no means to be limited to) the five things specifically said in the Quran to be known to God.[66]

In certain respects, the God/Prophet relationship is not as clear as the above quotations would suggest, however, in the following passage from the *Malfuzat*, Imam Ahmad Raza made the point that the Prophet is very close to God":

> (The Prophet had to teach his followers how to recite the Quran in the early days of Islam.) After listening to the recitation of a sahabi, Abu Musa Ash'ari, at night (from his own house, not in the same location as Abu Musa) he praised his reading the next morning. The sahabi said, O Prophet, had I known that you were listening, I would have read with even greater fevour. . . . (Imam Ahmad Raza comments) The sahabi himself said he

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would have recited more forcefully for the Prophet, and the Prophet didn't object. This proves that reading for the Prophet was not comparable to reading for one other than God (ghair-e khuda). The Prophet's business *(mo'amla)* is Allah's business.[67]

Imam Ahmad Raza also gave other examples of the identification of the Prophet and Allah, such as Hazrat A'isha's (may Allah be pleased with her) statement that she was repenting to Allah and the Prophet. On another occasion, Imam Ahmad Raza was asked whether it was permissible to use lanterns and carpets (and similar expensive decorative items) at a *milad* function. He responded that it was permissible as long as the purpose of the decoration was to honour the Prophet, rather than some selfish or worldly motive, and reported this story:

Imam Ghazzali wrote in his *Ihya al-Ulum*, on the basis of a writing by Sayyid Abu Ali Rudhbari, that a believer had organized a *zikr* meeting. He had installed a thousand lights in the meeting hall. A guest arrived, and seeing the lights, began to leave (in disapproval of the host's extravagance). The organizer of the function held him back, took him inside, and said, Any light that has been lit for one other than God should be put out. The man tried to do so, but none of the lights could be extinguished.[68]

These quotations are rather startling at first in their apparent closeness of the Prophet with God. We know from numerous clearly states passages in Imam Ahmad Raza's works that he did not equate the Prophet with God. What we have here, we think is evidence of Imam Ahmad Raza's unusually strong sense of Hazrat Muhammad's (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) prophecy itself, in terms of the uniquely close relationship to God that this implied. We are helped in our attempt to understand this by William Graham, who, in his study of the hadis qudsi or divine saying, writes:

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In the Divine Saying one sees perhaps most clearly that aspect of Prophet Muhammad's (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) mission that is most often ignored: his genuinely *prophetic* function as the ordinary man who is transformed by His "calling" to "rise and warn" - not only through His "Book", but in all his words and acts. . . . Outside the scriptural Revelation, God's revealing goes on, and most vividly so in the action and speech of His Messenger. In terms of religious authority, especially within the realm of personal faith and personal piety, the Quran and the varied materials in the Hadith form not two separate homogeneous bodies of material, but one continuum of religious truth that encompasses a heterogeneous array of materials.[69]

Imam Ahmad Raza, like the early *ummat* that Graham describes in his study, appears not to have made any distinction between Hazrat Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), the prophet, recipient and Messenger of God's immutable word, and Hazrat Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), the guide or leader,. For him, the Prophet was "in all his words and acts" prophetic, and thus extrahuman. While all believing Muslims too, see Hazrat Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) as extrahuman in perhaps indefinable ways, by virtue of his calling, Imam Ahmad Raza seems to have had a heightened awareness of Hazrat Muhammad's (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) "genuinely prophetic function," causing him to place the Prophet at the center of his own life as a believer. As may be expected, these ideas are expressed particularly forcefully in his poetry. In the following verses, the subject is Hazrat Muhammad's (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) close relationship with God:

The two worlds seek to please God
God seeks to please Mohammad
(khuda ki riza chahte hain do alam
khuda chahta hai riza-e muhammad)
Muhammad is the threshold to God

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God is the threshold to Muhammad
(muhammad bara-e janab-e ilahi
janab-e ilahi bara-e muhammad)
A vow was made for all time
to unite God's happiness with Muhammad's
(baham ahd bandhe hain wasl abad ka
riza-e khuda aur riza-e muhammad)[70]
(peace and blessings of Allah be upon him)

In the following verse Hazrat Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) is seen as God's beloved, completely near with Him:

I call you "Master" for you are the beloved of the Lord; there can be no "yours" and "mine" between the beloved and the lover

(main to malik hi kahunga ki ho malik ke habib; yani mahbub o muhibb men nahin mera tera)[71]

On the Prophet's night ascension (*meraj*), he went as bridegroom:

You went as a bridegroom of light
on your head a chaplet of light,
wedding clothes of light on your body
(kya bana nam-e khuda asra ka dulha nur ka
sar pe sihra nur ka, bar men shahana nur ka)[72]

As for his own relationship to the Prophet, Imam Ahmad Raza made it a conscious object of his life to immerse himself in serving the Prophet in whatever capacity he could. Small details about him say this most eloquently: he used to sign himself as Abd al-Musatafa the slave of ("Mustafa", "the Chosen," being one of Hazrat Muhammad's (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) names) on all correspondence, fatawa, and other writings. When asked about this at one of his daily meetings, he replied that the name was the sign of good judgment (*husn-e*

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zann) in a Muslim, and cited a hadis in which Hazrat Umar was reported to have said that he considered himself to be the Prophet's slave and servant *(khadim).*[73] On another occasion, he told those gathered about him that if his heart were to be broken into two pieces, it would be found that on one part would be inscribed the first part of the *kalima,* "There is no God but Allah," and on the other would be written the second half, "And Hazrat Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) is His Prophet."[74]

As was the case with Hazrat Shaikh Abd ul-Qadir Jilani who actively intervened on his behalf from time to time, or was perceived by Imam Ahmad Raza to do so, so too did he experience the Prophet's presence in a very personal sense in his life. When he was learning the art of divination *(ilm-e jafr),* the Prophet appeared to him in a dream giving him permission *(izn)* to proceed with his study.[75] On his second *hajj* in 1906, he spent a month at Madina, the Prophet's birthplace, being present there during the Prophet's birth anniversary celebrations on 12 Rabi ul-awwal. He spent this entire period, he said, at the Prophet's tomb, taking time off only once to visit the shrine of one Maulana Daghastani, and another time to go to *(ziyarat)* the tomb of Hazrat Hamzah, (may Allah be pleased with him), the Prophet's uncle. When he met the Ulama of Madina to engage in learned discussions, it was in the precincts of the Prophet's tomb.[76] This was, for Imam Ahmad Raza, the holiest place on earth; he was willing to go so far, indeed, as to say that tomb of the Prophet was better than Ka'aba, as in this verse:

O pilgrims! come to the tomb of the king of kings
you have seen the Ka'ba, now see the Ka'ba of the Ka'ba
(hajio! ao shahanshah ka roza dekho
ka'ba dekh chuke ka'be ke ka'ba dekho)[77]

(There is unanimity of the Ahl-e Sunnat Ulama throughout the world regarding this matter).

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In his belief, the Prophet is very much alive in his tomb, leading "a life of sense and feeling," as do the other prophets, as it is proved from Hadis.

From his grave he helps his "guests", those who visit his tomb, in whatever way he sees fit.[78]

It was particularly in the hope of being honored with a vision of the Prophet at his tomb in Madina, Maulana Zafar ud-Din Bihari writes, that Imam Ahmad Raza had undertaken his second hajj in 1906. While he was waiting for the Prophet to appear before him, Imam Ahmad Raza spent the first night composing a *ghazal;* the next night he presented the ghazal to the Prophet, and it was after this that "his fortune awoke. His watchful, vigilant eyes were blessed with the presence of the Prophet."[79]

Imam Ahmad Raza's personal devotion to the Prophet shine through in his poetry. Some poems have become popular nationwide in the Urdu speaking world and are recited particularly on the Prophet's birth anniversary. The simplicity, humility in the presence of the awesomeness of the Prophet, and grateful confidence in his forgiveness with which Imam Ahmad Raza addresses the Prophet, are apparent over and over again, as in these verses from the extremely popular poem *Karoron Durud:*

I'm tired, you are my sanctuary
I'm bound, you are my refuge
My future is in your hands.
Upon you be thousands of blessings
(khasta hun aur tum ma'az basta hun aur tum malaz
age jo shai ki riza, tum pe karoron durud)
My sins are limitless,
but you are forgiving and merciful
Forgive me my faults and offences.
Upon you be thousands of blessings
(garche hain behad qasur, tum ho afu ghafur

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bakhsh do jurm o khata tum pe karoron durud)[80]

It was entirely consistent with Imam Ahmad Raza's personal piety and devotion to the Prophet that the latter's birth anniversary on 12 Rabi' ul-awwal, known as *milad un-Nabi*, was celebrated on a grand scale. It was a time of rejoicing, eagerly anticipated by Imam Ahmad Raza and his followers Ahle Sunni. The *Dabdaba-e Sikandari* reported in January 1916 that on this occasion "the Muslims of Bareilly, Rampur, Pilibhit, Shahjahanpur and other towns came to Zayarat to A'la Hazrat (Imam Ahmad Raza)", for this was one of the three annual occasions on which he consented to give a sermon.[81] In fact, it appears from Zafar ud-Din Bihari's account that he gave two sermons that day, one at 8 a.m. in the morning after the fajr prayer, and again in the evening after the 'isha prayer. The sermons were delivered at his ancestral house (referred to as "Purani Haveli," or "Old Family Home"), in which his younger brother Hasan Raza lived. In addition to the Ulama who came from outside Bareilly, the elite of the city was also invited to attend. People considered it so important to listen to Imam Ahmad Raza on this day, Maulana Zafar ud-Din writes that no one of eminence in the town organized a similar gathering of their own at the same time.[82]

Preparations for the event began around dawn. The townspeople - Imam Ahmad Raza's murids, followers, and admirers and fellow Sunni Muslims - bathed, donned their new clothes, and hurried to the mosque to greet him there at the time of the fajr prayer. After the obligatory prayers *(fariz)* had been offered, people lined up waiting for him to finish saying his prayers and hoped to get close enough to him to kiss his hand.

Shortly thereafter, and again at night at the "Purani Haveli," began the recitation of na'at poetry by a trained reciter, recalling the Prophet's qualities. Imam Ahmad Raza ascended the *minbar* (pulpit) exactly at the moment of *qiyam* (literally "to stand") when everyone in the meeting stood up at the remembrance of the Prophet's birth. Imam Ahmad Raza stood in

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silence for several minutes, for his entrance had caused a tumult among the crowd, which was swelling in numbers and finding it hard to fit into the meeting hall. When the shoving and pushing had quietened down, and he began his sermon with the words "Bismillah-ir-Rahman-ir-Rahim."

In his sermon Imam Ahmad Raza said that God, who is intrinsic *(zat)*, chose the Prophet as His means of bringing the extrinsic *(ghair)* world to Him. Everything comes from Allah, and Hazrat Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) distributes what He gives. The other prophets are a reflection or shadow of Hazrat Mohammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), like stars reflected in water.

God made Hazrat Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) from His light before He made anything else. Everything begins with the Prophet. He was the first prophet as God made him before He made anything else, and he was the last as well, being the final prophet come to this world. Being the first light, the sun and all light originates from the Prophet. All the atoms, stones, trees, and birds recognized Hazrat Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) as Prophet, as did Gabriel, and the other prophets.

The central intent of the *majlis-e milad* is to recall God's blessings *(nemat)*. Ultimately, the majlis-e milad does what God commanded when He said, "And recall your Lord's blessing": *(wa Ama bi-ne'mati raba-ka fa-hadis)*. It reminds Muslims that the Prophet was born and came into being in historical time in the world *(tashrif-awari)*, and recalls his excellent qualities. The collective partaking of food (which follows at the end of a milad meeting), Imam Ahmad Raza said, is not central to the milad's purpose; nor, however, is there any harm in it, for it is an invitation of people "for a good purpose" *(dawat ala'l-khair)*, and is therefore necessarily good.[83] Allah has said, "What is better than that which brings one toward Allah?"

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Imam Ahmad Raza reminded his audience that God had brought all the prophets together and told them about the future prophethood of Hazrat Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). All, on God's command, bound themselves to believe in his prophecy, and were witness to the fact that the others did so. Thus, God was the first to speak of the Prophet, and the first majlis to mention the Prophet was this meeting of the prophets. In keeping with this covenant, all the prophets from Adam to Jesus have remembered the Prophet's coming and his birth. Speaking about the circumstances of the birth itself,[84] he recalled its joyous celebration by the angels and the fear with which the event was viewed by the devils *(shayatin)*. The meeting ended with a na'at calling upon God's blessing *(durud)* on the Prophet.

The practice of holding milad meetings, like that of celebrating the urs of a saint, reading the Fatiha in thanksgiving over an offering of food, or holding gyarahwin functions in honour of Hazrat Abd ul-Qadir Jilani, was a matter of intense debate and argument among the Sunni and Wahhabi Ulama at the turn of the nineteenth century. The Deobandi (a group of Wahhabis) Ulama sought "to avoid fixed holidays like the *maulud* of the Prophet, the *urs* of the saints," and other feasts;[85] the Ahl-e Hadis (another group of Wahhabis), taking an even more disapproving attitude, "prohibited *urs* and *qawwalli*, particularly opposing the *giyarhwin* of Hazrat Shikh Abdu'l Qadir Gilani. . . . They prohibited all Zayarats, even that to the grave of the Prophet at Medina".

Apart from the controversy over the permissibility of holding a milad, however, debate also centred over a particular aspect of the milad function itself, namely the practice of standing up (qiyam) during a sermon when the Prophet's birth was recalled, and blessings were called upon the Prophet *(salat o salam)*. Imam Ahmad Raza, answering a query about the permissibility of qiyam in a fatawa entitled *Iqamat ul-Qiyama*,[86] responded by saying that the practice was viewed as commendable *(mustahsan)* by a majority of Ulama throughout

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the Islamic world - particularly mentioning leading Ulama in the Haramain - for two reasons: first, that it had been in practice for hundreds of years, though admittedly it was not current in the first three generations of Islam.[87] Imam Ahmad Raza considered this a valid argument on the basis of the hadis that what Muslims *(ahl-e Islam)* consider to be good is good in God's sight t and that a practice which hundreds of Ulama have considered t be good over hundreds of years cannot be bad.[88] Second, standing up when the Prophet's birth was recalled, Imam Ahmad Raza argued, was an expression of respect and honour *(ta'zim)* for him.[89] Standing up as a mark of respect for the Prophet, was, for these reasons, a meritorious act that would earn great reward (sawab).[90] Imam Ahmad Raza did assert, as Metcalf writes, that the Prophet was actually present (though invisible to the audience) at the time of qiyam,[91] though he cited with obvious approval and concurrence a statement by a Hanbali mufti that the Prophet;s spirit is present at this time.[92]

The Importance of Intercession in the Exercise of Spiritual Authority

This chapter has highlighted the importance for Imam Ahmad Raza of intercession on behalf of the believer with God, a role fulfilled most especially by the pir, the shaikh, and the Prophet, though not limited to them. As Metcalf points out, the power of mediation is accessible to many: "Not only the dead but the living could be intermediaries," including children.[93] However, the intervention or mediations of certain categories of persons is more powerful than that of others. That of the Prophet is best of all.

Imam Ahmad Raza believed that such mediatory power (or grace, *barkat)* inheres most especially in lineal descendants of the Prophet; hence his marked respect for all Sayyids, regardless of social standing. Perhaps this was a significant factor, as well, in his (and his father's) choice of Shah Al-e Rasul of Marahrah, who was a Sayyid, as his pir. It also

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accounts in part for his devotion to Hazrat Shaikh Abd ul-Qadir Jilani.

As Imam Ahmad Raza's care in observing birth or death anniversaries such as urs, gyarhawin, and Milad, indicates, he believed strongly that the dead continued "to live" in a spiritual sense, and that they retained a specially close relationship with places they had been associated with during their lives. Moreover, their spirits were specially alert and their grace heightened on certain days (their birth or death anniversaries). For these reasons, supplicants were well-advised to observe such anniversaries, and exhibit the greatest respect for tombs. Such behaviour, pleasing to the saint whose intercession was sought, would find favour with him, and therefore be a source of benefit *(sawab)* to the believer.

While having a pir, or visiting the tombs of saints and Ulama in far-flung places were not on any account on par with the performance of obligatory ritual acts such as prayer or fasting, or substitutes for them, in Imam Ahmad Raza's eyes they could only be a source of good for the believer, a means of succor and aid. As he said in his fatawa in answer to the question as to why one needed a pir, it was absurd to imagine that one could reach God without an intermediary. One senses in all his writings and in his *Malfuzat* the humility of one who believed he needed help in getting access to God, and in working out his own salvation. He saw the Ahl-e Hadis or "Wahhabi" position, rejecting the need for intermediaries, as a sign of their arrogance.

As for the Prophet, his status was so elevated, and his closeness to God so great, that for Imam Ahmad Raza the Prophet had in a sense a closeness to God as the center of his devotions. While Imam Ahmad Raza's writings make clear that the Prophet's qualities and abilities were God-given, and thus contingent, while only God is intrinsic, the fact of prophecy itself had such compelling force in Imam Ahmad Raza's judgement that he viewed love of the Prophet as the best way of

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showing love of God. In all he did or wrote about, love of the Prophet was a motivating factor.

In fact, it was a standard Imam Ahmad Raza consistently applied in drawing boundaries between "right" and "wrong" action, and in distinguishing between Muslims who were on the right or wrong track. In our view it would be a mistake to conclude that because Imam Ahmad Raza supported a mediatory, custom-laden "Islam", he "made less of a demand for individual responsibility" on himself or his followers than did the Deobandis or others.[94] On the contrary, his whole life was spent defining how a Muslim should conduct him or herself in his or her time and day, and in punctiliously following these standards of conduct and belief in his own life, while at the same time distancing himself from those of whose beliefs or practice he disapproved. We have also tried to show that he attached great importance to the intention with which an action was undertaken, and stressed the importance of having the right intention. What emerges, we think, is the distinctiveness of his "style", compared with that of Indian "Wahhabis" in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, caused by the determining role of his life of the Prophet and of his defence of the Prophet against perceived disrespect or slight.

Notes:

1. We are deliberately using the term "shaikh" here to denote the founder of one of the major sufi orders, as distinct from a personal pir, although the two terms are generally used interchangeably. This appears to be the only way of making the distinction between two entirely different levels of belief and ritual practice.

2. p. 55. While the hagiographical literature sees this lack of a period of instruction as a sign of Imam Ahmad Raza's high attainments, and gives him center stage as it were in this event, the decision to seek bay'a from Shah Al-e Rasul was probably made by Maulana Naqi Ali.

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Imam Ahmad Raza's father, on Maulana Abd ul-Qadir Badayuni's advice. Maulana Naqi Ali and Imam Ahmad Raza did not know Shah Al-e Rasul personally. Why did Abd ul-Qadir, who was also a pir, not make father and son his own disciples? It's probable that they had expressed a wish to become disciples of a Sayyid, which he, as a descendant of an Usmani family, was not.

3. See, e.g. *Malfuzat,* vol. 1, p. 83; vol. 3, pp. 68-69.

4. See, e.g., *Dabdaba-e Sikandari,* 10 January 1910 (vol. 45, No. 50), p. 9; *ibid.*, 26 December 1910 (vol. 46, no. 50), pp. 12-13; *ibid.*, 18 December 1911 (vol. 47, no. 51), p. 3.

5. *Ibid.*, 1 August 1910 (vol. 46, no. 29), p. 6. The occasion for this wa'z was an urs-e Nuri at Marahrah. A *mujaddid* is a renewer of the religious law, who seeks to ensure that the shari'ah is implemented and followed in peoples' lives. The effort of renewal is called *tajdid.*

6. Zafar ud-Din Bihari, *Hayat-e A'la Hazrat,* pp. 97-98, 114.

7. *Malfuzat,* vol. 3, pp. 29-30.

8. Indeed, it appears that the impending death of a pir causes large numbers of people to seek bay'a from him before it is too late.

9. *Naqa us-Salafa fi Ahkam il-Bay'a Wa'l Khilafa,* 1319/1901. Published by the Maktaba Mihiria Rizvia, College Road, Daska (Pakistan). p. 9. The date of the question is 25 Jamadi ul-awwal 1318/August 1900.

10. *Ibid.*, pp. 9-11. This is based on a hadis that says, "When someone has no shaikh, Satan becomes his

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shaikh." See Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (Chapel Hill, 1975), p. 103.

11. *Naqa' us-Salafa fi Ahkam il-Bay'a wa'l Khilafa*, p. 12.

12. *Malfuzat*, vol. 3, pp. 59-60.

13. *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 65.

14. *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 45.

15. *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 41.

16. I*bid.*, vol. 3, pp. 22-23.

17. It is virtually impossible to estimate who these were, and how many. In addition to his two sons, Maulana Hamid Raza Khan and Maulana Mustafa Raza Khan, the names of many others are known, such as Haji Kifayat Ullah, and Hafiz Yaqin ud-Din Qadiri. The difficulty with identifying Imam Ahmad Raza's disciples is that the names cited in the literature are often of *khalifas* rather than murids. The difference between them will be discussed below. See *Sirat-e A'la Hazrat*, pp. 124, 132; *Hayat-e A'la Hazrat*, pp. 139-40.

18. By "silsila" is here meant a chain of discipleship that culminates in a particular pir, not a sufi order. The name Razvi or Razvia derived from the "Raza" in Imam Ahmad Raza's name. A person who wrote "Razvi" after his name (probably as part of a string of epithets, written in descending order of importance, such as "Sunni Hanafi Qadiri Razvi") would be signalling the pir to whom he bore allegiance.

19. *Dabdaba-e Sikandari*, 8 November 1915 (vol. 51, no. 51), p. 3.

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20. *Ibid.*, vol. dt?

21. See Muhammad Masud Ahmad, *Neglected Genius of the East: an introduction to the life and the works of Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan of Bareilly (India)* 1272/1856-1340/1921 (Raza Academy).

22. *Naqa us-Salafa fi Ahkam il-Bay'a wa'l Khilafa*, op. cit., p. 14.

23. *Ibid.*, pp. 15-21

24. *Malfuzat*, vol. 1, p. 62.

25. *Ibid.*, vol. 3, pp. 9-11.

26. *Ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 70-71.

27. The individual, he explained on another occasion, is composed of *nafs* (the base instincts), *qalb* ("heart" in a metaphoric sense), and *ruh* (spirit). *Ibid.*, vol. 3, p. 63. For a discussion of the background of this tripartite division in sufi thought, see Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, pp. 191-92. For the importance of "intention" in sufism, see Padwick, *Muslim Devotions*, op. cit., pp. 52-54.

28. *Malfuzat*, vol. 4, p. 33. The translation is by William A. Graham, *Divine Word and Prophetic Word in Early Islam: a Reconsideration of the Sources, with Special Reference to the Divine Saying or Hadith Qudsi* (Mouton: The Hague, Paris, 1975), pp. 127-30.

29. *Malfuzat*, vol. 1, pp. 29-30.

30. *Ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 91, 93.

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31. *Ibid.*, vol. 3, p. 63.

32. *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 102; vol. 3, p. 2.

33. *Ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 88-89, 108-12.

34. *Ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 86, 97; vol. 3, p. 44.

35. In this context see Francis Robinson, "Islam and Muslim Society in South Asia," in *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, 17 (1983), pp. 194-95, wherein he refers to the "special chemistry of personal contact" as a factor "spreading Islamic knowledge and bringing about a wider observance of Islamic law."

36. "The Sufi Shaikh as a Source of Authority in Mediaeval India," pp. 57-78, in Marc Gaborieau, ed., *Islam and Society in South Asia* (Paris, 1986).

37. *Ibid.*, pp. 61, 67.

38. *Hayat e A'la Hazrat*, pp. 40, 46, 50, 131, 181.

39. *Ibid.*, pp. 203-8.

40. *Ibid.*, pp. 189-92.

41. Ewing, op. cit., p. 142.

42. See *ibid.*, pp. 380-83, and Aftab ud-Din Ahmad's "Life-Sketch" in his translation of Abd ul-Qadir's *Futuh al-Ghaib ("The Revelations of the Unseen")* (Lahore, Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 1967), pp. 1-14, for a biographical note on Hazrat Abd ul-Qadir Jilani.

43. For a history of the Qadiri order in the subcontinent from the fifteenth century, when it was first introduced in that region, until the late nineteenth, see S.A.A. Rizvi, *A*

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History of Sufism in India, vol. 2, chap 2. Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers. Delhi, 1983.

44. Imam Ahmad Raza Khan, *Hada'iq-e Bakhshish* (Medina Publishing Co., Karachi, 1976), p 252

45. *Ibid.*, p. 249.

46. *Ibid.*, p. 233. This saying is extreinely popular and widely known among Qadiris. For comments see, for example, Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions*, pp. 247-48.

47. John A. Subhan, *Sufism, Its Saints and Shrines* (Samuel Weiser Inc., New York, 1970), p. 104.

48. *Malfuzat*, vol. 1, p. 102.

49 *Ibid.* Subhan, op. cit., pp. 104-6, gives the details of this hierarchy, which is considerably more complex than this brief summary indicates. Schimmel suggests the concepts of the *qutb* (or ghaus, for the two terms are interchangeable) is "the highest spiritual guide of the faithful".

50. Apparently, Imam Ahmad Raza was here following a scheme outlined by Hazrat Ali ul-Hujviri, the eleventh-century saint popularly known in the subcontinent as Data Ganj Bakhsh. See his *Kashf ul-Mahjub*.

51. *Hada'iq-e Bakhshish*, Part 1, p. 27. (Note: the reference here is to a different edition from the one cited before. This edition is also published by the Medina Publishing Co., Karachi, but it has no date. Unlike the 1976 edition, it has no annotations. It has a slightly different collection of poems, and occasionally, gives dates of composition, again unlike the 1976 edition. Hereafter, "n.d." or "1976 ed." will indicate which edition is being cited.)

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52. Subhan, op. cit., p. 176.

53. Rizvi, op. cit., p. 54.

54. *Hada'iq-e Bakhshish*, 1976 ed., p. 234.

55. *Malfuzat*, vol. 3, p. 59. Although Imam Ahmad Raza had invoked the help of both Shaikh Hazrat Abd ul-Qadir and Hazrat Nizam ud-Din Auliya, he interpreted this event as a miracle *(karamat)* by Shaikh Abd ul-Qadir alone. The latter's miracles are numerous. Many are recorded in the secondary literature in English, and are not being mentioned in this account.

56. *Hayat-e A'la Hazrat*, pp. 203-4.

57. See *Hayat-e A'la Hazrat*, p. 201. Maulana Zafar ud-Din recounts an incident in Imam Ahmad Raza's household when it was discovered that one of the household servants was a Sayyid. Imam Ahmad Raza immediately ordered everyone in the house to serve him instead, to consider the salary he had been receiving as *nazar* (a gift), and to ensure that he was fed and cared for.

58. Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions*, discusses the history of the veneration of the Prophet in the Muslim world specially as manifested in poetry, pp. 213-27. The subject receives fuller treatment in her *And Muhammed is His Messenger: the Veneration of the Prophet in Islamic Piety* (Vanguard Books Ltd. Lahore, Pakistan edition, 1987).

59. *Malfuzat*, vol. 1, pp. 43, 92-93; vol. 2, pp. 59-60: vol. 3, p. 29.

60. And *Muhammad is His Messenger*, op. cit., pp. 207-13.

61. *Mystical Dimensions*, pp. 213-14.

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62. *Ibid.*, pp. 214-15. Schimmel says this is a *hadis qudsi* (divine saying).

63. *Mystical Dimensions*, pp. 215-16.

64. Malfuzat, vol. 2, p. 58.

65. *Ibid.*, pp. 58-59.

66. "Known to God" did not mean not known to the Prophet, Imam Ahmad Raza argued. The five things were: knowledge of the Hour (of Resurrection), of when it would rain, of the sex of a child in the womb, of what a person would earn on the morrow, and of where one would die. (See Surah XXXI, verse 34.) Imam Ahmad Raza's position on the Prophet's ilm-e ghaib will be discussed in further chapters.

67. *Malfuzat*, vol. 2, pp. 44-45.

68. *Ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 99. Rudhbari, d. 934, was a contemporary of Hazrat Junaid Baghdadi. See Schimmel, Mystical Dimensions, p. 54.

69. William Graham, *Divine Word and Prophetic Word in Early Islam*, op. cit., p. 110. Graham argues that the very existence of the hadis qudsi, which is a record of a divine saying in the Prophet's words, and which thus straddles the boundaries of Quran and hadis.

70. *Hada'iq-e Bakhshish*, 1976 ed., p. 47.

71. *Ibid.*, p. 9.

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72. *Ibid.*, p. 13. A lengthy poem on the *meraj*, adjudged to be Imam Ahmad Raza's "masterpiece" by Professor Muhammad Masud Ahmad, a scholar on Imam Ahmad Raza and his work, again pictures the Prophet's ascension as a wedding. See *Hada'iq-e Bakhshish* (n.d.), Part 1, pp. 106-15. The imagery of a wedding is also central to the notion of urs, for, as noted, the word urs literally means "marriage".

73. *Malfuzat*, vol. 1, p. 43.

74. *Ibid.*, vol. 3, p. 67.

75. However, he gave it up of his own accord after some time. *Ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 82-83.

76. *Ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 34-35.

77. *Hada'iq-e Bakhshish*, 1976 ed., p. 96. Also see *Malfuzat*, vol. 2, pp. 47-48.

78. *Malfuzat*, vol. 3, pp. 28-30.

79. *Hayat-e A'la Hazrat*, pp. 43-44.

80. *Ibid.* (1976 ed.), p. 195. Although Imam Ahmad Raza did not approve of music and would not have put his verses to music, this poem, as many others he wrote, has a lilt and rhythm that makes it easy to remember and recite.

81. *Dabdaba-e Sikandari*, 24 January 1916 (vol. 52, no. 11), p. 3.

82. *Hayat-e A'la Hazrat*, pp. 96-97. Maulana Zafar ud-Din doesn't tell us which year his account refers to, though we assume that the proceedings were more or less standard from year to year.

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83. *Hayat-e A'la Hazrat*, p. 108.

84. *Hayat-e A'la Hazrat*, p. 112. Gabriel calmed the fears of Hazrat Amina, Prophet Muhammad's mother, and assumed the shape of a white hen when urging the Prophet to manifest himself. Again the image of a marriage comes up when Gabriel tells Prophet Muhammad (not yet born) that the procession *(barat)* of the bridegroom of both worlds is fully adorned and ready (to start for the bride's house. the Prophet, as bridegroom, is awaited before it can set out.)

85. Metcalf, *Islamic Revival*, p. 151.

86. Imam Ahmad Raza, *Iqamat ul-Qiyama ala Ta'in il-Qiyam li-Nabi Tihamat il-Jaza ul-Muhya li-Ghalmat Kanhaia*, 1299/1881-82. Published by Barkati Publishers, Karachi, 1986.

87. This was an important admission, in terms of the argument, for it meant that the practice was an "innovation" or *bid'at*. However, as Imam Ahmad Raza argued at some length in this fatawa, it was a *bid'at-e hasana* or "good innovation". the argument was taken even further, and the tables turned on the opponents of the practice, when Imam Ahmad Raza quoted an alim from the haramain as saying that because Muslims saw this as a good deed, those who opposed it were *bid'atis! Ibid.*, pp. 28-29. We will take up for discussion the Ahl-e Sunnat use of terms such as *bid'at* and *bid'at-e hasana* in a further chapter.

88. *Ibid.*, pp. 25-26, 28-29.

89. *Ibid.*, p. 36. Imam Ahmad Raza offered detailed proofs on both counts, arguing his point of view in about 30-odd pages. The second half of the fatawa was

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specifically in rebuttal of Nazir Husain Dehlawi, the Ahl-e Hadis leader.

90. *Ibid.*, pp. 15-22.

91. See Metcalf, op. cit., p. 301.

92. *Iqamat ul-Qiyama*, p. 23.

93. Metcalf, op. cit., p. 303.

94. Metcalf, op. cit., p. 397.

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Chapter IV

Definition as the "Ahl-e Sunnat wa Jama'at": Imam Ahmad Raza's Concept of the Sunnat as Exemplified in his Fatawa

It is recorded in *hadis:* This *ummat* will split up into seventy-three groups. One group will be *jannati* (deserving of Paradise), the others *jahannami* (deserving of hell). (A Sahabi asked,) "Which is that elect group, O Prophet of Allah?" He said, "Those who follow me and my *sahaba,* those, that is, who follow the *sunnat*." There is another report which says, "That (elect group) is the *jama'at,* that is, the great group of Muslims known as the "Sawad-e Azam." Whoever separates himself from it we will separate in hell. That is why the name of the elect group is "Ahl-e sunnat wa jama'at."

Maulana Muhammad Amjad Ali Azami, *Bahar-e Shari'at,* vol. 1, pp. 55-56.

One cannot read far into the "Sunni" literature without being struck by the repeated use of the term "Ahl-e Sunnat wa Jama'at," "people of the *sunnat* (customary practices of the Prophet) and the (majority) community," to describe those who share Imam Ahmad Raza Khan's vision of the faith. The term recurs in a multiplicity of contexts: in *fatawa,* the *malfuzat,* debates with others, the names given to journals, madrasas. the organizations of Ulama.[1] To use this term, with its twin emphases on "following the Prophet's sunnat" term, and constituting the "majority community", was to stake a universalistic claim linking its claimants with the wider Sunni Muslim world beyond the subcontinent. It was also, implicitly, to deny that relationship to other Muslims whose beliefs fell short of standards which Sunni considered irreducible, and uncompromisable.

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In turning our attention to the Sunni definition of themselves as the "Ahl-e Sunnat wa Jama'at", the focus shifts, as it must (given that the sunnat (Ar. *sunna*, or *sunnah*) is one of the primary sources for Islamic law), to consideration of the Sunnis as Ulama: as scholars of Quran, *hadis* (Ar. *hadith*, the traditions of the Prophet), *fiqh* (jurisprudence) and related fields. In view of the central position that the Prophet held for Imam Ahmad Raza, consonant with the sufi tradition of veneration of the Prophet,[2] it is remarkable that Imam Ahmad Raza saw himself primarily as an *alim* (scholar) rather than a sufi, and was so perceived by other Sunni Muslims.[3] Given his belief in the complementary roles of *shari'at* (the law) and *tariqat* (sufism) in a Muslim's life, and his insistence that the shari'at should be accorded precedence over tariqat, we must ask ourselves what sources his prophetology may have had in Hanafi law. The answer to this question must await an examination of his fatawa, particularly those in which he defended his views on the Prophet citing proofs from the classical sources of law (Quran, hadis, and fiqh).

Imam Ahmad Raza's fatawa, which later followers of the Ahl-e Sunnat movement have seen as the chief source and guidepost for belief and action in their lives, are available for study in a multi-volume collection (consists of 48 huge volumes) entitled the *Al-Ataya al-Nabuya fi'l Fatawa-e Rizwia* (The Gifts of the Prophet in the Fatawa-e Rizwia). Although not all Imam Ahmad Raza's fatawa are contained in this collection, it provides an overview of the range of his scholarship and enables the reader to follow his lines of interpretation on various issues and compare them with those of Ulama in other movements.

In this chapter, we turn to Imam Ahmad Raza's fatawa in order to understand his conception of what it meant to "follow the Prophet's sunnat." To do so, we have chosen to examine in detail those of his fatawa which deal with a specific issue that engaged him and other Ulama of the Ahl-e Sunnat wa Jama'at movement in the early 1900s.

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Here we would like to discuss the meaning of the term "sunnat" in a general way, indicating differences among Western scholars on when it came to be used and understood as the Prophet's "way" or "custom". We will also point out the relationship of the sunnat to hadis literature, and to sunnat's opposite, *bid'at* (innovation). The paired opposites of *ijtihad* (mental effort) and *taqlid* (adherence to one's law school), and the term *tajdid* (renewal) must also be understood before we can begin to study the Ahl-e Sunnat fatawa.

The Concept of the Sunnat of the Prophet

The Quran and the sunnat of the Prophet are regarded by Muslims as the two most important sources of authority in determining the beliefs and conduct of a Muslim's life.[4] The word "sunnat" "way, law, mode or conduct of life."[5] In the Quran, and in hadis literature, the word has been used to refer to law or practice emanating from sources other than the Prophet, ranging from Allah (Quran 33:62) to Companions of the Prophet, Muslims generally, and women. The term also refers on occasion to a religious practice ("the sunnat of *salat*", for instance).[6]

Because "total obedience" to the Prophet is ordered in several verses of the Quran, and Muslims are commanded to regard him as a "perfect model to be followed," Muslims believe that the Prophet's sunnat overrode existing custom and practice from the very beginning of Islam.

Whatever its date of origin, what is significant in so far as Muslims (of past or present generations) are concerned, is that the Prophet's sunnat is both an interpretative guide to the Quran, and a source of authority in its own right. It is an interpretive guide because "the Quran cannot answer each and every eventuality; it comes alive and becomes effective through the *sunna*." [7] "The Quran, being the word of God, is too sublime to interpret and decipher without the aid of the Prophet."

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The authority of the prophetic sunnat, as several scholars indicate, is perceived as being of divine origin. Goldziher writes, "Everything that the Prophet ordained in religious matters . . . he has decreed at God's command; it was revealed to him as was the Koran."[8] Graham, similarly, writes that "the word of the Prophet . . . possessed from the beginning, from the time of the Prophet, a divine authority."[9] This authority, while secondary to that of the Quran, was nonetheless, in practical terms, decisive.[10]

Because the Prophet was a "perfect model," everything that he (and his Companions) had "held to be exclusively correct in matters of religion and law," was seen as "a norm for practical application."[11] The Prophet's sayings, actions, and decisions, were therefore meticulously memorized, recited, repeated, and ultimately recorded,[12] by his Companions *(sahaba)* in the form of hadis.[13] In view of the fact that the sunnat of the Prophet is, with the Quran, a principally authoritative source, in Islamic legal theory the hadis literature tended to have an authority "coordinate with that of the Quran".[14]

As with the question of when, historically speaking, the Prophet's sunnat came to supersede previously existing practices and customs in Muslim-ruled territories.

Some Basic Legal Concepts: Sunnat and Bid'at

Based on the four sources of Quran, hadis, *ijma* (consensus), and *qiyas* (anology), Islamic jurisprudence *(fiqh)* classifies all human actions on a scale of relative religious value, ranging from obligatory acts (*farz*, Ar. *fard*) to those which are forbidden *(haram)*.[15] In the legal context the term "sunnat" has a range of specific meanings, being a subclass that falls under the category of commendable *(mandub)* acts. These legal definitions may be viewed as refinements of the general meaning of the term, that is, the practice of the Prophet and the ideal model for behaviour.

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The Muslims' desire to imitate their Prophet in all spheres of life necessarily meant that any belief, idea, or practice that came into use after the Prophet's lifetime became problematic. The term used to refer to such a belief or practice is *bid'at* (Ar. *bid'a*, literally "innovation"), that for which "there is no precedent in the time of the Prophet." As the opposite of sunnat, which is "old" *(qadim)*, it also has the meaning of "new" (*muhdath* or *hadath*).[16] Goldziher adds that "in general *bid'a* is something arbitrary that springs from individual insight and the admissibility of which is not documented in the sources of religious life."[17] Given these negative characteristics, the term bid'at had the connotation of "reprehensible."[18] This association of ideas is based on a number of hadis, such as the following: "May he who introduces new things into this town (Medina) be cursed by Allah, his angels and all men."[19]

Tracing the history of the use of the term bid'at in Islamic scholarship, one scholar believes that until the sixteenth century the term was used in a "general and vague" way by traditionalists *(muhaddithun)* and theologians *(mutakallimun)*, and was relatively little used in a legal sense by the *fuqaha*. Moreover, it was applied strictly to religious beliefs and practices *(ibadat)*, rather than to social customs more generally.[20] In the ninth century, al-Shafi'i (767-820) had made a broad distinction between a "good" and "bad" bid'at. As Robson says, a distinction came to be made between a *bid'a* which was 'good' *(hasana)* or praiseworthy *(mahmuda)* and one which was 'bad' *(sayyi'a)* or blameworthy *(madhmuma)*. Al-Shafi'i laid down the principle that any innovation which runs contrary to the Quran, the *sunna, idjma,* or *athar* (a tradition traced only to a Companion or a Follower) is an erring innovation, whereas any good thing introduced which does not run counter to any of these sources is praiseworthy.[21]

In due course, Islamic jurisprudence classified bid'at into five classes, ranging from the obligatory to the prohibited, on the basis of the general principle described above.[22]

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In the early nineteenth century, however, the Wahhabis in Arabia "claimed to go back to the early *sunna* of the Prophet in contradistinction to legal schools. With the Wahhabis *bid'a* acquired a legal value."[23]

Whether directly inspired by the Wahhabi example or not, Ulama in nineteenth-century British India also used the term bid'at in a legal sense, though not all defined it the same way. The Deobandi scholars Rashid Ahmad Gangohi (1828-1905) and Ashraf Ali Thanawi (1836-1943) regarded "every new thing . . . in conflict with *sunnah* (as) *bida*. According to them the domain of *bid'a* (was) only *ibadat* or strictly speaking, religious practices."[24] Strongly condemning practices such as the *urs* of saints, the *qiyarhawain* of Hazrat Shaikh Abd ul-Qadir Jilani, and other customs favoured by the Ahl-e Sunnat, the Deobandis and the Ahl-e Hadis accused the former of being "bid'atis". For the Ahl-e Sunnat, by contrast, the distinction between a "good" bid'at and a "bad" one was at the centre of their interpretation.

Ijtihad and Taqlid

Based on the four sources of Islamic law mentioned above, jurists offer legal opinions on a wide range of questions, as expressed in their fatawa. In the formative period of Islam, the process of legal reasoning was known as *ijtihad*, "the maximum effort expended by the jurist to master and apply the principles and rules of *usul al-fiqh* (legal theory) for the purpose of discovering God's law."[25] According to Joseph Schacht and other Western scholars, the process of ijtihad ceased after the formation of the four law schools (Shafi'i, Maliki, Hanafi, and Hanbali), in the early tenth century. The law schools henceforth provided the basis for legal judgement. This development is frequently described as the "closing of the gate of ijtihad."

Wael B. Hallaq has recently argued, on the basis of a re-examination of original sources, that until the twelfth century the presence of *mujtahids* (those who practices ijtihad) was assumed, and there was no debate about the "closing of the

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gate." However, already by the tenth century ijtihad was practiced only within the confines of one of the established schools of law.[26] In the eleventh century, al-Ghazali "admitted the extinction of independent mujtahids who were able to establish their own school of law", but "recognized the existence of mujtahids fi al'madhhab (limited to a particular school)"[27] Hallaq argues that the debate about the "closing of the gate of ijtihad" began in the twelfth century, in the context of the Hanbali argument that unless there was a mujtahid in every age the shari'at would be in danger of extinction. The Hanafis, Malikis, and some Shafi'is opposed this view. Gradually (by the fifteenth century), Hanbalis lost ground to their opponents, and the doctrine of *taqlid* (adherence to one's mazhab) began to gain he support of most jurists.[28]

The perception seems to have grown among the Ulama that they were unqualified to undertake the difficult task of ijtihad and to lay claim to the title of mujtahid.

In the subcontinent, both the Deobandis (a group of Wahhabis) and Ahl-e Sunnat in the nineteenth century took a strong stand in favour of taqlid and strict adherence to the Hanafi mazhab. Muhammad Qasim Nanautawi (1833-77), one of the founders of the madrasa Dar ul-'Ulum at Deoband, based his argument in favour of taqlid on the assertion, self-evident to him, that the world had dramatically declined from the time of the Prophet and that there were simply no people alive today who were as skilled as had been the *imams* of the classical schools. To consult the learned of today, he suggested, would be like consulting a quack instead of a skilled doctor . . .[29]

Imam Ahmad Raza, likewise, argued in a number of fatawa on the necessity for taqlid, and asserted that there were no "absolute mujtahids" *(mujtahid mutlaq)* alive in his day.[30] So great was the respect in which he was held by his followers, however, that occasionally one finds the claim that "if someone were to call (Imam Ahmad Raza) a mujtahid, it would be no exaggeration."[31] Despite such references, the number of fatawa

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in favour of taqlid indicate clearly that the sunni position was the classical Hanafi one indicated by Hallaq.

Among nineteenth century Ulama in British India, the Ahl-e Hadis (a group of Wahhabis), on the other hand, took a position strongly denouncing taqlid based on the schools of law. They were known, for this reason, as the *ghair-muqallid* (non-adherers, those who do not follow any of the four Sunni Imams), a term used in a pejorative sense in the Ahl-e Sunnat literature.[32]

Tajdid

The concept of *tajdid* (renewal) differs from that of ijtihad in that, rather than denoting a jurist's opinion on a newly arising situation, or a restatement on a new basis of an old problem, it describes the attempt by the Ulama to restore the Prophet's sunnat when the Muslim community has become negligent in implementing something the Prophet had instituted. The Muslim belief that this state of neglect recurs every century is based particularly on the hadis from Abu Da'ud which says: "God will send to this community on the eve of every century a man who will renew its din."[33] The one who emerges each century to renew the faith is the *mujaddid* or renewer.

Yet while the claim to be a mujtahid ceased to be made around the fifteenth century, mujaddids were recognized (sometimes more than one at a given time) every century.

At the end of the nineteenth century, it was claimed by Imam Ahmad Raza's followers on his behalf that he is mujadid; although he did not advance the claim himself.

There was no consensus among nineteenth-century Ahl-e Sunnat and Deobandi Ulama as to the identity of mujaddids in centuries close to their time [34] is a significant indication of their interpretative differences on other issues. As a first step toward understanding what these were, and to assessing their

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significance, we must attend to Imam Ahmad Raza's concept of the sunnat of the Prophet as reflected in his fatawa.

The Fatawa of Imam Ahmad Raza Khan

When Imam Ahmad Raza was approaching death in 1921, he reportedly told Hamid Raza Khan, his eldest son, that by Allah's grace, for more than ninety years the writing and sending out of fatawa (to those who had requested them) had been continuous activity in his house. The task had been started by his grandfather, handed over after many years to his father, and passed on in turn to him when he was a mere lad of fourteen. He had continued the work throughout his life. Now he, in his turn, was entrusting it to his two sons and nephew, as part of his bequest. If they all worked together, by Allah's grace they would be successful.[35]

Imam Ahmad Raza could not have indicated more forcefully than he did in this statement from his deathbed the importance to him of the writing of fatawa. He regarded it as a religious service he had rendered the Muslims of the subcontinent and abroad uninterruptedly for about fifty years. In his view, so great was the volume of questions received that it would require the joint efforts of three Ulama dedicated to the task, to accomplish what he had done single-handedly.
Elsewhere he had suggested that the volume of fatawa he wrote was so great that "it exceeds the work of ten *muftis*.[36]
In a fatawa dated Zil Hajj 1331/November 1913, he wrote:

> Questions come from the town (of Bareilly), from other cities, and from all Hindustan: Bengal, Punjab, Malabar, Burma, Arakan, (as well as countries such as) China, Ghazni, America, and Africa; so much so that they come even from the Haramain. At any one time there are about five hundred questions *(istifta)*. If there is delay in answering any of them, or if some go unanswered, then (I will be) to blame. "On no soul doth Allah place a burden greater than it can bear." (Quran 2:286)[37]

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Imam Ahmad Raza was not without assistance in handling this vast correspondence, however. Maulana Zafar ud-Din Bihari, his disciple and biographer, offers glimpses of how it was done. Each day's mail was gathered together, to be opened occasionally during the late afternoon public audience Imam Ahmad Raza held every day at his home. Maulana Zafar ud-Din Bihari would read letters out one by one, and, depending on their subject matter, each was assigned to different students or disciples of Imam Ahmad Raza for reply. Thus,

> if the letter dealt with *tasawwuf* (sufism), A'la Hazrat (Imam Ahmad Raza) would respond to it himself. If it asked for a *ta'wiz* (amulet), he would pass it on to me (Zafar ud-Din) or to Maulana Hamid Raza Khan (Imam Ahmad Raza's eldest son). If it was an *istifta* (request for a fatawa), he would give it to (one of several assistants) or to me, . . . or to Maulana Amjad Ali (a disciple of Imam Ahmad Raza, whose title was "Sadr ul-Shari'at"), depending on the complexity of the question. If the question was a particularly complex one, he would answer it himself.[38]

Questions which had not come up before, and for which there was no precedent in Imam Ahmad Raza's fatawa, were also answered by him.

Imam Ahmad Raza's students received their training in the writing of fatawa chiefly by making copies of his fatawa, so that he retained a record of them before they were sent out. A Dar ul-Ifta (office for the issuance of fatawa) had been created sometime before 1904-5.[39] It was a centre to which aspiring students like Maulana Zafar ud-Din came to learn by assisting in the daily writing of fatawa. Over time they came to learn Imam Ahmad Raza's style of fatawa-writing, and to be able to write their own on the model that his fatawa provided. As Zafar ud-Din Bihari's biography indicated, once they became proficient he entrusted some of his daily correspondence to them. The student Imam Ahmad Raza regarded as most skilled in the art of fatawa-

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writing was Maulana Amjad Ali Azami, author of the *Bahar-e Shari'at*.[40]

The Dar ul-Ifta was much closer to Imam Ahmad Raza's heart, in fact, than was teaching, another traditional occupation for Ulama. When Zafar ud-Din Bihari first came to him desiring to become his student, Imam Ahmad Raza advised instead that he study at an existing madrasa, the Madrasa Dar ul-Isha'at, and help out in his spare time in the work of the Dar ul-Ifta.[41] When the Madrasa Dar ul-Isha'at turned out, Zafar ud-Din Bihari took the initiative in establishing the Dar al-ulum Manzar-e Islam, with help from Imam Ahmad Raza's brother and elder son.[42] As a biographer of Zafar ud-Din recalls, Imam Ahmad Raza was initially enthusiastic.[43]

Despite help from students at the Dar ul-Ifta, Imam Ahmad Raza personally replied to a large number of questions received, from the privacy of his personal library or his household living quarters *(zenana-khana)*. The work took up most of his day, and as a follower of his recalled, he kept it going even when he fell sick.[44] Regarding it as a *shar'i* duty, he was offended when someone offered payment for a fatawa he had written.

It is probable that the first two volumes of the Fatawa-e Rizwia were published during Imam Ahmad Raza's lifetime, perhaps at the Hasani Press at Bareilly owned by Imam Ahmad Raza's brother, Hasan Raza Khan.[45] Evidently the intention was to publish the full collection, projected to be a 48 volumes work. For reasons that are not clear, but that may have stemmed from financial difficulties at the Hasani Press, as well as disarray in the leadership of the Ahl-e Sunnat movement after Imam Ahmad Raza's death, publication of the remaining volumes was not undertaken until the late 1950s. It began at the behest of Mustafa Raza Khan, Imam Ahmad Raza's younger son, under the direction of Maulana Abd ur-Ra'uf of the Dar ul-Ulum Ashrafia at Mubarakpur, in district Azamgarh.[46]

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The *Fatawa-e Rizwia* may have been intended as a comprehensive guide to Imam Ahmad Raza's opinions rather than sole reference on specific matters. Whatever the reason, in considering Imam Ahmad Raza's fatawa, it is necessary to refer to fatawa published separately in addition to the *Fatawa-e Rizwia*. Such publications appeared in the course of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries from the Hasani Press at Bareilly, and from presses in other small towns in the United Provinces, as well as Patna, Bihar.

The *Fatawa-e Rizwia* are organized, following traditional principles, into a number of books, some of which are further broken down into chapters. Matters relating to ritual and the so-called "pillars" - purification *(taharat)*, prayer *(salat)*, alms-giving *(zakat)*, fasting *(som)*, and the pilgrimage *(hajj)* - are dealt with first, in that order, in the first four volumes. The remaining volumes deal with subjects such as marriage *(nikah)*, regulations concerning infidels, apostates, and rebels *(sair)*, economic issues such as partnership *(shirkat)* and sale *(bai')*, and bequests *(rihn)*, among other things.[47]

Encompassed within this handful of topics are a host of important, though subsidiary, issues. Thus, in a lengthy chapter (of 377 pages) on funerals *(janaza)*, itself a part of the book entitled Salat, are fatawa detailing beliefs about the dead, the performance of death rituals such as *fatiha*, and offering food to *faqirs* in memory of the dead.[48]

Similarly, in the book dealing with infidels, apostates, and rebels, are fatawa relating to the Khilafat movement of the 1920s, on learning the English language, and on whether India was *dar al-harb* or *dar al-Islam*. Thus, although there is no separate treatment of sufi-related or political themes in the two instances cited, these are enmeshed, as it were, in the primary classification of the fatawa into those dealing with funeral prayers or treatment of apostates and non-Muslims.
A not dissimilar issue is that the question that called up a fatawa in the first place could and often did consist of a cluster of

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distinct questions, such that the fatawa responding to it could be classified under more than one head. Thus, a question as to whether a Sunni who had become an Ahmadi ("Qadiyani") was an apostate, and if so, what injunctions applied to his wife and children,[49] was one that related both to the treatment of apostates, and to marriage. It appears in the book on apostasy rather than that on marriage, however, because in his response Imam Ahmad Raza concentrated on that aspect of the question, treating the second half of it relatively briefly.

This fatawa is a good illustration of Imam Ahmad Raza's style of argumentation, his citation of a number of sources to support his opinions, and his clear judgment on the question at hand. The question had originally been asked of an alim in Amritsar by a resident of that city in 1902-3, soon after Ghulam Ahmad first made his claim to be a "shadowy" prophet. The fatawa given by this alim was certified by a number of other Ulama from Amritsar. The first alim then sent his fatawa and the certifications to Imam Ahmad Raza, requesting his opinion on the matter.

Imam Ahmad Raza responded with a comprehensive review of Ghulam Ahmad's writings, as he interpreted them. Citing these, and giving complete references to each book and page he was quoting, he found Ghulam Ahmad guilty of *kufr* on ten distinct grounds. He found the first kufr, for instance, in a risala entitled *Ek Ghalti ka Izala* ("The Annuling of a Mistake"). On page 673 of this, he writes "I am Ahmad," and quotes from (Quran 61:6) (in which Jesus gave) "glad tidings of an apostle whose name shall be Ahmad." (In saying this, Ghulam Ahmad implies that) he, and not the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was the prophet about whom Jesus spoke.[50]

After quoting from other books by Ghulam Ahmad in this way, Imam Ahmad Raza then examined Ghulam Ahmad's claim that he was using the word *nabi* (prophet) in a different sense from the one ordinarily understood. Imam Ahmad Raza

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poured scorn on this statement. Citing authorities from *fiqh*, he demonstrated that such arguments had not been accepted in the past. Nor would they be acceptable to people in the present: for instance, if a man told his wife that she was "free" *(taliq)*, it would be understood that he was divorcing her, not that he was giving her permission to go wherever she wished.[51] Indeed, if such reversals of meaning were accepted, there would be chaos in all religious and worldly affairs.[52].

After arguing that Ghulam Ahmad was a kafir in this detailed, point by point manner, Imam Ahmad Raza asserted that it was incumbent on Muslims who knew of Ghulam Ahmad's claims and statements to pass the verdict of kufr on him. Those who did not do this (he specifically mentioned the Nadwa), became kafirs themselves. Again a number of authorities from fiqh were cited in support of this view. Finally, addressing the related question about the validity of the marriage between an Ahmadi man and his wife, he said that the wife was released from her marriage bond, with all the consequences that this entailed with respect to rights over the *mahr* (marriage settlement) and children.

While the Deobandi Ulama frequently did not bolster their opinions with a citation of sources, [53] it was characteristic of Imam Ahmad Raza to cite authorities from Quran, hadis, and fiqh when writing a fatawa.[54] His appeal to logic was characteristic as well. In the fatawa cited, he made his opponent's position appear foolish, and the unassailability of his own view self-evident, by showing that the (seemingly) arbitrary changing of a word's meaning would lead to chaos in everyday life. Finally, he argued that not only was Ghulam Ahmad's claim foolish; much worse, it was an act of infidelity. Muslims must recognize this fact, and denounce it unequivocally; else they too would be guilty of kufr.

At a time when a variety of conflicting opinions were being expressed through different Muslim movements, the combined effect of Imam Ahmad Raza's erudition, logical

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argument, and decisiveness must have had a considerable impact. As the above fatawa illustrates, his judgments were as much a guide to what should be done and believed as they were a clear injunction and warning about what should *not* be done or believed. The lack of ambiguity in his judgments was thus joined by a call for action in the believer's personal life, even if this entailed taking a stand on controversial issues. As the next few chapters will make clear, this call for action was not limited to his condemnation of Ghulam Ahmad, but was made in relation to his opinions on other Ulama and other issues as well. He firmly believed that it was the *shar'i* duty of Muslims not only to follow the Quran and sunnat themselves, but also to condemn those who failed to do so, regardless of the consequences.

As Metcalf notes regarding the Deobandi fatawa, so too may it be said about Imam Ahmad Raza's fatawa that while they focused on "belief and ritual, *aqa'id* and *ibadat*, . . . they explored (these areas) with remarkable depth and range. Indeed, . . . the *fatawa* reflect not a narrowing of concerns but an expansion, for they treated issues earlier *fatawa* had not even considered."[55]

Reflecting the issues that were of concern to a number of Muslims in his day, Imam Ahmad Raza in his *Fatawa-e Razwia* thus addressed issues as diverse as the correct attitude that Muslims should have toward Hindus, on whether Muslims should join the anti-British non-cooperation movement launched by Gandhi in the 1920s, on the monetary value of bank notes, on whether news on the sighting of the moon during Ramadan could be acted upon if conveyed by telegraph, and so on.

A notable feature about Imam Ahmad Raza's fatawa that must be noted, finally, is his appeal to the Ulama of the Haramain for sanction and approval on a number of controversial issues.[56] One such case was the debate about bank notes, mentioned above, that began around 1877 (A.H. 1294).[57] While both Imam Ahmad Raza and Rashid Ahmad Gangohi

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agreed that notes were a valid form of money and that zakat must be paid on them, they disagreed on whether transactions involving exchange in unequal amounts was similar to interest *(riba)*, which is forbidden to Muslims. Gangohi held such transactions to be unlawful in light of his interpretation that they resembled interest, whereas Imam Ahmad Raza argued that they were not comparable to interest and were therefore permissible. Another mufti, Abd ul-Hayy Firangi Mahali, also opposed Imam Ahmad Raza's judgment.

While the details of the jurisprudential arguments made on each side are undoubtedly important, also significant is the fact that Imam Ahmad Raza wrote his definitive fatawa on the subject, *Kafl al Faqih*, in Makkah in 1906 in response to questions relating to the monetary value of the bank note by two Ulama in that city.[58] Here we see him in the role of mufti to other Ulama of the Haramain, which must surely have been exceptional. His admirers view this (with understandable pride) as evidence of Imam Ahmad Raza's high reputation among those Ulama, already established in the course of a previous judgment relating to the Nadwat ul-Ulama.[59] In that debate, as in the one concerning Deoband, both shortly to be examined,[60] Imam Ahmad Raza sought confirmation and approval by the Ulama of Makkah and Medina of a fatawa written in Bareilly. His role in this instance, then (unlike the case of the bank note debate), was of one seeking ratification by a higher authority on a matter on which the Ulama in British India were divided. Approval of his opinion would not only confirm his position, but could also be expected to discomfit his opponents. That several Ulama of the haramain did ratify his fatawa on a variety of issues, over a span of roughly twenty years, including in 1915 his judgment on the azan debate and that his relationship with them was one of reciprocity, can be understood to have considerably bolstered his personal standing in the subcontinent.

A Debate Regarding the Call to Prayer: Should the Call be Sounded from Within the Precincts of the Mosque or from Without?

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At the outset, before examining the "azan debate" (Ahl-e Sunnat sources also refer to it as the "Badayuni affair," for reasons that will shortly become clear), perhaps the most important observation to be made is that it took place in the context of early twentieth-century British India, that is to say, in a late-colonial setting. It was, moreover, a late-colonial setting in flux. As Frietag notes in her discussion of a major mosque riot that ocurred in Kanpur in 1913, "by the early twentieth century, the dynamic of debate had been extended beyond the details of personal practice" and had emerged in the public arena.[61] Access to new means of communication through the printing press and the newspapers, among other things, had enlarged the audience to which the Ulama were able to address themselves, and in a sense heightened the tensions caused by the social and political changes of the period. The Kanpur riot, which had been sparked by the demolition, by municipal authorities, of a washing-place *(dalan)* attached to a mosque, marked an important turning-point for many North Indian Muslims. This had been, for them, their first experience of direct conflict with the British Indian government over a religious matter.

The azan dispute in which Imam Ahmad Raza played a leading role during 1914-17 was of a different nature entirely from the Kanpur mosque affair. Unlike the latter, it never assumed national significance; nor did it lead to violence, as the Kanpur affair had done. Nevertheless, it is important to set this local, internal dispute, which was fought out largely in the columns of an Urdu-language newspaper (*the Dabdaba-e Sikandari,* of Rampur), and in which the discussants were Ulama who saw themselves as "Ahl-e Sunnat wa Jama'at," in the same context of shifting boundaries between, and redefinition's of, public and private action which had set the parameters for the Kanpur dispute and riot. The azan debate had one important consequence which resembled that at Kanpur, in that it ended up in a British Indian court, on a charge of libel, and was adjudicated by a non-Muslim magistrate.

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The debate had apparently already generated considerable heat and argument (probably in oral fora) when the *Dabdaba-e Sikandari*, a weekly newspaper published in Rampur, printed a series of ten questions addressed to the Ulama at Bareilly's Dar ul-Ifta. They appeared in a section of the paper entitled *Chashma-e Dar ul-Ifta-e Bareilly* (Fount of Bareilly's Dar ul-Ifta), which had been started by Muhammad Fazl-e Hasan Sabiri, the paper's sub-editor, in November 1910, at the request of some of its readers.[62] The paper was sympathetic to the Ahl-e Sunnat point of view, and gave wide coverage to events at Bareilly, such as an annual urs for Shah Al-e Rasul, Imam Ahmad Raza's *pir*, or the annual convocation and conferral of *ijazat-namas* at the Dar al-Ulum Ahl-e Sunnat. However, it by no means confined itself to such local events.[63]

Now and then, Munshi Muhammad Fazl-e Hasan himself asked the questions which occasioned the fatawa he printed in the *Dabdaba-e Sikandari*. In 1913, thus, he asked about a practice he said he had noticed in the mosque near Imam Ahmad Raza's house at Bareilly, though it was not in force in most mosques in Hindustan. This was the act of blessing *(salat o salam)* the Prophet thrice aloud after the azan, just before the start of the prayer. Since the practice was unusual in the country, was it a bid'at? And on what authority could it be said to be valid, he asked.[64]

Imam Ahmad Raza, in his response, asserted that the practice of blessing the Prophet after the azan was followed in Arabia, Egypt, Syria, and other countries of dar al-Islam; indeed, it was even done in the Holy Mosque at Makkah, and in Medina, at all times except during the maghrib (evening) prayer. It had been an accepted practice for more than five hundred years. "Holy remembrance of (the Prophet) is the faith of the Muslim at every instant, at all times. It is the life of faith, the tranquillity of life, and the source of repose." Citing a work of fiqh [65] in support of the practice, Imam Ahmad Raza went on to say that it was a bid'at-e hasana, a good bid'at, which had

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started in A.H. 781/A.D. 1379-80. This was one of those new things which was "good and praiseworthy".

It was in this context of ongoing questions and responses published in the *Dabdaba-e Sikandari* that the questions and corresponding fatawa about the azan appeared in its *Chashma-e Dar ul-Ifta'e Bareilly* section in January 1914.[66] Unlike the usual brief question and answer, however the questions in this case were detailed and lengthy, as was the response. The tone of the questions and the fatawa suggests that the issue had already been debated before this, and that disagreement was known to be strong in certain circles. Moreover, the style of the questions seems to indicate that the questioner himself had a position on the questions he was asking, and that he expected the mufti concerned to take a stand in sympathy with his view, although this is nowhere stated.[67] The central question was: should the second call to prayer [68] be given from inside the mosque (facing the pulpit, *minbar*), or from outside it? Among the related questions were the following: what was the practice of the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and the four "rightly-guided" caliphs; what did the books on fiqh say on the matter; should one act on the practice of the Prophet and the first four caliphs, and on the command of fiqh, or on customary practice, when the latter differed from the former; what was the current practice of the Ulama of the Haramain; do the hadis command one to revive the sunna, and do they promise a reward equal to that received by a hundred martyrs to the person who does so, or not; is it obligatory on the Ulama to revive a dead sunna, or not?

In his response, Imam Ahmad Raza [69] wrote that in the Prophet's time, and later in Hazrat Abu Bakr and Hazrat Umar's time, the azan had been given from the door of the mosque, which he interpreted to be "outside" rather than "inside" it. Citing a hadis from the *Sunan* of Abu Da'ud, he said that the words *bain yad* ("a hand's breadth") were followed by the words *ala'l bab almasjid* ("at the door of the mosque"). Moreover, the books of Hanafi fiqh (of which he cited several)

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have forbidden the practice of calling the azan from within the mosque. Replying to the other questions, he said that obviously, Muslims must never cling to custom when this goes against the hadis and fiqh, that one must distance oneself from that which is contrary to the sunnat of the Prophet and the khulafa, that the practice in Makkah and Medina was in accordance with the sunnat, and that several hadis promised great reward to the one who revives a dead sunnat. He ended on a note of appeal to all Muslims:

> Muslim brothers! This is *din*. It is not some worldly quarrel. See what your Prophet's sunnat is, what is written in the mazhabi books. It (this fatawa) is submitted *(ma'ruz)* to the Ulama of the Ahl-e Sunnat. . . . Revivification of the sunnat is your task. Don't say to yourselves that a small person among you has started it. It is for you to do it too. Your Lord has commanded (you to) "strengthen piety and faith" *(ta'wanu ala'l birre wa taqwa)*. If you think my opinion on this matter is wrong, do not get angry. Without hesitation, give your opinion as to what is right.[70]

He also added five new questions to the ten already asked, and said that whoever dissented with the opinion he had just given must include in his response an answer to the fifteen questions raised.

The note of challenge thus sent out was reinforced, on the same page, by Mustafa Raza Kahn, who as *muhtamim* (manager) of the Dar ul-Ifta, issued an "Important Request to (our) Muslim brothers." He asked that whoever came across the above fatawa make every effort to publicize it among his fellows, by reading it out aloud to friends and in the mosque, and that the names and addresses of all those who revived this sunnat be sent to him, Mustafa Raza, so that they could be published at some future date in the *Dabdaba-e Sikandari*. He asked, further, that Ulama who agreed with the opinion should say so in writing, and send their approval to him with the signatures of as many people in their town as possible. Finally,

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the names of twenty-odd men, who had already revived this sunnat in their mosques, were listed.

There was opposition from other quarters as well: thus, Imam Ahmad Raza suggested, in his open letter to the Rampur alim who had opposed his fatawa, that its author had been encouraged to openly disagree with him by certain "Wahhabis," when a personal letter would have enabled them to discuss their differences in private.[71] That Imam Ahmad Raza was probably referring to some Ulama from Deoband is indicated by another open letter that appeared in the *Dabdaba-e Sikandari* a week later, written by Maulana Amjad Ali Azami (author of the *Bahar-e Shari'at,* as noted above) and addressed to an alim of Deoband. In it, he accused the Deobandi alim of misquoting certain sources to support his stand that the second azan should be said from inside the mosque. Maulana Amjad Ali offered him a fifty-rupee prize if he could substantiate his claim from the sources.[72]

This extended, many-sided, and strong disputation, together with the deep sense of anguish created in some by the prolonged uncertainty surrounding a prayer ritual of central importance to Muslims, provided the context for the fatawa that appeared in the 15 February 1915 issue of the *Dabdaba-e Sikandari* by certain Ulama of the Haramain. It had been requested by a Muslim of Pilibhit, who wrote to one Maulana Muhammad Karim Allah of Medina. Enclosing a copy of Imam Ahmad Raza's fatawa, he said:

Here people have raised a huge uproar *(shor o ghul)* on account of Imam Ahmad Raza's fatawa), saying that the (second Friday) azan should be said inside the mosque. Kindly, therefore, send your reply to this istifta, with the confirmation of the Ulama there, very quickly, so that the discord may be repelled. In writing this, kindly think deeply. The Wahhabis have raised a great tumult here. The answer of *Shahab-e Saqib* ("The Brightly Shining Star", a tract by an opponent of Imam Ahmad Raza) has been published.[73]

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Replying in a letter dated Zil Qada 1332/October 1914, Muhammad Karim Allah wrote that requests for a fatawa on the azan question had been received by a number of Ulama in Makkah and Medina, from Muslims resident in places as diverse as Karachi, Bhopal, Bareilly, and Badayun (via a resident in Bombay). He explained that he had circulated this particular istifta among certain Ulama in Medina, and that the replies of two Ulama were included in the letter.

All the three Ulama who replied to the question endorsed Imam Ahmad Raza's position strongly.[74] Praising Imam Ahmad Raza's erudition and devotion to the Prophet, Muhammad Karim Allah wrote:

> I would urge upon you that at this time there are none who equal A'la Hazrat Barelwi (Imam Ahmad Raza). The Ulama of the Haramain, of Arabia, of the East, of Syria, and of Egypt, have acknowledged A'la Hazrat, and have accepted him as their Imam. . . . (The "Wahhabis") burn from head to foot in the fire of wretchedness, asking why A'la Hazrat has become so famous in the whole Islamic world. . . . Don't pay attention to other people. Soon *Daulat al'Makkia* (Imam Ahmad Raza's 1906 fatawa, written in the Haramian) will be published, and you will (gauge) A'la Hazrat's quality from its study.[75]

Addressing the issue itself, Ahmad al-Jaza'iri al-Husaini, the Mufti al-Malikia, wrote in his fatawa that the second azan had been instituted by the caliph Hazrat Usman, and since his time, the residents of the cities of the Maghrib, and of the countryside, had given this azan from the minaret. He added:

> . . . and that is correct. . . . there is no advantage to giving the azan in the mosque. Those people who are outside the mosque (are alerted, by the azan, that they) should strive after the remembrance of Allah, and leave off selling, and whatever is forbidden. There is no need for an azan for those who are (already) inside the mosque.

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Imam Malik considered it makruh to say the azan inside the mosque. He said, "Some have (called it a) *bid'at madi'at* (a useless bid'at)."[76]

It was this "war of the risalas" (which calls to mind the "fatawa war" of about ten years before, to be discussed in chapter VI), which led to the institution of a court case against Imam Ahmad Raza, probably in 1916, by a resident of Badayun. The charge was of libel.

According to the magistrate who heard the case, and who delivered his judgment on it in early 1917, the origins of the dispute between the Ulama of Bareilly and Badayun lay in a fatawa opposing Imam Ahmad Raza's stand on the azan, written by one Maulan Muhammad Ibrahim, and confirmed by Maulana Abd ul-Muqtadir Badayuni.[77] Whether in response to this, or somewhat earlier, Imam Ahmad Raza had stated his position in a risala entitled *Ta'bir-e Khwab* (Interpretation of a Dream). The magistrate's account of subsequent events is as follows:

> Now the discussion of this question began in earnest, and (more) risalas . . . began to be published. Efforts were made to hold a (verbal) debate, but were unsuccessful. In the series of risalas published, one was *Jawab-e Shafi* (A Decisive Answer), published from Badayun. This was the incentive for *Sad al-Firar* (Fleeing a Hundred Times). This debate had generated a great deal of anger, which is reflected in the writings.[78]

In Barelwi sources, the judgment was seen as a landmark event which strongly vindicated their position.[79]

There is no discussion in the sources of why the Badayuni case was brought against Imam Ahmad Raza in the first place, their disagreement with him over the second azan being seen, perhaps, as having sufficient explanatory force. Yet it is curious that such vehement opposition should have come from those whose elders had had such a close, intimate

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relationship with Imam Ahmad Raza and his family. The deep mutual regard of Imam Ahmad Raza and Maulana Abd ul-Qadir Badayuni, Abd ul-Muqtadir's father, is frequently mentioned in Imam Ahmad Raza's biography.[80] More curious still, the sources indicate that it was Abd ul-Muqtadir who, in a 1899-1900 (A.H. 1317) meeting of the Ahl-e Sunnat wa Jama'at at Patna, first addressed Imam Ahmad Raza as the *mujaddid* of the fourteenth century Hijri, a title which was apparently accepted by all present.[81]

In light of this, Abd ul-Muqtadir's confirmation of his khalifa's fatawa opposing Imam Ahmad Raza on the azan question is hard to understand. One can only speculate that in the intervening period, roughly the last decade of his life, a difference of opinion had developed between him and Imam Ahmad Raza. If so, this had almost certainly arisen over religio-political issues. Abd ul-Muqtadir is said to have been supportive of efforts by Maulana Abd ul-Bari Firangi Mahal to protect the Holy places in the Hijaz from non-Muslim aggression, through the latter's Anjuman-e Khuddam-e Ka'ba established in 1913, while Imam Ahmad Raza had reservations about some aspects of the Anjuman.[82] After Abd ul-Muqtadir's death in late 1915 or early 1916, the rift between Imam Ahmad Raza and Abd ul-Muqtadir's followers, particularly Abd ul-Majid (a disciple of Abd ul-Muqtadir), must certainly have grown as a result of the latter's involvement in pro-Khilafat and pro-Congress activities.[83]

The Azan Debate: a Means of Self-Definition and the Redrawing of Boundaries?

It is difficult to draw definite conclusions about the debate outlined above, for, apart from the court judgment (which dealt with a subsidiary issue, that of libellous publication), the debate ended inconclusively. Three years after the issue first arose in the *Dabdaba-e Sikandari*, much opposition remained to the stand taken by Imam Ahmad Raza and his fellow Muslim Ahl-e Sunnat, although Muslims did change their practice of

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calling the second Friday azan from inside the mosque as a result of the debate.

During the debate, a number of assertions had been made. Proponents of the change had argued in their defense that they were following the Prophet's sunnat, which in this case had died out in the subcontinent, though it was in use in various parts of the Islamic world, including Makkah and Medina.

Both sides had cited textual sources in their support. Indeed, most of the discussants' attention, it seems fair to say, was directed toward citing textual proofs in support of their respective positions, and to faulting the manner in which sources had been quoted by the opposition.

Many Muslims admittedly did change their minds as a result, and having made the change in their own lives.

The azan debate differs from earlier debates Imam Ahmad Raza had engaged in, however, in one important respect, namely, that to a large extent those who opposed his stand perceived themselves as Ahl-e Sunnat wa Jama'at (rather than Nadwi, Deobandi, or Ahl-e Hadis, for example). Most striking is the fact that he was opposed by Ulama in Badayun, whose elders had been partners in debate with Imam Ahmad Raza on all the issues they had seen as defining: their opposition to the Nadwat ul-Ulama, their belief in the Prophet's knowledge of the unseen, and their efforts to counter Shi'i influence in their midst, among other things. There had been no hint of a difference of opinion between Imam Ahmad Raza and Abd ul-Qadir Badayuni (d. 1901), while his son Abd ul-Muqtadir had reportedly held Imam Ahmad Raza in such esteem that he called him (Imam Ahmad Raza) "Mujaddid" in a meeting attended by the Ahl-e Sunnat leadership.

The azan debate was, historically, the last of its kind insofar as the Ahl-e Sunnat movement is concerned. Frietag's comment that in the early twentieth century "the dynamic of

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debate" was moving from the personal to the public sphere in the subcontinent,[84] is very pertinent here. The Ulama of the Ahl-e Sunnat had only defined themselves against those heretical Muslims they perceived as "other" - Nadwis, Deobandis, Wahhabis, Ahmadis, Sir Sayyid's, and Shi'is. Another change - a dramatic one - was that, apparently for the first time insofar as Ahl-e Sunnat debates are concerned, a party to the debate had signalled its willingness to take its differences with its fellow-Muslims to court.[85] As the Hindu magistrate in the case wrote, "Muslims of the same belief were engaged in a trial of strength with one another."[86] This had led to a considerable increase in the scale of the debate, and escalated the intensity. The act of taking one's internal differences of opinion to a British Indian court was to completely change the terms of the debate. By choosing an outside arbiter, the differences of opinion no longer remained internal, ones which were of concern to the Muslim Umma alone, and which it could iron out in self-sufficient wholeness.

This change itself should probably be seen in the larger context of national and international events as these impinged on Muslims in the subcontinent in the early twentieth century. No longer by this time was the arena for action by the Ulama leadership confined to writing scholarly tracts on theological and ritual matters of interest to others in their learned and elite circle. Events on the national and international stages - the upcoming non-cooperation and Khilafat movements in the subcontinent, and, in the international arena, mounting Muslim concern over the future of Turkey's possessions as they fell to the Allied powers of World War I - were increasingly enlarging the scope for debate to matters which had a potential for mass action and mobilization.

NOTES:

1. To cite some examples: in 1894-95, a number of Ulama from north India created a body called the "Majlis-e Ahl-e Sunnat wa Jama'at" to counter the influence of the

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Nadwat ul-Ulama; in 1904, a madrasa called the "Madrasa-e Ahl-e Sunnat wa Jama'at Manzar-e Islam" was established in Bareilly; in 1920, Maulana Naim ud-Din Muradabadi, one of Imam Ahmad Raza's *khalifas* started a journal called the *Sawad-e A'zam,* (The Great Majority); in the 1940s, the Ulama of Mararah began a journal entitled *Ahl-e Sunnat ki Awaz*, (The Voice of the Ahl-e Sunnat).

2. See chapter III.

3. These remarks are based on a personal interview with a follower of Imam Ahmad Raza at Bareilly, and on remarks in his writings as well as those of some followers. Chapter VII will examine the source(s) of Imam Ahmad Raza's conception of the Prophet in detail.

4. There are two other sources, *ijma* (consensus) and *qiyas* (analogy), which may be brought to bear on a question in the absence of clear guidance from the Quran and the sunnat. The means by which the Ulama interpret the sources is known as *ijtihad*, literally "(mental) effort, endeavor." The Ulama have differed with one another as to the weight that may be given to *ijma* and *qiyas* in the exercise of *ijtihad*. The Ahl-e Hadis in nineteenth-century India, for instance, narrowed the scope of *ijma* and *qiyas*, while others such as Muhammad Iqbal agreed with the former.

5. M. Mustafa al-Azami, *On Schacht's Origins of Jurisprudence* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1985), pp. 30-31.

6. al-Azami, op. cit., pp. 30-34.

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7. Ignaz Goldziher, *Introduction to Islamic Theology and Law* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), p. 38.

8. *Muslim Studies*, p. 31.

9. Graham, op. cit., p. 13.

10. In Graham's view, the early Muslims had what he calls "primarily unitive" view of "divine word and prophetic word". Ibid., p. 3. His discussion of the "hadith qudsi" or "Divine Saying", which is a record of Allah's speech in the Prophet's words, illustrates his point.

The question of what was to be done in cases where a contradiction arose between the Quran and hadis, was dealt with by al-Shafi'i (b. 767) by the rule that "the Quran can only be abrogated by the Quran and the *sunna* only by the *sunna*. The *sunna* cannot abrogate the Quran because its function is to interpret the Quran, not to contradict it." See N.J. Coulson, *A History of Islamic Law* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1964), pp. 58-59.

11. Goldziher, Introduction to Islamic Theology and Law, pp. 37-38.

12. The attitude of the Prophet and the early Muslims to committing hadis to writing has been the subject of considerable scholarly debate. See, e.g., Alfred Guillaume, *The Traditions of Islam: and Introduction to the Study of the Hadith Literature* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1924), pp. 15-18; Muhammad Zubayr Siddiqi, *Hadith Literature: its Origins, Development, Special Features and Criticism* (Calcutta: Calcutta University Press, 1961), pp. 37-45.

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13. There are six major collections of hadis, the most authoritative being the *Sahih Bukhari* by al-bukhari (d. A.H. 256/A.D. 870), and *Sahih Muslim* by Muslim (d. A.H. 261/A.D. 875). These two collections are jointly referred to as the "Sahihain," or "The Two Sahihs," *sahih* meaning "correct". The other four collections are the *Sunan* of Abu Da'ud (d. A.H. 275/A.D. 888), al-Nasa'i (d. A.H. 303/A.D. 915), al-Tirmidhi (d. A.H. 273/A.D. 892), and Ibn Maja (d. A.H. 273/A.D. 886). See Goldziher, *Introduction to Islamic Theology and Law*, p. 39.

14. Graham, op. cit., p. 33.

15. The categories are: obligatory *(farz)*, forbidden *(haram)*, commendable *(mandub)*, abominable *(makruh)*, and permissible *(mubah)*. Mandub, in turn, is subcategorized into: *sunna mu'akkada* (omission of act leading to rebuke, but not punishment, e.g. *azan*); *sunna nafila* (a practice which the Prophet sometimes carried out, but not on every occasion); and *sunna al-musthab* (a desirable, though not obligatory, practice in imitation of the Prophet, such as his way of walking). See al-Azami, op. cit., pp. 34-35.

16. Article "Bid'a", *EI2*, vol. 1, by J. Robson.

17. Godziher, *Muslim Studies*, vol. 2, p. 34.

18. As Robson comments in *EI2*, the term bid'at is to be distinguished from heresy *(irtidad/kufr?)*.

19. Quoted by Goldziher, *Muslim Studies*, p. 26.

20. Muhammad Khalid Mas'ud, "Trends in the Interpretation of Islamic Law as Reflected in the *Fatawa* Literature of Deoband School: A Study of the Attitudes of the Ulama of Deoband to Certain Social Problems and Inventions",

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M.A. thesis, Institute of Islamic Studies (Montreal: McGill University, 1969), p. 17.

21. *EI2*, op. cit.

22. Goldziher cites the following hadis as one which regards bid'at with favor: "Anyone who establishes in Islam a good sunna *(s. hasana)* which is followed by later generations will enjoy the reward of all those who follow this sunna, without losing their proper reward; but anyone who establishes in Islam an evil sunna . . . " As Goldziher comments, this hadis presupposes the continued introduction of sunna(s) after the Prophet. Goldziher, *Muslim Studies*, p. 37. Although the word "sunna" is used in this hadis rather than "bid'a", the manner of its use indicates that here it has the meaning of a "good" or "evil" bid'at.

23. Mas'ud, op. cit., p. 17.

24. Mas'ud, op. cit., p. 18.

25. Wael B. Hallaq, "Was the Gate of Ijtihad Closed?", *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 16 (1984), p. 3. My understanding of the concepts ijtihad, taqlid, and tajdid, as set out in this section, are largely based on Hallaq.

26. Ibid., pp. 10-11.

27. Ibid., p. 17.

28. Ibid., p. 27.

29. Ibid., p. 144.

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30. *Fatawa-e Rizwia,* vol. 6 (Mubarakpur, Azamgarh: Sunni Dar ul-Isha'at, 1981), p. 70 (on there being no mujtahids).

31. Zafar ud-Din Bihari, *Hayat-e A'la Hazrat* (Karachi, 1928), p. 163. The comment is made in the context of his knowledge of *ilm-e taksir* (the making of numerical charts for amulets).

32. On the Ahl-e Hadis, see Metcalf, op. cit., pp. 268-96.

33. The translation is by Yohanan Friedmann, *Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi: an Outline of His Thought and a Study of His Image in the Eyes of Posterity* (Montreal and London: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1971), p. 13.

34. They were undoubtedly in agreement over earlier periods, for the list was widely accepted in the (Sunni) Muslim world. Hallaq gives a list of mujaddis through the centuries. In some centuries there was a difference of opinion, and some Ulama preferred one candidate rather than another. Hallaq says that although a mujaddid continues to have been chosen down to the nineteenth century, "after Sirhindi (seventeenth century) the practice of choosing a mujaddid seems to have lost some importance." Hallaq, op. cit., p. 28.

35. Hasnain Raza Khan, *Wasaya Sharif,* p. 5, in *Rasa'il-e Rizwia,* vol. 5 (Faisalabad, 1984).

36. A *mufti* is an alim who issues fatawa.

37. *Fatawa-e Rizwia*, vol. 4, problem 123 (Ramnagar, Nainital: Raza Dar ul-Isha'at), 1986, p. 149.

38. *Hayat-e A'la Hazrat,* p. 68.

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39. This was the date when Zafar ud-Din first came to Bareilly, and the Dar ul-Ifta was already in existence. Muhammad Ahmad Qadiri, "Malik ul-Ulama Maulana Muhammad Zafar ud-Din Bihari aur Khidmat-e Hadis," *Ashrafia* (Mubarakpur, April 1977), p. 29.

40. Imam Ahmad Raza used to recommend that others learn the art of writing fatawa under Amjad Ali's direction. *Hayat-e A'la Hazrat*, p. 214.

41. *Ashrafia*, p. 29.

42. *Ashrafia*, July 1977, p. 15.

43. According to Muhammad Ahmad Qadiri in his biographical sketch of Zafar ud-Din Bihari, Imam Ahmad Raza was persuaded to agree to the founding of the new madrasa when the idea was put to him by one Hakim Sayyid Amir Ullah Barelwi. The madrasa's three initiators - Zafar ud-Din Bihari, Hamid Raza Khan, and Hasan Raza Khan - had asked the Sayyid to approach Imam Ahmad Raza about the matter rather then do so directly themselves, because they knew that his respect for Sayyids was so great that he would find it difficult to refuse the request! Muhammad Ahmad Qadiri, "Malik ul-Ulama Muhammad Zafar ud-Din Bihari aur Khidmat-e Hadis", *Ashrafia* (Mubarakpur, July 1977), p. 15. Once he had agreed to its founding, however, Imam Ahmad Raza supported the madrasa in a number of ways.

44. There is a remarkable story related in *Hayat-e A'la Hazrat*, pp. 36-37, about how Imam Ahmad Raza was once seen dictating twenty-nine fatawa to four scribes, when sick in bed. While one scribe wrote down his response to a question, he dictated the answer to another question to a second person, and so on - in continuous relay, as it were - until all twenty-nine questions had been answered.

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45. Unfortunately we have been unable to learn anything about this press, or its list of publications. Original publications from this press are not available in the market, and a rare find even in libraries. However, we were able to trace a number of the Hasani Press's publications, consisting most often of fatawa by Imam Ahmad Raza. but other items as well, in the personal library of Mr. Muhammad Mustafa Ali Razwi, an advocate in Bareilly. Mr. Razwi very kindly permitted me to photocopy whatever we needed from his collection.

46. He was Deputy Shaikh ul-Hadis at the Dar ul-Ulum Ashrafia. The publication of the *Fatawa-e Rizwia* was not undertaken under the auspicies of the Ashrafia, however, but under a separately constituted body called the "Sunni Dar ul-Isha'at" of which Abd ur-Ra'uf was the head. When he died in 1971, only volumes 4 and 5 had been published. The remaining volumes were published by other Ulama at Mubarakpur, as also at Bareilly. See Introduction to *Fatawa-e Rizwia*, vol. 7, for details.

47. We were unable to make a complete listing of the kitabs. The order of the kitabs is similar to that of the *Hidaya* by al-Marghinani (d. 1195) and of the *Fatawa-e Alamgiri* (composed 1664-72). See J.H. Harington, "Remarks upon the Authorities of Mosulman Law," in *Asiatic Researches*, vol. 10 (1811), p. 511.

48. This is only a small number of the subjects covered by the fatawa in this chapter. The details are set out in the list of contents to volume 4.

49. The Ahmadis are followers of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (1835?-1908). All Muslims, consider them to be non-Muslims.

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The question of the fatawa that was its response are in *Fatawa-e Rizwia*, vol. 6, pp. 297-307, in the form of a risala (tract) entitled *Al-Su wa'l E'qab ala'l Masih il-Kazzab* ("Punishment of the False Claimant to Prophethood"). This risala has also been published separately, in a collection entitled the *Majmua-e Rasa'il: Radd-e Murza'iat* (Karachi: Idara-e Tasnifat-e Imam Ahmad Raza, 1985), pp. 23-45.

50. *Fatawa-e Rizwia*, vol. 6, p. 299.

51. Ibid., pp. 300-1.

52. Ibid., p. 302.

53. See Mas'ud, op. cit., p. 71.

54. To give some examples from the fatawa examined above, in dismissing Ghulam Ahmad's claim to be using the word *nabi* in a special way, Imam Ahmad Raza cited the *Fatawa Khulasa*, *Fusul-e Imadia*, *Jame ul-Fusulin*, *Fatawa Hindia*, Imam Qazi Ayyaz's Al-Shafa, vol. 3, and Maulana Rumi, among others. (I will try and trace the authorship and dates of these sources.)

55. Metcalf, op. cit., p. 148.

56. We are grateful to Dr. Khalid M. Masud for drawing my attention to this in a personal communication.

57. Our summary of the debate is based on Masud, op.cit., pp. 40-43, for the Deobandi view; and, for the Sunni side, *Fatawa-e Rizwia*, Introduction to vol. 7, pp. 9-10, and Imam Ahmad Raza's fatawa, *Kafl al-Faqih al-Fahim fi Ahkam Qirtas al-Darahim* ("Guranty of the Discerning Jurist on Duties relating to Paper Money"), in that volume, pp. 126-95.

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58. They were Maulana Abd Allah Ahmad Mirdad, imam at the Masjid al-Haram, and Maulana Hamid Ahmad Muhammad Jaddawi, his teacher. These and other details are in another fatawa by Imam Ahmad Raza entitled *Kasir ul-Safih il-Wahim fi Ibdal Qirtas al-Darahim* ("Foolish Breaking and Misleading Notions on the Exchange of Paper Money"), A.H. 1329/A.D. 1911, in *Fatawa-e Razwia*, vol. 7, p. 228. At the beginning of this fatawa, Imam Ahmad Raza explains that the word "foolish" in the title refers to Rashid Ahmad Gangohi, and the "misleading notions" to Abd ul-Hayy Firangi Mahali. Ibid., p. 199.

59. See, for example, Muhammad Masud Ahmad, *Fazil Barelwi Ulama-e Hijaz ki Nazar Men*, 6th edition (Mubarakpur, Azamgarh: Al-Majmu'a al-Islami, 1981), pp. 90-92.

60. See chapters V and VI.

61. Sandria B. Frietag, "Ambiguous Public Arenas and Coherent Personal Practice: Kanpur Muslims 1913-1931," p. 146, in Katherine P. Ewing, *Shari'at and Ambiguity in South Asian Islam* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988). On the Kanpur mosque incident, also see Gail Minault, *The Khilafat Movement: Religious Symbolism and Political Mobilization in India* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), pp. 46-48.

62. This column first appeared in the *Dabdaba-e Sikandari* on 7 November 1910, vol. 46, no. 43, p. 3. It was generally accorded two full newspaper pages (of the sixteen-page paper), and consisted of brief replies to the questions asked. Thus, in the first fifteen-month period, from November 1910 to February 1912, two hundred questions had been answered in this section of the

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Dabdaba-e Sikandari. The answers were given for the most part by one "Ubaid un-Nabi" Nawab Mirza Ali, not by Imam Ahmad Raza.

63. Some of the other news dealt with in issues of this period were: World War I, the fate of Turkey's possessions in the Balkans; the activities of the Anjuman-e Khuddam-e Ka'ba (Society of the Servant of the Ka'ba), an organization created in 1913 by Maulana Abdul Bari and others for the protection from non-Muslim aggression of the places of the Hijaz; activities of the Nadwat ul-Ulama, the Muslim League, and other national organizations; local news about the Nawab of Rampur, etc. In 1913, the Kanpur mosque riots and subsequent court case had been covered in great detail.

64. *Dabdaba-e Sikandari*, 8 December 1913, vol. 50, no. 2, p. 7.

65. *Al-Durr al-Mukhtar*, a seventeenth-century work by a mufti of Damascus.

66. *Dabdaba-e Sikandari*, 26 January 1914, vol. 50, no. 9, pp. 3-5. The questions were asked by one Maulwi Muhammad Jamil ur-Rahman Khan, of Bareilly. This fatawa also appears in the *Fatawa-e Razwia*, vol. 2, pp. 488-94.

67. We owe this insight to a comment by Dr. M.K. Masud, made in an unpublished paper.

68. This second azan is given only at the start of the Friday congregational prayer; thus the debate concerned only this particular prayer, not all the daily prayers.

69. The name of the writer of the fatawa, given at the end, is Maulana Hamid Raza Khan. Imam Ahmad Raza's eldest

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son. Imam Ahmad Raza has confirmed it, along with other Ulama from the Dar ul-Ifta.

70. *Dabdaba-e Sikandari*, ibid., pp. 4-5.

71. *Dabdaba-e Sikandar*i, 16 March 1914. vol. 50, no. 16, p. 5.

72. *Dabdaba-e Sikandari*, 20 March 1914, vol. 50, no. 21, p. ?, "An open letter in the name of Mufti Aziz ur-Rahman Deobandi, and a promise of a fifty-rupee prize."

73. *Dabdabe-e Sikandari*, 15 February 1915, vol. 15, no. 13, pp. 3-6, "Fatawa by the Ulama of the Haramain on the azan question." The writer of the istifta was one Sayyid Muhammad Umar, of Pilibhit, Muhalla Ahmad Za'i.

74. They were: Maulana Muhammad Karim Allah of Medina, the addressee of the istifta, Maulana Ahmad al-Jaza'iri al-Husaini, Mufti al-Malikia, and Maulana Sayyid Muhammad Taufiq Afendi al-Ayubi al-Ansari al-Hanafi, teacher *(mudarris)* at the Haram al-Sharif al-Nabwi (the Prophet's mausoleum).

75. Ibid., p. 4.

76. Ibid., p. 5. The mention of "leaving off selling" is a reference to Quran lxii:9, which reads: "O ye who believe! When the call is proclaimed to prayer on Friday (the day of assembly) hasten earnestly to the remembrance of God, and leave off business (and traffic): that is best for you if ye but knew!" (Tr. by A. Yusuf Ali) We are grateful to Dr. M. Masood Ahmed, of Karachi (Pakistan). for bringing this Quranic verse to our attention.

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77. Muhammad Ibrahim (1876-1956) was a khalifa of Maulana Abd ul-Muqtadir Badayuni (1866-1915). The latter was a well-known and greatly-respected alim in Ahl-e Sunnat circles, and belonged to the famous line of Usmani Ulama and pirs, whose madrasa Shams ul-Ulum was a scholarly center for the Ahl-e Sunnat. It was Maulana Abd ul-Muqtadir's father, Abd ul-Qadir Badayuni, who in 1877 had directed Ahmad Raza and his father to Shah Al-e Rasul of Marahrah, that they may become his disciples.

78. *Dabdaba-e Sikandari*, 12 March 1917, vol. 53, no. 20, pp. 7-10, "Decision on the famous libel case between Badayun and Bareilly."

79. The importance of the outcome of this case is indicated in small ways in the sources. One of these is the fact that past events are sometimes dated in reference to this judgment, such as "when the Badayuni case was going on," or "soon after the Badayuni case was won." Such usage illustrates the landmark nature of the event in the subsequent oral tradition of the movement. See Zafar ud-Din Bihari, *Hayat-e A'la Hazrat*, pp. 150 and 190, for examples.

80. See, for example, ibid., pp. 44-45, 63, 160-61, 186, 198.

81. See, for instance, Khwaja Razi Haidar, *Tazkira-e Muhaddis Surati* (Karachi: Surati Academy, 1981?), p. 304. The original source is Maulana Abd ul-Wahid Azimabadi's *Darbar-e Haqq o Hidayat* (Patna, 1900).

82. Responding to a request for support for the Anjuman-e Khuddam-e Ka'ba from Maulana Abd ul-Bari Firangi Mahali, the Anjuman's founder, Abd ul-Majid Badayuni, to immerse himself in its activities. See Shah Mahmud Ahmad Qadiri, *Tazkira-e Ulama-e Ahl-e Sunnat*

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(Kanpur: 1971), p. 147. For Imam Ahmad Raza's reservations about it, see *Dabdaba-e Sikandari*, 11 August 1913, vol. 49, no. 35, p. 5.

83. For Imam Ahmad Raza's position on these issues, see Chapter x.

84. See note 61. in this chapter.

85. Note that the circumstances in which the Badayun libel case began were in this sense very different from those of the Kanpur mosque incident of 1913. In the latter case, a dispute with an outside group - the British Indian government itself - was involved.

86. *Dabdaba-e Sikandari*, 12 March 1917, vol. 53, no. 20, p 7.

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Chapter V

Late Nineteenth-Century Ahl-e Sunnat Attitudes Towards Other Heretics: Shi'is, and the Nadwat ul-Ulama

Whoever denies any of the "essentials of the faith" is a Kafir, and whoever doubts his kufr and punishment is a kafir, ... approval of kufr is kufr ... If one advances and promotes that kufr, the kufr is even greater.
Imam Ahmad Raza Khan, *Fatawa al-Haramain bi-Rajf Nadwat al-Main.*

Does a man become a Muslim ... merely by saying the *kalima* (confession of faith) and bowing before the *qibla* (the Ka'ba in Makkah)? Until he believes in the essentials of faith, he is not entitled to call himself a Muslim. Nor will he be saved from the eternity of the fire ...

Haji La'l Khan, *Darbar-e Sarapa-e Rahmat*

Not infrequently, religious reformers exhibit in their life and work a sense of deep moral outrage against those guilty, in their view, of personal moral laxity and of weakening the faith. In late nineteenth-century British India - which saw the rise of several movements of religious reform, both Muslim and non-Muslim - a number of reformers spoke and wrote with deep dismay about the moral condition of their communities, and saw an urgent need for self-correction. In the writings of Nawab Siddiq Hasan Khan, the Ahl-e Hadis leader, for instance, "there (was) a pervasive pessimism, a fear of the end of the world, and an emotional commitment to the need for dramatic reform."[1] Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, founder of the Ahmadi movement,likewise "was convinced that Islamic religion, Islamic society, and the position of Islam vis-a-vis other faiths (had sunk) in his times to unprecedented depths."[2] On the Hindu side of the religious spectrum, Swami Dayanand, founder of the

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Arya Samaj movement in the 1860s, attacked Hindu orthodoxy for weakening Hinduism from within, and causing it to fall before the challenges of "invading Islam and the Christian British."[3]

Imam Ahmad Raza Khan's writings also convey a sense of pessimism about the condition of Islam in his day and age, while urgently calling upon Muslims to reform in British India, he blamed his fellow Muslims, rather than others, for their situation. He denounced the views of Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan and his modernist Aligarh school, and of Ulama such as the Ahl-e Hadis, the Deobandis, the Nadwa ul-Ulama, and the Ahmadis. In addition, the Shi'is came under attack.[4] The Hindu reform movement of the Arya Samaj was also a concern, though debates and writings rebutting it arose later than those against other heretical Muslims, and were largely the work of the Ahl-e Sunnat leader Imam Ahmad Raza.

Examination of the Ahl-e Sunnat's opposition to the heretical Muslim movements mentioned above is an essential aspect of the attempt to understand what they meant by the *sunna* and the way in which they sought to apply it in their lives. In a broad sense, their opposition to their heretical Muslim contemporaries in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century period stemmed from the argument that there is a constellation of beliefs, the "essentials of the faith", which includes the main creed of Islam but is wider than it in scope, and which must be embraced if one is to "be" a Muslim. Failure to believe in even a single one of these "essentials" made one a kafir. What exactly is meant by the apparently vague term "essential of the faith" becomes clearer when one examines Ahl-e Sunnat opposition to groups such as the Shi'is, Nadwat ul-Ulama and the Wahhabis.

The Essentials of the Faith and Distinctions between Categories of "False" Belief among Muslims

In 1896 (Shawwal A.H. 1313), Imam Ahmad Raza Khan wrote a series of fatawa in response to several questions

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relating to contemporary heretical Muslim groups such as Sir Sayyid Ahmad of Aligarh and his followers, the Shi'is, the Ahl-e Hadis, the Deobandis,and the Nadwat ul-Ulama. Four years later, in 1900 (A.H. 1317), these fatawa received the approval of leading Ulama of the Haramain, and were published in a *risala* (tract) entitled *Fatawa al-Haramain bi-Rajf Nadwat al-Main* ("Fatawa from the Haramain (causing) the falsehood of the Nadwa to shudder"). Twenty of the twenty-eight questions in the risala dealt with the Nadwat ul-Ulama, one of the most recent heretical Muslim movements to have arisen in British North India.

Taking the groups one by one, Imam Ahmad Raza concluded that each, in one way or another, was guilty of "false" belief, thereby becoming *bad-mazhabs* (people with "wrong" or "bad" beliefs) and *gumrah* ("those who had lost their way"), or kafirs and *murtadds* (apostates).[5] The terms occur in pairs. A group was described as either "bad-mazhab" and "gumrah," or as "kafir" and "murtadd." Sir Sayyid Ahmad and his followers were said, in the first question, to deny the corporeal existence of the angel Gabriel, the other angels, the *jinn*, Satan, heaven, and hell, as well as the resurrection of the dead on the Last Day, and the occurrence of miracles. In their view, all these stood for moral states such as good and evil, and did not "actually exist." Moreover, the question said, they believed "that all books of *hadis* and *tafsir* are false; they have all been created by Ulama from their own heads. ... Only the Quran is true."[6] In view of such beliefs, were they to be considered to be Muslims, as they claimed to be? In response, Imam Ahmad Riza wrote:

> the *necharia* (Sir Sayyid Ahmad and his followers) have no relation to Islam. They are kafirs and murtadds, as they deny the essentials of the faith. Although they read the kalima, and accept the qibla of the Muslims, this is not sufficient to make them *ahl-e qibla* and Muslims. There is no room for alternate interpretation *(tawil)* of the essentials of the faith. This has been the judgement of the Ulama in their books of aqa'id and figh, as stated in clear expositions *(tasrih)*.[7]

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In that case, the next question asked, what was Imam Ahmad Raza's judgement on those who, being acquainted with their views, nevertheless called them Muslims and considered them to be celebrated leaders and knowledgeable and earlier Muslims as ignorant. To this, Imam Ahmad Raza replied that "approval of kufr is kufr ... if one advances and promotes that kufr (by publishing the views of persons holding beliefs that qualify as such, for instance), then the kufr is even greater."[8]

Discussing the Ahl-e Hadis further on in the risala, Imam Ahmad Raza said they were *bid'ati* "innovators", and deserving of hell on account of their rejection of *taqlid* (following one of the four Sunni schools of law), and their exclusive reliance on Quran and hadis:

Sayyid Allama Tahtawi ... writes, "Those who separate themselves from the collectivity of the people of figh and *ilm* (knowledge), and from the great majority, separate themselves in that which will take them to hell. O, you Muslims! It is imperative on you, the group that will receive salvation, that you follow the Ahl-e Sunnat wa jama'at, because Allah's help, guidance, and favor are with those who agree with the Ahl-e Sunnat, while those who oppose the Ahl-e sunnat, leave Allah and make Him angry. This salvation-attaining group is today divided into four mazhabs: Hanafi, Shafi'i, Maliki, and Hanbali. Whoever is outside these four, is bid'ati, jahannami.[9]

Being "bid'ati," they could not be among the Ahl-e Sunnat. In another fatawa, Imam Ahmad Raza said clearly that "apart from the Ahl-e Sunnat, it is a definitive obligation to recognize all other groups as bid'ati."[10] It did not follow, however, that all bid'atis had denied the essential of the faith (and were therefore kafirs). The Ahl-e Hadis were among those who "are not kafirs, but have been declared to be gumrah on account of their opposition to the Ahl-e Sunnat."[11] They were "bad-mazhab" and "gumrah", and it was "necessary by the mazhab of the Ahl-e Sunnat" to "show contempt for them and to

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oppose them ... it is forbidden to show love for them or to unite with them."[12] In the *Fatawa al-Haramain* he wrote: "How can it be permitted *(ja'iz)* to honor bad-mazhabs? ... The Prophet said. 'Whoever attempts to honor a bad-mazhab, is helping in the destruction of Islam.'"[13] The company of Ahl-e Hadis, and of bad-mazhabs generally, was to be shunned lest they mislead ignorant Muslims, and cause wrong belief to spread further:

Continually, hadis and the words of the Imams (here, the founders of the four Sunni law schools) have come down, saying that it is forbidden to mingle with bad-mazhabs and that it is imperative to stay away from them. ... the Prophet said, "Stay away from them, lest they lead you astray, and cause turmoil *(fitna)* (among you)."(He also said,) "If they fall ill, don't ask about them, if they die, don't join their funeral." (And,) "When you meet them, don't salute them." "Don't sit near them, don't drink or eat with them, don't marry them." "Don't read the namaz with them."[14]

More positively, they were to be openly denounced and rebutted, and their wrongdoing and false belief made known, particularly by the Ulama:

When bad-mazhab things are published, by the *ijma* (consensus) of the religious community, it is one of the important duties (of the Ulama) to rebut them, and to make their baseness apparent.[15]

If the Ulama did not do so, people would begin to respect them, they would listen to what they had to say, and soon they would be misled. "Then the work of *din* would fall into the hands of those who have broken their faith into many pieces, ... and become a separate group."[16]

In Imam Ahmad Raza's interpretation, "bad-mazhabi" and gumrahi" differed from *kufr* and *irtidad* (apostasy) in terms of degree, the latter being of course the worst category for a Muslim. For instance, he said, if the Shi'is (referred to as

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"Rafizis," in the literature) elevate Hazrat Ali, the Prophet's son-in-law and fourth khalif in the Sunni view, above Hazrat Abu Bakr and Hazrat Umar, the first and second khalifas respectively, this is merely "bad-mazhabi" according to the jurists. Categorical denial of the khilafat of either or both of the latter, however, is kufr, at least in the eyes of the jurists. Theologians *(mutakallimin)* are more cautious, preferring to call this too "bad-mazhabi" rather than "kufr."[17] Imam Ahmad Raza, who himself was a jurist, based his contention that a Muslim became a "kafir murtadd" if he denied any of the "essentials" of the faith, on an array of Sunni juridical sources.[18]

What, then, were these "essentials," in Imam Ahmad Raza's definition? In an early work, written in 1880-81 (A.H. 1298),[19] he devoted a brief chapter to the essential of the faith, describing them as those beliefs which are based on the clear verses *(nusus)* of the Quran, on mashhur wa mutawatir hadis, and the consensus of the community.[20] He then listed a number of beliefs founded on these sources, which the Ahl-e Sunnat wa Jama'at therefore uphold. Starting with the unity of Allah and the prophethood of Hazrat Muhammad (peace and blessing of Allah be upon him), the list includes belief in heaven and hell, the delights and punishments of the grave, the questioning of the dead, the reckoning on the Day of the Resurrection, and the heavenly river (Kausar) and bridge.[21] The other chapters in the book describe in some detail the qualities of Allah, the Prophet, the angels, the Prophet's Companions, his family, and the relative ranking of the first four khalifas.

In later writings, however, Imam Ahmad Raza clearly indicated that the term essentials of the faith had the widest application. Based on the three sources of clear verses of the Quran, Mashhur and mutawatir hadis and the consensus of the community, they include everything that falls under the term *(aqa'id)* faith, which were central to one's identity as a Muslim. The Ahl-e Sunnat wa Jama'at were defined, in fact, as those who faithfully followed and believed in the essential of the faith: "All the essential of the faith have to be accepted. If someone

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denies even one of them, he is a kafir, even if he reads the namaz and faces the Ka'ba."[22] As long as one did not deny these, one was a Muslim. Not all Muslims, however, were necessarily one of the Ahl-e Sunnat. As we have seen, some groups, perceived to be opponents of the Ahl-e Sunnat, were described as bid'ati, gumrah, and bad-mazhab, though not kafir. We turn now to the Ahl-e Sunnat wa Jama'at's use of these terms in relation to some specific groups.

The Ahl-e Sunnat and Shi'ism

Anecdotes from Imam Ahmad Raza's life illustrate his complete refusal to have any social relations whatsoever with Shi'is.[23] He is reported to have refused to meet, or to accept any gifts from, the Shi'i Nawab of Rampur, Hamid Ali Khan (ruled 1896-19XX).[24] He admonished a follower for wearing a black cap during the month of Muharram, when Shi'is observe mourning rituals to commemorate Husain's death at Karbala.[25] In addition, he is reported to have challenged a group of Tafzilis (Shi'is who accord preeminence to Hazrat Ali over the Prophet's other Companions, but do not deny the legitimacy of the first three khalifas) to debate with him, though the challenge was allegedly not taken up.[26]

Doctrinally, Imam Ahmad Raza distinguished between Shi'is on the basis of how "extreme" *(ghali,tabara'i)* or otherwise their beliefs were. At the "mild" and therefore less objectionable end, were Tafzili Shi'is, who were merely bad-mazhabs. But in this view most Shi'is in his day were "extreme," being guilty of kufr on one or more grounds, such as belief that the Quran in its existing state is defective; that Hazrat Ali and the other Imams are superior to the non-legislative prophets *(Anbiya);* or denial of the legitimacy of the first three khalifas before Hazrat Ali.[27] Belief in the perfection of the Quran, in the superiority of prophets over the Imams, and acceptance of the khilafat were all among the essential of the faith. Hence, Shi'is holding beliefs to the contrary were kafirs and apostates.[28]

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Turning to Shi'i ritual practices, such as the making of *ta'ziyas* (replicas of Imam Hasan and Imam Husain's tombs) during Muharram, or the reading of *shahadat-namas* (elegiac poetry dealing with Husain's martyrdom), Imam Ahmad Raza was, however, more equivocal. When asked for his judgment on *ta'ziyadari* (rituals associated with the re-enactment of Husain's martyrdom), Imam Ahmad Raza responded that in principle there was no harm in keeping a reproduction of Husain's tomb as a *tabarruk* (sacred relic). It was like keeping pictures of the Ka'ba, or of the Prophet's tomb, or reproductions of the Prophet's shoes. These were all sources of barkat, or grace, and the making and keeping of reproductions of inanimate objects is permitted in Islam.[29] So long as people kept faithful reproductions of Husain's tomb, and transferred the reward *(isal-e sawab)* accrued by reading the Quran to the spirits of the martyrs, this was permissible.

However, ta'ziyadari as currently practised contained a number of bid'at, and was completely *haram*. These included the fact that the ta'ziya bore no resemblance whatsoever to Husain's tomb. Practices such as the excessive display of grief, bowing before the image , circumambulating it, making a wish on it, and the mingling of men and women, were also bid'at and haram. Sunnis should avoid associating themselves with such acts, for not to do so would be to convey the impression of similarity with Shi'is.[30]

Imam Ahmad Raza's judgments on other Shi'i practices were similar. On the reading of the shahadat-nama, in which the martyrdom of Husain and his army at Karbala are recalled, he said that if the events of that battle were accurately portrayed, and if the grief and mourning that takes place on such occasions were replaced by recollection of the martyr's qualities and their patience under duress, there would be no harm. But as currently practised, the participation of Sunnis in a shahadat-nama was forbidden. In addition, recollection of the martyrs of Karbala should never take place in a *majlis-e milad*, in which the

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Prophet's birth is narrated or recited, and which is an occasion for happiness.[31]

Likewise, Imam Ahmad Raza, apparently differing from the Ulama of Deoband, saw no intrinsic harm in the practice of offering food to the poor on Ashura (the tenth day of Muharram). If food or water were offered "with the right intention, purely for the sending of reward (sawab) to the good spirits of the Imams, then without a doubt this is good and pleasing.[32] But he warned against wastefulness in offering *langar* (food offering for religious purposes), and lack of respect toward either food or money: "Allah has made everything for the fulfilment of man's needs, and it should not be thrown (on the ground)."

Imam Ahmad Raza emphasized several times the importance of having the right intention. Not only were the bid'ats associated with many of the rituals of Muharram to be avoided, but their performance had to be accompanied by the right intention. Sometimes he advised that a ritual act, even when not objectionable in itself, be avoided because of the possibility that others may imitate the act with the wrong intention. Thus he advised a questioner against eating food off to Husain's spirit, because "even if one's intention is good, in the eyes of ignorant people a forbidden matter (i.e., eating the food with the wrong intention) will acquire respect."[33]
Despite the careful manner in which Imam Ahmad Raza weighed his opinions and judgments, hedging his approval of certain practices with conditions, particularly the requirement that all such practices be within the limits of the *shar'ia*.

The Wahhabis (i.e. Deobandis, Ahl-e Hadis and Maududis) charge against Imam Ahmad Raza, that "he belonged to a Shi'i family" which passed off as Sunni in order to undermine the Sunnis from within, is easily dismissed. His Sunni Pathan background is well documented.[34] However, we have seen that Imam Ahmad Raza's sufi preceptor, Shah Al-e Rasul, belonged to a renowned Sayyid family, so this charge

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has no strong grounds. In the nineteenth century, the Barkati Sayyids of Marahrah, to which Shah Al-e Rasul belonged, engaged vigorously in countering Shi'is influence among the Muslims. To the extent that this connection of his pir's family influenced Imam Ahmad Raza, it seems probable that it strengthened his anti-Shi'i attitudes.

However, one must not take seriously the charge that some of Imam Ahmad Raza's "beliefs and ideas were like those of the Shi'a." One does find on examination that the views on Imam Ahmad Raza and the Ahl-e Sunnat are close to Shi'i doctrine where some aspects of the concept of prophecy are concerned.[35] Like Shi'is, they believed in the sinlessness of all the prophets preceding and including Hazrat Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him).[36] Extreme respect for the Prophet Muhammad's (peace and blessing of Allah be upon him) family was another feature shared by the Ahl-e Sunnat and Shi'is; we have noted already Imam Ahmad Raza's belief that *baraka* or grace is inherent in Sayyids, those genealogically related to the Prophet through his daughter Hazrat Fatima and her descendants.[37]

From all this discussion it is wrong to think that Imam Raza and Shi'a has any likeness to each other. Imam Ahmad Raza attached considerable importance to the concept of the preeminence of the Prophet's light, which was created before Allah created the spiritual or material universe, and before the creation of Adam, the first prophet.[38]

Imam Ahmad Raza wrote in the light of the Quran, Hadis and other books of the Ahl-e Sunnat that the divine light had been transferred from generation to generation by Hazrat Muhammad's (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) ancestors, through "pure backs (i.e. loins) and pure wombs" until his birth. "All (Hazrat Muhammad's) male ancestors were noble, and his female ancestors pure."[39]

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Because they were always the best of their generation, and were pure bearers of the divine light, it followed that they could not have been kafirs: "Allah always chose the prophethood to pass through the best loins. And what could be worse, more base, and more impure, than kufr and shirk?"[40] Imam Ahmad Raza cited a hadis from Hazrat Ali, said by him to be *sahih* (based on a sound chain of transmission through the Sunni sources), to the effect that there had never been less than seven Muslims on the face of the earth; Hazrat Muhammad's ancestor had been among these.[41] Finally, he based his opinion, as interpretations, on a Quran verse (XXVI: 219) in which Hazrat Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) is told to put his trust in "the worshippers" *(sajidin)*.

Imam Ahmad Raza's views on Hazrat Muhammad's prophecy included the *nur Muhammadi* concept, which he reports through the tradition that the entire world was created (for the purpose of) Hazrat Muhammad's prophetic emergence at a predestined time and place. ... Allah revealed to Adam that Hazrat Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was the only cause for his own creation, as well as for the creation of heaven, earth, paradise and hell.

This idea is found in Imam Ahmad Raza's poetry. In his collection of poems, for instance, one finds the following:

The earth and the heavens are for you
The master and the house are for you
This and that, it's all for you
The two worlds were made for you[42]

Or again:

The world gets its life from you
Because of you the world came into being
The real is bound to its shadow
Upon you be thousands of blessings[43]

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On the concept that the Prophet had no shadow, on this respect there are several fatawa in which he argued through Quran and Hadis that the Prophet, being made of light, had no shadow.[44]

It is unnecessary to search the literature for further similarities, which undoubtedly exist, particularly in relation to the Prophet. One must, however, be careful not to interpret this as a "borrowing" of Shi'i concepts by Imam Ahmad Raza and his followers. First, and most obviously, there are more important differences of detail between the two. Thus, the fact that in Imam Ahmad Raza's interpretation the Prophet Muhammad's (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) light was not passed on, differs significantly from Shi'i belief that the infallible Imams inherited it from Hazrat Muhammad through Hazrat Ali.[45] Imam Ahmad Raza considered Hazrat Muhammad's (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) spiritual descendants to be the sufi "helpers" or *ghaus*, culminating in Hazrat Shaikh Abd ul-Qadir Jilani (d. A.D. 1166).[46] The ghaus, and the *aulia*, inherited or achieved grace *(barkat)*, but the light was Hazrat Muhammad's (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) alone. And again, in the case of Hazrat Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) not having a shadow, for Imam Ahmad Raza this quality was unique to the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), and this option was shared by the earlier Sunni Imams too.

The larger point that emerges, however, is that one has to attend seriously to the insistent claim made by Imam Ahmad Raza and his fellows that they were the Ahl-e Sunnat wa Jama'at, people of the Prophet's "way," for whom the Prophet was at the center of their belief system and self-identity. Paradoxical though this may seem, the resemblance between aspects of Ahl-e Sunnat prophetology and Shi'i concepts regarding the Prophet appear to have arisen from the centrality of the figure of the Prophet and desire to faithfully follow his *sunna* in Imam Ahmad Raza's thought, rather than any direct influence

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derived from Shi'ism. To the extent that Hazrat Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and the *ahl-e ba'it* (members of (his) house) occupied center stage for both Imam Ahmad Raza and the Shi'is, they reached similar positions. However, they did so along different paths, coming from different traditions.

An important measure of the fact that Imam Ahmad Raza was writing very much from within the Sunni tradition is the fact that his sources were entirely Sunni. Even when he cited a tradition from Hazrat Ali, or interpreted a Quran verse as Shi'i tradition does, he did so on the basis of Sunni sources. Thus, when citing the hadis that says that all of creation proceeded from the Prophet's light, he asserted that this had been accepted by a number of Sunni authorities, such as Imam Ahmad bin Muhammad al-Qastalani (d. 1517), a Shafi'i authority on tradition and theology in Cairo, and Allama Abd ul-Haqq Dihlawi (d. 1642), the well-known hadis scholar from Mughal India.[47] Other prominent sources for hadis and figh cited by him were Imam Muhammad al-Zurqani, a Maliki scholar; Imam Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti (d. 1505), a scholar of Mamluk Egypt; Imam al-Tirmidhi, the Sunni traditionist; Allama Ibn al-Jauzi; and Allama Shah Abd ul-Aziz Dihlawi. Occasionally Sufi sources were cited, such as Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi and Imam Al Gazzali.[48] In another work, in which Ahmad Raza argued that Hazrat Ali, the fourth khalifa, had been a believer *(mu'min)* from the earliest years of his life, the sources used were largely Asha'ri and Maturidi, both Sunni theological schools - as one may have expected given its subject matter.[49]

To sum up, then, while there are some important conceptual similarities between Shi'i thought and aspects of Imam Ahmad Raza's prophetology, the evidence indicates that his writings were based on Sunni sources, most of them well-known works of fiqh, hadis and collections of fatawa. In his works, he indicated clearly that he regarded the Shi'is of his day as kafirs. Given this unequivocal judgment, and the lack of evidence that Imam Ahmad Raza was acquainted with Shi'i

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literature, one has to discount the suggestion that he was influenced by Shi'ism.

The Ahl-e Sunnat and the Nadwat ul-Ulama

The Nadwat ul-Ulama ("Council of Ulama" was first conceived in 1892 by a group of Ulama who had assembled at Kanpur's Madrasa Faiz-e Amm to attend the school's annual graduation *(dastarbandi)* ceremonies.[50] Senior teachers at the school, such as Maulana Lutf Ullah Aligarhi the Madrasa's principal), Sayyid Muhammad Ali Mongiri (the Nadwa's first administrator), and Maulana Ahmad Hasan Kanpuri, were in the forefront of the Nadwa's leadership . More importantly, the early leaders of the Nadwa were united by the fact that several of them had either studied under, or were disciples of, Shah Fazl-e Rahman Ganj Muradabadi (1797-1895/96). Maulana Fazl-e Rahman had taught hadis to Maulanas Muhammad Ali Mongiri, Thanawi, Ahmad Hasan Kanpuri, and Sayyid Zuhur ul-Islam among others, all of whom were leaders of the Nadwa in its early years. Muhammad Ali Mongiri and Hazrat Wasi Ahmad "Muhaddis" Surati (a close friend of Imam Ahmad Raza's and a supporter of the Nadwa at this time) were, in addition, disciples of Shah Fazl-e Rahman Ganj Muradabadi. All these former Ulama were indeed Sunni. Indeed, according to one writer, the latter was the "spiritual center" uniting the founders of the Nadwa.[51]

These leaders were soon joined by others, notably Maulana Shibli Nu'mani, a nechari,then teacher of Arabic at the Aligarh Muhammadan College founded by Sir Sayyid Ahmad. Their chief aims were twofold: to improve the system of Madrasa education, by establishing one of their own, based on a new curriculum; and to promote unity among the Ulama, settling disputes between them internally.[52] By improving on the existing madrasa system of education, of which the founders were highly critical, they hoped to train a new generation of religious leaders who would be respected both within the Muslim community and by the British Indian government: "They

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would act as spokesmen for Muslims to the government ... They called for improved communications among the Ulama, and, in the style for the Congress and the Education Conference (of Sir Sayyid Ahmad), annual meetings at which they would assemble."[53]

By one Nadwi's account - al-Hasani's -, the proposal to start such a "council" was greeted with enthusiasm by a large number of Ulama. Support for the idea was expressed by Ulama from Deoband, Rampur, Patna, Aligarh, Bhopal, and Bombay, among other places.[54] Two Ulama whose views were close to Imam Ahmad Raza's, Wasi Ahmad Surati and Abd ul-Qadir Badayuni, attended the Nadwa's 1893 annual meeting, thus indicating their support.[55]

Serious opposition to the Nadwa, however, was not long in coming. At their 1894 annual meeting, held at Kanpur, statements made by one Maulana Ibrahim Arwi of the Ahl-e Hadis, (a group of Indian Wahhbis) and by the Shi'i alim Ghulam Hasnain Kantori, caused the Sunni Hanafi Ulama to get upset. The Ahl-e Hadis speaker used the Nadwa platform to talk about the shortcomings of *taqlid*. As for the Shi'i alim, he addressed the Sunni Ulama at length on Hazrat Ali as the Prophet Muhammad's successor "without any separation" *(bila fasl)*, implying thereby that the Khilafat of Hazrat Abu Bakr, Hazrat Umar, and Hazrat Usman (the first three khalifas, in the Sunni view) was invalid. However, having agreed beforehand that there would be no argument at the meeting, the Ulama reportedly remained silent.[56]

At the same meeting, Shibli, a nechari, also spoke, saying, "We recognize both *muqallids* and *ghair-muqallidds* as *muwahid* (professors of Allah's unity) and *mu'min* (believers, Muslims), and we regard it as a grave evil to call any believer a *mushrik* and *bid'ati*.[57] The namaz would be considered valid if read behind another Muslim, regardless of distinction, because "whoever has faith in the *kalima-e tauhid* (profession of faith proclaiming Allah's unity) is a Muslim." At the Nadwa's next

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annual meeting held at Lucknow in 1895, Maulana Muhammad Ali Mongiri, the chief administrator, is reported to have expressed similar sentiments minimizing internal differences between Muslims. He said, for example, that the differences between *muqallids* and *ghair-muqallids* were like the minor differences, relating to matters of detail, that existed between the four Sunni law schools.[58]

Imam Ahmad Raza had supported the Nadwa initially, in the hope, as he wrote, that "in this era full of misfortune, in which the affliction of bad-mazhabi surrounds us and the plague of freedom "free thinking" has conquered the world, the Nadwat ul-Ulama ... would strengthen the Ahl-e Sunnat, and dispel turmoil.[59] In January 1896 (Sha'ban A.H. 1313), however, he wrote a private letter to Maulana Muhammad Ali Mongiri to persuade the Nadwa's leadership to adopt certain "reforms" he viewed as essential.[60] These included, most importantly, the exclusion of all but "Sunni" Ulama (the Ahl-e Hadis and Deobandi, as we noted earlier, were not among those included in the category of "Sunni") from the Nadwā's leadership, and a public repudiation of statements which were objectionable from the Sunni point of view. Muhammad Ali replied that the Nadwa's aims had been misrepresented and misunderstood, that the differences between Imam Ahmad Raza and the Nadwis were not as wide as appeared, and that the reforms Imam Ahmad Raza wanted the Nadwa to undertake could best be carried out if he joined the new organization. Muhammad Ali also felt that lengthy written rebuttal of each others' arguments was pointless, and that they could sort out their differences verbally at the forthcoming Nadwa conference in Bareilly.[61]

As the exchange of letters continued, however, it became clear that their positions were irreconcilable. Muhammad Ali argued that while he himself had no sympathy for "Nechari" (Sir Sayyid Ahmad's) or Ahl-e Hadis or Deobandi or Shii views - and he was taking steps to ensure that the Shi'is did not make statements distressing to Sunni members, as they had done in previous meetings - the inclusion of all these different Muslim

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groups within the Nadwa was nevertheless "necessary" or "expedient." In his view, new groups such as the Ahl-e Hadis and Deobandi would not have become as numerous or as influential as they were if the Ulama had simply ignored them at the very beginning, when there were only a handful of them. By opposing them, the Ulama had merely helped to publicize their beliefs, and thereby helped spread their movement. In saying this, he implied that Imam Ahmad Raza's opposition, too, was counterproductive, and that quiet persuasion would be more effective. Secondly, present disputes with other heretical Muslim groups were distracting the Ulama from the more important task of "erasing the dishonor" with which they were regarded by the"kafir rulers."[62] Given the appalling state into which Muslims had fallen, when "our enemies laugh at us and at our pure mazhab, ... (our) disgraceful quarrels should be set aside." In short, it was against their best interest to exclude any group from the Nadwa, because they needed to unite and strengthen their position vis-a-vis the British government of the day.

Imam Ahmad Raza completely rejected this interpretation of *maslahat,* or "benefit," "interest." In his view, by bringing Sunnis and "bad-mazhabs" under one platform, the Nadwa was engaged in that which was absolutely contrary to the Muslims' best interest as spelt out in Quran, hadis, and the writings of the founders of the law schools. Quoting Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi from the *Maktubat,* to the effect that "the harm done by a single *mubtadi'* (innovator, heretic) is greater than that done by a hundred kafirs," he asked: "Maulana, do you ... and the leaders of the Nadwa know the best interest in din and mazhab better, or does the Shaikh Mujaddid?"[63] And, cataloguing a long list of statements by which the Ahl-e Sunnat had been "slandered" at past meetings of the Nadwa, he asked rhetorically: "In which direction does the benefit lie?"[64] In fact, the Nadwa was no longer entitled to its name, "Nadwa" or "Council" of Ulama, given its opposition to the Ulama of the Ahl-e Sunnat. It was now better suited to be a meeting seeking religious freedom, as so many others were, in association with the followers of Sir Sayyid Ahmad ("nechari sahibs").[65]

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By the time the Nadwa held its next annual session at Bareilly some months later, a veritable "storm of opposition" had broken out. Imam Ahmad Raza alone is said to have written approximately two hundred anti-Nadwa works over the next few years.[66] Several were collections of fatawa, circulated to Ulama around the country and printed with their confirmatory opinions and seals at the end. Statements were taken from one or other of the Nadwa's annual reports, and posed as a question. An influential set of fatawa was one entitled *Fatawa al-Qudwa li-Kashf Dafin al-Nadwa* (Exemplary fatawa to reveal the Nadwa's secret), which was signed by more than fifty Ulama from places as far flung as Bombay, Allahabad, Panjab, Sind, and Delhi, apart from smaller towns like Bareilly, Muradabad, or Rampur. A number of the questions dealt with relations between different Muslim groups: for instance, was it correct to say that Shi'i-Sunni differences were exaggerated, given that both groups agreed on love of the Prophet, his family, and the Companions?[67] Was it true, as the Nadwa claimed, that the person with the greatest *taqwa* (religious fear) was closest to Allah, regardless of his or her "mazhab" (group affiliation)?[68] Or again, should Muslims of one group desist from characterizing those of another group as mushrik, bid'ati, gumrah, fasiq, or similar?[69]

As the signatures at the end of Imam Ahmad Raza's fatawa indicate, he was by no means alone in his denunciations of the Nadwa. Maulana Abd ul-Qadir Badayuni was also most forcefully opposed. Among the many publications of this period is one in which Abd ul-Qadir is reported to have met Maulana Lutf Ullah Aligarh, who had chaired the Nadwa's Bareilly meeting, and got his signature to an anti-Nadwa fatawa. Apparently, Ahl-e Sunnat leaders and representatives continued to communicate with Lutf Ullah even after he left for Haidarabad to serve under the Nizam shortly thereafter. According to sources, Maulana Luft Ullah indicated to them that Imam Ahmad Raza's opinions were essentially "correct".[70]

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The high point of Ahl-e Sunnat writing against the Nadwa (which included posters, poems, and risalas, in addition to fatawa) was, undoubtedly, Imam Ahmad Raza's *Fatawa al-Haramain bi-Rajf Nadwat al-Main* which was published in 1900 (A.H. 1317) with the confirmatory opinions of many Ulama from Makkah, and Medina. In this fatwa, Imam Ahmad Raza had argued that the Nadwis were "bad-mazhabs," who were misleading ordinary Muslims and creating yet another group in opposition to the Ahl-e Sunnat.[71] Among the Ulama who confirmed his opinions were two muftis of Makkah (one of the Shafi'i, the other Hanafi), and several teachers at the Haram mosque. In this fatwa, Imam Ahmad Raza set a pattern to be followed up more dramatically some years later, in which a bitter "fatwa war" against another group culminated in his getting confirmatory opinions from the Haramain, thereby considerably his authority at home.

If the Ahl-e Sunnat's anti-Nadwa efforts had been confined to writing and publication, that alone would have been remarkable. By the end of the nineteenth century, however, a new phase in the movement's history was inaugurated with the creation of the "Majlis-e Ahl-e Sunnat wa Jama'at," a forum for the annual gathering together of Ulama much the same way as the Nadwat ul-Ulama was. Its sole purpose was opposition to the Nadwa.

Although the Ahl-e Sunnat organization appears to have first met at Bareilly (perhaps in the immediate aftermath of the Nadwa's annual meeting in that town in 1896), its center of activity soon shifted to Patna, Bihar. To have an eastern center (as Patna was) rather than a western one, based in Bareilly, was in fact a logical choice, given that the Nadwa itself was centered in places such as Lucknow (where it had established a Dar ul-Ulum in 1898), and Kanpur (at the Madrasa Faiz-e Amm). The Nadwa's influence could thus be understood to be strong in the eastern region. Or, as an Ahl-e Sunnat source had it, the "plague" of the Nadwa had reached such proportions in Patna and its environs that a collective effort by the "doctors of the

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shari'at and the physicians of *din* and *millat* " became necessary in order to eradicate it. In June 1897 (25 Muharram 1315) the Ahl-e Sunnat Ulama of Patna met for the first time.[72] This meeting was a forerunner to the first major meeting of the Majlis-e Ahl-e Sunnat wa Jama'at, in Rajab A.H. 1318/October 1900, attended by Ulama from all over the country.

The creation of the Majlis-e Ahl-e Sunnat was itself part of a larger multi-faceted organizational effort mounted by Qazi Abd ul-Wahid Azimabadi of Patna, to promote Ahl-e Sunnat interests.[73] It coincided with his founding of the Madrasa Hanafia (the formal opening of which probably took place on the occasion of the Majlis-e Ahl-e Sunnat meetings in October 1900). Qazi Abd ul-Wahid was the school's first manager Maulana Wasi Ahmad "Muhaddis" Surati was its principal for the first two years, leaving his own madrasa in Pilibhit in order to set this new one on a sound footing. Qazi Abd ul-Wahid had also started the monthly journal *Tuhfa-e Hanafia* in 1897, in which anti-Nadwa writings figured prominently. This paper continued to be published until about 1910.[74] Early lists of the buyers of the *Tuhfa-e Hanafia* indicated that it enjoyed the support of a number of the local common Muslims and all over the country.

From the first, the Majlis-e Ahl-e Sunnat wa Jama'at adopted the aggressive strategy of holding its annual meetings (generally lasting about a week) at the same time as, and in the same town as, the Nadwa. Its first meetings, held in Patna in 1900, thus took place side by side with those of the Nadwa. A list of participants attached to its published report shows that this first Majlis was attended by all the leading Ulama of the Ahl-e Sunnat: Abd ul-Qadir Badayuni, Imam Ahmad Raza Khan Barelwi,Wasi Ahmad Surati, and Abd us-Salam Jabbalpuri, among others. The total number was about a hundred; the presidential chair was occupied by Abd us-Samad Sahaswani.[75]

Imam Ahmad Raza addressed the gathering in a sermon on the Prophet's light, and the meaning of faith *(iman)*.[76] Faith

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had two pillars, he said: Allah was the first pillar, and the Prophet the second. Allah had created the Jinn, and men, that they might worship Him. But He Himself neither benefited by their worship, nor was diminished by their failure to do so. He had commanded it because it was a measure of people's obedience to the Prophet. Worship of Allah strengthened love of the Prophet, as exemplified by Hazrat Ali who once missed saying his prayer because the Prophet had fallen asleep on his lap, and Hazrat Abu Bakr,who allowed himself to be bitten by a snake rather than wake the Prophet.[77] "Such respect and love were the self-sacrificing devotion of the moth for the candle of prophethood."[78]

Imam Ahmad Raza then spoke of Hazrat Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) being the distributor of Allah's bounty:

The Prophet said, "I am the distributor, and Allah is the giver." From the first day until today, and from today until the last day, ... whatever blessings have been received, or will be received, were and will be distributed by the hand of Mustafa. Din and millat, Islam and Sunnat, virtue and prayer, devotion and purity, knowledge and gnosis, all these dini blessing have been distributed by him; in the same way, the worldly blessings of wealth and property, cure and health, respect and dignity, power and rulership, and children, were also received from him.[79]

Such blessings cannot be reciprocated. One can only be grateful, devoted and humble. And this in turn invites further blessings, as were received by Hazrat Abu Bakr and Hazrat Ali.[80]

Imam Ahmad Raza had been discoursing at length on Hazrat Abu Bakr's superiority over Hazrat Ali when he learnt that some Nadwis had joined the audience. Seeing this as an opportunity to criticize the Nadwa, from here on he spoke along now-familiar lines of argument against them. He also rebutted

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the latest Nadwi charges that his own anti-Nadwa fatwa, ostensibly approved by Ulama of the Haramain, had in fact been signed by Indian Ulama on hajj. The sermon, which had started at 8 p.m., lasted well past midnight.[81]

The efforts of the Ulama of the Ahl-e Sunnat to weaken the Nadwa continued forcefully for several years. In December 1901, the Majlis-e Ahl-e Sunnat met at Calcutta, again in conjunction with the Nadwa's annual meeting there.[82] The Persistent opposition it represented was at least partially responsible for the loss of influence by the Nadwa, and the withdrawal of the Shi'is, and those from Aligarh, from its membership.[83] And then Nadwa became a heretical group, which thereafter was partially supported by Deobandis and Ahl-e Hadis.

Imam Ahmad Raza as the Mujaddid of the Hijri Fourteenth Century

It was arising out of the debates surrounding Ahl-e Sunnat differences with the Nadwis that there was made the remarkable claim that Imam Ahmad was the *mujaddid* (renewer) of the Hijri fourteenth century. During the course of the Ahl-e Sunnat's meeting at Patna in 1900, Maulana Abd ul-Muqtadir Badayuni, the *sajjada-nishin* of the Khanaqah Qadiria at Badayun, referred to Imam Ahmad Raza in his sermon as the "*mujaddid* of the present (i.e. fourteenth Hijri) century."[84] Zafar ud-Din Bihari wrote that all those present at the meeting accepted the title, and that later thousands of others, including several Ulama of the Haramain, did so. Thus there was *ijma* (consensus) among the Ahl-e Sunnat wa Jama'at on the question.[85]

The proclamation of Imam Ahmad Raza by Ulama as the mujaddid of the Hijri fourteenth century at this meeting occurred at a time when Ulama who identified themselves as "Ahl-e Sunnat" were strongly united in condemnation of the Nadwat ul-Ulama. Imam Raza had written extensively in its rebuttal, and it

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was not surprising that his personal influence should have grown considerably as a result. The formation of the Majlis was also a major new development, lending coherence to previously individual and uncoordinated opinions on the Nadwa. Each of these factors seems to have played a part in Imam Ahmad Raza's emergence at this time as the intellectual center for the new movement.

As he and his followers saw it, of course, their movement was not new: their main purpose being to revive the Prophet's sunna, they were following in the footsteps of the Prophet and his companions, and thereby reviving the "old" way. For the same reason, the term "founder" was - as it is today - rejected as a way of describing Imam Ahmad Raza's relationship to the movement. To the Ulama attending the Ahl-e Sunnat meetings, the term "mujaddid," on the other hand, must have seemed to perfectly describe the role Imam Ahmad Raza had come to play in it.

The concept of the mujaddid is based, as Maulana Zafar ud-Din Bihari indicated, on the hadis from Abu Da'ud in which the Prophet is reported to have said, "On the eve of every century Allah will send to this community a person who will renew its religion."[86] As is well known, the need for renewal is premised on the Muslim belief that "an almost unarrestable process of decline" set in immediately after the worldly life of the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) in whose lifetime "divine will (had been) embodied in the most perfect fashion." The process of decline could, however, be temporarily reversed by the appearance, once every hundred years, of the renewer or mujaddid who would "revive the beliefs and customs of the prophetic age."

Among the conditions necessary for one to qualify as mujaddid, Zafar ud-Din wrote, were that the man (it could not be a woman) be a Sunni of sound belief, and an alim who combined in himself all the sciences and skills and that he be well known ("the most famous among the celebrated of his

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age"), be a protector of din unfettered by fear of going against prevailing "innovations," and be learned in shari'at and tariqat (sufism). He also had to satisfy the technical requirement that he be well known by the end of the century in which he was born, and at the beginning of that in which he was to die.[87] In fact, failure to appear at the right time disqualified an otherwise acceptable person. According to Zafar ud-Din, Shah Wali Ullah (A.H. 1115/A.D. 1703-A.H. 1176/A.D. 1762) could not be a mujaddid because he was born and died in the Hijri twelfth century, thus failing to span two centuries.[88] Imam Ahmad Raza, on the other hand, did span two Islamic centuries, having been born in A.H. 1272/A.D. 1856, and died in A.H. 1340/A.D. 1921.

Imam Ahmad Raza was considered, by the Ahl-e Sunnat, to have succeeded Shah Abd ul-Aziz (d. 1824), eldest son of Shah Wali Ullah, as mujaddid of the Hijri thirteenth century, was said to have had all the necessary qualities of learning, piety, and fame among the Ulama both in India and in the Arab lands. He was a brilliant teacher of hadis, and writer of fatawa. Moreover, he had disassociated himself from the movement of Sayyid Ahmad Barelwi and Shah Muhammad Isma'il, who both took up the Wahhabi belief. When Muhammad Isma'il wrote the book *Taqwiat ul-Iman* (Strengthening the faith), Shah Abdul Aziz ordered his other nephew to write a rebuttal to it, being then himself a blind man in old age.[89]

Zafar ud-Din recognized (as does the classical theory of tajdid) that there could be more than a single mujaddid in any one century. Sometimes there was no consensus on any one person.

Ahl-e Sunnat use of the term "Wahhabi," and their judgment of kufr against certain Ulama associated with the founding of the Dar ul-Ulum at Deoband will be looked at later. In examining this issue we are led directly to Imam Ahmad Raza's and the Ahl-e Sunnat movement's prophetology.

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NOTES

1. Barbara D. Metcalf, *Islamic Revival in British India: Deoband, 1860-1900* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), p. 269.

2. Yohannan Friedman, *Prophecy Continuous: Aspects of Ahmadi Religious Thought and Its Medieval Background* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), p. 105.

3. Kenneth W. Jones, *Arya Dharm: Hindu Consciousness in 19th-Century Punjab* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), p. 33.

4. It was a measure of the Ahl-e Sunnat's strong disapproval of these movements that the terms used in their writings to describe them are implicitly derogatory: Sir Sayyid and his school are referred to as *nechari* (nature lovers); the Ahl-e Hadis are *ghair muqallid* (followers of none of the four Sunni *mazhabs*, or schools of law) or *wahhabi*, a term also used to describe Deobandis; all Ahmadis, without distinction, are *qadiyanis* (after the town of Qadiyan, where the movement first began); Shi'is are referred to as *rafizi* (Ar. Rafidi; lit., dissenters), the name of a Shi'i group in early Muslim history. The Ahl-e Sunnat's opponents, of whom there were many, responded in kind with terms such as "Barelwi," *"bid'áti,"* and *"mushrik"* (i.e., "innovators," "idolators").

5. The distinction between these terms is discussed below. It should be noted at the outset, however, that in this and other texts where the discussion is confined to Muslims, the terms *kafir* and *murtadd* are treated as a single category, i.e. "those who have become kafirs by apostasy from Islam." Non-Muslims, while kafirs,

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cannot be apostates unless they had earlier been Muslims.

6. *Fatawa al-Haramain bi-Rajf Nadwa al-Main* (Bareilly: Matba-e Ahl-e Sunnat wa jama'at), A.H. 1317/A.D. 1900, pp. 27-28.

7. Ibid., p. 29.

8. Ibid., pp. 29-31. This second question, and its reply, were in reference to the Nadwat ul-Ulama, discussed further on in the chapter.

9. Ibid., p. 35.

10. Imam Ahmad Raza Khan, *Fatawa al-Qudwa li-Kashf Dafin al-Nadwa* ("Exemplary fatawa to reveal the Nadwa's secret"), A.H. 1313/A.D. 1895-96, p. 6 (The publication details are not legible on the title page.)

11. Imam Ahmad Raza Khan, *Fatawa al-Sunna li-Iljam al-Fitna* ("Fatawa on the sunna to rein in discord"), (Bareilly: Matba Ahl-e Sunnat wa Jama'at, A.H. 1314/A.D. 1896-97), p. 14.

12. Ibid. Imam Ahmad Raza cited sources from Imam Ghazali's *Ihya ul-Ulum*, Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi's *Maktubat*, and Shah Abd ul-Aziz's *Tafsir Azizi*, among other things in support of his view.

13. *Fatawa al-Haramain bi-Rajf al-Main*, p. 37.

14. Ibid., p. 43. These and other comments below about relations with bad-mazhabs were made in the context of the Nadwat ul-Ulama, whose members were also described as "bad-mazhab."

15. Ibid., pp. 39-41; also see p. 65.

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16. Ibid., p. 39.

17. Ibid., p. 31.

18. See the discussion of the Ahl-e Sunnat's relation to Shi'ism, below, for some details on Imam Ahmad Raza's range of sources.

19. *E'tiqad al-Ahbab fi'l Jamil wa'l Mustafa wa'l Al wa'l Ashab* ("Faith in the dear ones, consisting of the beautiful, the Prophet, the family, and the companions") reprinted with translation and annotations by Mufti Muhammad Khalil Khan Barkati (Lahore: Hamid and Company Printers, n.d.).

20. Ibid., p. 77.

21. Ibid., pp. 77-78.

22. *Fatawa al-Sunnat li-Ijjam al-Fitna*, p. 8.

23. Zafar ud-Din Bihari, *Hayat-e A'la Hazrat*, vol. 1 (Karachi, 1928), pp. 189-90.

24. Ibid., pp. 191-92. Perhaps Imam Ahmad Raza was influenced, among other things, by the reported refusal of Maulana Nur-Uddin of Firangi Mahal to greet the Shi'i minister of the Nawab of Awadh. Maulana Nur, who had taught Imam Ahmad Raza's sufi preceptor, Shah Al-e Rasul, would have commanded respect with Imam Ahmad Raza for that reason. See *Malfuzat*, vol. 1 (Gujarat, Pakistan: Fazl-e Nur Academy, n.d.), p. 81.

25. *Hayat-e A'la Hazrat*, p. 194. Imam Ahmad Raza is reported to have said that green, red, and black were the three colors to be avoided during the first ten days of Muharram - green was the color of the Shi'i standard-

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bearers; red was the color worn by the Kharijis, who celebrated Husain's death; and black is worn by the Shi'is as a sign of mourning.

26. Ibid., pp. 12-13, 197. This event dates to 1882-83. Tafzili Ulama from Badayun, Rampur, and Sambhal sent a representative to Bareilly, hoping that Imam Ahmad Raza, then physically weakened by illness, would be easy to defeat. But Imam Ahmad Raza sent the representative a set of thirty questions, seeing which the latter left Bareilly without attempting to reply. Imam Ahmad Raza's personal doctor was alleged by Zafar ud-Din Bihari, the biographer, to have conspired in the opposition's timing of the debate.

27. *Fatawa al-Haramain bi-Rajf Nadwat al-Main*, pp. 31-33; *Radd-e Rafaza*, pp. 47-50.

28. Ibid., pp. 53-57.

29. Imam Ahmad Raza Khan, *A'la al-Ifada fi Ta'zia al-Hind wa Bayan al-Shahada* ("Great benefit in the *ta'zia* of Hind, and discourse on the *shahadat (nama)*"), (A.H. 1321/A.D. 1903-4), in *Majmu'a-e Rasa'il: Radd-e Rawafiz*, p. 74.

30. Ibid., pp. 74-76. In the same risala, Deobandis ("Wahhabis") are said to consider ta'ziyadari *shirk* (associating another with Allah). See p. 88.

31. Ibid., pp. 76-79.

32. Ibid., pp. 82-84.

33. Ibid., p. 86.

34. See Chapter I for biographical details.

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35. Imam Ahmad Raza's views on Prophet Muhammad's (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) prophethood are further examined in chapter VI, in the context of his differences on the subject with Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, founder of the Ahmadi movement, and leading early twentieth-century Deobandi Ulama.

36. On the Shi'i view, see Tabataba'i, *Shi'ite Islam*, pp. 144-45; for Imam Ahmad Raza's view, see *E'tiqad al-Ahbab*, pp. 40-41.

37. See chapter III above.

38. In his risala, *Silat al-Safa fi Nur al-Mustafa* ("The Rewards of internal purity in discourse on Hazrat Muhammad's light") A.H. 1329/A.D. 1911, included in *Majmu'a-e Rasa'il: Masa'il Nur aur Saya* (Karachi: Idara-e Tahqiqat-e Imam Ahmad Raza, 1985), p. 8, Imam Ahmad Raza cites the following (Sunni) hadis on the authority of Abd al-Razzaq (d. A.H. 211): "The Prophet told the *sahabi* Jabir b. Abdallah that Allah had created the light of Hazrat Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) from His Own Light, prior to all things. ... When Allah wanted to create the world He divided the light of Hazrat Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) into four parts. From the first He created the pen *(al-qalam)*, from the second He created the tablet *(al-lawh)*, from the third the throne. The fourth part was subdivided into four. From the first of the four parts He created ..."

39. Imam Ahmad Raza Khan, *Shumul al-Islam li-Usul al-Rasul al-Karam* ("Inclusion in Islam of the doctrines of the noble Prophet"), (Bareilly: Hasani Press, A.H. 1315/A.D. 1897-98), pp.5, 20.

40. Ibid., p. 17.

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41. Ibid., pp. 3, 4.

42. zamin o zaman tumhare li'e makin o makan tumhare li'e chunin o chunan tumhare li'e bane do jahan tumhare li'e.

Imam Ahmad Raza Khan, *Hada'iq-e Bakhshish* (Karachi: Medina Publication Co., 1976), p. 374.

43. tum se jahan ki hayat tum se jahan ka sabat asal se hai zill bandha tum pe karoron durud.

44. Several of these are collected in *Majmu'a-e Rasai'l: Masa'la Nur aur Saya.*

4. . See Rubin, p. 108, for the Shi'i tradition: "It is related that before his end of the worldly life, Hazrat Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) transmitted to Hazrat Ali his divine light, together with the rest of the heritage that was handed down to him through the preceding prophets."

46. See chapter III.

47. See *Silat al-Safa fi Nur al-Mustafa*, p. 9.

48. These names are a selection of those cited in Imam Ahmad Raza's *Nafi al-Fe' Amaman Anara bi-Nurahi Kulla Shai* ("Negation of the shadow of that pure essence, which shadow illuminated everything"), A.H. 1296/A.D. 1878-79, reprinted in *Majmu'a-e Rasa'il: Masa'la Nur aur Saya*, pp. 51-69.

49. Imam Ahmad Raza Khan, *Tanzia al-Makanat al-Haidaria an Wasma Ahd al-Jahilia* ("Discussion of the purity of Ali's dignity from the blemish of the *jahili* era"), A.H. 1312/A.D. 1894-95, reprinted under the title *Bura't-e Ali az Shirk-e Jahili* ("Ali's innocence of *jahili*

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associationism"), (Muhammadabad, Azamgarh: Madrasa Faiz ul-Ulum, n.d.), 40 pp.

50. Sayyid Muhammad al-Hasani, *Sirat-e Maulana Sayyid Muhammad Ali Mongiri Bani-e Nadwat ul-Ulama* (Lucknow: Shahi Press, 1962), p. 115.

51. Khwaja Razi Haidar, *Tazkira-e Muhaddis Surati* (Karachi: Surati Academy, n.d.), p. 102, quoting Sayyid Suleiman Nadwi's *Hayat-e Shibli*.

52. al-Hasani, *Sirat-e Maulana Sayyid Muhammad Mongiri*, pp. 119-20.

53. Metcalf, *Islamic Revival in British India*, p. 336. Metcalf's brief account of the Nadwa, on pp. 335-47, is one of the few available in English.

54. al-Hasani, p.118.

55. Khwaja Razi Haider, pp. 101-2.

56. Ibid., pp. 103-4.

57. Ibid., p. 105.

58. Ibid., p. 105.

59. Muhammad Hasan Raza Khan, *Sawalat Haqa'iq-numa ba-Ru'asa Nadwat ul-Ulama* ("Truth-filled questions addressed to the leaders of the Nadwat ul-Ulama"), Badayun: Victoria Press, A.H. 1313./A.D. 1895--96), p. 2.

60. Both sides of this correspondence were published in *Murasalat-e Sunnat wa Nadwa* ("Correspondence of the (Ahl-e) Sunnat and the Nadwa"), published by Hamid Raza Khan (Bareilly, A.H. 1313/A.D. 1895-96), 23 pp.

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Imam Ahmad Raza's letters are also available in a new edition, *Maktubat-e Imam Ahmad Raza Khan Barelwi*, ed. Mahmud Ahmad Qadri (Lahore: Maktaba Nabuwwa, 1986), pp. 88-102.

61. *Murasalat-e Sunnat wa Nadwa*, pp. 3-5.

62. Ibid., pp. 11-15.

63. *Maktubat-e Imam Raza Khan*, pp. 90-91.

64. Ibid., pp. 93-94.

65. Ibid. This comment probably points to the fact that large numbers of Ulama had begun to leave the Nadwa, as a result of the aggressive anti-Nadwa initiative of leaders like Imam Ahmad Raza. As we shall see, several were soon to form an organization of their own.

66. al-Hasani, *Sirat-e Maulana Sayyid Muhammad Mongiri*, p. 175.

67. This was answered, here and elsewhere, in the negative. Imam Ahmad Raza said that the Shi'is denied some of the essential of the faith and were therefore kafirs. *Fatawa al-Qudwa li-Kashf Dafin al-Nadwa*, pp. 6-7. Also see Muhammad Abd ur-Razzaq Makki Haidarabadi's *Fatawa al-Sunna li-Iljam al-Fitna*, P. 8.

68. *Taqwa* had nothing to do with aqa'id, came the reply. If there was *fisq* (falsehood) in one's aqa'id (or "mazhab," the same thing in Imam Ahmad Raza's usage) no amount of pious conduct could alter the fact that one was a bad-mazhab, gumrah, and bad-din. *Fatawa al-Qudwa li-Kashf Dafin al-Nadwa*, pp. 3-4.

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69. Imam Ahmad Raza's reply to this was that no Muslim should call another a mushrik; but all groups apart from the Ahl-e Sunnat were bid'ati. Ibid., p. 6.

70. *Fatawa al-Qudwa li-Kashf Dafin al-Nadwa*, pp. 17-19.

71. See discussion earlier in this chapter, in the context of the concept of "essential of the faith".

72. *Makhzan-e Tahqiq*, more commonly know as *Tuhfa-e Hanafia*, vol. 1, no. 1, Jamadi al-Awwal A.H. 1315/September 1897, pp. 9-10.

73. Few biographical details appear to be available about Qazi Abd ul-Wahid, whose name is absent from Rahman Ali's *Tazkira-e Ulama-e Hind* (Karachi, 1864), as well as Mahmud Ahmad Qadri's *Tazkira-e Ulama-e Ahl-e Sunnat* (Muzaffarpur, Bihar: Khanqah Qadiria Ashrafia, A.H. 1391/A.D. 1971). Brief mention may be found in Hasnain Raza Khan, *Sirat-e A'la Hazrat* (Karachi: Bazm-e Qasmi Barkati, 1986), p. 113. Qazi Abd ul-Wahid was a *ra'is* ("person of authority," notable) of Patna, at whose home Imam Ahmad Raza stayed when attending the Majlis meetings in 1900.

74. The *Tuhfa-e Hanafia* lasted until shortly after Qazi Abd ul-Wahid's death in 1908. The last volume we have been able to trace is vol. 13, dated Safar A.H. 1327/February 1910.

75. Unfortunately, we have not been able to see the report. Brought out by Abd ul-Wahid Azimbadi, it was entitled *Darbar-e Haqq o Hidayat* (Patna: Matba Hanafia, A.H. 1318/A.D. 1900), and was approximately 160 pp. long.

76. Reprinted in full in Zafar ud-Din Bihari's *Hayat-e A'la Hazrat*, pp. 113-31.

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77. Ibid., pp. 118-20. These two incidents are based on hadis. The Prophet rectified the damage in each case: in Hazrat Ali's case, he ordered the sun, which had set by the time he awoke, to return, so that Hazrat Ali could offer his prayer; and in Hazrat Abu Bakr's, he spat on the snake-bite and made him well.

8. Ibid., p. 120.

79. Ibid., p.121.

80. Hazrat Abu Bakr's behaviour toward the Prophet was said to be superior to that of all others - consequently he received the honor of becoming the Prophet's father-in-law; Hazrat Ali received the blessing of being brought up by the Prophet in his childhood and later married the Prophet's daughter, Hazrat Fatima. Imam Ahmad Raza insisted, through Sunni sources, however, on Hazrat Abu Bakr's superiority to Hazrat Ali. Ibid., p. 123.

81. See ibid., pp. 124-31.

82. A report of the Ahl-e Sunnat meeting, entitled *Darbar-e Sarapa-e Rahmat,* was published by Muhammad Zia' ud-Din, muhtamim of the *Tuhfa-e Hanafia* at Patna, in A.H. 1319/A.D. 1901.

83. See Metcalf, *Islamic Revival in British India,* pp. 342-44, for the many reasons for the Nadwa's loss of support.

84. Zafar ud-Din Bihari, *Chaudhwin Sadi ke Mujaddid,* p. 66.

85. Ibid., pp. 68-71. Zafar ud-Din Bihari cited the opinions of some Ulama of the Haramain who certified Imam Ahmad Raza's 1906 fatawa, *Husam al-Haramain* and *Daulat al-Makkia.* These fatawa will be discussed in

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chapter VI. The mujaddid issue is the subject of a separate section below.

86. Zafar ud-Din Bihari, *Chaudhwin Sadi ke Mujaddid*, p. 33.

87. Zafar ud-Din Bihari, *Chaudhwin Sadi ke Mujaddid*, p. 34. On this last issue, Friedman writes: "Considerable attention is devoted to the question of exactly when the *mujaddid* should appear in order to qualify for the title. ... It has become accepted that the *mujaddid* should be a well-known scholar at the end of a century and should die in the next one.

88. Zafar ud-Din Bihari, pp.39, 41. It must be said, however, that the Ahl-e sunnat has serious differences with Sayyid Ahmad's vision of Islam, and in Particular with that of Muhammad Isma'il. They would thus have refused to accept Sayyid Ahmad as a mujaddid on these grounds. With regard to Shah Wali Ullah too, they had reservations, saying, for instance, that his writings could not be relied upon as they had been changed by Wahhabis (Ahl-e Hadis) since his death. See "Introduction" to Zafar ud-Din Bihari's *Chaudhwin Sadi ke Mujaddin*, p. 18.

89. Zafar ud-Din Bihari, *Chaudhwin Sadi ke Mujaddin*, pp. 50-55. For the Ahl-e Sunnat interpretation of Sayyid Ahmad's movement, and their view of Muhammad Isma'ils *Taqwiat ul-Iman*, see chapter VI.

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Chapter VI

Differences with the Ulama of Deoband and with "Wahhabis," and Ahl-e Sunnat Prophetology

Tell me clearly whether you think these leaders of heresy are as I have indicated them through their writing, whether the judgement (of kufr) that I have passed on them is appropriate . . . some ignorant people, in whose hearts faith has not lodged itself, claim that because they are Ulama and maulwis the shari'a calls upon us to respect them - even though they are Wahhabis, and even though they insult Allah and the Prophet.

Imam Ahmad Raza, addressing some Ulama of Medina, in *Husam al-Haramain ala Manhar al-Kufr wa'l Main*, p. 10

The "leaders of heresy" referred to in the above passage were well known Ulama in early-twentieth century British India: Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadiyan, the first on Imam Ahmad Raza's list of kafirs, was the founder of the Ahmadia movement. The others - Rashid Ahmad Gangohi, Muhammad Qasim Nanautawi, Ashraf Ali Thanawi, and Khalil Ahmad Ambethwi - were leading figures at the Dar ul-Ulum at Deoband or in affiliated institutions. In this fatawa, originally written in 1902, all but Mirza Ghulam Ahmad were described as "Wahhabis," a word frequently encountered in the current literature of the Ahl-e Sunnat as well in reference to Ulama with Deobandi or Ahl-e Hadis affiliations.[1]

The judgement of kufr passed in *Husam al-Haramain ala Kufr wa'l Main* (The sword of the Haramain at the throat of kufr and falsehood)[2] in 1906 was a highly public one, delivered in Makkah while Imam Ahmad Raza was on his second hajj. Despite Imam Ahmad Raza's unrelenting opposition to numerous groups of heretical Muslims, among them the Shi'is and the organization of Ulama known as the Nadwat ul-Ulama examined in the previous chapter, it was only in 1902, and again

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in 1906 when *Husam* was written, that he had accused specific persons of kufr. Hitherto he had written in general terms of various groups of heretical Muslims being either *bad-mazhab* (those whose beliefs were "bad" or "wrong"), or *gumrah* ("lost", on the wrong path), or *murtadd* (apostates from Islam), based on the fact that they had denied the "fundamental" belief.[3]

It was thus of some consequence that Imam Ahmad Raza should have accused the Ulama mentioned in *Husam al-Haramain* of kufr, and have presented this fatawa to certain Ulama in Makkah and Medina for their seals and signatures, whereby they signaled approval of his opinion.[4] He himself regarded the takfir of another Muslim with great seriousness. Experts of the law he wrote, had enjoined restraint in making a charge of kufr as long as any possibility existed that a statement that seemed on the face of it to involve kufr may not have been intended that way, that another interpretation of the statement may have been meant.[5]

Imam Ahmad Raza wrote that when confronted with one who "ascribes lies to Allah or decreases the glory of the leader of the prophets," such search for intended meaning was unnecessary, for this was a clear cut case of kufr. Failure to acknowledge such a person to be a kafir, or doubt of such a person's kufr, resulted in the denier or doubter of kufr becoming a kafir as well. Because offences of this nature (denigrating Allah Ta'ala or the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him)) were against the "fundamental" of religion, even if a person's faith was within the bounds of Islam in every other respect, in Imam Ahmad Raza's view the person was a kafir. As he put it rather graphically, "If you put one drop of urine in nine hundred and ninety-nine drops of rose water, it will all become impure. But these ignorant people say that if you put one drop of rose water in nine hundred and ninety-nine drops of urine it will become pure."[6] Seen in this light, everything hinged on whether or not a statement constituted denial of a "fundament" of belief.

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Detailed analysis of *Husam* provides a useful entree into the nature of the Ahl-e Sunnat's differences with Deoband. It also enables us to approach related issues such as the Ahl-e Sunnat use of the term "Wahhabi", and, most importantly, Ahl-e Sunnat prophetology. As the preceding chapters have suggested, it was the Prophet who really held the key to the Ahl-e Sunnat perspective on what it was to "be" a Muslim. And it was differing conceptions of the Prophet, as well, that lay at the heart of Ahl-e Sunnat denunciation of the Wahhabis.

The Charges of Kufr in Husam al-Haramain

Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, founder of the Ahmadia movement, was in a category all by himself in *Husam al-Haramain:* condemned as the Antichrist *(dajjal)* inspired by Satan, his kufr was believed to be greater than that of the other Ulama mentioned. Imam Ahmad Raza's opinion was based on a number of claims made by Ghulam Ahmad, among them the fact that he was "like the Messiah" (Jesus Christ), and that, having received revelations from Allah, he was a kind of prophet:

> In the beginning, he claimed to be "like the Messiah." Allah, in this he spoke the truth, because he is like the Antichrist, the liar. Then he began to elevate himself still more, and claimed to have received revelation. And in this too he is truthful, because Allah says that in the assembly of devils there is one among them who is inspired by Satan, whose inspiration is false and deceptive. . . . Then he made an unambiguous claim to prophecy *(nabuwwat)* and messengership *(risalat),* writing that Allah is He Who sent His messenger to Qadiyan, and asserted that a verse had been revealed to him that says, We sent him to Qadiyan, and sent him with the truth. He also asserted that he was the Ahmad who Jesus had predicted would come (after him as the next prophet) . . . Then he began to say that he was better than all the other Prophets and Messengers: forget about Ibn-e Maryam (Jesus), Ghulam Ahmad is better than he.[7]

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Of all the claims made by Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (and there were others, such as his declaration that he was the *mujaddid* or renewer of the fourteenth Hijri century), the one that incensed Imam Ahmad Raza and other Indian Ulama the most was his assertion that he was a "shadowy" *(zilli)* prophet. This appeared to a large number of Sunni Ulama to directly deny the Muslim belief that Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was the "seal of the prophets". It was on the basis of this alleged denial, in fact, that under the terms of a constitutional amendment in Pakistan in 1973, Ahmadis were declared to be non-Muslims.

In addition to his prophetic claim, Ghulam Ahmad had also angered Imam Ahmad Raza (and other Ulama) by offering an interpretation of Jesus which was at variance with the Sunni mainstream. Thus he denied the prevailing Muslim belief that Jesus was alive in heaven and would return to earth at the end of days as the Mahdi to defeat the Antichrist (dajjal), thereby inaugurating a kingdom of justice on earth. Against this, Ghulam Ahmad maintained that Jesus was dead, and that it was he, Ghulam Ahmad, who had been sent by Allah and Jesus's spirit to restore the Muslim community to its former glory. For Ghulam Ahmad, to believe in Jesus's second coming was to acquiesce in Christianity's claimed superiority to Islam, which it was one of his principal aims to deny. Ironically, the image he evoked to describe Christianity - "the most perfect manifestation of Satan" - was the same one called up by Imam Ahmad Raza in *Husam al-Haramain* to describe Ghulam Ahmad: The Antichrist inspired by Satan. The fact that the Qadiyani Ahmadis were subsequently led by the logic of their position to pronounce the judgement of kufr on non-Ahmadi Muslims was also of course a mirror opposite to the Ahl-e Sunnat stance in relation to those they believed to be deviating from the "Sunni" path.

Imam Ahmad Raza's *Husam* turned next to those described as "Wahhabis": four different groups of "Wahhabis" were identified, each guilty of denigrating Allah or His Prophet in some specific way. The "Wahhabia Ismailia" and the

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"Wahhabia Khawatimia", the first two, believed, according to Imam Ahmad Raza, that there exists a prophet like Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) in every one of the six levels of the earth beside this one,[8] and that each of these prophets is a Last and Final Prophet as was Hazrat Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). He suggested that these groups thereby denied that Hazrat Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was the best prophet of all and that he was unique in his capacity as the last prophet. Imam Ahmad Raza then charged Qasim Nanautawi (1833-79), the founder of the Dar ul-Ulum at Deoband, with denial of the finality of Prophet Muhammad's (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) prophethood in a recent work. Nanautawi was quoted to the effect that although the ignorant were under the impression that Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) is the last prophet in time, the discerning knew that prophet superiority was unrelated to being either first or last in time.[9] Imam Ahmad Raza's response to this was that belief in the temporal finality of Prophet Muhammad's (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) prophethood was among the "fundaments" of belief. Consequently, those who belonged to this group were "rebellious followers of Satan.[10]

The third group of "Wahhabia" were those Imam Ahmad Raza called the "Wahhabia Kazzabia", who believed that Allah can lie.[11] The leader of this group was Rashid Ahmad Gangohi (d. 1905), a founder and patron of the Dar ul-Ulum at Deoband. Imam Ahmad Raza alleged that he was a follower of Isma'il Dihlawi, founder of the Wahhabi movement in India.[12] Imam Ahmad Raza's argument against this group was that if one believed that Allah can lie, one would be inclined to doubt even the first half of the profession of faith (the *kalima*).

Imam Ahmad Raza's fourth group, which he called the "Wahhabia Shaitania", were explicitly described as followers of Satan. Led once again by Rashid Ahmad Gangohi, this group believed that Satan's (Iblis's) knowledge was more vast then that of Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be

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upon him), and that Prophet Muhammad's (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) knowledge of the unseen *(ilm-e ghaib)* was only partial. The question of the Prophet's knowledge was one that interested Imam Ahmad Raza deeply. He devoted the greatest part of *Husam* to rejection of what he viewed as slights on the Prophet's knowledge, and wrote extensively in other fatawa (one of these, *Daulat al-Makkia bi'l Madat al-Ghaibia,* was written during the same 1906 hajj as *Husam*) in defense of his views on the matter. Two more Deobandi Ulama, Khalil Ahmad Ambethwi[13] and Ashraf Ali Thanawi,[14] were singled out of kufr for statements they had made in recent writings.

Apart from the space and level of detail entered into by Imam Ahmad Raza on the knowledge of unseen issue, his citation of sources also indicated how important it was to him to defend the Prophet on this score. Central to his argument that Allah had gifted knowledge of the unseen to the Prophet[15] was this verse from the Quran (72:25, 26): "(He is) the Knower of the Unseen, and He revealeth unto none His secret, save unto every Messenger whom He hath chosen" (Pickthall trans.). As Imam Ahmad Raza considered the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) to be the most beloved of Allah's prophets, it followed that Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) must have been one of the Messengers referred to in this verse. He defended his view, in addition, with quotation from works of fiqh, and rejection of a baseless hadis in which the Prophet is reported to have said that he didn't even know what lay behind the wall.[16]

It is evident from this somewhat simplified summary of Imam Ahmad Raza's *takfir* of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad and the Deobandi Ulama named in *Husam* that the grounds for the charges made related largely (though not wholly, given the debates centered on Allah's transcendence) to the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). Specifically, Imam Ahmad Raza interpreted the various statements quoted to imply denial of Prophet Muhammad's (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) superiority to all

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other prophets, denial of the finality of Prophet Muhammad's (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) prophethood, belief in the superiority of Satan's knowledge to Prophet Muhammad's (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and denial of the fact - indisputable to Imam Ahmad Raza - that Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) had been granted knowledge of the unseen by Allah.[17] For these reasons, Imam Ahmad Raza regarded the above Ulama as kafirs and apostates from Islam, followers of Satan rather than of Allah.

The satanic imputation was in fact frequent throughout the fatawa. The words most used to describe Satan were "liar", "false", and "deceitful". It comes as no surprise that such epithets should have been used to describe Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, whom Imam Ahmad Raza regarded as the worst kafir then living in India.[18] It is fact that Qasim Nanautawi, actually denied the finality of Prophet Muhammad's (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) prophethood, and therefore was a follower of Satan: "Satan has planted deceit in their hearts", Imam Ahmad Raza wrote of those who accepted Nanautawi's leadership.[19] Rashid Ahmad Gangohi and Khalil Ahmad Ambethwi were similarly described for their alleged belief that Satan's knowledge exceeded that of the Prophet. In fact, they were said to go so far as to associate Iblis with Allah.[20]

Imam Ahmad Raza's portrayal of Satan as engaged in artfully luring the believer away from obedience to Allah and His Prophet toward disobedience and hence kufr appears to have been largely based on hadis literature. As Awn explains in his study of the Satan motif in Islamic literary sources, hadis literature depicts him as "evil, cunning, and wily; his delight is to lead mankind astray."[21] Mankind experiences Satan as a constant presence throughout life, for he is "part of man's very life blood."[22] One has therefore to be watchful at all times, waking and sleeping, against Satan's snares. As Imam Ahmad Raza saw it, the fact that the Ulama mentioned in *Husam* had taken the positions they had in alleged denigration of Allah and the Prophet was proof positive that they had fallen victim to

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Satan's wiles. And because following Satan was the polar opposite to following Allah and the Prophet, they were necessarily kafirs.

The Ahl-e Sunnat and "Wahhabis"

As we saw above, Imam Ahmad Raza used the term "Wahhabi" to describe the kinds of kafirs that he believed the Deobandi Ulama to be. He looked upon them as the latest in a line of kafirs that went all the way back to the Prophet's and Hazrat Ali's own time. When asked whether Wahhabis had existed during the (golden) age of the first four caliphs, he responded in the affirmative, relating a number of hadis in support of his view. The Kharijis who had seceded from Hazrat Ali's army after he agreed to submit his battie against Hazrat Mu'awia to arbitration (A.H. 37/A.D. 657) had been among the first.[23] Thereafter one group (of kafirs) followed another, generation after generation, assuming new shape and a new name in each age. In the present time, they were known as Wahhabis.[24]

Imam Ahmad Raza depicted these and other people considered to be kafirs as superficially devout, though in fact not so: "You will consider your salat contemptible in comparison with their salat, and so also with your fast and your (pious) acts. They will read the Quran, but its words will not go further than their throats."[25] On another occasion he related a story about the "father of the Wahhabis", illustrating at the same time the Prophet's knowledge of future events:

One day (some) Companions entered into the Prophet's presence. A man came and, after standing at the edge of the group, went into the mosque. (The Prophet) asked, "Which of you will kill that man?" Hazrat Abu Bakr got up and went (toward him). He saw that the man was reading the salat with great humility. Hazrat Abu Bakr's hand did not come up, for to kill such a worshipper in the very act of praying. He returned, and related all that had happened. (The Prophet) asked, "Who is

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there who will kill him?" Hazrat Umar got up and the same thing happened with him, the Prophet again asked who would kill the man. Hazrat Ali rose and said, "O Prophet of Allah, I shall." He said, "Yes, you. If you can find him. But you will not be able to find him." And so it happened. By the time Hazrat Ali reached (the mosque) the man had finished his salat and left. The Prophet said, "If you had killed him a great calamity would have been lifted from the community." This was the father of the Wahhabis, whose external and intrinsic heirs are making the world dirty today.[26]

Imam Ahmad Raza went on, in truth he was haughty. For, while standing at the edge of the crowd of Companions surrounding the Prophet, he had said to himself that none among them was as good as he. This pride nullified all his pious deeds. Without respect for the Prophet there could be no faith, and without faith prayer had no efficacy. "The true servant of Allah is he who is the servant of the Prophet; if not he will be the servant of Satan."[27]

The concept of "fitna", tumult, or moral and social chaos, evoked in conjunction with the description of the "father of the Wahhabis" in the above passage, and in the opening paragraphs of *Husam,* recurs frequently in the literature. It is seen as the result, experienced in worldly life, of pride, deceit, and refusal to repent. Ultimately of course it would lead to punishment in hell after judgement on the Last Day. In the meantime, in the here and now of late nineteenth century British India, Muslims were witnessing the realization of the prediction in hadis that a time would come when the *ummat* (community of believers) would be split into seventy-three groups only one of which (the *jama'at* or majority) would be destined for heaven (jannat).

The Ahl-e Sunnat movement itself was ultimately predicated on this view of the world: for them, the "Wahhabis" (not to mention Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, seen as Antichrist) were

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Satanic and hell-bound in contradistinction to themselves, who were true followers of Allah and the Prophet.

The Wahhabis were depicted not merely as proud and disrespectful to the Prophet, as described by Imam Ahmad Raza above, but as people who refused to repent. If a "Wahhabi" repents, Imam Ahmad Raza once said, he was not really a Wahhabi to begin with.[28] Moreover, Wahhabis were deceitful. They practised dissimulation *(taqiyya)* to an even greater degree than did Shi'is, for purposes such as raising money for their madrasa in Deoband from supporters of the Ahl-e Sunnat.[29] A terrible punishment awaited them - and other alleged apostates, such as Shi'is, Ahmadis, and Sir Sayyid Ahmad's followers ("necharis") - on the Last Day in hell:

> Every kafir will be made to drink boiling water, so hot that the mouth will melt when it touches it. And when the water reaches the stomach, it will reduce the intestines to pieces. And they will drink this water like a camel suffering from great thirst. They will be faint from hunger. They will be fed thorny cactus. . . . which, on reaching their stomachs, will cause them to be in a great frenzy just as the boiling water did and will in no way alleviate their hunger. . . . Death will come from all directions, but they will not die. Nor will there ever be any let up in their punishment.[30]

When one asks how the Ahl-e Sunnat defined a "Wahhabi", and which of the Ulama groups of the late nineteenth century were so labelled, one finds Imam Ahmad Raza defines them in two categories: Wahhabi "muqallids", Wahhabi "ghair-muqallids".

We have seen, however, that certain leading Deobandi Ulama were called "Wahhabi" in Imam Ahmad Raza's 1906 fatawa, *Husam al-Haramain*. The explanation for the inconsistency can only be that Imam Ahmad Raza had defined this term and was using the word "Wahhabi" to describe the leaders of the Wahhabi movement, notably Sayyid Ahmad

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Barelwi (d. 1831) and Muhammad Isma'il Dihlawi (d. 1831), and Ulama who were their followers. The connection is indicated in *Husam* by Imam Ahmad Raza's assertion that Rashid Ahmad Gangohi was a follower of Muhammad Isma'il, and the derisive reference to the latter as Rashid Ahmad's master of the group. The literature also offers more conclusive evidence that Imam Ahmad Raza and the Ahl-e Sunnat generally considered Deoband an intellectual and spiritual heir of the Tariqa-e Muhammadia (founded by Sayyid Ahmed Barelwi and disappeared soon after him) and that (going backwards in time) they saw an intellectual spiritual link between the Arabian Wahhabis and the Tariqa-e Muhammadia. Indeed, *Husam al-Haramain* was first written in 1902 as part of a longer commentary on a work by Hazrat Maulana Fazl-e Rasul Badayuni (d. 1872) in which the latter had explicitly linked the beliefs of the "Nejdis" with those of Muhammad Isma'il, both of whom he condemned.[31] In a later work, Muhammad Isma'il was condemned by Imam Ahmad Raza on the same grounds for which the Deobandi Ulama named in *Husam* had been.[32]

The Ahl-e Sunnat thus used the term "Wahhabi" primarily to indicate a perceived commonality of views between the Tariqa-e Muhammadia and some later similar movements in the subcontinent, with the implication that the ultimate source for the opinions they purportedly shared was the Wahhabi movement of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Arabia. The term as used in Ahl-e Sunnat literature is therefore something of a polyglot one, in which Deobandis, Ahl-e Hadis, and sometimes Sir Sayyid Ahmad and his followers as well, were included. As the Ahl-e Sunnat saw it, the founders of the early nineteenth century Tariqa-e Muhammadia movement and their followers constituted the first wave of Indian Wahhabis (and consequently those most directly responsible for the "fitna" that they, the Ahl-e Sunnat of the late nineteenth century, had to root out). Our attempt to understand Ahl-e Sunnat differences with Deoband thus leads us to examine Ahl-e Sunnat writings on the Tariqa-e Muhammadia.

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The Tariqa-e Muhammadia in Ahl-e Sunnat Perspective

The Tariqa-e Muhammadia (name of the group which was founded Indian Wahhabis i.e. Sayyid Ahmed). It seems important to stress the continuities between these late eighteenth and early nineteenth century reformers and the Tariqa-e Muhammadia, despite differences between them, in view of the widespread tendency by contemporaries of the Muhammadis and others to see the Wahhabi movement in Arabia as the mainspring for their religious beliefs.[33] This is not to deny, on the other hand, that there are similarities do exist between Arabian Wahhabi thought and the Indian Wahhabis, who thought to have founded Tariqa-e Muhammadia.

As the name "Tariqa-e Muhammadia", "the Order of Muhammad", claims, the movement was modelled on the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). The leaders of the Tariqa-e Muhammadia, sought to "restore and revive", like any other heretical and renegade group, the original purity of community, thus the movement's leaders attempted in the 1820s to establish a Wahhabi Muslim state in the north-west frontier to fight against the Sikh kingdom of Ranjit Singh in the Panjab with backing of the British government [34]. But they did come into conflict with Sunni Muslim Mujahideen in the north-west frontier where the Muhammadis (Wahhabi) continued to fight with the Muslims in the late nineteenth century. Then finally, the deaths of Sayyid Ahmad and Muhammad Isma'il on the battlefield in 1831 while fighting with Sunni Muslims was a major set back. Though a new leadership continued to pursue the goals set by the founders, the movement split on several doctrinal issues.[35] The groups to emerge from this split were the Ahl-e Hadis and Deobandis.[36]

It may be useful at this point, before we examine Ahl-e Sunnat arguments against the Tariqa-e Muhammadia, to note that the term "Indian Wahhabi", frequently used to describe the

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Muhammadis (the Ahl-e Hadis and Deobandis), had acquired a negative connotation in India by the mid-nineteenth century. It is true, the term "Wahhabi" was used as a means of expressing anger as well. Among heretical Muslim admirers of the Muhammadis, the most noteworthy was Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan, founder in 1875 of the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College of Aligarh (later Aligarh Muslim University).[37] He considered Muhammad Isma'il "the founder of Wahhabism in India", and on one occasion even described himself as a "friend" and "well-wisher" of "Wahhabism".[38] Additionally, many Arabians Sunni and world-wide Sunni movements, regarding the Muhammadis as Wahhabi.

Despite occasional admiration of the Muhammadis the term "Wahhabis" had primarily negative connotations in the nineteenth century, in India and elsewhere. This was due in part to the Arabian Wahhabis' record of uncompromising opposition to popular practices which aroused the hostility of large numbers of the Muslim world, specially their demolition of the tomb over the Prophet's family's and Companions' graves at Makkah and Medina. In India, additionally, the word "Wahhabi" came to be associated in British minds in the aftermath of the 1857 revolt. Sunni Muslims had been blamed for playing a major role in the revolt, and although the Muhammadis had had little part in it, they continued the confrontation on the frontier with Sunni Muslims in the 1860s that helped the British.

For Indian Muslims who disapproved of the Muhammadi programme for reform, however, the negative connotations of the word "Wahhabi" were related to religious and political issues. Their objections related both to ideas propagated in Muhammadi religious literature, and to aspects of their reform programme. In examining below the main elements of Muhammadi thought and Ahl-e Sunnat objections thereto, we hope to clarify the nature of the Muhammadis' vision for religious change, while simultaneously looking at them through the perspective of the Ahl-e Sunnat.

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The Ahl-e Sunnat literature dealing with the "Wahhabi" leaders Sayyid Ahmad Barelwi and Muhammad Isma'il Dihlawi focuses on certain key texts of the Muhammadi movement. As was his wont when it came to rebuttal of those with whom he disagreed - and "Wahhabis" were chief among these - Imam Ahmad Raza wrote a number of books in which he set out, point by point, what he found objectionable in these texts. In one of these, written in 1894 (A.H. 1312), he enumerated seventy different grounds for the takfir of Muhammad Isma'il of the Tariqa-e Muhammadia, but declared at the end that in his view it was prudent to "stop the tongue" *(kaff-e lisan)* and refrain from doing so.[39] He did so, because it was said that Muhammad Isma'il had repented from his beliefs which he had written in his books before his death.

Yet in view of his takfir of the Deobandi Ulama named in *Husam al-Haramain,* whom he regarded as followers of the "Wahhabia Isma'ilia" this restraint in regard to the Muhammadi leaders is curious.

Among Muhammadi writings, one work by Muhammad Isma'il was particularly influential and misleading in spreading the ideas of the Muhammadi movement and creating a mass following: this was *Taqwiat al-Iman* (Strengthening the faith. Actually destroying the faith.), originally written in Arabic but soon translated and printed in Urdu. *Sirat al-Mustaqim* (The straight path), written in Persian in 1818, was intended for an elite audience and dealt with Sayyid Ahmad Barelwi's qualities as a leader.[40] Passages from these and other books by Muhammad Isma'il were found objectionable by the Ahl-e Sunnat.

The central them of *Taqwiat al-Iman* and other popular works was that Muslims should live their lives in accordance with the *kalima* or profession of faith, "There is no God but God and Hazrat Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) is His Prophet." The first clause of the profession, Muhammad Isma'il wrote in *Taqwiat,* required strict adherence

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to the monotheistic belief in Allah's unity *(tauhid)*, and consequent abhorrence of shirk, or polytheism. He distinguished between three different types of shirk, each subject of an extended discussion in the text. The second part of the kalima, belief that Muhammad is Allah's prophet, called upon Muslims to act in keeping with the Prophet's sunna, as preserved in (sound) hadis, and reject bid'at, defined as innovations not validated by hadis.

Muhammad Isma'il went to great lengths in *Taqwiat al-Iman* to stress the importance above all else of acknowledgment of Allah's transcendental power, and avoidance of shirk or associationism. Referring to the shirk of associating others with Allah's knowledge *(ishrak fi'l 'ilm)*, he denied that anyone but Allah had 'ilm-e ghaib, or knowledge of the unseen.[41] But he proves that Sayyid Ahmed, his pir, had knowledge of unseen (Sirat-e Mustaqim).

Notwithstanding this admission of the possibility that Allah sometimes apprised the Prophet Muhammad of things he had not known, Muhammad Isma'il went on to argue that the Prophet definitely did not have knowledge of the "five things" mentioned in Sura Luqman.[42] Anyone who maintained that the Prophet had been told about them by Allah but had abstained from revealing it was a liar. Here too, he proves it of his pir that he had knowledge of these five things (Sirat-e Mustaqim).

As the discussion earlier in this chapter suggests, Imam Ahmad Raza's position on this issue was diametrically opposed to that set out here by Muhammad Isma'il. In a work devoted exclusively to the subject of the Prophet's knowledge, to be discussed below, he argued that knowledge of these five things had been gifted by Allah not only to the Prophet but also to the seven *qutub*, the pivots of the world of whom there is only one in existence at any given time.[43]

In *Taqwiat al-Iman*, Muhammad Isma'il proceeded to attack the shirk of associating others with Allah's power *(ishrak*

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fi'l tasarruf). His concern here was with the dangers of intercession. On one hand, Isma'il denies of intercession of Prophets and saints and on the other hand he proves intercession for his pir (Sirat-e Mustaqim).

Muhammad Isma'il went on to say that "both angels and men were equally (Allah's) servants," and that Allah had not delegated any power to anyone other than Himself.

Intercession was to be understood, Muhammad Isma'il wrote, as nothing more than "commendation". Comparing Allah to a "king of kings", Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was said to be like a minister whose intercession was acceptable to Allah only because it was undertaken "to please his master, and with his tacit permission." Allah's power was so great than in a twinkling, solely by pronouncing the word "Be!" he can, if he like(s), create crores (tens of millions) of apostles, saints, genii, and angels, of similar ranks with Gabriel and Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), or can produce a total subversion of the whole universe, and supply its place with new creations.[44]

Here, then, embedded in an argument on Allah's transcendental power was the statement which gave rise to subsequent debate as to whether or not denial of the finality of Prophet Muhammad's (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) prophethood was herein implied. Imam Ahmad Raza, in his fatawa *Husam al-Haramain*, was to argue that there could not be another prophet like Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) in any of the six levels of the earth believed to exist beside this one, and that it was kufr to hold otherwise. As noted previously, in his treatment of this issue (known as imkan-e nazir, the possibility that Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) could have an equal), there was no discussion of Allah's transcendental power, solely of belief in the finality of Prophet

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Muhammad's (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) prophethood.

In addition to disagreement with Muhammad Isma'il on the *imkan-e nazir* issue, Imam Ahmad Raza and the Ahl-e Sunnat could not accept his general attitude to intercession. In their view, to say, for instance, that "none . . . can be mediator with God," or have the power to profit or hurt anyone, went much too far in denying Prophet Muhammad's (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and other prophets' powers of intercession, which is clearly stated in Quran and Hadis. In a work devoted to rebutting Muhammad Isma'il, Imam Ahmad Raza argued that occasionally he contradicted the very word of Allah, thereby making Allah Himself appear to be a *mushrik*, or polytheist:

In the *Taqwiat al-Iman* is written that the giving of health, of well-being, fulfilment of desires, etc. are all part of Allah's glory. It is not in the power of any prophet or *wali* (saint) to fulfil someone's wishes, or to help them. If someone asks for help from any of these he is a mushrik, whether he believes that they have this power in and of themselves or whether (he believes) they have received it from Allah. This statement is tantamount to accusing everyone of shirk, including Allah, because the Quran says Allah and Allah's prophet have made you prosperous out of their bounty *(tumhen daulatmand kar diya Allah aur Allah ke Rasul ne apne fazl se)*. No one, neither the saints nor the prophets, nor Allah Himself, would be devoid of shirk in Isma'il Dihlawi's (Muhammad Isma'il's) interpretation. Another verse would also become shirk: (3:49) Lo! I (Jesus) heal him who was born blind, and the leper, and I raise the dead, by Allah's leave. (Picktall trans.)[45]

In other words, prophets intercede with Allah on behalf of human beings, and have in addition an independent God-given ability to change human destinies for good or ill by performing miracles.

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Muhammad Isma'il also objected to what he called *ishrak fi'l ibadat*, or association in worship.

The practices Muhammad Isma'il criticized were associated with the veneration of shrines, including the annual death anniversary celebrations of saints *(urs)* centered around their tombs.[46] Veneration of such tombs or graves, in which several of the practices listed above were carried out, was part of Ahl-e Sunnat ritual. It followed from the belief, to be discussed in the context of Ahl-e Sunnat prophetology, that the bodies of prophets, saints, and martyrs remained in a state of perfect preservation after death. The afterlife of such persons being both corporeal and spiritual, veneration of their tombs was a sign of the respect they were due.[47] As for the area surrounding the Prophet's tomb, Imam Ahmad Raza cited a hadis from al-Bukhari in which the Prophet is reported to have said that he would make the land between Medina's two mountains *haram* (sacred), just as Hazrat Abraham (may peace be with him) had made Makkah haram.[48] From the Ahl-e Sunnat point of view, thus, to say as Muhammad Isma'il did that it was shirk to venerate Prophet Muhammad's (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) tomb was yet another sign of his lack of respect toward Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), and consequently of kufr.

Given the foregoing, it will come as no surprise that Muhammad Isma'il's image of the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was radically different from the worldwide community of the Ahl-e Sunnat's.

Ahl-e Sunnat Prophetology

Much has already been said, in this chapter and preceding ones, about the Ahl-e Sunnat concept of the Prophet. While there will inevitably be some repetition of material and arguments made elsewhere in this study, it is helpful to pull the pieces together in order that a coherent picture of Ahl-e Sunnat prophetology may be formed. Insofar as Ahl-e Sunnat beliefs

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about the Prophet were in line with the orthodox view, such as belief in the finality of Hazrat Muhammad's (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) prophethood, this does tell us a great deal about the Ahl-e Sunnat themselves. But there was much in their prophetology that was too, in the line with the worldwide Sunni view. Such elements included: belief that the Prophet had knowledge of the unseen (ilm-e ghaib); that he was made of light and had no shadow; that Allah can only be approached through the intermediacy of Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and none other; and that, because the Prophet lives on in corporeal as well as spiritual form in his grave at Medina, as hadis indicates, he continues to "exist" and to be. In azan, Imam Ahmad Raza defended the distinctive practice of kissing the thumbs of both hands and touching them to the eyes at designated moments when the Prophet was mentioned through hadis.[49]

The most important element of Ahl-e Sunnat prophetology, around which everything else seems to revolve, was the belief in Prophet Muhammad's (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) intercessionary role with Allah on behalf of mankind. The preceding discussion on the Tariqa-e Muhammadia's views on this, and Ahl-e Sunnat differences with them, has indicated what the Ahl-e Sunnat belief was on this issue. It bears repeating, on account of its centrality to Ahl-e Sunnat prophetology, as set out in Ahl-e Sunnat literature and Imam Ahmad Raza's frequently quotes in his writing. In *Daulat al-Makkia,* a work devoted primarily to defence of the Prophet's knowledge of the unseen, he wrote as follows on the Prophet's intercessionary powers:

Our Prophet received the gift of intercession. The Prophet's saying which quoted in the *Sahih Muslim,* "I have been given the gift of intercession." The Wahhabis say that the Prophet hasn't yet been given this ability, that he will receive it only on the day of the resurrection. They say this so as to dissuade people from seeking the Prophet's help in times of distress. . . . Not only is it true that the Prophet's intercession is

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best in Allah's regard, but furthermore, no one can approach Allah without the Prophet's intermediacy. All have to approach the Prophet, for he alone can intercede for them with Allah. The Prophet said, "I am the owner *(malik)* of the intercession of all the prophets, and no one can be Muslim by saying, "There is no God but Allah" unless he says, "Muhammad is Allah's Messenger".[50]

In this passage, Imam Ahmad Raza alluded to several characteristics believed by the Ahl-e Sunnat to inhere in the Prophet as intercessor: his ability to intercede was a "gift" from Allah; it was not a gift held in abeyance until the day of the resurrection, but was exercised in the present time in the interests of those who supplicated him for help. His intercessionary powers were superior to those of all other prophets, also believed to possess such influence with Allah.

The Prophet's intercessionary role, in addition, was believed to have existed from the beginning of his prophetic calling, as hadis indicates. This is illustrated by a story, recounted below, which was based on sahih (sound) hadis recorded in al-Nasa'i, al-Tirmidhi, and Ibn Maja (compilers of three of the six major Sunni hadis collections). In this hadis, importantly, the Prophet himself was reported to have taught someone of the efficacy of his intercession with Allah:

The Prophet taught a blind man a *du'a* (supplication) to be said after the salat which went as follows: "Allah! I ask you and turn toward You through the intermediacy of Your Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) who is a compassionate prophet. O Prophet of Allah! By means of the prophet I turn toward my Lord in my need that my need may be fulfilled. Allah, accept his intercession in my favor."[51]

The man was cured of his blindness immediately after saying the prayer as instructed by the Prophet.[52] This hadis was cited in defence of the argument that it is permissible to address the Prophet directly by saying "Ya rasul Allah," or words to that

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effect, and ask for his help. The expression "Ya rasul Allah" was in fact so closely associated with the Ahl-e Sunnat that it came to be thought of as a sort of emblem of identification.[53] As seen above, Imam Ahmad Raza said that one could address the Prophet in this way in the form of a du'a after the salat, or at any other time. As in the case of the blind man cited above, such supplication was considered to have immediate effect.

Not only did Allah gift the Prophet the power of intercession from the very beginning of his prophethood, the Ahl-e Sunnat believed, but this power continued after his worldly life. This is an important dimension of Ahl-e Sunnat prophetology, for it meant in effect that the Prophet is a continuous presence in the lives of Muslims at all times, intervening when called upon. It is for this reason that Imam Ahmad Raza and other Sunni always spoke, and wrote, of the Prophet in the present tense, as in first code of faith. The Prophet was believed to be *hazir o nazir*, present and hearing.

This presence could be either spiritual or physical, and was unlimited in terms of space or time. The Prophet could go anywhere anytime. His spiritual presence and therefore grace (barkat) were likely to be particularly strong on particular occasions such as the celebration of his birth anniversary *(majlis-e milad)*. It was a mark of respect to his presumed spiritual (and perhaps even physical) presence to stand up at the end of the ceremony when the *salat o salam* (prayer calling down Allah's blessings on him) was read.[54] One could know whether the Prophet was physically present at such a time: the decision to do so or not was in his hands, a matter of choice on his part.[55]

Blessings or grace was particularly associated, in the Ahl-e Sunnat view, with the graves which marked the last earthly home of exalted spiritual beings, whether it be Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), the best of all created beings, or other prophets, or saints. The reason this was so was that, in Ahl-e Sunnat belief, prophets and other spiritually eminent persons inhabit their graves in a state of

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perfect physical preservation, and lead afterlifes devoted to prayer. The Ahl-e Sunnat insisted therefore that graves are places worthy of the greatest respect. In a fatawa discussing the impermissibility of demolishing a grave and building some other structure over it, Imam Ahmad Raza wrote:

> It is not permitted to any Muslim to break up and demolish another Muslim's grave and put up a building on that spot. As far as the Ahl-e Sunnat are concerned, the prophets *(Anbiyya)*, saints *(auliyya)*, and martyrs *(shuhada)* are alive. They have sense perception. Although an ordinary person's body decays after a few months or years of burial, the bodies of prophets, saints and martyrs don't decay. They remain in a state of perfect preservation, because Allah made it haram for any decay to take place, so is written in hadis books.[56]

He quoted approvingly a work in which the prophet's afterlifes were said to take place on both a material and a spiritual plane. Another writer was quoted as saying that the spirits of the saints became so powerful after their death that they acquired bodies which roamed the earth and the sky. Inside their graves, in addition, they read the salat, and performed devotional exercises (*zikr* and *tilawat*).[57] Imam Ahmad Raza's Malfuzat, likewise, contain references to the ability of saints to be physically present in several places at the same time.[58]

If prophets and saints shared in some respects in the Prophet Muhammad's (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) abilities in this respect, they were in no way his equal. Imam Ahmad Raza and other Ahl-e Sunnat Ulama tirelessly and repeatedly taught that the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was the most exalted being of all creation, to whom Allah had gifted unimaginable powers. The reason this was so, Imam Ahmad Raza frequently explained, was that Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was Allah's beloved *(habib)*. So beloved was he, in fact, that Allah had created the world for him. As we saw in Chapter V, Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of

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Allah be upon him) was believed to have been both the first and last prophet to be created; his ancestry was of the purest, never having been tainted by the existence of any kafirs in his genealogical ancestry; and, finally, he transmitted and was part of Allah's own light.

In Ahl-e Sunnat interpretation, therefore, the Prophet was a being exalted by Allah above imagining, because of Allah's love for him. All the qualities he possessed had been gifted to him by Allah. Imam Ahmad Raza emphasized that the Prophet's powers and qualities were "gifts" from Allah, and herein lay the crucial difference between Allah and His Prophet: Allah was unconditional, uncreated, necessary *(wajib),* while the Prophet was a created, contingent *(mumkin),* and limited being. Ahl-e Sunnat prophetology is characterized by this duality, in which the Prophet is at once very close to Allah, such that there can be no true faith if the believer has no "love" for him, and yet the Prophet is distinct from Allah and subject to Him. All he knows and has power over, is a gift from Allah.

Imam Ahmad Raza's writings on Prophet Muhammad's (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) knowledge illustrate this perspective on the Prophet. This was an issue which he cared about deeply, and differed with Muhammad Isma'il and Deobandi Ulama mentioned in *Husam* on, as seen above. He interpreted the latter's position as a sign of their lack of respect for Allah and the Prophet.

Imam Ahmad Raza's own interpretation, as presented in *Daulat al-Makkia,* was that there are some verses in the Quran denying that he had such knowledge, and others affirming that he did. It was therefore necessary to recognize that both are true, and to understand the underlying sense of the Quranic references. He made a distinction between two basically different kinds of knowledge:

One is the *masdar* or source, from where knowledge emanates, and the other is dependent upon it. In the first case,

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knowledge is *zati*, that is, it is complete and independent in itself, not dependent on any outside source. In the second case, it is *ata'i*, that is "gifted" by an outside source. Zati knowledge is exclusively Allah's; it would be absurd to claim it for anyone else. Whoever attaches such knowledge in no matter how small a degree to anyone on earth, is a mushrik. The second kind is peculiar to Allah's creatures. It is not for Allah.[59]

Further on, Imam Ahmad Raza made the following distinctions between Allah's knowledge and that of created beings:

> Allah's knowledge is intrinsic while man's is gifted; Allah's knowledge is necessary *(wajib)* while man's is contingent *(mumkin);* Allah's knowledge is pre-existent, everlasting, ancient and true, while man's knowledge is recent *(hadis)* since all created beings are themselves recent. . . . Allah's knowledge is uncreated, while man's knowledge is created. Allah's knowledge is omnipotent, while man's is in Allah's power and subject to Him. While Allah's knowledge has to be perpetual, man's could be extinguished. While Allah's knowledge never changes in any way, man's is changing all the time. Given these differences, there can be no suspicion of equality.[60]

Within the ambit of the limitations spelled out above, the knowledge possessed in Imam Ahmad Raza's and Sunni view by man and by prophets was nevertheless vast. To begin with, some knowledge of the unseen is possessed even by ordinary people, Imam Ahmad Raza argued. This was proved by the fact that Muslims believe in the resurrection, heaven, hell, and other unseen things commanded by Allah. This belief was itself a confirmation of the existence of these and other things.[61] As for the knowledge of prophets, (it) is (but) a small part of Allah's knowledge; yet it is like an ocean beyond counting, for the prophets know, and can see, everything from the First Day until the Last Day, all that has been and all that will be.[62]

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Prophet Muhammad's (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) knowledge, though, was even greater than that of other prophets because "the Quran was revealed to him, in which everything was explained." Because the Quran was revealed bit by bit, the Prophet's knowledge kept growing over time until, at the end of the revelation, it was complete. Quranic verses which speak of the Prophet's lack of knowledge about something refer to the time when the revelation, and consequently his knowledge, was still incomplete. Quran verses such as: "He told you that which you did not know," were proof that Allah had favored him with immense knowledge. By the end of the period of revelation, the Prophet's knowledge went beyond the Last Day, to the tumult of the resurrection, the accounting and the reward and punishment. So much so that he will see everyone arriving at their proper places, whether heaven, or hell, or whatever else Allah may tell him. Undoubtedly, the Prophet knows this much, thanks to Allah, and Allah alone knows how much besides. When He has given His beloved *(mustafa)* so much, then it is apparent that knowledge of everything in the past and the future, which is recorded in the Tablet *(lauh-e mahfuz)* is but a part of his knowledge as a whole.[63]

The Prophet also had knowledge of people's internal, mental states:

In the view of the Ahl-e Sunnat, every single thing that exists is . . . known to the Prophet: all that exists between the sky and the earth, from east to West, everything pertaining to people's selves, their states, their movements, their moments of rest. He knows the movement and glance of the eyelid, the fears and intentions of the heart, and whatever else exists.[64]

Finally, Imam Ahmad Raza addressed the "five things", which were widely interpreted as known to Allah alone.[65] Imam Ahmad Raza argued that contrary to Wahhabi interpretation these were but minor things in a vast store of the Prophet Muhammad's (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him)

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knowledge. With the exception of the resurrection, they were not very important in themselves, compared to the nature and attributes of Allah, hell, heaven, and such matters. They had merely been singled out by Allah because the age in which Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) lived was the age of the *kahins*, the soothsayers, who believed they could predict these things. Allah wanted them to know that without His telling someone about the "hidden" (al-ghaib), none could know it. The Prophet was favored with knowledge of these things, including the hour, but was commanded not to reveal it.[66]

All this, Imam Ahmad Raza wrote in a variety of contexts, was gifted to Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) by Allah because of Allah's love for him. This concept of the love between Allah and the Prophet as the ultimate cause for creation has a distinctly sufi flavor. So does the argument that Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), being made of light, had no shadow. It is important, therefore, to note that such arguments were defended in Imam Ahmad Raza's writings largely, indeed overwhelmingly, by citation of works of hadis and fiqh.[67] Asked whether Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) had a shadow, for instance, Imam Ahmad Raza replied:

> Undoubtedly the Prophet did not have a shadow. This is clear from hadis, from the words of the Ulama, of the Ai'ma (founders of the four main Sunni law schools), and *fuzula* (learned men) . . . Allama Ibn-e Saba, Imam Qazi Iyaz, Imam Arif Bi'llah, . . . Allama Jalal ud-Din Suyuti, Imam Ibn-e Jauzi, . . . Imam Ahmad bin Muhammad Qastallani, Imam Muhammad Zarqani Maliki, Shaikh Muhaqqiq Dihlawi, Shaikh Mujaddid-e Alif Sani, . . . Shah Abd ul-Aziz Dihlawi, etc. Today's unsound claimants ("Wahhabis") claim to be their pupils, but they don't understand the words of the masters.[68]

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Imam Ahmad Raza cited numerous hadis illustrating the luminous quality of Prophet Muhammad's (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) face and body, including accounts of the light that was shed on cities far and wide at his birth. In another fatawa, Imam al-Suyuti was cited to the effect that flies did not settle on the Prophet's body, Imam Fakhr ud-Din al-Razi was cited as saying that mosquitoes didn't suck his blood, and Imam al-Suyuti, again, was reported to have written that once the Prophet had ridden on an animal, that animal never aged any further. One hadis was quoted to prove that the Prophet could see in the dark.[69]

Such views were by no means new, or unknown in the subcontinent at the time. As Schimmel indicates, there was a whole genre of popular literature based on hadis in Sindhi, among other languages, the object of which was to venerate the Prophet down to the smallest details of his life.[70] Imam Ahmad Raza himself contributed to this *shama'il* and *faza'il* literature, in praise of the Prophet's lofty qualities and outward beauty, with his Urdu poems. In addition, it was his distinctive contribution to give this existing popular veneration authority by defending such an image of the Prophet in fatawa, and making it acceptable to the Ulama.

In short, Ahl-e Sunnat prophetology inclined toward a view of Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) as a miraculous, extrahuman being the like of whom could not be equalled, nor imagined. Allah had created an unparalleled individual in Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), due to His love for him. There could never, even hypothetically, be another like Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). The crowning event in Prophet Muhammad's (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) life, which bore witness to his unique place in Allah's sight, was Allah's revelation of Himself to Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) on the occasion of the *mi'raj* or night Ascension. Imam Ahmad Raza

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wrote that this event was both spiritual and physical.[71] As he put is in a memorable verse:

How could anything whatsoever be hidden from you
When Khuda Himself did not conceal Himself from you
On you be thousands of blessings![72]

This was the ultimate act of love, not given even to the angel Gabriel. Schimmel writes that the stories of Prophet Muhammad's (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) miracles and accounts of his natural beauty have been recounted by generations of Muslims, who find "nothing . . . wonderful and beautiful enough to give an adequate impression of the personality of the beloved Prophet."[73] So it was with Imam Ahmad Raza, who called himself "Abd al-Musatafa" and taught that faith and belief could only be true if it placed devotion to the Prophet above all human ties.

Conclusion

The Ahl-e Sunnat, of course, denied the possibility that there could be any prophet after Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), even one who saw it as his mission to enforce the law instituted by the Prophet. This is the orthodox position. Nevertheless, in a sense they too have grappled with the problem of the spiritual loss to the Muslim community caused by the Prophet's worldly life. Their answer is that Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) continues to "be," that he continues to intervene in human affairs, and to guide those who seek to follow him. Prophet Muhammad's (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) intercessionary role, therefore, is at the heart of Ahl-e Sunnat prophetology. Without it, the community would be thought to be bereft. Imam Ahmad Raza's denial of the belief that the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) intercedes for his community only on the day of the resurrection confirms this. Prophetic intercession is a constant process: ultimately it is man's link with Allah. The hierarchy of

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saints, the appearance of the *mujaddid (*renewer) once every hundred years, and the presence of Ulama who keep the Prophet's sunna alive - all these are further links in the "rope of God."

The concept of hierarchy is inseparable from this view of the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and other spiritually exalted persons. The measure is "closeness to Allah": the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), Allah's beloved who saw Him face to face and for whose sake Allah created the world, is of course the closest to Him. Occasionally, Imam Ahmad Raza even said that Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was not far from Allah, so close was he to Him.[74] The *ghaus*, pivot of the world, the *aulia* or saints, and ultimately the Ulama are much further away from Him, though securely linked as long as they follow the Prophet. Mankind's proper response is to humbly respect and obey, which means that people should strive at all times to follow the Prophet's sunna.

But if obedience is called for, it is loving obedience. Throughout Imam Ahmad Raza's writings, and in the living out of his own life, he seems to have stressed both respect and love for the Prophet to an equal degree. For the Prophet, like Allah Himself, is ultimately a source of forgiveness. Imam Ahmad Raza frequently pointed out to his opponents that if they repented their sins arising from a lack of respect and love for the Prophet, all would be forgiven and they could start out afresh with a clean slate. Thus the notions of hierarchy and love, on the face of it contradictory, coexist harmoniously in Ahl-e Sunnat prophetology, reinforcing one another to create an attitude of religious devotion that is quite consistent.

Our examination of the Ahl-e Sunnat's relations with other heretical Muslims in the late nineteenth century period indicates that the Ahl-e Sunnat regarded other existing interpretations of the Prophet's powers and role to be a sure sign of kufr. As they put it, "Wahhabis," Deobandis, Shi'is, and

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others were "disrespectful" toward Allah and the Prophet. As such respect was an important "fundament of belief", failure to show the right attitude made one an apostate and unbeliever. Such persons, Imam Ahmad Raza was convinced, were guided by Satan and had forsaken Allah and the Prophet. Because they were Ulama, the disorder caused by their influence on ordinary Muslims was even worse than it might otherwise have been. The Ahl-e Sunnat interpreted their situation in light of hadis which interpreted the division of the religious community into many groups, all but one of which would have gone astray. They, the Ahl-e Sunnat, were called upon to try to revive the Prophet's sunna and restore the community to its pristine state of belief and worship.

In fact; for the Ahl-e Sunnat it followed that if one loved the Prophet, one must hate his enemies and do all one could to rebut them. Imam Ahmad Raza regarded it as one of his most important tasks as an alim to devote every effort in this direction. He once said that he was happy that people attacked his writings as frequently as they did because in the process they forgot to denigrate Allah and the Prophet.[75] Consequently, Ahl-e Sunnat leaders wrote voluminous fatawa, risalas, poetry, and posters against the perceived insults, misinterpretations, or false beliefs of these and other "enemies of the Prophet." Ahl-e Sunnat writings, guided by Imam Ahmad Raza, were marked by a remarkable tone of certainty throughout, regardless of which group of heretical Muslims was being rebutted.

The literary sources for Ahl-e Sunnat prophetology, as we have seen, were interpretation of Quran, hadis, and fiqh works for the most part. In hadis, weak traditions were not rejected if they elevated the Prophet's stature, for nothing that did this was considered unacceptable, and authorities could be cited in their defence just as easily as they could for rejecting them. For the Ahl-e Sunnat, defence of the Prophet was sufficient grounds to accept a doubtful hadis. In addition, there was a large corpus of fiqh scholarship to draw on, as Imam Ahmad Raza did with skill in making his arguments. In view of

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the validation Imam Ahmad Raza found for his beliefs in a wide array of medieval sources, one has to conclude that the picture of the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) that emerges in Ahl-e Sunnat writings was not an uninformed "popular" one, but one that many medieval Islamic scholars would have agreed with.

But of course there were, and are, points of comparison and similarity between the Ahl-e Sunnat's conception of the Prophet and those of popular poetry and oral tradition and legend throughout the Islamic world, as Schimmel's work on popular Islamic piety shows us. This study has also indicated that the Ahl-e Sunnat had a strong sufi dimension, in affiliation particularly with the Qadiria order. Many of the leading leaders of the Ahl-e Sunnat leadership in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were *sajjada-nishins* (caretakers) of sufi shrines, and belonged to a world in which the intercessionary power of saints and family ancestors was taken for granted. Imam Ahmad Raza's conceptions about the Prophet's role as mediator with Allah and his miraculous achievements were in line with sufi concepts of spiritual authority and power.

Finally, it must be noted that the deep rooted sense of hierarchy implicit in Ahl-e Sunnat prophetology, as well as the underlying spirit of devotion noted above, were in harmony with social and religious conceptions held by South Asians who were not Muslim. Ahl-e Sunnat sources seldom refer to the Hindus amidst whom they lived, and when they do, the purpose is to distance themselves from the beliefs and customs of these "polytheists". This is as one would expect from the followers of a movement which wanted to stress its universalistic Sunni roots and ties to the *umma* (religious community) beyond South Asia.

Notes:

1. See for detail about Wahhabi movement: *Confession of a British Spy*. Printed in Istanbul - 1992.

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2. In fact, *Husam al-Haramain* had been written, under a different name *(Al-Mu'tamad al-Mustanad)* in 1902, in the form of a commentary *(sharh)* on Hazrat Maulana Fazl-e Rasul Badayuni's *Al-Mu'tamad al-Muntaqid*. Printed in Istanbul. Imam Ahmad Raza's work had been in Arabic, and may therefore not have been widely known before its re-issuance in Makkah in 1906.

3. See chapter V for Imam Ahmad Raza's use of these terms, and discussion of his views on (Twelver) Shi'is and the Nadwat ul-Ulama.

4. Some of these Ulama had previously signed Imam Ahmad Raza's earlier fatawa against the Nadwat ul-Ulama. See *Malfuzat-e A'la Hazrat* (Gujerat, Pakistan: Fazl-e Nur Academy, n.d.), vol. 2, p. 7.

5. Imam Ahmad Raza Khan, *Tamhid al-Iman ba-Ayat al-Quran* (Bombay: Raza Academy, n.d.), pp. 33-35. Originally written in A.H. 1326/A.D. 1908.

6. *Tamhid al-Iman*, p. 33.

7. Imam Ahmad Raza Khan, *Husam al-Haramain ala Manhar al-Kufr wa'l-Main* (Lahore: Maktaba Nabuwia, 1985), p. 12. Originally written in A.H. 1323/A.D. 1906.

8. Debate on this particular issue, known as *imkan-e nazir* (the possibility of an equal) - or, alternatively, as *imtina-e nazir* (the impossibility of an equal) - derived from questions about the transcendence of Allah, and His ability to produce another prophet equal in every respect to Hazrat Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). Isma'il Dihlawi (d. 1831), founder of the Wahhabi movement in India, had argued that this was within Allah's power, while Allama Fazl-e Haqq Khairabadi (d. 1862) had denied this. Imam Ahmad

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Raza's father Maulana Naqi Ali Khan, arguing in favor of Allama Fazl-e Haqq's position, had participated in the debate a generation later, against one Amir Ahmad Sahaswani, of the Ahl-e Hadis. See Rahman Ali *Tazkira-e Ulama-e Hind* (Karachi: Pakistan Historical Society, 1961), p. 531.

9. Qasim Nanautawi, Tehzir-un-Nass.

10. *Husam al-Haramain,* p. 14.

11. Imam Ahmad Raza wrote a lengthy rebuttal to this position in S*ubhan al-Subbuh an Aib Kizb Maqbuh* (Praise to the glorified one (in denial of) the repulsive blemish of lying), in *Fatawa-e Rizwia,* vol. 6 (Azamgarh: Sunni Dar ul-Isha'at, 1981), pp. 212-71. Originally written in A.H. 1307/A/D/ 1889-90.

12. For discussion of this movement and the Ahl-e Sunnat interpretation of it, see below.

13. Khalil Ahmad Ambethwi Deobandi was a disciple *(murid)* of Rashid Ahmad Gangohi. The book for which Imam Ahmad Raza attacked him in *Husam al-Haramain* was *Barahin-e Qati'ya,* in which he allegedly said that there was no *nass* (clear verse of the Quran) to support the belief that Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) had "vast knowledge" *(wasa't-e 'ilm),* though such evidence does exist with regard to the knowledge of Iblis (Satan). In fact the Quran clearly proves that the Prophet had such knowledge.

14. Ashraf Ali Thanawi was patron of the Dar ul-Ulum at Deoband for several years. See Metcalf, op. cit., pp. 157, 203 passim. The book for which Imam Ahmad Raza took issue with him in *Husum* was *Hifz al-Iman,* in which Ashraf Ali had purportedly said that "the sort of knowledge of the unseen *(ilm-e qhaib)* that the Prophet

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has, every child, madman, animal and four-footed creature has."

15. The word "gifted" *(atai)* was important to Imam Ahmad Raza, for, as he argued at length in *Daulat al-Makkia*, it had never been his position that the Prophet had acquired it on his own.

16. The sources cited were Allama Khafaji's *Nasim al-Riyaz* and Allama Shihabuddin Ahmad B. Allama ibn Hajar Makki's (d. 1565?66) *Afzal al-Qura*. The hadis in question was apparently mentioned in *Barahin-e Qatia* in defense of the view denying that Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) had *ilm-e ghaib*. Imam Ahmad Raza maintained that this hadis was baseless *(be'asl)* and had been declared to be so by Shaikh Abd al-Haqq Mudahhis Dihlawi (d. 1642) in his *Madarij al-Nabuwwat*.

17. Imam Ahmad Raza's prophetology is the subject of a separate section below.

18. *Husam al-Haramin*.

19. *Husam al-Haramain*, p. 14.

20. Ibid., p. 16.

21. Peter J. Awn, *Satan's Tragedy and Redemption: Iblis in Sufi Psychology* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1983), p. 46.

22. Ibid., p. 47.

23. Imam Ahmad Raza did not refer to the Kharijis by name on this occasion, though it is evident that it was they that he meant in his recounting of hadis. *Malfuzat*, vol. 1, p. 57.

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24. Ibid., vol. 1, p. 56.

25. Ibid.

26. *Malfuzat*, p. 58.

27. Ibid.

28. *Malfuzat*. The repent theme occurs on several occasions. In reference to Deobandis, the following examples are of interest: in 1906, Khalil Ahmad Ambethwi reportedly fled Makkah one night after having requested an alim to arrange for the presence of a translator so that he could repent for his book *Barahin-e Qatia*. *Malfuzat,* vol. 2, p. 14; in 1911, Imam Ahmad Raza wrote to Ashraf Ali Thanawi inviting him to repent of statements made in his Hifz al-Iman in which Ashraf Ali had allegedly denigrated the Prophet. The latter presumably did not respond. *Maktubat-e Imam Ahmad Raza Khan Barelwi* (Lahore: Maktaba Nabuwwia, 1986), p. 130.

29. *Maktubat,* vol. 2, p. 60.

30. Ibid., vol. 1, p. 78.

31. Hazrat Maulana Fazl-e Rasul's 1854 work, entitled *Al-Mu'tamad al-Muntaqid* (Trustworthy critic) written in Arabic, dealt with *aqa'id* (belief). In it, the properties and characteristics of Allah and the Prophet were discussed. Imam Ahmad Raza's commentary, approving this work, was entitled *Al-Mu'tamad al-Mustanad* (Dependable reason). *Husam al-Haramain,* published separately in 1906, had originally been a part of this 1902 work.

32. Imam Ahmad Raza Khan, *Tamhid al-Iman ba-Ayat al-Quran*, op. cit., pp. 42-43.

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33. Evidence has been found of connection between Sayyid Ahmad's Tariqa-e Muhammadia and the Wahhabis of Nejd, on Sayyid Ahmad's hajj of 1821-23.

Examination of the continuities between Shah Wali Ullah and the Tariqa-e Muhammadi, and of similarities with Wahhabi thought, is beyond the scope of this study. Shah Wali Ullah, Shah Abd ul-Aziz, and the Tariqa Muhammadi have been studied in detail by several scholars. One of the most recent studies of Shah Wali Ullah is J.M.S. Baljon, *Religion and Thought of Shah Wali Allah Dihlawi* 1703-1762 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1986).

34. Saif al-Jabbar by Shah Fazal e-Rasool Badayuni.

35. Tarikh Tanawalliyan.

36. Founded by a student of Shah Muhammad Ishaq (d. 1846), a grandson of Shah Abd ul-Aziz, the Ahl-e Hadis rejected taqlid, and sought direct guidance from Quran and hadis. As was noted above, Hanafi Muslims such as the Ahl-e Sunnat who regarded taqlid as an essential prerequisite for arriving at legally valid judgments, called them ghair-muqallids for this reason.

37. There are numerous studies of Sir Sayyid Ahmad and his work.

38. Pearson, pp. 265, 269.

39. Imam Ahmad Raza, *Al-Kaukab al-Shahabia fi Kufriyat Abi al-Wahhabia* (Brightly-shining star among the blasphemies of the father of the Wahhabis) (Lahore: Nuri Book Depot, A.H. 1375/A.D. 1955-56). Originally published in A.H. 1312/A.D. 1894-5.

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40. Pearson, pp. 79, 106. English translations of extracts from these works, or essays discussing them, appeared in the first half of the nineteenth century, a reflection no doubt of the importance the British attached to the perceived "Wahhabi" problem. See "Notice of the Peculiar Tenets held by the Followers of Syed Ahmed, taken chiefly from the 'Sirat-ul-Mustaqim'," in *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* (Calcutta), 1, January-December 1832, pp. 479-98; Mir Shahamat Ali, "Translation of the Takwiat-ul-Iman, Preceded by a notice of the Author, Maulavi Isma'il Hajji," in *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (London), 13 (1852), pp. 310-72.

41. *Taqwiat al-Iman* (Mir Shahamat Ali trans.), p. 331.

42. Quran 31: 34 "Lo! Allah! With Him is knowledge of the Hour. He sendeth down the rain, and knoweth that which is in the wombs. No soul knoweth what it will earn tomorrow, and no soul knoweth in what land it will die. Lo! Allah is Knower, Aware." (Pickthall trans.) It is astonishing that Wahhabis deny knowledge of unseen to the Prophet on one hand but on the other hand they prove this knowledge for their pirs and ulama.

43. On Imam Ahmad Raza's description of the hierarchy of saints culminating in the qutub, see Chapter III.

44. Ibid., p. 339.

45. Imam Ahmad Raza Khan, al-Kaukab al-Shahabia, pp. 40-41.

46. See Chapter II above for a description of some of the main ritual events in the *urs-e Nuri* attended by Imam Ahmad Raza and others of the Ahl-e Sunnat in the early twentieth century.

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47. Imam Ahmad Raza, *Ilhaaq al-Wahhabiin ala Tauhin Qubur al-Muslimin* (Attachment of the Wahhabis to insulting the graves of Muslims) A.H. 1322/A.D. 1904-5, pp. 2-7.

48. Imam Ahmad Raza Khan, *Al-Kaukab al-Shahabia*, p. 42.

49. These were: during the *azan* (call to prayer) when the words *"ashhadu anna Muhammadur-Rasul Allah,"* "I testify that Prophet Muhammad is the apostle of Allah," during *iqamat* (the second call to prayer at the beginning of namaz, when everyone stands up), and every time the Prophet's name is mentioned. Imam Ahmad Raza Khan, *Fatawa-e Rizwia* (Muradabad, U.P.: Maktaba-e Na'imia), vol. 2, pp. 517-648.

50. Imam Ahmad Raza Khan, *Daulat al-Makkia bi'l Madat al-Ghaibia* (The Mekkan state on that which is hidden) (Karachi: Maktaba-e Rizwia, n.d.), p. 137.

51. Imam Ahmad Raza Khan, *Anwar al-Intibah fi Hill Nida Ya Rasul Allah* (The lights of vigilance in the permissibility of the call "Ya rasul Allah") (Karachi: Basm-e Qasimi Barkati, 1986), p. 7. Originally written in A.H. 1304/A.D. 1886-87.

52. Ibid., pp. 7-10.

53. Metcalf, *Islamic Revival*, p. 301.

54. Imam Ahmad Raza Khan, *Iqamat al-Qiyama* (Karachi: Barkati Publishers, 1986), pp. 17-29. Originally written in A.H. 1299/A.D. 1881-82.

55. Imam Ahmad Raza Khan, *Fatawa-e Rizwia* (Mubarakpur, Azamgarh: Sunni Dar al-Shia'at, 1981),

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vol. 6, p. 147. In Urdu, *"tashrif awari huzur ke ikhtiyar hai."*

56. Imam Ahmad Raza Khan, *Ilhaq al-Wahhabiin,* op. cit., p. 3. See also Tirmidhi on this issue.

57. Ibid., p. 4.

58. E.g., *Malfuzat,* vol. 1, p. 101.

59. Imam Ahmad Raza Khan, *Daulat al-Makkia,* pp. 15, 17, 19.

60. Ibid., pp. 45, 47.

61. As he argued, "Our faith is confirmation (that heaven, hell, etc.) exist, and confirmation is knowledge. If someone doesn't know the unseen, how can he confirm it? And if he can't confirm it, how can he believe in it?" Ibid., p. 39.

62. Ibid., pp. 57, 59.

63. Ibid., p. 77.

64. Ibid., p. 93.

65. These were: knowledge of the Hour of resurrection, of when it would rain, of the sex of a yet unborn child, of what one would earn on the morrow, and of the land where one would die.

66. *Daulat al-Makkia*, pp. 119-35, 175-91.

67. This is not to say, however, that sufi sources are entirely absent. Among sufi authors encountered in Imam Ahmad Raza's works are Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi ("Mujaddid-e Alif-e Sani"), and Imam al-Ghazzali.

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68. Imam Ahmad Raza Khan, *Nafi al-Fi' Amaman Anara bi-Nurahi Kull Shai* (Negation of the shadow of that pure essence, which shadow illuminated everything), in *Majma Rasa'il: Masa'la Nur aur Saya* (Karachi: Idara-e Tahqiqat-e Imam Ahmad Raza, 1985), pp. 51-52. Originally written in A.H. 1296/A.D. 1878-79.

It is possible to identify all the writers mentioned in this quotation here. i.e. Imam Qazi Iyaz (d. 1149), a Maliki theologian and judge in Ceuta and Granada, whose *Kitab al-Shifa* is one of the most frequently used handbooks on the Prophet; Imam Jalal ud-Din al-Suyuti (d. 1505), a scholar of Mamluk Egypt; Allama Ibn al-Jawzi (d. 1256), a famous preacher and historian in Damascus; Imam al-Qastallani (d. 1517), an authority on tradition and theology in Cairo; Allama Abd ul-Haqq Dihlawi (d. 1642), an authority on hadis in Mughal India; Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi (d. 1624), the Naqshbandi shaikh who was imprisoned by Emperor Jahangir for heresy; and Shah Abd ul-Aziz Dihlawi (d. 1824), Shah Wali Ullah's eldest son and well-known hadis scholar.

69. Ibid., pp. 62-65; Imam Ahmad Raza Khan, Qamar al-Tamam fi Nafi al-Zill an Sayyid al-Anam (The full moon of denial of a shadow for the leader of mankind), pp. 79-84.

70. Annemarie Schimmel, *And Muhammad is His Messenger: the Veneration of the Prophet in Islamic Piety* (Lahore: Vanguard Books Ltd., 1987), pp. 32-35.

71. *Malfuzat*, vol. 4, p. 23; vol. 3, p. 51. also see *Fatawa-e Rizwia*, vol. 6, p. 170.

72. Imam Ahmad Raza Khan, *Hada'iq-e Bakhshish* (Karachi: Medina Publishing Company, n.d.), p. 425. The reference to God revealing Himself to the Prophet is of course to the Prophet's night Ascension. (We were

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also told orally by Maulana Yasin Akhtar Misbahi, a contemporary authority on the Ahl-e Sunnat, that there are hadis in which it is recorded that when the Prophet arrived at Allah's threshold, he saw the other prophets who had preceded him seated around Allah's throne, and led them in salat. This would not have been possible, Maulana Yasin Akhtar pointed out, if they had not had bodies.)

73. Schimmel, *And Muhammad is His Messenger*, p. 76.

74. See Chapter III.

75. *Malfuzat,* vol. 2, p. 50.

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Chapter VII

Ahl-e Sunnat Perspectives on the Khilafat and Hijrat Movements, and on Relations with Non-Muslims, 1912-1921

. . . among the Ahl-e Sunnat it is a condition of the shari'i khilafat that the khalifa be a (member of the) Quraish (tribe).
Imam Ahmad Raza, *Dawam Al-Aish fi'l Ammat min-al-Quraish*, p. 46

If (Muslim) leaders now wish to cast off the (mantle of) serfdom to the Christians which (Sayyid Ahmad Khan took on) . . . if their eyes have opened . . . they are to be congratulated. May God make them true and put them on the right path. . . . But Allah, that servitude . . . to the *mushrikin* (polytheists) (which) was incomplete, is being made complete. . . . What *din* is this which goes from its (previously) incomplete subservience to the Christians to completely shunning them, and immerses itself wholly in following the mushriks (i.e., Hindus)? They (the Muslims) are running from the rain only to enter a drainpipe.

Imam Ahmad Raza Khan, *Al-Mahajjat al-Mutamana fi Ayat al-Mumtahana*, p. 94.

Indian Muslims were deeply affected by political events in the teens of the twentieth century. These were years of enormous political change in the world in general and in British India specifically: abroad, the Ottoman empire collapsed after World War I, various European nations claimed parts of its territory. In India, the nationalist movement gained momentum in reaction to unpopular British policies, becoming more broad-based particularly after Gandhi's return from South Africa. In 1919-20, Muslims took their stand on the Khilafat and Hijrat movements.

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Despite the crowded political landscape of the period, from the Indian Muslim perspective the issues at stake were at bottom quite small in number. One problem, called into question after decades of acceptance of the status quo, was the religious status of India under British rule. The early twentieth century saw a revival of debate among the Ulama on whether British India was *dar al-harb* (the land of war) or *dar al-Islam* (the land of Islam, and of peace). Although the Khilafat movement of 1919-20 arose out of a different concern - the role and significance to twentieth-century Muslims in the subcontinent of a pan-Islamic Khalifa (caliph) - the two questions were, at least to some Indian Muslims, related. The connection is apparent from the fact that the Hijrat movement of 1920, in the course of which thousands of Indian Muslims emigrated to Afghanistan, followed immediately on the heels of the Khilafat movement. Evidently some Ulama, looking upon British India as dar al-harb at this time, gave the call for hijrat (migration) in accordance with classical Islamic theory and bearing in mind the historical precedent of the Prophet's migration from Makkah to Medina.

A third issue, also related to the status of British India and to the structure of Muslim political relations, was what kind of relationship Indian Muslims should seek with Hindus, who constituted the Indian majority. While for some Ulama the current political situation seemed to call for a response in which Muslims joined with Hindus in common cause against the British, others looked upon Hindus as *harbis* (those with whom one was at war), cooperation with whom could have no *shar'i* (legal Islamic) sanction. Both sides, it should be said, argued as they did on the basis of shari'a and the historical model of the Prophet's example.

In what follows, we shall try to elucidate Ahl-e Sunnat views on the issues outlined above, seeking connections to the extent possible between these and the more theologically oriented debates dealt with earlier in this study. Imam Ahmad Raza's writings will again be our main guide. Imam Ahmad Raza's death in late October 1921 (Safar A.H. 1340) occurred

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soon after the collapse of the Khilafat and Hijrat movements in 1920. The disarray among the Indian Muslim political leadership that followed upon these events thus coincided with a period of profound change in the Ahl-e Sunnat movement, which did not split in the 1930s and 40s even under new leadership. These events and the debates that they generated form part of a new phase in the movement's history, dealt with briefly in the Epilogue that follows this chapter.

Socio-Economic Context of the Ahl-e Sunnat Leadership During the Nineteenth Century

The core leadership of the Ahl-e Sunnat movement in the late nineteenth century consisted primarily, as earlier chapters have indicated, of Ulama and Qadiri *pirs* (sufi preceptors) from Bareilly, Badayun, Rampur, Pilibhit, and Marahrah in the Rohilkhand region of the United Provinces and Awadh, and from Patna, Bihar. They were drawn, thus, from both urban and rural towns, dependent variously on incomes from land ownership, trade, teaching, voluntary contributions from followers, or combinations thereof. In social class terms, they were part of the *ashraf*, or Muslim elite. Their status was based on ancestral lineage (whether Pathan, Sayyid, Usmani, or similar), religious learning, and economic wealth. Privileged social standing corresponded to the concepts of hierarchy central to the religious style they favored. As seen, they approved of and attended annual *urs* (death anniversary) celebrations around the country, and engaged in other mediational practices. So close knit were the scholarly and mediational aspects in Imam Ahmad Raza's life and thought, in fact, that by the end of his life a *khanaqa* (sufi hospice) known as the Khanaqa-e Alia Razwia had been established in Bareilly, where, among other things, the annual meeting of the Ahl-e Sunnat's Dar al-Ulum Manzare-e Islam took place.[1] The lifestyle fostered by Ahl-e Sunnat Ulama in the towns and that centered around rural khanaqas therefore shared a common tone, even if their emphases were different.

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As noted previously, however, the Ahl-e Sunnat Ulama and pirs stressed the need to follow the *sunna* and remain faithful to the shari'at. Consequently the pir families associated with the movement considered themselves to be "reformist", identifying with a sufi movement of reform that has been active in the countryside parallel to the urban movement of Ulama. As noted in Chapter II, this concern for reform was evident among other things in religious ritual during annual urs zayarates, in which the attendance of women, and the holding of *sama* musical sessions, for instance, were totally prohibited.

It is also noted that the sufi reformist pirs of the Panjab were closely tied to the local patronage network than "older" pirs, and were willing on occasion to join reformist Ulama "in defense of Islamic symbols and, at times, in religious attacks on the colonial system."[2] Two such pirs in the Panjab, with whom the Ahl-e Sunnat movement worked closely in the course of the Khilafat movement and during the anti apostasy campaign of the early 1920s to counter the Arya conversion of Muslims to Hinduism (known as the Shuddhi movement), were Pir Jama'at Ali Shah, a Naqshbandi from Alipur Sayyedan, a rural town near Sayalkot (now in Pakistan) and Pir Mihr Ali Shah, a Cheshti from Golra Sharif (Islamabad Pakistan). According to Gilmartin, both men "emphasized the reforming mission of the Naqshbandi and Cheshti orders within the rural organization of *khanaqah* and shrine."[3] The political base of "reforming" pirs such as these, consisted of a combination of rural and urban networks. The Ulama pirs and the Ahl-e Sunnat movement, thus, were at once both urban and rural, both "reformist" and mediationist.

As townsmen, some of the Ahl-e Sunnat competed for local administrative positions and played a part in the political organization. Among subscribers to the *Tuhfa-e Hanafia,* an important Patna-based journal of the movement in the late nineteenth century, for instance, were qazis, wakils, tahsildars, as well as municipal commissioners, barristers, doctors, and station masters.[4] Although the Ulama did not usually undertake

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government service, this was not unprecedented either: Maulana Fazl-e Haqq Khairabadi (d. 1862), identified by the Ahl-e Sunnat as one of themselves, had served the East India Company as a *peshkar* (agent) early in the nineteenth century;[5] likewise, Maulana Fazl-e Rasul Badayuni (d. 1872) was at one time a *mufti-e adalat* (legal expert) and a record keeper *(sar-rishtadar)* in Badayun district.[6] Paradoxically, however, both Ulama also participated in the anti-British revolt (independence war) of 1857)[7]

Imam Ahmad Raza's family, while never engaged in government service, appears to have had indirect but cordial relations with the British. His father, a local *ra'is* (notable) and a wealthy landowner, apparently suffered loss of property after the 1857 rebellion.[8] Imam Ahmad Raza's nephew Hasnain Raza (d. 1981), owner of the Hasani Press in Bareilly which published a number of Imam Ahmad Raza's works,[9] was reportedly not well regarded by the British. While he never worked in an official capacity, it is said that he used to collect fees *(chungi)* from the police tribunal for the British, act as arbitrator *(hakam)* in disputes between Muslims in the town, and exercise his personal influence with the administration on local citizens' behalf.[10] Imam Ahmad Raza's father-in-law, Shaikh Fazl-e Husain, was a government officer in the Rampur Post Office, and attended the Nawab's court.[11]

Usmani pirs of Badayun, and the Ashrafia Ghausia pirs of Kachhochha (Faizabad district, in the Awadh region), constituted the elite in their areas, being both landowners and purveyors of *baraka* (spiritual grace).[12] However they probably never commanded the same influence over the local society as did the wealthy Panjab pirs described by Gilmartin as "hinges" in the political structure of that province. Gilmartin records that a significant proportion of the landed gentry in the Panjab (one third of some districts) who received British recognition and support, were pirs.[13] British rule in the Panjab rested on an alliance between the colonial power and local elites in the rural areas (classified as "agricultural tribes") who thus faced both

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downward (or inward) toward their local followers, and upward (or outward) toward the ruling British.

The Ahl-e Sunnat wa Jama'at's relationship to the British power and administrative structure, and their degree of integration with networks dependent on British patronage, seems to have been sufficiently diverse as to preclude any single characterization. Based on our rather limited knowledge of the family histories of Ulama and on the evidence of pertinent fatawa (to be examined below), it seem fair to say that there was active hostility toward the British on the part of the Ahl-e Sunnat Ulama during the nineteenth century.

Debate among the North Indian Ulama on the Religious Status of British India

The ambivalence of the Ulama in the United Provinces toward the British, across the entire "reformist" spectrum, was illustrated in the course of the nineteenth century by the debate that started in the early 1800s within Ulama circles about whether British India was dar al-harb or dar al-Islam. The question was raised not once but several times in British India. Throughout the nineteenth century, most Ulama appear to have agreed, albeit with reservations, that British India was dar al-Islam.

The debate began immediately after the British conquered Delhi from the Marathas in 1803 (in the Third Maratha War). Shah Abd ul-Aziz Dihlawi (d. 1824), the eldest son of Shah Wali Ullah (d. 1763) wrote a fatawa, the first on the subject as far as one can tell, that has been widely interpreted to be an unequivocal declaration of British India as dar al-harb, implying a call for *jihad* (holy war) or hijrat, but there are not any significance evidence to prove it, as everything he wrote is not available or deliberately changed.

However, several scholars have challenged this interpretation.[14] Mushir ul-Haqq's detailed analysis of Shah Abd

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ul-Aziz's fatawa on this issue was perhaps the first to do so.[15] He argues that although in his 1803 fatawa Shah Abd ul-Aziz did say that British India was dar al-harb, this was not intended as a call for either jihad or hijrat. There was no move in either of these directions after issuing of this fatawa, nor any significant discussion in the literature of these courses of action.[16] Indeed, Shah Abd ul-Aziz defended his decision not to emigrate from British India, and advised Abd ul-Hayy, his nephew and son-in-law, to accept an offer of employment by the East India Company.[17]

Mushir ul-Haqq demonstrates convincingly that Shah Abd ul-Aziz's fatawa on the question of British India's shar'i status must be viewed in the context of the economic conditions.[18] He believes that Shah Abd ul-Aziz, well aware of the economic problems and contraints of his fellow Muslims, issued a fatawa that rendered their economic activities legally acceptable, while refraining from drawing any political implications therefrom.[19] If this interpretation of Shah Abd ul-Aziz's fatawa is correct, it is unlikely that he would have looked upon the jihad movement of the Tariqa Muhammadia favorably.[20] As he died in 1824, while Sayyid Ahmad and his followers were still on *hajj* (pilgrimage to Makkah) prior to launching their jihad, he was unable to pass judgement on the issue.

In Bengal, another movement arose under the leadership of Haji Shari'at Ullah (d. 1840), which interpreted British occupation of India as transformation of a dar al-Islam into a dar al-Harb.[21] Returning to Bengal after a twenty-year sojourn in Arabia, Haji Shari'at Ullah forbade the performance of the Juma salat and the Eid salats in the absence of duly functioning *qadis* (judges of Islamic law) and *amirs* (governors) in towns and villages. In a situation of extreme economic distress caused by the destruction of local industry by indigo planters and others, he concentrated his efforts on religious reform and economic uplift among Bengal peasants, rather than a call for jihad.[22]

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The popular uprising of 1857 was the last occasion in the nineteenth century when the banner of jihad was raised.[23] In the aftermath of this cataclysmic event, W.W. Hunter's book *The Indian Mussalmans: Are Thy Bound in Conscience to Rebel Against the Queen?* (published in 1871) provoked an outpouring of writing against his thesis that "the fanatical masses" of Muslim peasants and artisans were bound by their faith to rebel against British rule.[24] Muslim thinkers such as Maulwi Karamat Ali of Jaunpur (1800-73), Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan (1817-98), Chiragh Ali (1844-95), Maulwi Nazir Ahmad (1833-1912), and others, responded to Hunter's book with counter arguments of their own. Some, such as Karamat Ali, argued that British India was dar al-Islam because "the three conditions laid down by Imam Abu Hanifa (may Allah be pleased with him) for the conversion of a *dar al-Islam* into a *dar al-harb* were not satisfied."[25] The fact that Muslim law was in force in matters such as marriage, divorce, and inheritance, and that Muslims enjoyed complete freedom of worship, Karamat Ali said, made it unlawful to declare British India to be dar al-harb. Others, including Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan and Chiragh Ali, argued that British India was neither dar al-Islam nor dar al-harb "but something of both" (in Sir Sayyid's words), or "simply British India" (in Chiragh Ali's).[26]

It is within this context of post-1857 debates about the shar'i status of British India amid increasing changes under colonial rule, that fatawa on the dar al-harb question by north Indian Ulama such as Imam Ahmad Raza must be seen. Asked in 1880-81 whether British India was dar al-harb or dar al-Islam, and whether the Jews and Christians of the time should be regarded as *kitabi* ((people) of the book), Imam Ahmad Raza's reply (to the first question) was essentially in agreement with the views of Karamat Ali and others, who had maintained that there was no basis in Hanafi law for declaring British India to be dar al-harb.[27] As to the second question, he cited opinions from fiqh literature on whether belief that Jesus was God rendered a person a *mushrik* (polytheist) and thus deprived him or her of the privileged status of a kitabi; then advised that in

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view of the lack of consensus it was best for a Muslim not to eat meat slaughtered by a Jew or Christian, or marry among them.[28]

On the dar al-Islam issue, Imam Ahmad Raza cited disagreement within the Hanafi school on whether fulfilment of all three conditions was required for a dar al-Islam to become dar al-harb, or whether fulfilment of the first alone was sufficient to do so.[29] His own judgement was as follows:

In Hindustan . . . Muslims are free to openly *(ala al-a'lan)* observe the two Eids, the *azan, iqamat, namaz ba-jama'at* . . . which are signs of the shari'at, without opposition. Also the religious duties, *nikah,* fosterage, . . . There are many such matters among Muslims . . . on which . . . the British government also finds it necessary to seek fatawa from the Ulama and act accordingly, whether they (the rulers) be Zoroastrian or Christian. . . . In short, there is no doubt that Hindustan is dar al-Islam.[30]

In his judgement, the first condition was the decisive one. Because Muslims were free to fulfil their religious duties, and to conduct their personal lives in accordance with Muslim law, British India was dar al-Islam. Imam Ahmad Raza charged that anyone who ruled differently was doing so merely in order to permit Muslims to engage in interest-bearing debt. They had no intention of either waging jihad, or doing hijrat, as they ought to do if they were sincere in holding India to be dar al-harb.[31]

The opinion that British India was dar al-Islam, as noted above, was in agreement with the generally prevailing view at this time among leading Muslim thinkers. The same judgement was delivered by Deobandi Ulama such as Ashraf Ali Thanawi and Rashid Ahmad Gangohi,[32] and by Maulan Abd ul-Hayy of Firangi Mahal, Lucknow.[33]

However, by the early teens of the twentieth century, the political climate in north India had changed dramatically from that of the 1880s, turning progressively more anti-British.

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Although it would be an oversimplification of a complex political process to assign a single date or event to this ongoing change, the partition of Bengal in 1905 is generally acknowledged to have been a significant turning point for both Hindus and Muslims.[34] For Muslims, events in the international arena were equally important in changing their attitude: their single greatest cause for discontent was the European dismemberment of the Ottoman empire, a process that began in the last decades of the nineteenth century, and was renewed in 1911-12.[35] By 1912-13, influential Urdu journals such as *Al-Hilal* owned by Abu'l Kalam Azad (1888-1958) and English language papers such as Maulana Muhammad Ali's (1878-1931) *Comrade* were advocating helping the Turks. The British rightly interpreted these and other signs of pro-Ottoman feeling as evidence of a growing pan-Islamic movement.[36]

In 1919, a large number of Ulama lent their support to journalists such as Azad and Muhammad Ali in creating a formal organization called the Jam'iat al-Ulama-e Hind (Azad was one of the members of the Jam'iat). Its declared purposes were:

to protect the Hijaz and the Arabian peninsula (from non-Muslim encroachment) and to defend Islamic nationality from all ills; to obtain and protect the religious and patriotic, (i.e. relating to their homeland India) rights and interests of Muslims; to bring the Ulama together at one centre; to organize the Muslim community on a shari'a footing and to establish shari'a courts; to bring about (the) complete freedom of the country in accordance with shari'a objectives; to seek the religious, educational, moral, social and economic welfare of Muslims and to propagate Islam inside India so far as they were able in terms of Islam; to strengthen the bonds of brotherhood and unity with the Muslims of other lands; and to establish in conformity with the mandates of the shari'a co-operative and comradely relations with their non-Muslim brothers living in their common homeland.[37]

Among the leaders of this new organization were Maulanas Abd ul-Bari Firangi Mahali, Abu'l Kalam Azad, Abd

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ul-Majid Badayuni,[38] and Shabbir Ahmad Usmani (of Deoband). In outlining the ambitious list of objectives above - particularly in the declaration that they would seek to bring about the complete freedom of the country - the Ulama of the Jam'iat sent the clear signal that they were no longer inclined to acquiesce in British rule or issue fatawa declaring British India to be dar al-Islam. Indeed, they were prepared, as their declaration of objectives shows, to cooperate with non-Muslims in this endeavour.

Imam Ahmad Raza's name, and that of important leaders of the Ahl-e Sunnat movement such as Maulana Naim ud-Din Muradabadi and Maulana Muhammad Miyan Awlad-e Rasul Marahrawi, were however conspicuously absent from the list of supporters of the Jam'iat al-Ulama.[39] In the late summer of 1920, some leaders of the Jam'iat (notably Maulanas Abd ul-Bari Firangi Mahali and Abu'l Kalam Azad) launched the Hijrat movement in the wake of the collapse of the Khilafat movement[40] (in which, too, the Jam'iat Ulama played a major role.). Shortly thereafter, in October 1920, a fatawa by Imam Ahmad Raza was published in *Dabdaba-e Sikandari*, Rampur, on the dar al-Islam/dar al-harb issue.[41] It was the same fatawa as that written in 1880-81. It made clear his refusal to declare British India dar al-harb, and his condemnation of the Hijrat movement.

The publication of this fatawa evidently raised an outcry among fellow-Muslims, for in January 1921 the *Dabdaba-e Sikandari* published a lengthy rebuttal of charges that Imam Ahmad Raza had pro-British sympathies.[42] The paper reported that Imam Ahmad Raza had been accused (possibly by the Jam'iat's United Provinces wing[43]) of opposing the giving of assistance to the Ottoman sultan, and of not considering it necessary to protect the holy places (of Makkah and Medina) from European occupation. Moreover, it was said that he had met the Lieutenant-Governor of the United Provinces (Sir James Meston) while on retreat in the hill station of Naini Tal,[44] that he wrote fatawa on lines pleasing to the government, and that he

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was in its pay. The article reported a conversation between Imam Ahmad Raza, Maulana Muhammad Miyan of Marahrah and one Maulana Ahmad Mukhtar Siddiqi of Bombay, in which Imam Ahmad Raza verbally denied each charge.

Debate on How Best to Help the Turks, 1912-1920

Several scholars of twentieth-century subcontinental history have noted the important effect that loss of territory by the Ottoman empire to European countries such as Britain, France, and Italy had on the politicisation of the Indian Muslim intelligentsia and literate public.[45] As they note, internal events such as revocation of the partition of Bengal in 1911, which many Muslims interpreted as a setback to their economic interests in terms of competition with Hindus, and the government's refusal to grant the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College at Aligarh university status in 1912, added to anti-British feeling caused by developments in the international arena.[46] Even the pro-government Muslim League, founded in 1906, had become anti-British a decade later as a result of these and other events.

The role of the press was most important in creating across the board awareness of these matters and widening the range of discontent. As noted above, Muslim journalists such as Muhammad Ali and Abu'l Kalam Azad advocated taking measures against European encroachment on Ottoman territory through their respective papers. In Panjab, Zafar Ali Khan, an alumnus of MAO College Aligarh like Muhammad Ali, was equally influential in Urdu-speaking circles through his paper, *Zamindar*. These men were influential not only among elite Western-educated Muslims but also among the Ulama. This was particularly the case with Muhammad Ali and his brother Shaukat Ali (1873-1938) who became disciples of Maulana Abd ul-Bari Finagi Mahali sometime after 1913.[47] Abd ul-Bari had been independently involved in efforts to raise money for Turkish relief prior to his meeting with the brothers in December 1912.[48] At this meeting, he proposed the setting up of an

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association "dedicated to the cause of preserving the holy places (Makkah and Medina) from harm" to be called the Anjuman-e Khuddam-e Ka'ba (Society of the Servants of the Ka'ba).[49] The brothers approved the idea, and actively supported Abd ul-Bari and other Ulama in their efforts.[50]

During 1913 Abd ul-Bari was busy recruiting members and seeking funds for the Anjuman.[51] Over eight thousand Muslims were enroled in the course of the year as a result of extensive touring, the holding of public meetings, and printing of leaflets for circulation.[52] Imam Ahmad Raza was prominent among those whose patronage was sought. The two Ulama exchanged a series of letters on the subject in the course of which Imam Ahmad Raza expressed his objection to the Anjuman on two major grounds: first, the use of words in the Anjuman's constitution which may lead to "impermissible opposition" to the government, for such opposition was not beneficial but harmful to the Muslims.[53] Imam Ahmad Raza wanted these words to be changed. As we saw earlier, his stand on the religious status of British India was that it was dar al-Islam. He had not changed his mind on this despite the spate of international and domestic events that had so angered fellow Ulama.

His second objection was to the presence of Deobandis and *bad-mazhabis* (those whose faith was thought to be wanting) in leadership roles in the Anjuman, and their undertaking of teaching and preaching functions: "Their Islam is not Islam in our regard, and their introduction as teachers of *din* will be extremely harmful."[54] He proposed that the Anjuman have a small select leadership, such that its inner "circle is confined to the Ahl-e Sunnat." Subject to these conditions, he would gladly become a member and patron.[55]

As with Imam Ahmad Raza's previous correspondence with Maulana Muhammad Ali Mongiri, who played a leading role in founding the Nadwat ul-Ulama in Lucknow,[56] the outcome of this exchange of views was also a stalemate. On

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Imam Ahmad Raza's part, there was consistency in his arguments on these two occasions, particularly in his insistence that the Ulama of the Ahl-e Sunnat could not join on a common platform with Ulama he considered bad-mazhab in defense of any religious cause, no matter how laudable. To do so, Imam Ahmad Raza argued, was to be responsible for the ruin of din itself.

Refusal to join the Anjuman-e Khuddam-e Ka'ba did not however mean that he opposed helping the Turks. Asked, in February 1913 (Rabi ul-Awwal A.H. 1331), what (Indian) Muslims should do in their present circumstances, and how they could help the Turks, Imam Ahmad Raza outlined a programme for internal reform as well as assistance to the Turks.[57] Expressing his sympathy for the plight of the Turkish people, Imam Ahmad Raza's central message was encapsulated in verse 13 : 11 from the Quran, quoted at the beginning of his fatawa: "Lo! Allah changeth not the condition of a folk until they (first) change that which is in their hearts." (Pickthall trans.).[58] Essentially, both the Turks and the Indian Muslims must help themselves, rather than wait to be helped. However, the Indian Muslims could help the Turks as well as themselves if they would but "open their eyes."

The Indian Muslims did not have the resources to enable them to leave their homes, possessions, and families, and travel thousands of miles to help their Turkish brethren on the battlefield, Imam Ahmad Raza wrote. But they could help by giving money *(mal)*. If every Muslim wage-earner donated a month's salary, living for twelve months on eleven months income, tens of thousands of pounds could be gathered for Turkish relief without causing excessive hardship.[59] What had been achieved so far in assistance was but a pittance of what was needed.

Imam Ahmad Raza was highly critical of the manner in which the Muslim leadership, both Ulama and Western-educated

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Muslims, had gone about the task of Turkish relief. In his view they had merely frittered money away in meaningless activities:

> The Muslims there in Turkey are going through grave hardship. But here there are the same meetings, the same color, the same theatre, the same entertaining performances, the same forgetfulness, the same useless expense. Nothing is lacking. Just the other day a man donated fifty thousand rupees to some worldly cause. . . . When it comes to helping the poor of Islam, the enthusiasm expressed is sky high; (but) the actions which accompany it are at floor level.[60] In passages such as this throughout the fatawa, Imam Ahmad Raza indicated his disdain for the populist efforts of Ulama like Abd ul-Bari and others then active in Muslim public affairs. None of their meetings, associations, or colleges accomplished anything for the welfare of Muslims, in his view. It was all a waste of money.[61]

Imam Ahmad Raza's answer to the related question of what should be done by Indian Muslims in the midst of prevailing anti-British sentiment, was to propose a four-fold course of action. Dismissing a proposal by other Ulama for a boycott of European goods as impractical on account of a widespread love by Indians of foreign goods, he suggested instead that Muslims seek means to be legally and economically self-sufficient, dependent on help from neither the British nor the Hindus.

First, excepting those limited matters on which the government had the right to intervene, Muslims should refrain from taking their disputes to the courts.[62] They should make their own judgements, thereby saving large sums of money on stamp duties and legal fees.

Second, Muslims should buy whatever they needed from other Muslims, thus keeping money within the community, giving a fillip to Muslim traders, and being self-reliant.

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Third, wealthy Muslims in large cities such as Bombay, Haidarabad, and elsewhere should open interest-free banks for their fellow Muslims. This would benefit the Muslim bankers in the long run if not immediately, as well as their brethren. Moreover, the wealth currently being lost to Baniyas (a Hindu trading caste) would remain in Muslim hands.

Finally, the most important thing that Muslims had was their din. They had neglected it in pursuit of other goals, and reduced it to its current weak state. They should go back to acquiring knowledge of their faith, and act on it.[63]

This fatawa is particularly interesting in view of the fact that it is one of the few known fatawa in which Imam Ahmad Raza proposed a course of action to address current Muslim problems, rather than purely theological concerns. Its interest lies both in what it does and does not say. Focusing chiefly on economic reform to be carried out individually and collectively by Muslims themselves, it is silent on the need for political action. The problem, Imam Ahmad Raza argued, was internal to the Muslim community: the Muslims were so engrossed in mutual quarrels, the pursuit of pleasure, and the quest for a university education so as to get government jobs that they had neglected din and allowed the non-Muslims to get ahead of them in worldly affairs as well. Imam Ahmad Raza's criticism of the Muslim leadership was on the grounds that it was wasting time and money on selfish and self--promotional activities (including meetings, associations, and educational programmes). His vision of reform was an internal as well as external one. But while other Ulama had begun to explore new alliances and organizational avenues for improving the Muslims' political situation vis a vis the British and the Hindus, Imam Ahmad Raza's position that British India was a dar al-Islam, coupled as we shall see with his objections to a Muslim-Hindu political alliance, caused him to be resolutely opposed to the course advocated by the Jam'iat leadership.

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On the Turkish question, however, Ahl-e Sunnat leaders did more than advise fellow-Muslims to donate a month's salary to help the Turks. Several years later, in Sha'ban 1339/April-March 1921, shortly before Imam Ahmad Raza's death, they created their own association called the "Ansar al-Islam"[64] one of the main purposes of which was to help the Turkish state and the holy places.[65] Resolutions were adopted to this end, as also to promote the economic reform programme laid out by Imam Ahmad Raza in his 1913 fatawa. Imam Ahmad Raza's closest followers were in the forefront of the leadership: Maulana Sayyid Muhammad Miyan Marahrawi, Maulana Zafar ud-Din Bihari, Maulana Sayyid Naim ud-Din Muradabadi, Maulana Sayyid Didar Ali Alwari, and others.

Ahl-e Sunnat Opposition to the Khilafat Movement, 1919-20

The Jam'iat al-Ulama-e Hind, formed in November 1919 in response to a strong tide of anti-British feeling, was the first "political" party of Ulama in British India. Its decision to cooperate with the Hindu-dominated Indian National Congress, made on the basis of shar'i interpretation,[66] coincided with an agreement forged between the purely political parties of the Muslim League and Congress in 1916, under the terms of the famous Lucknow Pact.[67] The Khilafat movement arose in 1919 in the context of this internal political climate of anti-British feeling, of Hindu-Muslim unity,[68] and of post-World War I events abroad.

The Indian movement must also be seen in light of a broader trend, namely pan-Islamic sentiment centered around loyalty to the Ottoman ruler who became, for many Muslims, a rallying point against European colonial expansion in the nineteenth century. As Kramer points out, threat of "an expanding West" had made many Muslims "anxious to exchange professions of allegiance for whatever military, diplomatic, or moral aid the Ottomans could spare them."[69] On his part, the sultan Abd ul-Hamid II (r. 1876-1909), no longer able to defend

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the empire against European encroachment, was in need of outside sources of support himself.[70] When war broke out in 1914, the reigning Sultan, Mehmed V Resad, declared a holy war against Russia, France, and England, and asked all Muslims world-wide to rally to the Turkish cause.[71]

Whether Khilafatists came to the movement primarily due to sympathy for pan-Islamic ideals, or whether they did so in order to "reconcile Islamic identity with Indian nationality,"[72] there can be no doubt that they all opposed British rule in India. Indeed, looking at the movement purely as an anti-British struggle, one sees that all Khilafat leaders, whether Ulama or "modernist" intellectuals, saw it as their primary goal to oppose British rule. This goal was shared by leaders as diverse as Abu'l Kalam Azad, the Deobandi Ulama Ubaid Ullah Sindhi and Mahmud al-Hasan, Shi'is such as Chiragh Ali, and other Muslim scholars.[73] The nineteenth-century figure, Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (1838-97), seen by some as the first to have spread and popularized pan-Islamic ideas in India, had himself been fiercely anti-British.[74]

Before we move on to Imam Ahmad Raza's views on the khilafat question and related issues, it is worth noting that Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan, standing apart from most of his late nineteenth-century contemporaries - both in India and in other parts of the Muslim world - had been hostile to the idea of a universal Muslim caliphate. Aziz Ahmad suggest that the determining factor in his attitude was his loyalty to the British, rather than theoretical concern about the institution of the caliphate:

> In 1870 Sayyid Ahmad Khan had been as pro-Turkish as any other educated Muslim. . . . he had complimented Sultan Abd ul-Aziz as one 'who graces and defends the throne of the Caliph'. He had praised the *tanzimat* and the subsequent Turkish reforms. . . . In fact everything was perfect as long as the British, to whom he had pledged his own and his community's

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loyalty, and the Turks, towards whom his community felt an emotional attachment were on good terms.

When, in the 1890s, British and Turks interests clashed, however, Sayyid Ahmad declared that the Indian Muslims were "devoted and loyal subjects of the British government . . . We are not the subjects of Sultan Abdul Hamid II; . . . He neither had, nor can have any spiritual jurisdiction over us as *Khalifa*."[75]

Imam Ahmad Raza, contrary to Sayyid Ahmad Khan, refused to make a connection between support for the Turkish ruler and opposition to British rule in India. In a 1920 fatawa dealing specifically with his views on the khilafat in light of shar'i considerations, he criticized the Khilafat leaders for using the Khilafat issue as an "excuse for working toward their real goal of freedom, a Hindu majority government."[76] In another fatawa, he criticized Abd ul-Bari for saying that he considered the fight for Indian independence to be an "Islamic duty."[77] The political goal of freedom from British rule was for Imam Ahmad Raza an entirely different thing from support of a shar'i institution.

Imam Ahmad Raza's conception of the khilafat, as set out in his fatawa *Dawam al-Aish*, corresponds to Islamic theory as formulated by medieval jurists, particularly Mawardi (d. A.D. 1058), a famous jurist in Baghdad at the end of the Abbasid era.[78] The arguments, supported by illustrative examples from Muslim history, are, briefly, that the khalifa is the Prophet's deputy and is therefore owed absolute obedience by the Muslim community. Furthermore, there can only be one khalifa at any one time, though there may be several sultans or kings. The khalifa's authority over these sultans has frequently been unrelated to his command over physical resources or power (for the sultans have often been more powerful than he), yet has been acknowledged to be superior to them. The reason for this, Imam Ahmad Raza wrote, was that the khalifa had always been required to be - and had historically been - a member of the

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Quraish tribe, while "worldly" rulers such as sultans were not limited in this way.80 The institution of the khilafat had ceased to exist after 132/749 (the beginning of the Abbasid caliphate), and all Muslim rulers since then had been, and presently were, rulers or sultans, but not khalifas. The next khalifa would be the Mahdi.[79]

The theological basis for the above theory of the khilafat is the hadis literature. Imam Ahmad Raza cited several in his fatawa, all bearing on the requirement that the khalifa be of Quraishi descent.[80] Responding to an argument by Abd ul-Bari Firangi Mahali on the authority of Ibn Khaldun (d. 1406) that Quraishi descent was not a necessary condition for a khalifa, Imam Ahmad Raza said that Ibn Khaldun, a historian rather than an alim, was outnumbered by the authorities he had cited. Ibn Khaldun's importance had been exaggerated; furthermore, he "smelled of" being a Mu'tazila, and sometimes of a "Nechari."[81]

Imam Ahmad Raza's fatawa was simultaneously an exposition of a theory of the khilafat and an attack on the views of two Ulama, Abd ul-Bari Firangi Mahali and Abu'l Kalam Azad. At the time, both the above were actively engaged in promoting the cause of the Khilafat movement in British India, through political association with the Indian National Congress and their journalistic writings. Of the numerous arguments Imam Ahmad Raza made in *Dawam al-Aish* and elsewhere against their views, we would like to turn in particular to two specific points.

First, Imam Ahmad Raza referred to Abu'l Kalam's argument that limiting the choice of khalifa to a member of the Quraish tribe contravened the principle of equality that it had been Islam's original purpose to uphold, and that such a rule did in fact exist.[83] Imam Ahmad Raza, in his fatawa, explicitly repudiated the claim that equality was a principle of din. In one instance, he cited the example of the Mamluk king Baybars I (r. 1260-77) who installed the uncle of the last Abbasid king as khalifa, despite the fact that Baybars enjoyed great power while the khalifa, al-Mustansir, did not. Imam Ahmad Raza argued

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that this showed that Baybars considered the ascribed status of Quraish descent more important than his own achievements.[84] Elsewhere in the fatawa, Imam Ahmad Raza again affirmed his belief in the inequalities caused by high birth:

> The Ahl-e Sunnat argued (with the Kharijis, who had favoured the principle of equality) that definitely kinship had some bearing on the matter, for when Muslims know that the ruler belongs to the Prophet's family, they will pay greater attention. And there is none to equal the Quraish in nobility *(sharif)*. . . .
>
> And in marriage *(nikah)* everyone must know, even the ignorant . . . what the place of equality is in the shar'i view. All the books of fiqh are full of it, and there are also ahadis on the matter.[85]

These sentiments, defended on the authority of the fiqh and hadis literature, confirm the importance to the Ahl-e Sunnat world view of the principle of hierarchy based on genealogical descent, to which earlier chapters have alluded. We also see that Imam Ahmad Raza highlights the fact that the Quraish, as descendants of the Prophet, are by virtue of this alone superior to all other people. This argument is of course consistent with Imam Ahmad Raza's Prophet-centered vision of the faith.

Another significant, and decisive, difference between Imam Ahmad Raza's position and those of Abu'l Kalam Azad and Abd ul-Bari in the course of the Khilafat movement - but also in other areas - was his view that Muslims may not seek the help of kafirs in pursuit of shar'i goals.[86] Imam Ahmad Raza's criticism of these two Ulama and of Jam'iat al-Ulama-e Hind leaders generally for their leadership of the Khilafat movement (which, as we saw, had nothing to do in his view with protection of the shar'i khilafat at all), was based in part on the fact that they had welcomed the cooperation of Hindus in the movement. At one level, this can be viewed simply as objection to certain tactical aspects of the movement; but Imam Ahmad

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Raza's use of the term *harbi* (those with whom one is at war) to describe the Hindus of his day indicates that his objection went much deeper than that.

To understand what was at issue here between Imam Ahmad Raza and the Ahl-e Sunnat generally on the one side, and Ulama such as Abd ul-Bari and Abu'l Kalam representing the Jam'iat al-Ulama-e Hind position, on the other, we need now to broaden the discussion. For this related but nevertheless distinct debate on Hindu-Muslim relations took place in the context of other major political events such as the Hijrat and Non-Cooperation movements as well as the Khilafat movement. Additionally, of course, arguments between the Ulama about relations between Hindus and Muslims were simultaneously arguments about Muslims' relations with the British. In the remaining section of this chapter, we shall try to delineate Imam Ahmad Raza's, and thereby the Ahl-e Sunnat's, perspective on the Muslim-Hindu-British relationship, such that we may find coherence in the wide range of arguments examined thus far.

The Muslim-Hindu-British Triad: Ahl-e Sunnat Perspectives circa 1920

It is well known that when the Khilafat movement began to lose momentum in 1920 in response to the publication of the Peace Treaty of Sevres,[87] some prominent Muslim leaders raised the cry of hijrat, and encouraged the migration to Afghanistan of several thousands of Indian Muslims on the grounds that British India was dar al-harb. Abd ul-Bari and Abu'l Kalam Azad were among the leaders who spoke in favor of hijrat, while Imam Ahmad Raza, predictably, spoke against it.[88] He said that in a place that was dar al-Islam (as British India was in his opinion), it was *haram* (prohibited) for Muslims to do hijrat and go elsewhere.[89]

Although the Hijrat movement still awaits careful scholarly study,[90] there are indications that among those who responded to the Ulama's call for hijrat were peasants suffering

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economic hardship in parts of the United Provinces, Sind, and the North-West Frontier Province.[91] Attracted by the promise of land in Afghanistan by the Amir of that country, several thousands gave up their possessions in British India only to find on arrival that the situation in Afghanistan was even worse than the one they had left behind.[92] Here it is noted that no leader made the Hijrat, which is very astonishing. While Imam Ahmad Raza and other opponents of the movement blamed fellow Ulama for having encouraged people to migrate, one returnee to British India also blamed the Urdu press for having magnified the scale of the economic help promised on the other side of the border.[93]

In 1920, leaders of the Jam'iat such as Abd ul-Bari and Abu'l Kalam Azad were engaged in anti-British activities on yet another front, namely the Gandhi-led Non-Cooperation movement. This movement, which grew out of the Khilafat movement,[94] adopted a programme of progressively escalating non-violent non-cooperation with the government, starting with the return of titles previously awarded and accepted.[95] Gandhi believed that independence could be achieved by these means, provided the movement remained faithful to his ideal of non-violence.[96]

Throughout the course of the teens of the twentieth century, then, we see large sections of the Muslim leadership, both Ulama and "modernist", engaging in a series of anti-British initiatives in concert with the Indian National Congress (the Muslim League being at this time still a fledgling organization). This culminated in August 1920 in the issuing of a fatawa by the Jam'iat al-Ulama-e Hind supporting the Congress's proposed boycott of courts, legislative councils, schools and foreign goods, among other things.[97]

Imam Ahmad Raza, looked at this alliance of Hindus and Muslims against the British, in shar'i terms, rather than in "nationalist" or "political". His fatawa, Al-Mahajjat al-Mu'tamana, written in 1920, makes a strong and clear argument

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for the view that the Muslim leadership had lost its sense of balance between relations with the British, which it wanted to cut off completely, and those with Hindus, which it wanted to be of the closest. In shar'i terms, it had pronounced that which was mubah (indifferent) to be haram, and that which was haram to be an absolute duty.[98] Moreover, he argued that even from a political stand-point, far from throwing off the yoke of dependence, the Muslims had merely allowed themselves to become more dependent - for unlike the British, who had refrained from interfering in the Muslims' ritual observances, the Hindus were beginning to do that as well.[99] As he put it in the passage quoted at the beginning of this chapter, the Muslims were running from the rain only to enter a drainpipe.

Imam Ahmad Raza described the Hindus as active belligerents, and as killers, oppressors, infidels.[100] He reminded his fellow-Muslims of recent Hindu atrocities committed against them:

Did they (the Hindus) not fight with us over din? Has their extremely oppressive viciousness (already) grown old? Have the impure and terrifying tyrannies of Katarpur, Arrah and elsewhere, still fresh (in the mind), been obliterated from the heart? Innocent Muslims were sacrificed with great cruelty. They were set alight with petroleum. Those impure people demolished our pure *masjids* and tore and burnt the pure pages of (our) Quran, and did other things the mention of which makes one sick.[101]

Responding to the Non-Cooperation leaders' argument that responsibility for violence of this sort lay with only a few individuals rather than with Hindus as a whole, he said that on the contrary, this was the case of the Hindu community fighting the Muslims. The individual aggressors had acted as representatives of the Hindu community. For even if only a few committed the actual deed, others helped behind the scenes with money, or by their writings, or in other ways. At the very least, they acquiesced in it.[102]

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As for the British, social relations with them were permitted under the shari'a as long as kufr was not promoted thereby, nor any disobedience to the shar'i involved. Here, Imam Ahmad Raza was arguing particularly in the context of a speech made in October 1920 by Abu'l Kalam Azad at Lahore, in which he said that the local Islamic College must cease to accept the government grants-in-aid, and disaffiliate itself from Panjab University.[103] Imam Ahmad Raza, however, maintained that these steps should only be taken if shar'i reasons so warranted. He wondered, further, why Muslim leaders advocating steps such as these continued to use facilities like the railways, the telegraph, and the postal system, all of which benefited the government revenues:

> Are these not also social relations? The difference is that in taking aid (from the British) one is taking wealth in, while in using (the services they provide) one is giving it away. How strange that in (this) boycott it is halal to give money away but haram to take it in. . . . What remedy is there for this inverted logic? But then what is one to say of this community which has not only turned shari'at on its head but the essence of Islam as well?[104]

The argument between the two sides revolved, essentially, around the definition of non-cooperation itself,[105] as well as the conditions in which different degrees of friendship between Muslims and non-Muslims were permitted. Imam Ahmad Raza maintained that his opponents had failed to make a vital distinction between two completely different sorts of relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims: those of "mere human relations" *(mujarrad)* which were permitted under the shari'a with all non-Muslims (though forbidden with a *murtadd* or apostate), and those of intimacy *(muwalat),* which Muslims may enter into only with other Muslims.[106] He believed that the relationship between Hindus and Muslims being advocated by the non-cooperators was one of love, intimacy, even unity, all of which, being forms of muwalat, were forbidden; while, on the

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other hand, worldly or social relations with the British were being forbidden although they had shar'i approval.

Both sides based their respective cases on quotation from the Quran. The non-cooperators cited two verses of the Quran (60: 8, 9), in which Muslims were told that they may enter into friendly relations with non-Muslims so long as the latter were not warring against them.[107] Imam Ahmad Raza countered by saying that these verses had been abrogated by a historically later (though sequentially earlier) one (9: 73) which advocated taking stern measures against "disbelievers" and "hypocrites."[108]

As Qureshi says, however, Muslim public opinion was so overwhelmingly anti-British at the time that dissenting voices such as Imam Ahmad Raza's were not heard, regardless of the merits of their argument.[109] Indeed, Imam Ahmad Raza's views on the Khilafat and Non-Cooperation movements were unanimously accepted within the Ahl-e Sunnat leadership.

Imam Ahmad Raza: Pro-British, Anti-Hindu?

The accusation that he was pro-British was frequently leveled at Imam Ahmad Raza, as we have noted throughout this chapter. Indeed, the positions he took on major national issues facing Indian Muslims in the teens and twenties of the twentieth century, such as the Khilafat, the Hijrat, and the Non-Cooperation movements, were all consistently opposed to the anti-British positions of the Jam'iat al-Ulama-e Hind. While this proves that he opposed the Jam'iat, it does not, in and of itself, prove that he was pro-British.[110] We would argue that Imam Ahmad Raza was uninterested in the nationalist movement of Wahhabis and congress and the question of political self-determination of Hindus and Muslims together as long as Muslims are free to practise their faith unhindered.

Freedom to fulfil the dictates *(ahkam)* of the shari'a was, to Imam Ahmad Raza, what made British India dar al-Islam. His concern as an alim lay in guiding and teaching the Muslims

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around him as to how (in his view, which he believed to be the only "correct" view) the shari'a should be interpreted and practised. For this reason, he was deeply interested in - and often critical of - what other Muslims in India and elsewhere were saying, writing, and doing. Although he acquiesced in the British presence, in practice he acted as if it were not there.

At a purely empirical level, nevertheless, one could cite - as Imam Ahmad Raza himself did in *Al-Mahajjat al-Mu'tamana* [111] - instances in which he had taken a stand that was at least indirectly anti-British in tone. Furthermore, his refusal to attend a British-run court in 1916 should be seen as a statement that he did not acknowledge its authority over himself. When mailing a postcard he would deliberately affix the stamp (which had a picture of Queen Victoria on it) upside down as a mark of disrespect to the Queen.[112] But he never made the British a target of his writings - as he did numerous contemporary Muslim movements and even, to some extent, Hindus - because they didn't really matter. Had the British had an active anti-Muslim policy in terms of interference in "religious" affairs, however, Imam Ahmad Raza would undoubtedly have become very anti-British.

It was indicative of this same concern with self-examination and exhortation of fellow-Muslims to engage in self-correction in light of interpretation of the shari'a that Imam Ahmad Raza was not supportive of even that quintessentially Muslim issue: the Khilafat. Rather than blame non-Muslim powers for aggressing against the Khalifa and the Turks, as Kilafat leaders were doing, he said that the Turks should help themselves rather than wait to be helped. Furthermore, he could not accept the Muslims' claim that the Turkish ruler was a khalifa, because this term had important shar'i connotations and was inapplicable in the present case. Consequently, the question of opposition to the British on this issue did not even arise insofar as Imam Ahmad Raza was concerned. As he said, it was one thing to seek political independence, but quite another to "use" shar'i arguments to further that purpose.

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Perhaps this was what most distinguished Imam Ahmad Raza from his fellow Ulama in the early twentieth century. On the one hand, much that has just been said could have been said, with equal validity, of Ulama whom Imam Ahmad Raza so strongly opposed: among them the Deobandis, the Nadwis, the Ahl-e Hadis. For they were all concerned with self-correction and self-improvement within the Islamic tradition of renewal and reform, even if each group denied this of the other. But while, in the early decades of the twentieth century, other Ulama had begun to look around for political tools with which to bring about an improvement in the Indian Muslims' situation, reinterpreting shar'i sources of authority in a manner that made sense in their multi-religious and relatively disadvantaged socio-economic context (in relation, that is, to Hindus), Imam Ahmad Raza's insistence on strict adherence to shar'i injunctions, widely interpreted, caused him to make judgements that were more flexible, and more responsive to changing realities, than they.

This was evident, notably, in Imam Ahmad Raza's judgement in 1920 that British India was dar al-Islam, a judgement which he had delivered in the 1880s but saw no reason to change even in 1920 despite British (and Allied) action in other Muslim lands that had been injurious to Muslim interests. While other Ulama who had judged British India to be dar al-Islam in the late nineteenth century now considered it justified to call it dar al-harb, Imam Ahmad Raza seemed to argue that the yardstick on which the matter should be determined had not changed. If in the 1880s what had been decisive was Indian Muslim's freedom to fulfil their ritual and other obligations as Muslims, this was still the decisive factor in the 1920s. What the British were doing in other contexts did not, to him, have a bearing on the matter.

Another major difference between Imam Ahmad Raza's attitude toward political activity and that of other contemporary Ulama in early twentieth century India was Imam Ahmad Raza's

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apparent distrust of large-scale organizational endeavour which encompassed diverse groups. This was to some extent a matter of temperament: Imam Ahmad Raza's personal style, as Metcalf noted, was a solitary and aristocratic one,[113] the antithesis of the new populist style favored by the leaders of the Jam'iat al-Ulama-e Hind. But beyond this it was also the result of his insistence that all Indian Muslims submit to the normative standard which he and his followers called the sunna. As debates with the Nadwa leaders had earlier illustrated, he would not agree to joint action with Muslims he considered misled, and those with false views, and so on. Therefore to reach out in an inclusive way toward fellow Muslims in the interest of wider political goals (which to him were secondary in importance to ensuring "correct" personal conduct, in any case) was contrary to all he had ever believed in.

Because Imam Ahmad Raza was so focused on shar'i considerations to the exclusion of "political" ones, he appears to have had a largely reactive approach to the public issues of his day. This is, of course, the hallmark of an alim, whose role it is to respond to issues which are raised and brought to his attention by others. Typically the question relates to matters of ritual and belief or of social relations with one's fellows.[114] In the context of Muslim political concerns in the 1920s, however, he occasionally found himself asked questions about the shape of things to come rather than a currently existing situation. The discussion, reported by a close follower *(khalifa)* of his, is of great interest, and is pertinent to our argument here.

Maulana Burhan ul-Haqq Jabbalpuri, a khalifa of Imam Ahmad Raza, related that in 1921, shortly after a Khilafat Committee meeting held at Bareilly, Imam Ahmad Raza was asked whether India would ever gain its freedom from British domination, and if so how did he expect the appointment of a judge of Islamic law and a jurist to take place on the basis of popular demand?[115] In response to the first part of the question, Imam Ahmad Raza said that yes, India would surely become

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independent some day. But he needed time to think about the second half of the question. Some days later,

(he) started making some special seating arrangements in the morning in the sitting area. The platform was set apart with three specially adorned chairs next to it. And, departing from usual practice, the Imam-e Ahl-e Sunnat (Imam Ahmad Raza) himself sat down on a separate chair facing the platform. When the daily audience of people had assembled in the hall the Sarkar-e A'la Hazrat (Imam Ahmad Raza) said: "The country will definitely become free of English domination. The government of this country will be established on a popular basis. But there will be great difficulty, in appointing a qazi-e shar and a mufti-e shar on the basis of Islamic shari'a law.

Because in the country's fundamental laws (constitution) there will be no clear (course of) action on the basis of which the qazi-e shar and the mufti-e shar may be appointed in the correct manner, I am today laying the foundations for this (process) so that this . . . may continue and no difficulty be experienced after independence." Then he said, "Today, I am appointing Maulana Amjad Ali Azmi the qazi-e shar for the entire Indian nation." . . . And, accompanied with supplications for (him), he seated him on the chair singled out for the qazi-e shar.[116]

In this way, Imam Ahmad Raza also appointed two mufti-e shar to assist the qazi, seating each one on either side of him. One of these was his younger son, Mustafa Raza Khan, the other Maulana Burhan ul-Haqq, in whose biography this incident is related.

This passage is striking for several reasons. First, one sees an echo of the elective process of the first "rightly guided" caliphs, one that was not institutionalized but nevertheless stamped by the consensual approval *(ijma)* of the community. Elements of both direct appointment and election were therefore present. In this case, one imagines that Imam Ahmad Raza's choice was approved by all those present. The qazi-e shar and

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his two assistant muftis were also, it is important to note, being appointed for all of India: they were to adjudicate, thus, between Muslims of all schools of thought, not just "Ahl-e Sunnat". This was in keeping, one supposes, with the latters' claim to be representative of the "Ahl-e Sunnat"throughout the Muslim world, rather than merely of a local "sect" or school. And finally, one must note the ad hoc nature of the solution (which too, of course, had precedents in early Islamic history). Did the solution ever carry practical weight, even within the Ahl-e Sunnat movement? One suspects that this was not the case, given that there is no further mention of this "election" in the Ahl-e Sunnat literature.

What this incident tells us, we believe, is that Imam Ahmad Raza did not look at the world in which he lived in political terms, but as a Muslim ought to look at the world in a religious way. This was a challenge that his followers had to face, and didn't face, in several different ways. Contrary to what later followers have chosen to read into his works, he himself seems to have offered clear answers to the political dilemmas of early twentieth century Muslims. His scholarly output, enormous as it was, concentrated largely on matters of belief and practice at individual level.

The question of Imam Ahmad Raza's attitude to the Hindus remains to be discussed. If the British were not important to him, the Hindus were for the most part not a significant concern either. He wrote about them only toward the end of his life, in the context of social conflicts generated by the Arya Samaj conversion of Muslims to Hinduism in the course of the so-called Shuddhi movement - the Muslims called it apostasy - the cow slaughter and many other issues. Additionally, Imam Ahmad Raza opposed the political union of Hindus and Muslims in the various early twentieth century movements already examined.

As with the British, he thought about the Hindus only when circumstances forced this upon him, often in a situation. A

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passage from his *Malfuzat* gives us a glimpse of his deep-rooted sense of distance from the Hindus amidst whom he lived. They were the kafirs, and were to be regarded with enmity for that reason. Paradoxically, his characterization of the Hindu (a Brahman, no less) that he met on this occasion as "unclean", and his revulsion toward even the slightest physical contact with him, mirrors exactly Hindu concepts of ritual purity and impurity:

> Praise be to Allah, ever since I gained consciousness I have found only strong dislike for the enemies of Allah in my heart. Once I had gone to my village. Some rural court case arose and our servants from all four directions had to go to Badayun (to appear in court). I was left all alone. This was a time when I suffered from severe colic pain. That day the pain started from the time of mid-day . . . I couldn't stand up for the salat. (Imam Ahmad Raza then relates that he supplicated Allah and the Prophet for help, his plea was heard, and he was able to offer the salat. But the pain returned just as severely as before, and he decided to lie down. While he was lying there,) a Brahmin from the village passed by in front of me. (The wretch himself professed something close to Allah's unity and deceitfully inclined toward the Muslims in order to please me.) The gate was open. Seeing me he came in. And putting his hand on my stomach he asked, "Is this where it hurts?" Feeling his impure hand touching my body I felt such revulsion that I forget my pain. And I began to experience a pain even greater than this, a kafir's hand was on my stomach. This is the kind of enmity that one should (cultivate toward kafirs).[117]

In answer to the question, "Imam Ahmad Raza: pro-British, anti-Hindu?," one would probably have to say that in a qualified way he was both anti-British and anti-Hindu.

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NOTES:

1. See report of the eighteenth such meeting of the Dar al-Ulum Manzar-e Islâm in Dabdaba-e Sikandari (Rampur), vol. 58. no. 36, pp. 4-5.

2. David Gilmartin, *Empire and Islam: Punjab and the Making of Pakistan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988, pp. 58-60, 63-64.

3. Ibid., p. 59.

4. *Tuhfa-e Hanifia* (Matba-e Ahl-e Sunnat wa Jama'at, A.H. 1315/A.D. 1897-98), vol. 1, no. 9, p. 2. For detailed analysis of the socio-economic and institutional background of the Ahl-e Sunnat, see Chapter II.

5. See A.S. Bazmee Ansari, art. "Fadl-i Hakk," in EI2.

6. Maulwi Rahman *Ali, Tazkira-e Ulama-e Hind* (Karachi: Pakistan Historical Society, 1961), p. 381.

7. Bazmee Ansari writes that Allama Fazl-e Haqq Khairabadi played "a leading part in the military uprising of 1857, was charged with high treason, arrested, tried and sentenced to transportation for life. He died in exile in the Andaman (Kala Pani), where he was interred, in 1862." EI2, art. "Fadl-i Hakk." Ahl-e Sunnat Ulama regard him with great respect, in part because of his participation in a debate with Muhammad Isma'il (d. 1831) on the doctrine of *imkan-e nazir*. On this issue, see Chapter VI above. His autobiography, translated from Persian into Urdu under the title *Baghi-e Hindustan,* has been through several editions. It tells of the conditions of his capture and imprisonment, and is readily available in book stores stocking Ahl-e Sunnat literature in Pakistan.

8. Maulana Tahsin Raza Khan, a grandson of Imam Ahmad Raza's brother Hasan Raza, said that two villages owned

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by a family in Rampur were lost to them after 1857, because of failure to find the title deeds. Interview, April 18, 1987.

9. On the part played by this and other printing presses in the Ahl-e Sunnat movement, see Chapter I.

10. This was reported by Sibtain Raza Khan, son of Hasnain Raza. Interview, April 18 1987.

11. Hasnain Raza Khan, *Sirat-e A'la Hazrat* (Karachi: Bazm-e Qasimi Barkati, 1986), p. 152. The Nawab of Rampur himself was pro-British, though politically independent.

12. See Chapter II for a detailed family history of the Barkatia Sayyids of Marahrah.

13. Gilmartin, *Empire and Islam*, p. 51.

14. Among them: Harlan Otto Pearson, "Islamic Reform and Revival in Nineteenth Century India: the *Tariqah-i Muhammadia*," Ph.D. thesis, Duke University, Department of History, 1979, p. 97; Barbara D. Metcalf, *Islamic Revival in British India: Deoband, 1860-1900* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), pp. 46, 50-51; Yohanan Friedmann, *Prophecy Continuous: Aspects of Ahmadi Religious Thought and Its Medieval Background* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), p. 169. All these interpretations accept the arguments of Mushir ul-Haqq, discussed below.

15. Mushir ul-Haqq, "Unniswin sadi ke Hindustan ki hai'at shar'i: Shah Abd ul-Aziz ke fatawa-e dar ul-harb ka ek ilmi tajzia," *Burhan*, 63: 4, October 1969, pp. 221-44.

16. Ibid., p. 222, and passim. Mushir ul-Haqq points out that this fatawa was cited by early twentieth century Muslim nationalists in defense of their own struggle

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against the British. It suited them, according to him, to make the argument that Shah Abd ul-Aziz's fatawa proved that jihad against the British was a shar'i duty.

17. Ibid., pp. 235, 237.

18. He argues that the controversial 1803 fatawa had been written in response to a set of questions about the shar'i injunction relating to the giving and taking of interest *(sud)* on loans in a land that had been adjudged to be dar al-harb. in view of Muslims' right to engage in interest-bearing loans in such a situation, it was important for those Muslims already weighed down by such debt, Mushir ul-Haqq argues, to know whether their new subjection to the British had rendered their land a dar ul-harb. If so, they could draw some comfort in the knowledge that their involvement in interest-paying loans, forbidden in a dar al-Islam but entered into by them nevertheless due to adverse circumstances (with other Muslims, regarded particularly negatively in a dar al-Islam), now had shar'i sanction. In short, the question showed an interest in Muslim "rights" rather than "duties" in the new situation. Ibid., pp. 228, 231-33.

19. As Barbara Metcalf summarizes the position cogently: "Abd ul-Aziz thus appears to have wanted Muslims to behave politically as if the situation were *daru'l-Islam,* for he gave no call to military action, yet he wanted them to recognize that the organization of the state was no longer in Muslim hands." Metcalf, *Islamic Revival,* p. 51.

20. Metcalf suggests that Shah Abd ul-Aziz had opposed to the jihad. See ibid., p. 55.

21. Peter Hardy, *The Muslims of British India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), pp. 55-57. The most comprehensive study of the Fara'izi movement is Muin-ud-din Ahmad Khan, *History of the Fara'idi*

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Movement in Bengal (1818-1906) (Karachi: Pakistan Historical Society, 1965).

22. Hardy, pp. 55-57.

23. See, e.g., Eric Stokes, *The Peasant Armed: The Indian Rebellion of 1857*, ed. C.A. Bayly (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1986), pp. 86-87. Although Bahadur Shah Zafar, the Mughal Emperor, refused to turn "the rebellion into a predominantly Islamic crusade" against "white *kaffir* rule," some local leaders such as Bakht Khan saw the fight as jihad and raised local support on that basis. Another well-known figure, Rahmat Allah Kairanawi (1818-90), "endorsed the jihad against English rule and escaped to Makkah with a price on his head following the collapse of the Mutiny." Martin Kramer, *Islam Assembled: The Advent of the Muslim Congresses* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), p. 5, quoting A.A. Powell's "Maulana Rahmat Allah Kairanawi and Muslim-Christian Controversy in India in the Mid-19th Century," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (1976) no. 1, pp. 42-63.

24. For a discussion of Hunter's book, see, e.g., David Lelyveld, *Aligarh's First Generation: Muslim Solidarity in British India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), pp. 10-12.

25. Hardy, *The Muslims of British India*, p. 111. The three conditions referred to above were: "(1) the law of the unbelievers replaces that of Islam; (2) the country in question directly adjoins the *dar-al-harb;* (3) Muslims and their non-Muslim *dhimmis* no longer enjoy any protection there. The first of these conditions is the most important." A. Abel, "Dar al-Harb," in *EI2*. There is disagreement within the Hanafi school as to whether all three conditions have to be met to render a place dar al-

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harb, or whether the existence of even one of these conditions is sufficient to do so.

26. Hardy, pp. 112-13.

27. Imam Ahmad Raza, *A'lam al-A'lam ban Hindustan Dar al-Islam* (The flag of flags (on) the clause Hindustan is dar al-Islam), (Bareilly: Hasani Press, A.H. 1306/A.D. 188-89), 20 pp. Reprinted in *Do Ahm Fatwe* (Lahore: Maktaba Qadiria, 1977).

28. This opinion was significant in light of the later charge (on which, see below) that Imam Ahmad Raza had pro-British sympathies. His defenders never cited this part of the fatawa, however.

29. On these three conditions, see note 25 above.

30. Imam Ahmad Raza Khan, *A'lam al-A'lam*, p. 2.

31. This may or may not have been a charge against a hypothetical opinion contrary to Imam Ahmad Raza's. The only alim who expressed a contrary opinion at this time was Muhammad Qasim Nanautawi, of Deoband, who, according to Ashraf Ali Thanawi, "gave preference to *(tarjih)* (British India being) dar al-harb." *Do Ahm Fatwe*, p. 55.

32. See *Do Ahm Fatwe*, pp. 38-55 for Ashraf Ali's fatawa, entitled *Tahzir al-Ikhwan* (Warning to (our) brothers). Unlike the *istifta* (question) addressed to Imam Ahmad Raza, in which the question about British India's religious status was followed by questions about the status of Jews and Christians, and whether Shi'is were innovators *(mubtada)* or not, the questions asked of Ashraf Ali related to the use of bank promissory notes, and the giving and taking of interest. Ashraf Ali said that although there was disagreement within the Hanafi

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school as to the precise conditions under which a dar al-Islam becomes dar al-harb, he considered it impermissible to give or take interest-bearing loans in India, even from Hindus who had been *zimmis* (people for whose security one is responsible, *zimme-dar*) since Mughal times. Ibid., p. 45. Gangohi's reply also appears to clearly imply that British India was dar al-Islam.. Judging by this fatawa, Hardy's statement that Rashid Ahmad Gangohi "refused to give a clear answer when bluntly asked for a *fatawa* " seems mistaken. See Hardy, *The Muslims of British India*, pp. 115, 174.

33. Hardy, p. 114. On p. 174, however, Hardy suggests that Abd ul-Hayy left it to his audience to decide whether British India was dar al-harb or dar al-Islam. According to Hardy, he merely set out Imam Abu Hanifa's conditions in his fatawa, but did not address the question of whether those conditions obtained in India.

34. Though for Muslims, it was the 1911 revocation of the partition, not the 1905 act of partition, that they objected to. For a general survey of the political events of early twentieth-century British India, see, e.g., Stanley Wolpert, *A New History of India* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 2nd ed., Chapters 19-21. For a specifically Muslim perspective on these events, see Hardy, particularly Chapters 6-7.

35. See Hardy, pp. 176, 182.

36. Ibid., pp. 175, 177. For British fears of a pan-Islamic movement in Southeast Asia, see Anthony Reid, "Nineteenth-Century Pan-Islam in Indonesia and Malaysia," in *Journal of Asian Studies*, XXVI: 2, pp. 267-83. For discussion of the pan-Islamic character of the Khilafat movement, see below.

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37. Peter Hardy, *Partners in Freedom - and True Muslims: the Political Thought of Some Muslim Scholars in British India 1912-1947* (Lund: Scandinavian Institute of Asian Studies, 1971), pp. 31-32.

38. Though earlier associated with the Ahl-e Sunnat leadership, Abd ul-Majid's (1886/7-1931) career represents a clear break from the path advocated by Imam Ahmad Raza and other Ahl-e Sunnat leaders. Following the leadership of his pir, Shah Abd ul-Muqtadir Badayuni (1866/7-1915/16), he played a leading role in the Khilafat movement and Congress politics. See Mahmud Ahmad Qadiri, *Tazkira-e Ulama-e Ahl-e Sunnat* (Muzaffarpur, Bihar: Khanqah-e Qadiria Ashrafia, A.H. 1391/A.D. 1971), pp. 146-49. Also see Chapter IV above for discussion of Abd ul Muqtadir's role in the azan dispute of 1916.

39. Other well known Ulama also stood apart, among them Ashraf Ali Thanawi of Deoband. After 1921, however, the Jam'iat appears to have come under Deobandi domination. See Gail Minault, *The Khilafat Movement: Religious Symbolism and Political Mobilization in India* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), p. 80; G.R. Thursby, *Hindu-Muslim Relations in British India: A Study of Controversy, Conflict and Communal Movements in Northern India 1923-1928* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1975), p. 154.

40. On Ahl-e Sunnat perspectives on these two major events, see below.

41. *Dabdaba-e Sikandari*, vol. 57, no. 5 (18 October 1920), pp. 4-6. Only the first part of the fatawa, dealing specifically with the question whether British India was dar al-harb or dar al-Islam, was published. The second part, in answer to the question whether contemporary Jews and Christians were kitabis, was not published.

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42. *Dabdaba-e Sikandari,* vol. 57, no. 20 (31 January 1921), pp. 4-6.

43. Maulanas Nisar Ahmad Kanpuri and Riyasat Ali Khan Shahjahanpuri, representatives of the U.P. branch of the Jam'iat, had sought Imam Ahmad Raza's participation in a forthcoming meeting. (No date is indicated for this meeting.) He told them that if they agreed to give up unity *(ittihad)* with Hindus, and not associate Deobandis and "Wahhabis" with it, he would consider himself a *khidmatgar* (servitor) of the Jam'iat and send a paper *(tahrir)* to be read at the meeting. Illness and weakness prevented him from attending personally, he said. Although they reportedly agreed to these conditions, the Jam'iat's stand on participation with Hindus among other things undoubtedly did not change. See ibid., p. 5.

44. For the last two or three years of his life (from 1918-19 to 1921, the year of his death), Imam Ahmad Raza had been going to Bhawali, near Naini Tal, to observe the Ramazan fast there. His poor health made it difficult for him to fast in the heat of the plains, while in the foothills of the Himalayas at Bhawali it was relatively easy to do so. Hasnain Raza Khan, *Sirat-e A'la Hazrat,* pp. 123-4.

45. See, e.g., Hardy, *The Muslims of British India*, pp. 175-182; I.H. Qureshi, *Ulema in Politics: a Study Relating to the Political Activities of the Ulema in the South-Asian Subcontinent from 1556 to 1947* (Karachi: Ma'aref, 1974), 2nd ed., pp. 229-32; Minault, *The Khilafat Movement,* pp. 22-24.

46. See, e.g., Minault, pp. 10, 22-23.

47. Minault, ibid., relates the circumstances in which the brothers met Maulana Abd ul-Bari on pp. 34-35.

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48. The money which was raised for the Turks had been misused by the Wahhabis. They used these funds to publish Wahhabi books.

49. Organization of assistance to the holy towns of Makkah and Medina of course also signalled support of the Ottomans, who controlled Arabia until 1916.

50. Cooperation in Anjuman affairs between Western-trained Muslim and Ulama was apparently quite wide-ranging. Among others, prominent "traditional" Muslims included Hakim Ajmal Khan (1863-1928), son of an old family of *tabibs* (Unani medical practitioners) in Delhi, who later rose high in the ranks of the Indian National Congress. Dr. Ansari (1880-1936), also a "nationalist Muslim" (i.e., one who supported Congress rather than Muslim League policies), had a European education but belonged to a family in which two brothers practised *tibb*.

51. This was also the year of the "Kanpur Mosque Affair," as Muslim agitation over destruction by municipal authorities of a washing area attached to the Machghli Bazaar Mosque in Kanpur was known. Abd ul-Bari and the Ali brothers were involved in anti-government protests over this incident as well. For details on the event, see Sandria B. Freitag, "Ambiguous Public Arenas and Coherent Personal Practice: Kanpur Muslims 1913-1931," in Katherine P. Ewing, ed., *Shari'at and Ambiguity in South Asian Islam* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1988), pp. 143-53. See Minault, *The Khilafat Movement*, pp. 46-48, for Abd ul-Bari and the Ali brothers' role in the affair.

52. See ibid., pp. 36-38.

53. *Dabdaba-e Sikandari*, vol. 49, no. 35 (11 August 1913, pp. 5-6.

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54. Ibid., p. 6.

55. Ibid.

56. For discussion of this correspondence, and Ahl-e Sunnat arguments in that connection, see Chapter V above.

Press, A.H. 1331/A.D. 1913), 15 pp. The question was posed by Munshi La'l Khan Madrasi, a khalifa of Imam Ahmad Raza who lived in Calcutta. He was a wealthy merchant (personal communication with Maulana Yasin Akhtar Misbahi, of Delhi), and was active in directing important Ahl-e Sunnat activities in the early twentieth century.

58. Ibid., p. 3.

59. Ibid., p. 14.

60. Ibid., pp. 5-6.

61. In 1921, answering the Jam'iat al-Ulama -e Hind's charge that he had done nothing to help either the Turks or the holy places, Imam Ahmad Raza countered by saying that they had accomplished nothing in that direction either. In fact, they had taken money from ordinary Muslims and spent it on their travels, meetings and festivities. See *Dabdaba-e Sikandari*, vol. 57, no. 20 (31 January 1921), p. 4.

62. For his part, Imam Ahmad Raza had followed this policy of avoiding the courts in his own life, refusing on a famous occasion related to a libel case to answer a court summons. For details, see Chapter IV.

63. *Tadbir-e Falah*, pp. 6-8.

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64. In choosing the word "Ansar," Helpers, they were undoubtedly invoking the Prophet's own lifetime, when the Ansar of Medina gave Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) shelter from his enemies in Makkah and enabled him and his fellow companions (the Muhajirs, or Emigrants) to set up the first state run in accordance with Muslim prescriptions.

65. *Al-Sawad al-Azam* (Muradabad), vol. 2, no. 5 (A.H. Sha'ban 1339/April-May 1921), pp. 2-8.

66. For an analysis of the Jam'iat's attitude to the Indian nationalist movement down to 1947, the year of India's independence and Pakistan's creation, see Yohanan Friedmann, "The Attitude of the Jam'iat-i Ulama-i Hind to the Indian National Movement and the Establishment of Pakistan," *Asian and African Studies*, vol. 7 (1971), pp. 157-80. Also see Hardy, *Partners in Freedom*, op. cit.

67. These events are well-documented in the scholarly literature. A vivid account, from the point of view of Gandhi's political role during this period, is Judith M. Brown, *Gandhi's Rise to Power: Indian Politics 1915-1922* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972). For a Muslim perspective, see Hardy, *The Muslims of British India*, op. cit.; Stanley Wolpert, *Jinnah of Pakistan* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984).

68. Gail Minault argues, in *The Khilafat Movement*, that it is primarily in this context of Indian nationalist interest - what she calls a quest by Indian Muslims for a "pan-Indian Islam" - that the Khilafat movement should be viewed, not in terms of pan-Islamic sentiment (discussed below). See Minault, pp. 1-3.

69. Martin Kramer, *Islam Assembled*, op. cit., p. 5.

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70. Ibid., p. 6.

71. Ibid., p. 55.

72. Minault, *The Khilafat Movement*, p. 2.

73. Aziz Ahmad, *Studies in Islamic Culture in the Indian Environment*, pp. 62-65; Kramer, *Islam Assembled*, pp. 59-61, on Ubaid Ullah Sindhi; Ian Henderson Douglas, *Abul Kalam Azad: an Intellectual and Religious Biography*, ed. Gail Minault and Christian W. Troll (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1988), pp. 176-78; Peter Hardy, *Partners in Freedom - and True Muslims*, 62 pp.

74. For al-Afghani's influence on Indian Muslims in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, see Aziz Ahmad, "Afghani's Indian Contacts," *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 89.3 (1969), pp. 476-504. Aziz Ahmad points out that Afghani was not in fact the first to have popularized pan-Islamic ideas in India. To our information, Afghani was a Wahhabi and British agent to inhilate the Turkish power and he said to be the chief of the masonic lodge in Cairo.

75. Aziz Ahmad, *Studies in Islamic Culture in the Indian Environment*, p. 60.

76. Ibid., p. 64.

77. Imam Ahmad Raza Khan, *Dawam al-Aish fi'l Ummat min Quraish* (Lahore: Maktaba-e Rizwia, 1980), p. 95. Originally written in A.H. 1339/A.D. 1920.

78. Imam Ahmad Raza Khan, *Al-Mahajjat al-Mu'tamana fi Ayat al-Mumtahana* (The trusted way with regard to the Ayat al-Mumtahana) A.H. 1339/A.D. 1920, in *Rasa'il-e*

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Razwia, vol. 2 (Lahore: Maktaba Hamidia, 1976), p. 155.

79. See Thomas W. Arnold, *The Caliphate*, reprint (Lahore: Oxford University Press, 1966), pp. 70-72, for Mawardi's theoretical writings on the khilafat. Imam Ahmad Raza did not mention Mawardi as a source, though he quoted later works such as Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti's (1445-1505) *Tarikh al-Khulafa* and *Husn al-Muhadara*, a biographical work. See, e.g., *Dawam al-Aish*, pp. 51, 52.

80. *Dawam al-Aish*, pp. 47-56. The requirement of Quraish ancestry was not the only one, as Imam Ahmad Raza went on to say. There were seven requirements in all: Islam, independence *(hurriyat)*, maleness *(zukurat)*, intelligence *(aql)*, maturity *(bulugh)*, and power *(qudrat)* were the other six. Ibid., pp. 46, 50. This is similar to (though differs in some respects from) Mawardi's list, for which see Arnold, *The Caliphate*, pp. 71-72.

81. This is based on a hadis in which the Prophet is reported to have said that after the khilafat had come to the Bani Abbas, it would not be given to anyone until the appearance of the Mahdi. *Dawam al-Aish*, p. 74.

82. Ibid., pp. 65-69. Arnold, *The Caliphate*, cites several such hadis in English translation on p. 47.

83. *Dawam al-Aish*, pp. 78-80. Arnold, *The Caliphate*, discusses Ibn Khaldun's theory of the caliphate on pp. 74-76. Arnold writes that Ibn Khaldun defended the principle of Quraishi descent being a necessary condition of a khalifa. The question appears to have come up in the present context because Ibn Khaldun had apparently referred in his writings to doubts being expressed on the matter by other historians, rather than sharing in them himself.

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84. Hardy writes of Azad's argument: "He (Azad) rejects the classical *ijma* that the caliph must be chosen from among the male members of the Prophet's clan, the Quraysh, with the rhetorical question whether it was likely that Islam the religion of equality and human brotherhood would have permitted the caliphate to become the preserve of any one kin-group, with the claim that reports in favour of the Quraysh qualification in Tradition are advisory rather than mandatory and with a denial that there had been an *ijma* of the Companions of the Prophet that the caliph must be Quraysh." Hardy, *Partners in Freedom*, pp. 26-27.

85. *Dawam al-Aish*, p. 51. The fact that the Mamluks treated the khalifas with scant regard, seeing them as a means of legitimizing their own rule, does not invalidate Imam Ahmad Raza's argument.

86. Ibid., pp. 96-97.

87. The fatawa *Dawam al-Aish* does not deal with this aspect of Imam Ahmad Raza's differences with Khilafat leaders. He discussed it at length in his *Al-Mahajjat al-Mu'tamana*, also dating to 1920, which was written in the context of the Non-Cooperation movement.

88. "Under its terms the Sultan would keep Constantinople as the capital of the Turkish state, but would lose Eastern Thrace to Greece, while Armenia, Syria, Mesopotamia and Palestine were to become independent states. This meant that two of the three claims made by Indian Khilafat leaders were not granted: the Jazirat-ul-Arab would not remain under Muslim sovereignty, and the Khalifa would not remain warden of the Muslim sanctuaries." Judith Brown, *Gandhi's Rise to Power*, op. cit., p. 217. The only claim to have been recognized was that the "personal centre of Islam, the Khalifa,

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should retain his empire with sufficient temporal power to defend the faith." Ibid., p. 192. Even this, of course, was to become a part of history when the Khilafat was abolished altogether in 1924 by Turkish nationalists.

89. Details of statements made by these and other Ulama at various meetings or in their writings, as reported in the Urdu press of the time, may be found in Raja Rashid Mahmud, *Tahrik-e Hijrat (1920) Ek Tarikh, Ek Tajziya* (Lahore: Maktaba Alia, 1986).

90. However, if a particular individual was unable for one reason or another to perform his ritual duties in his current residence, it was his duty to migrate elsewhere, whether this meant moving to a different house, neighbourhood, or town. The distinction between the two situations was that between the general and the particular, the latter being unrelated to the larger question of a politically delimited area being dar al-Islam or dar al-harb. Imam Ahmad Raza Khan, *Fatawa-e Rizwia* (Azamgarh: Sunni Dar al-Isha'at, 1981), vol. 6, p. 2. Also reprinted in Raja Rashid Mahmud, *Tahrik-e Hijrat*, p. 72.

91. In addition to brief references to it in larger histories, there exist only a handful of articles in English among them: F.S. Briggs, "The Indian Hijrat of 1920," in *Muslim World*, 20, II, pp. 164-68; M. Naeem Qureshi, "The Ulama of British India and the Hijrat of 1920," in *Modern Asian Studies*, 13, 1 (Cambridge, 1979), pp. 41-59. Interesting parallels and differences, yet to be investigated, must exist between the internal debates that occurred during this hijrat and the one that led to the creation of Pakistan in 1947.

92. Qureshi, "The Ulama of British India," p. 52.

93. Raja Rashid Mahmud, *Tahrik-e Hijrat*, pp. 90-92.

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94. Ibid., p. 90.

95. See Judith Brown, Gandhi's Rise to Power, pp. 216-18, and passim.

96. This was to be followed by: "(2) Resignation from government service; (3) Resignation from the police and the military; and (4) Non-payment of taxes." Minault, *The Khilafat Movement;* p. 98. Gandhi visualized the last two stages, which constituted acts of civil disobedience and not merely of non-cooperation, as distant goals.

97. In fact he called it off abruptly in February 1922 after violence at Chauri Chaura, U.P. The movement was into its civil disobedience phase in some parts of the country at the time. See Brown, *Gandhi's Rise to Power,* pp. 319-28.

98. I.H. Qureshi, *Ulema in Politics* (Karachi: Ma'aref Limited, 1974), p. 269.

99. *Al Mahajjat al-Mu'tamana,* p. 197.

100. A reference to the friction between Hindus and Muslims over the Muslims' right to slaughter cows during Baqr-e 'Eid. See below for details.

101. *Al Mahajjat al-Mu'tamana,* p. 136, and passim.

102. Ibid., p. 116. Also on p. 137, and passim. The reference to Katarpur in this passage is to a riot that occurred in Katarpur village, Saharanpur district. Of its approximately 800 residents a third were Muslim. The riot originated from the Hindus' "unwillingness to settle for anything less than a total ban on" the sacrifice of cows during the Eid festivities. It left thirty or more Muslims dead (burned alive in many cases), and several

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houses and a mosque demolished. G.R. Thursby, *Hindu-Muslim Relations in British India*, op. cit., p. 82.

103. *Al-Mahajjat al-Mu'tamana*, p. 117. He went on to say, furthermore, that if one accepted the Non-Cooperation movement's argument that only a small number of Hindus were aggressing against the Muslims, then one must also argue, on the same principle, that only a certain limited number of Englishmen had aggressed against the Turks or against the Indian Muslims. Ibid., p. 118.

104. Ibid., pp. 80, 96-97. Azad's speech must of course be seen in the context of the Non-Cooperation movement's programme under which Indians were to refuse to participate in government-run institutions.

105. Ibid., pp. 85-86.

106. In Urdu, the term non-cooperation is generally translated as *tark-e muwalat*, "the giving up of friendly relations." See I. H. Qureshi, *Ulema in Politics*, pp. 268-71, for more of this debate.

107. *Al-Mahajjat al-Mu'tamana*, p. 95.

108. The title of Imam Ahmad Raza's fatawa contains the name of this sura, *al-Mumtahana*. The verses are (Pickthall trans.): "8. Allah forbiddeth you not those who warred not against you on account of religion and drove you not out from your homes, that ye should show them kindness and deal justly with them. Lo! Allah loveth the just leaders. 9. Allah forbiddeth you only those who warred against you on account of religion and have driven you out from your homes and helped to drive you out, that ye make friends of them. Whosoever maketh friends of them - (All) such are wrong-doers."

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107. Verse 73 of this sura, called *al-Taubah* or *al-Bara'at*, reads (Pickthall trans.): "O Prophet! Strive against the disbelievers and hypocrites! Be harsh with them. Their ultimate abode is hell, a hapless journey's-end."

110. Imam Ahmad Raza and other Ahl-e Sunnat leaders were not the only opponents to Non-Cooperation. Apparently Ashraf Ali Thanawi of Deoband also wrote a long fatawa along similar lines of argument. See Qureshi, *Ulema in Politics*, p. 270.

111. He said in a verbal talk with Maulana Muhammad Ali and Saukat Ali, "He is not against the Muslim freedom, but he is against Hindu Muslim Unity."

112. *Al-Mahajjat al-Mu'tamana*, pp. 142-44. He had written anti-British poems, he said, in some works he named; he had spoken out against the Nadwa, which enjoyed British support; he had opposed Abd ul-Bari's fatawa on the Kanpur mosque affair of 1913, in which Abd ul-Bari had said that the demolition (by the British civil authorities) was alright as it had taken place outside the mosque proper, and so on.

113. We are grateful to Professor Masood Ahmed, Pakistan, for showing us samples of postcards in which this had been done.

114. Metcalf, *Islamic Revival*, p. 306.

115. It was a source of pride to Imam Ahmad Raza that he never allowed a question to go unanswered. His followers were also proud of his ability to give an immediate response, including quotations (from memory) of Quran, hadis, and fiqh, on any question.

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116. Muhammad Ramzan Abd ul-Aziz Rizwi, *Tazkira-e Hazrat Burhan-e Millat* (Jabbalpur: Astana Alia Razwia Salamia Burhania, 1985), pp. 20-21.

117. Ibid., pp. 21-22.

118. Imam Ahmad Raza Khan, *Malfuzat* (Gujarat, Pakistan: Fazl-e Nur Academy, n.d.), vol. 2, pp. 78-79.

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CONCLUSION

Close examination of the Ahl-e Sunnat movement of the kind that has been attempted here reveals a certain paradox between Ahl-e Sunnat opposition to diverse "others", whether defined as rival Ulama movements, Shi'is, "false" sufis, or Hindus, and aspects of Ahl-e Sunnat belief and practice. For, in fact, the movement creatively incorporated within itself specific features associated with each of these groups and harmonized them in a way very much its own. Its success as a nineteenth-century renewal movement appears to have been based in large part on its selective but inclusive integration of elements of belief and practice present among different groups in nineteenth-century British India. Appeal to the cosmopolitan and historic past of the worldwide community *(umma)* of Muslims, made accessible by study of the classic scholarly sources of Quran, the literature of the prophetic traditions *(hadis)*, and jurisprudence *(fiqh)*, was the second aspect of its message integral to its success.

It was Imam Ahmad Raza's singular achievement that the vision of "Islam" outlined in his writings, validated by the authority of the classic texts, was compelling and meaningful to his followers. This vision was coherent, intellectually consistent, and spiritually satisfying to those who followed him. Echoing Valensi, one might say that Imam Ahmad Raza was at once locally "embedded", and cosmopolitan in outlook.[1]

Placing the Prophet at the center of its consciousness, the Ahl-e Sunnat movement's inclusiveness of thought and multiplicity of inspiration were evident in several ways. Most importantly, it combined within itself aspects of both "popular" and reformist belief and practice. While it was "popular" in its acceptance of the validity of shrine-associated ritual at the death anniversaries of saints and the Prophet's birth anniversary, for instance, it was simultaneously reformist in its invitation to Muslims to return to the ideal of the prophetic *sunna* and in

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insisting that sufi devotional practice be subordinated to the *shari'a*.

However, preaching the overriding importance of following the prophetic sunna and discarding *bid'at* or reprehensive innovations that arose after the Prophet's lifetime, the Ahl-e Sunnat nevertheless approved of practices it characterized as *"bid'at-e hasana"*. These were held to include changes in institutional structure and the accumulation of scholarly knowledge which advanced understanding of the shar'ia, such as the creation of *madrasas* and the development of fiqh scholarship. More controversially, innovations in practice whose purpose was to exalt and honor the Prophet (urs and Milad, among other things) were also defended on the grounds that honoring the Prophet was a laudable activity whatever form this might take.

Contemporary heretical renewal movements (Wahhabis) in British India, by contrast, disapproved of or strongly condemned shrine-associated ritual practice and rejected the concept of bid'at-e hasana (which was by no means an Ahl-e Sunnat creation) as a contradiction in terms. They would not have defined the creation of madrasas as a "bid'at-e hasana", for madrasas were seen as good and necessary and no bid'at, in their view, could be that. Urs and Milad, on the other hand, were condemned, or disapproved of, as conducive to extravagance and the wastefulness of economic resources, but more importantly for their potential conflict with the principle of tauhid, the overarching transcendence and unity of Allah. The Ahl-e Sunnat, for their part, did not consider that Allah's transcendence was in any way compromised by their exaltation of the Prophet - far from the two being in conflict, they believed, love of the one reinforced that of the other.

The Ahl-e Sunnat's inclusiveness, as we call it, is evident as well in its perception of the person of the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) himself. The Prophet of Imam Ahmad Raza's fatawa is Allah's

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primordial creation, preceding the very beginning of time, possessing knowledge of past, present and future, of inner states of mind and of other worlds. Made of light *(nur)*, his spirit is said to have been conveyed through time by successive generations of perfect human beings until the time of his own birth. The picture, in short, bears much similarity to the Prophet of sufi thought of early Islam. Yet we must take note that the sources on which this image rests and from which it is derived (or created) are the classical jurisprudential ones of Quran, hadis and fiqh. Indeed, it seems fair to say that Imam Ahmad Raza showed little interest in sufi literature, seldom quoting sufi works in support of his arguments. This is in strong contrast to his habit of extensive quotation or citation of works of the above-mentioned categories. Nor, to our knowledge, does his corpus of works include other specifically sufi writings.

Finally, another plane on which the Ahl-e Sunnat reconciled opposing tendencies was in the interplay between concepts of hierarchy and equality. Rooted in respect for hierarchy, Imam Ahmad Raza nonetheless balanced inequality with the real possibility that by "loving the Prophet" all become in some sense spiritually and intellectually equal. His own career offers a fascinating glimpse of this. As seen, he had an exceptionally high regard for all Sayyids on account of their putative kinship with the Prophet. Nevertheless, his self-image of inferiority to Sayyids on account of his own Pathan ancestry did not prevent him from seeing himself as an authoritative figure vis-a-vis certain Ulama in the Haramain (some of whom at least were Sayyids) when he went on hajj in 1905. There was, to him, no contradiction in this because his love of the Prophet, acknowledged by all around and opposite him, was believed to have conferred on him the necessary authority to be their intellectual superior.

If it is possible, in the ways suggested above, to see the Ahl-e Sunnat movement as partaking of and sharing in concepts one is more accustomed to characterizing as sufi, devotional, while being simultaneously grounded in a deep and abiding

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respect for the shar'ia, a different picture emerges when one looks at the Ahl-e Sunnat in terms of their relations with contemporary renewal movements of the nineteenth century. By defining themselves as "the" Ahl-e Sunnat wa Jam'at the leaders of the movement were defining themselves simultaneously "against" a whole range of Ulama, designated by them as "enemies of the Prophet." In this latter perspective the Ahl-e Sunnat appear exclusive, as will have become evident to readers of chapters detailing Ahl-e Sunnat debates with other Ulama.

The Ahl-e Sunnat defined themselves against, for the most part, other nineteenth-century Ulama who saw their goal as *tajdid* or renewal of the prophetic sunna through Ijtihad. The Ulama of each of these movements, whether the Tariqa-e Muhammadia of the early nineteenth century, or the Deobandis, Ahl-e Hadis, and Nadwat al-Ulama of the latter half of that century, believed themselves to be engaged as they thought in the attempt to restore the morally exemplary standards of belief and conduct thought to have obtained in the Prophet's day. Probably *because*, rather than despite the fact that, the Ahl-e Sunnat didn't share considerable common ground with these movements, debates between the Ahi-e Sunnat and members of these other heretic groups were frequently protracted and sometimes bitter. Also this was in contrast to Ahl-e Sunnat debates or writings about the modernist renegade and apostate intellectual Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan, Abu'l Kalam Azad, or the Ahmadia movement, with whom they differed radically in several ways and whom they condemned in no uncertain terms, yet were less "engaged" with, a helpful term which indicates mutual affinity even if we use it here in a conflictual sense. In addition, at yet another remove, the nineteenth-century landscape included Shi'is, Hindus, and Christians, who were even further from sharing the Ahl-e Sunnat perspective than those named above. While debate and disagreement was not lacking between the Ahl-e Sunnat Ulama and this wider circle of "others", it was most heated with those who were closest, that is to say with the Tariqa-e Muhammadia, Deobandis, Ahl-e Hadis and Nadwa and

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we think this was necessary because these were wolves hiding in sheep's clothing.

Intellectually, each of these heretic movements, the Ahl-e Sunnat excluded, were not centred around the prophetic sunna and did not desire to model their conduct on the Prophet's example. However, while the Prophet was not an essentially human model of conduct for Ulama of the Tariqa-e Muhammadia and Deobandis for the Ahl-e Sunnat the Prophet was an essentially extrahuman model of conduct and also mediation.

The question arises: Given the Ahl-e Sunnat's perception of the Prophet in extrahuman, mediatory terms described in this study, and the centrality of this as an organizing principle for the movement as a whole (which to many observers may seem to contradict the general understanding of the term "reform"), what did the movement's followers mean by their claim to being engaged in tajdid? The Ahl-e Sunnat answer to this, perhaps, would go something like this: The Prophet, who was and continues to be Allah's beloved, is His deputy. Spiritually and physically alive, as he must be given that he was the last prophet and that humanity nevertheless continues to be in need of prophetic guidance (and shall be needful of until the end of time), the Prophet has been vested with extraordinary powers of physical and/or spiritual movement which enable him to intercede with Allah on behalf of the humblest petitioner, should he so choose. The Prophet alone, by virtue of his closeness to Allah, can be the ultimate source of guidance and hope to the believer in his daily life. It would therefore be an act of extreme arrogance for ordinary human beings to seek to approach Allah directly, rejecting the possibility of help from spiritually superior preceptors (whether dead or alive), who are a means of approaching the Prophet, and through him (and *only* through him) Allah.

Return to the prophetic path thus entails awareness of one's frailty and a constant attempt to bring one's personal

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conduct as close in line as one can to the prophetic ideal. To do this, in turn, requires knowledge of the sunna, which can only be acquired through scholarly understanding of the texts of Quran, hadis and fiqh. Access of this knowledge to the alim, but not to the ordinary Muslim unless he too invests the time required to acquire the necessary learning, accounts for the Ahl-e Sunnat view, widely shared by rival Ulama movements, of the central importance to the community of the Ulama as "heirs" to the Prophet. A chain of authority exists, in other words, linking the ordinary believer through the alim to the scholarly tradition of hadis and fiqh, but also reaching out through him to a variety of sufi perceptors. These latter are linked to the wider Umma, which in turn is indissolubly linked to the Prophet and thereby to Allah. In this view, then, the alim's scholarship is directed toward learning about the Prophet's life in all its aspects in order the better to emulate him, but also the better to venerate him.

The contrast between the Ahl-e Sunnat and those with whom they debated should not, however, be overdrawn. Deobandis didn't venerate the Prophet, as didn't other heretical Ulama, even if they differed on how best to do this. Differences between the Ahl-e Sunnat and their rivals are better understood in terms of shifting emphases than as stark difference. Furthermore, while these movements initially differed in some way in terms of their social backgrounds or in their geographic reach and areas of influence, these differences were blurred by the end of the nineteenth century by the extensive use of the press and the consequent spread of each group's influence throughout the subcontinent. The appeal of the Ahl-e Sunnat over its rivals lay, we believe, in that element of inclusiveness that we spoke of earlier. In its emphasis on personal authority rather than exaltation of an impersonal ideal of conduct or belief in tauhid, and in its sanction of devotional practice, the movement responded creatively to its local environment. At the same time, by placing the Prophet squarely at the center of its scholarly, devotional and ritual preoccupations, the movement reached out to, and was emotionally and intellectually enriched by, the wider world of Islam and that seems to be their aim.

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NOTES:

1. Lucette Valensi, "Le jardin de l'academie, ou comment se forme une ecole de pensee," pp. 16-17. Unpublished paper presented at Coloquium on Modes of Transmission of Religious Culture in Islam, Princeton University, jointly sponsored by the Department of Near Eastern Studies, Princeton University, and the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, Paris, April 28-30, 1989.

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EPILOGUE

The previous chapter has looked at the reasons why the Ahl-e Sunnat movement did not support the nationwide Khilafat movement in 1919-20, nor join with the Jam'iat-e Ulama-e Hind in its endeavour to launch an anti-British struggle in a Hindu-Muslim partnership. In this Epilogue we would like to indicate some of the directions in which Imam Ahmad Raza's followers led the movement after his death in 1921, particularly in relation to the Pakistan question. In order to do this as concisely and as clearly as possible, we have chosen to focus on the contributions made to the movement by two men. All personally close to Imam Ahmad Raza, each took the same stand in the 1940s on Pakistan and the Muslim League.

Maulana Sayyid Naim ud-Din Muradabadi

Born in 1882 in Muradabad, Maulana Sayyid Naim ud-Din was a precocious student. He memorized the Quran by the age of eight, then learned Persian, Arabic, *tibb* (Yunani medicine), and a good bit of the dars-e nizami syllabus [1] under the personal direction of his father and other teachers. At the age of fourteen or thereabouts, he joined Muradabad's Madrasa Imdadia, where he was taught logic, philosophy, and *hadis* by one Sayyid Shah Gul Muhammad, who was the school's manager among other things.[2] Maulana Sayyid Naim ud-Din completed the dars-e nizami syllabus by the time he was nineteen, then stayed on at the madrasa another year to study the art of *fatawa*-writing. He graduated in 1902, at age of twenty. Shortly thereafter, he sought and received *bai'a* (discipleship) from his erstwhile teacher, Sayyid Gul Muhammad.[3]

Although the biography is uninterested in (and therefore uninformative about) chronology, which would have helped us map Maulana Sayyid Naim ud-Din's intellectual development, however roughly, a few details mentioned therein suggest that his loyalty to the Ahl-e Sunnat cause may have developed only gradually. We learn from the biography that Maulana Sayyid

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Naim ud-Din's father Muin ud-Din had been a disciple *(murid)* of Muhammad Qasim Nanautawi. Apparently, it was not until the early twentieth century, long after Muhammad Qasim's death, that Muin ud-Din learned the "truth" about his dead pir:

Maulana Muin ud-Din took bai'a at the hands of Muhammad Qasim Nanautawi. At this time, the Wahhabi used to hide his Wahhabism well. Thus, Maulawi Qasim permitted Maulana Muin ud-Din to attend *milad sharif* (celebration of the Prophet's birth anniversary), do *qiyam* at the *salat o salam* (stand up when praying for benediction for the Prophet), and taught him ways full of *baraka* (grace). When others told Maulana Muin ud-Din that Muhammad Qasim was a Wahhabi, he replied, "How can I accept this? He himself told me about the baraka of milad sharif, . . . and gave me permission to do this." But when he was shown the fatawa *Husam al-Haramain* (by Imam Ahmad Raza Khan) and *Tahzir al-Nass* by Qasim Nanautawi, in which (the latter) had denied the finality of prophethood, and the contents of *Husam al-Haramain* were compared with those of *Tahzir al-Nass,* he dissolved his tie of discipleship to Qasim Nanautawi, and became A'la Hazrat's (Imam Ahmad Raza Khan's) disciple[4]

As a young Alim, he started writing articles which were published in *Al-Hilal* and *Al-Balagh,*[5] in order to establish his place in the literary field and preach din through the written word. Abu'l Kalam Azad had little in common in terms of their views on Islam or politics. In fact the Ahl-e Sunnat were in sympathy with the point of view represented by Azad's father Khair ud-Din (1831-1908), who believed strongly in the doctrine of *taqlid* (following one of the four main Sunni law schools) and had written extensively against the Indian "Wahhabis."[6] Abu'l Kalam disagreed with his father on all of the above.

Maulana Sayyid Naim ud-Din was also engaged in writing a book in defense of the Prophet's knowledge of the unseen *(ilm-e ghaib).*[7] According to one account, someone showed this book to Imam Ahmad Raza who, liking it, asked to

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meet the author. However, another story, also related in the biography, has it that Maulana Sayyid Naim ud-Din came to Imam Ahmad Raza's attention because he had written a series of articles published in a paper called *Nizam ul-Mulk* attacking the views of a "Wahhabi" from Jodhpur.[8]

The broad outlines of Maulana Sayyid Naim ud-Din's subsequent career seem quite clear. Based in Muradabad, he devoted himself to defense of the Ahl-e Sunnat cause through his writings,[9] as well as debates with Deobandis, Ahl-e Hadis, Shi'is, Christians, and Aryas.[10] He is said, for instance, to have persuaded an Arya of the falsity of the Hindu doctrine of transmigration of souls, and to have worsted another in debate when a Deobandi failed to do so.[11] Imam Ahmad Raza is reported to have had such high regard for Maulana Sayyid Naim ud-Din's skill at debate that on important occasions, when the opponent was well known, he frequently appointed him the Ahl-e Sunnat representative and sent him across the country at short notice.[12] Imam Ahmad Raza's trust in his abilities was again evident in 1920-21, when he sent Maulana Sayyid Naim ud-Din at the head of a team of emissaries, to Lucknow to accept Abd ul-Bari's statement of repentance for public comments made by the latter in the course of the Khilafat movement.[13] Some years later, according to Maulana Sayyid Naim ud-Din's biography, Maulana Muhammad Ali Juhar, one of the principal leaders of the Khilafat movement, personally came to Muradabad and did tauba in Maulana Sayyid Naim ud-Din's presence.[14]

Attendant on Maulana Sayyid Naim ud-Din's skills as a persuader and debater were his organizational abilities. Unlike Imam Ahmad Raza, whose style was essentially scholarly and solitary, Maulana Sayyid Naim ud-Din excelled in creating and managing institutions. Among his many achievements in this regard were the founding, around 1920, of a madrasa which subsequently expanded to become the Jamia Naimia, and leadership of the anti-Shuddhi organization "Jama'at-e Raza-e Mustafa" which sent members to Agra, Ajmer, and to villages in neighbouring districts to convert former Muslims (the Malkana

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Rajputs) back to Islam in the 1920s.[15] In 1924, he created and edited (with the assistance of his pupil, Maulana Muhammad Umar Naimi) a monthly journal, Al-Sawad al-Azam. In 1925 he also created a new body of Ahl-e Sunnat Ulama, called the All-India Sunni Conference. The very name of the new organization indicates that it was intended to reach the Ahl-ę Sunnat nationwide. In fact it was the Ahl-e Sunnat answer to the Jam'iat al-Ulama-e Hind and the Khilafat Committee, then the main Ulama organizations at the national level.

According to Maulana Sayyid Naim ud-Din's biography, the All-India Sunni Conference grew out of Maulana Sayyid Naim ud-Din's awareness of an increasingly anti-Sunni Muslim attitude among Wahhabi and especially, Hindus, exemplified not only in the Arya-led Shuddhi movement referred to above but also in Hindu assertiveness over the cow slaughter issue:

> After (the Shuddhi movement) the Hindus . . . started the Guru Gokul movement, by which they hoped to establish shelters for cows, colleges, schools . . . where young people would be admitted and given training which would result in their becoming severely anti-Muslim. (Maulana Sayyid Naim ud-Din) said that outwardly, this movement seeks to spread learning but the result will be that twenty or twenty-five years down, such people will . . . play Holi (Hindu spring festival celebrated with water) with blood. . . . Consequently he roused every Sunni alim and made (the Ulama) aware of these new dangers. He told them, "If you have not become conscious (of the situation) yet, . . . prepare yourselves for that which is to happen." He invited all the Ulama and *mashaikh* of the Ahl-e Sunnat, from all parts of the country, to Muradabad. The four days they gathered together and deliberated. At the end, the All-India Sunni Conference was established.[16]

Records of the 1925 meeting bear out the biography on the expression of anti-Hindu sentiment at the All-India Sunni Conference.[17] In line with arguments made by Imam Ahmad Raza against the Jam'iat al-Ulama-e Hind and Khilafat

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leadership a few years previously,[18] the All-India Sunni Conference rejected the principle of Hindu-Muslim unity as a means of achieving freedom.[19] Indeed, in his welcome address Maulana Hamid Raza Khan (Imam Ahmad Raza's eldest son). Instead, he spoke of the need to work toward Muslims' education, economic uplift, and social issues on a national scale.

New to the Ahl-e Sunnat movement thus far was the projected sweep of the All-India Sunni Conference's influence. From the very beginning the organizers spoke of the need to set up branch affiliates at the state, district and sub-district levels. In his address Maulana Hamid Raza Khan outlined a range of activities which the Conference would undertake. Important among these was *tabligh* (preaching), both against the Shuddhi movement, and against the "false" teachings of other heretic Muslim schools of thought. Tabligh would be carried out from madrasas to be set up throughout the country. "The purpose of every madrasa is tabligh," he said. Students were to be trained in the principles of tabligh, and a select number of students as well as teachers would be required to spend two days a week actively preaching.[20]

Maulana Hamid Raza also outlined a detailed hierarchy of madrasas to be set up throughout the country, affiliated to a Jam'iat-e Alia at the national level and going all the way down to the village level.[21] The madrasas would teach Quran, religious subjects, using Maulana Amjad Ali Azami's *Bahar-e Shari'at*,[22] arithmetic, and Persian and Arabic. Girls' schools were also to be set up, teaching diniyat, needlework and housekeeping. There were to be separate madrasas for Muslim boys attending English-language schools, in which religious instruction would be given for an hour each day. All madrasas would have a Dar al-Ifta, though important fatawa would have to be approved by the Jam'iat-e Alia before being issued. Preachers, teachers, and debaters would also be trained under the aegis of the Jam'iat-e Alia, among other things.[23]

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Finally, he suggested ways by which Indian Muslims could promote their economic welfare: instead of working under Hindu employers as servants, they should start businesses instead, no matter how small.[24] They should put aside some of their earnings to buy land at the earliest opportunity. Even if a man had inherited land, he should earn enough to buy himself some more. He advised everyone to put money aside for their children from the beginning. A paisa a day, he said, would add up to a lot in fifteen years.[25] And they should cut down on their expenses: don't attend a lavish wedding feast, he said. Better still, don't marry your child into a family that wants to have a feast which will involve borrowing money.[26]

The 1925 meeting of the All-India Sunni Conference was attended, it is reported, by over two hundred and fifty Ulama, sufi shaikhs, and learned men from all over the country.[27] An important supporter of the organization was Pir Jama'at Ali Shah from Panjab (now in Pakistan).[28] In his khutba he expressed strong support for the anti-Hindu, anti-Jam'iat-e Ulama-e Hind stand of other leaders of the Conference.[29] He said that unity should not be sought with Hindus, or with "free-thinking" Apostates and misled such as the Ahmadis or Ahl-e Hadis, or Deobandis. Unity already existed among the Ahl-e Sunnat wa Jama'at, who represented the vast majority of Muslims in India. The task before them was to carry out internal reform: to strengthen *iman* (faith), root out social evils, build more madrasas, and continue the work of tabligh.

In 1935 the All-India Sunni Conference met again; and a third time in April 1946, at Banaras. We turn to this 1946 meeting directly for its discussion of the Pakistan issue. It is said to have been attended by five hundred sufi shaikhs, seven thousand Ulama, as well as two hundred thousand "Sunni" Muslims.[30] Among the leadership were Maulana Sayyid Naim ud-Din Muradabadi, Maulana Mustafa Raza Khan (Imam Ahmad Raza's younger son), Maulana Zafar ud-Din Bihari, and Maulana Sayyid Muhammad Ashrafi Jilani of Kachhochha. The last-named delivered the welcome address.

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Fortunately, the khutba delivered by Sayyid Muhammad[31] or the formal resolutions adopted by the 1946 All-India Sunni Conference meeting, give us insight into the debate that had taken place on this occasion, and in preceding years, about the creation of Pakistan. Indeed, the khutba does not mention Pakistan in a political context at all until the very end. Instead, it focuses, as such khutbas did on previous occasions, on the need for "Sunni" Muslims to improve their situation through tabligh, madrasas, and personal attention to din. One may guess that the reason for this discussion of what undoubtedly was an issue of paramount importance to Muslims in 1946 may have been that all Sunni Ulama had in supporting the Muslim League.[32]

At any rate, Sayyid Muhammad's khutba concentrates on the All-India Sunni Conference's educational and tablighi aspirations for the Ahl-e Sunnat throughout India. Occasionally he couched this sentiment by playing on the word *pakistan* in its literal meaning of "a pure place". He indicated for instance that Pakistan would come about naturally to the extent that Muslims became "pure".

> Because every Muslim must, from morning to night, be a Muslim, because every minute a person is governed by essentials, by the grace of education every breath can become an Islamic breath. Then that breath will have that glory which we call Pakistan. . . .
>
> (If all Muslims) live and die for Allah, then you may be sure that in the parched land between the Bay of Bengal and the Indian Ocean (you) will see Pakistan. When a community becomes pure *(pak)* in knowledge, in deed, (and) in disposition, it transforms whichever place on which it sets foot into a pure abode *(pakistan)*.[33]

Maulana Sayyid Muhammad spoke at some length of the lack of communication between the Ahl-e Sunnat in different

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parts of India, and their attendant to make a concerted effort to ameliorate their situation.[34] During the course of the four-day proceedings, resolutions were adopted to act on suggestions made on this occasion as well as in past Conferences.

Addressing the Pakistan issue in the context of this larger concern for self-improvement toward the end of his khutba, Maulana Sayyid Muhammad affirmed the All-India Sunni Conference's support of the Muslim League in the demand for Pakistan. Ideally, he said, they would like all of India to be "Pakistan", but recognizing that things change slowly, they supported the idea of a part of the country being singled out as a place to start. But this support was conditional, he said, on the Pakistan-to-be being subject to the laws of Islam:

> Those Sunnis who have accepted this message (demand for a separate state) advanced by the (Muslim) League, and who go about canvassing support for the League, do so only to the extent that, in one part of Hindustan, the free governance of the Quran, of Islam, will prevail. In this (part), the lives and property of non-Muslim *zimmis* will enjoy protection according to the shari'a. They will be allowed to freely engage in social relations and practise of their din. . . . If the League has adopted a path other than the one assumed by the Sunnis to have been taken, no Sunni will accept it.[35]

And again,

> In Pakistan that offender will not be favored, who, professing the *kilama* (articles of faith), calling him or herself a Sunni, is (nevertheless) irritated by the thought of an Islamic authority.[36]

Insofar as the All-India Sunni Conference was concerned, Sayyid Muhammad said, the Muslim League was but an "interpreter" of the Ahl-e Sunnat's passionate desire to see the recreation of that pristine state of affairs that had prevailed at the time of the "rightly-guided" caliphs of Islam.[37] The Muslim

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League's goals were but temporary. It was the All-India Sunni Conference which would be needed in the future:

If Sunnis have the right, as other communities do - and they do have the right - to stay alive, to protect their din, to arrange their future, to save their society from destruction, to adorn their mosques and khanaqas, to keep their centers on the right track, then (the Sunnis) need the All-India Sunni Conference more than they do any other organization (at the state level?).[38]

The formal resolution on Pakistan adopted by the All-India Sunni Conference, however, gave a great hint of the nuanced support indicated by Sayyid Muhammad in his khutba. It said:

This session of the All-India Sunni Conference fully supports the demand for Pakistan, and announces that the Ulama and shaikhs of the Ahl-e Sunnat are prepared for whatever sacrifice may be necessary in the movement for the creation of an Islamic state. And they consider it their duty to establish a state (guided by) the Quran, hadis, and the principles of fiqh.[39]

As to Maulana Sayyid Naim ud-Din Muradabadi, he never migrated to Pakistan. He was about sixty at the time of Partition, and died a year later in 1948. But before his death, he managed to visit Karachi, Lahore, and other places in Pakistan, where he met with Ahl-e Sunnat Ulama and directed them in the organization of tabligh and other work.[40]

Maulana Burhan ul-Haqq Jabbalpuri

While Maulana Sayyid Naim ud-Din and his associates in the Ahl-e Sunnat movement supported the League and Pakistan from the outside, Maulana Burhan ul-Haqq Jabbalpuri played a leadership role in the Muslim League from his home town of Jabbalpur in the Central Provinces. Insofar as the

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Pakistan issue was concerned, he presents the picture of an important local politician.

Maulana Burhan ul-Haqq Jabbalpuri (1892-1984) was born to a family that traced its decent to Hazrat Abu Bakr (may Allah be pleased with him) and therefore called itself "Siddiqi" (from the epithet "Siddiq," "true", attached by Sunni Muslims to Hazrat Abu Bakr's name). The family had lived at Jabbalpur since about 1865. This was the year that Maulana Burhan ul-Haqq's grandfather, Maulana Abd ul-Karim, a religious teacher and magistrate came to Jabbalpur from somewhere near Hyderabad.[41] He gave up his job a few years later and devoted himself to religious teaching. He was initiated into the Qadiri order by his pir, a man from the south Indian town of Vellore, and had also been admitted into the Naqshbandi order by another sufi teacher.[42] Maulana Abd ul-Karim corresponded with, though never met, Imam Ahmad Raza, whom he held in high esteem.[43]

Maulana Burhan ul-Haqq's early education took place under the direction of family elders, among them his grandfather and father Maulana Abd ul-Salam. Maulana Abd ul-Salam, an alim , devoted his time to teaching at the Madrasa Eid al-Islam and issuing fatawa from its dar ul-Ifta. In the 1890s, he associated himself with the Nadwat al-Ulama, attending its annual meetings at Lucknow and elsewhere in a leadership role. A personal dispute with Shibli Nu'mani over proposed changes in the *dars-e nizami* syllabus, and disagreement with the Nadwa on more general matters, however, caused him to leave.[44] Henceforward, Maulana Abd ul-Salam became active in opposing the Nadwa in concert with other Ahl-e Sunnat Ulama.[45] In this capacity he came into close contact with Imam Ahmad Raza. In 1895-96 (1313 A.H.), Imam Ahmad Raza gave him a *sanad-e ijazat*, a certificate linking Maulana Abd ul-Salam as a teacher to Imam Ahmad Raza and his teachers in turn.[46]

The relationship between Imam Ahmad Raza and Maulana Burhan ul-Haqq's father deepened over the years.

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Maulana Burhan ul-Haqq recalled that Imam Ahmad Raza wrote or sent a telegram whenever a bereavement occurred in the family.[47] It was he who named Maulana Burhan ul-Haqq's brother, born in 1904, and then mourned his death a few years later. In 1908, Maulana Burhan ul-Haqq's uncle died within a day of the death of Imam Ahmad Raza's brother, Hasan Raza. Each side condoled with the other at its loss.[48]

Growing up in this atmosphere of reverence for Imam Ahmad Raza, Maulana Burhan ul-Haqq soon developed a passionate desire to meet him in person. He recalled that when he was about nine, he dreamt that he had fallen sick and was only cured when Imam Ahmad Raza gave him a *ta'wiz* (amulet). Shortly after this, his dream became reality when he fell seriously ill with the plague; only when a ta'wiz from Imam Ahmad Raza was tied to his body did he recover.[49] Some years later, in 1905 (1323 A.H.) when he was fourteen, he was finally able to fulfil his ambition of meeting Imam Ahmad Raza. That year Maulana Burhan ul-Haqq accompanied his father to Bombay to welcome Imam Ahmad Raza back from the Haramain. Imam Ahmad Raza, now recognized by Ahl-e Sunnat Ulama as the *mujaddid* or "renewer" of the fourteenth Hijri century, was seen by the Ahl-e Sunnat as having scored a special victory against the Deobandis in the course of his recent sojourn at the Haramain.[50] He naturally left a deep impression on the young Maulana Burhan ul-Haqq during his ten-day stop in Bombay en route to Bareilly.[51]

In 1913-14 (1332 A.H.), Maulana Burhan ul-Haqq and his father went to Bareilly. Imam Ahmad Raza had sent for Maulana Abd ul-Salam in connection with his dispute with certain Badayuni Ulama over the second *azan* (call to prayer) on Fridays, which had led them to file a case of libel against Imam Ahmad Raza.[52] Maulana Burhan ul-Haqq spent the next three years at Bareilly, attending personally to Imam Ahmad Raza's needs, helping in the Dar al-Ifta, and taking classes at the Dar al-Ulum Manzar al-Islam.[53] From Imam Ahmad Raza, he learned *ilm-e tauqit*, the precise calculation of time by means of the sun.

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Returning to Jabbalpur in 1917, he was able to persuade Imam Ahmad Raza to come on a visit in 1919. While there, Imam Ahmad Raza did Maulana Burhan ul-Haqq's *dastar-bandi* (tying of a turban, symbol of the completion of one's studies) at a large public function.[54] Maulana Burhan ul-Haqq also received *sanad-e khilafat*, a testimonial to his close relationship with Imam Ahmad Raza over the years.

In the 1920s, Maulana Burhan ul-Haqq followed Imam Ahmad Raza's lead on the major issues: he opposed the Khilafat movement, the Non-Cooperation movement, Hindu-Muslim unity, and the Hijrat movement.[55] In March 1921, he was part of a delegation from the Jama'at-e Raza-e Mustafa at a Khilafat Committee meeting at Bareilly. Presenting the delegation's point of view to the Committee, Maulana Burhan ul-Haqq verbally debated with Abu'l Kalam Azad on the issue of Khilafat and Hindu-Muslim unity.[56]

The biographical sources are silent on Maulana Burhan ul-Haqq's activities between this point and Partition in 1947, though some information is available about his interests in the 1950s and beyond.[57] Unfortunately, we cannot tell therefore whether he ever discussed with other Ahl-e Sunnat Ulama the course to be followed regarding the Muslim League and its demand for Pakistan.[58] We do not know what led him to join the League, or whether he had earlier been involved in other organizations, including Maulana Sayyid Naim ud-Din Muradabadi's All-India Sunni Conference. In addition, the fact that he never moved to Pakistan despite his avid support for the League in the early forties raises a whole different set of questions about his relationship to the League and his support of a Muslim state versus his commitment to stay on in Jabbalpur and maintain his ancestral dargah. On this too, the sources are silent.

Although we do not know when Maulana Burhan ul-Haqq joined the League, this must have occurred in the late 1930s when the League was reorganized and revamped under

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Jinnah's leadership.[59] In January 1940, Maulana Burhan ul-Haqq addressed a meeting of the Jabbalpur District Muslim League Conference as the chairman of the welcome session.[60] In his speech, he pointed out that Muslims constituted only 4 per cent of the population of the Central Provinces, and that because they were so outnumbered by Hindus (the other 96 per cent) they were economically weak, poor, and helpless. He then went on to detail the manner in which the Hindus had taken advantage of this weakness in recent years, and enumerated at length the wrongs that Muslims had suffered in the Central Provinces during the Hindu-dominated Congress ministry that had governed from 1937 to 39.[61] All this was, of course, an echo of League arguments made in support of its "two-nation theory", which held that Hindus and Muslims had never shared in a common cultural, linguistic, or religious tradition and therefore could not live together as fellow citizens of the same country. Maulana Burhan ul-Haqq likened India to Europe, which consisted of separate countries, each with its own language, religions and culture. If it was acceptable for Europe to be politically divided into several states, he said, why should a different standard be applied to the Indian subcontinent?[62] Beyond this, he went on to criticize recent attempts at the national level to bring the League and Congress together within a new constitutional framework.

During the next few years, Maulana Burhan ul-Haqq was actively involved in Muslim League politics at Jabbalpur. In a 1941 letter addressed to Jinnah, he reported that the Muslim League in Jabbalpur had set up a Municipal Parliamentary Board which would be contesting elections that November in those district wards in which Muslims constituted a majority.[63] Wolpert points out that it was precisely by establishing such parliamentary boards throughout the country that Jinnah was able to extend the League's influence to towns and villages throughout the country.[64]

Further correspondence dating to 1943-46 reveals Maulana Burhan ul-Haqq directing administrative and political

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affairs in his area as President of the Jabbalpur Town and District Muslim League. His correspondence with Jinnah and other national Muslim League leaders deals with a range of issues. In a letter that shows his concern about internal administrative organization, he suggested to Jinnah that the number of delegates allotted to each district be changed to reflect the number of fee-paying members in their districts.[65] Other letters reveal Maulana Burhan ul-Haqq protesting to local authorities over matters that Muslims perceived as injurious to their interests. One of these related to a proposal by the municipality to prohibit meat vendors going from house to house to sell meat. Maulana Burhan ul-Haqq argued that as it was overwhelmingly Muslims who engaged in this trade, this law would affect them adversely and have no impact on other religious groups.[66] Similarly, he protested the decision by some military officers (both Muslim and non-Muslim) to prohibit Muslim soldiers keeping their beards.[67]

Letters written in 1946 reflect the growing atmosphere of conflict between Hindus and Muslims, and the violence simmering beneath the surface, ready to erupt at a moment's notice. In one of these, Maulana Burhan ul-Haqq protested the Hindu Mahasabha's use of loudspeakers fitted on horse-drawn passenger carriages as they carried people to and fro through town.[68] In others, he referred to the death of Muslims in railway trains, and the holding of public meetings by the Arya Samaj inciting Hindus to anti-Muslim violence. He pleaded with local authorities to take steps to prevent bloodshed.

This correspondence gives us a vivid glimpse of the local atmosphere of Hindu-Muslim hatred in Jabbalpur immediately preceding Partition, and of the efforts of one Muslim League politician to defend Muslim interests in his town and district. What we do not see so clearly, for lack of knowledge of the internal dialogue and debate, is the connection between Maulana Burhan ul-Haqq and the Muslim League leader, and Maulana Burhan ul-Haqq the devoted follower of Imam Ahmad Raza Khan and the Ahl-e Sunnat movement.

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As noted above, despite his Muslim League career, Maulana Burhan ul-Haqq never migrated to Pakistan. While some of his children married and settled in Karachi, he remained in India. After his father's death in 1952, he became his sajjada-nishin. He appears to have continued to be an important local political figure, for it is reported that upon his death in December 1984 tributes were paid to him by Indian politicians, among them Rajiv Gandhi who happened to be in Jabbalpur in the course of a national election campaign.[69]

NOTES:

1. The sources (on which, see note 2 below) say "up to Mulla Hasan." This book was taught in the third year of an eight-year course. We assume the curricula of most madrasas in the late nineteenth century were similar. G.M.D. Sufi, *Al-Minhaj, being the Evolution of Curriculum in the Muslim Educational Institutions of India* (Delhi: Idarah-i Adabiyat-i Delli, 1977), reprint, p. 130.

2. Mahmud Ahmad Qadiri, *Tazkira-e Ulama-e Ahl-e Sunnat* (Muzaffarpur, Bihar: Khanqah Qadiria Ashrafia, A.H. 1391/A.D. 1971), pp. 252-53; Ghulam Muin ud-Din Naimi, "Tazkira al-Ma'ruf Hayat-e Sadr al-Afazil. Tajdar-e Ahl-e Sunnat Sultan al-Ulum Sadar al-Afazil Ustad al-Ulama Hazrat Maulana Sayyid Muhammad Naim ud-Din Muradabadi ke Zindagi ke Halat". Tayyiba ke Sath Musalmanon ki Dini o Siyasi Rahnuma'i," in *Sawad-e A'zam*, vol. 2 (Lahore: Naimi Dawakhana, 12-19 Zi'l Hijj A.H. 1378/19-26 June 1959), pp. 5-6. Hereafter cited as "Hayat-e Sadr al-Fazil." We should note here that although the biography is ascribed to a single author, it consists in fact of articles by more than one person. The longest memoir is that of Ghulam Muin ud-Din Naimi, named as author.

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3. He had travelled to Pilibhit in search of a well-known pir there, Shah Ji Muhammad Sher Miyan of Pilibhit; but the latter advised him to go back to Muradabad and become Savyid Gul Muhammad's murid. "Hayat-e Sadr al-Afazil," p. 6.

4. "Hayat-e Sadr al-Afazil," p. 5. See Chapter VI above for discussion of the term "Wahhabi" as used in the Ahi-e Sunnat literature, and for details on the works referred to in this passage.

5. This detail is related in both the biographical sketches available to us: Mahmud Ahmad Qadiri, *Tazkira-e Ulama-e Ahle-e Sunnat*, p. 253, who uses the word *"mustaqil!"* ; "Hayat-e Sadr al-Afazil," p. 18. (We have not verified these statements by tracking down Naim ud-Din's articles in these journals, though it would obviously be important to do so to understand more fully the course of Naim ud-Din's intellectual development.)

Al-Hilal appeared from July 1912 to December 1914, and again from June to December 1927. *Al-Balagh* appeared between November 1915 and March 1916. See Ian Henderson Douglas, Abul Kalam Azad: *An Intellectual and Religious Biography*, Gail Minault and Christian W. Troll (eds) (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 98, n. 3.

6. Ibid., pp. 33-35, 42-43. Khair ud-Din was also an important pir in his time in Calcutta. Azad rejected the institution of piri-muridi (the honor and devotion of disciples for their masters) with the same vehemence as he did his father's views on taqlid and "Wahhabis". See ibid., pp. 49-51.

7. "Hayat-e Sadr al-Afazil," p. 18.

8. "Hayat-e Sadr al-Afazil," pp. 6-7, 18.

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9. These included: works defending the Prophet's knowledge of the unseen, works about *isal-e sawab* (transfer of merit), rebuttal of Muhammad Isma'il's *Taqwiat al-Iman*, and others. See ibid., p. 20.

10. On the Arya Samaj, see Kenneth W. Jones, *Arya Dharm: Hindu Consciousness in 19th-Century Punjab* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976).

11. "Hayat-e Sadr al-Afazil," pp. 7-8.

12. Ibid., pp. 10-11, and passim.

13. Maulana Sayyid Naim ud-Din was one of a small number of intermediaries in the protracted correspondence that took place between Imam Ahmad Raza and Abd ul-Bari on this occasion. Imam Ahmad Raza had listed 101 statements made by Abd ul-Bari for which he wanted the latter to do tauba, on grounds that these were either *kufr* (expressive of unbelief), or *dalal* (dishonorable), or *haram* (unlawful, forbidden). After a lengthy correspondence back and forth, Abd ul-Bari is said to have done tauba, though he later refused to sign a document to that effect drawn up by Imam Ahmad Raza. Naim ud-Din was a witness, together with eleven others representing Imam Ahmad Raza, to the tauba-nama. See Musatafa Raza Khan (compiler), *Al-Tari al-Dari li-Hafawat Abd ul-Bari* (Unexpected correspondence (?) regarding Abd ul-Bari's errors) (Bareilly: Sunni Press, A.H. 1339/A.D. 1921), pp. 3-27, 55.

14. No date is given for this event, though we are told that it occurred three months before his death. As Muhammad Ali Maulana Juhari died in London in January 1931 (where he had gone to attend the Round Table Conference), this places the event in September or October 1930. "Hayat-e Sadr al-Afazil," p. 74.

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15. For details, see Chapter II. (new chapter, to come) For the Shuddhi movement, see G.R. Thursby, *Hindu-Muslim Relations in British India: a Study of Controversy, Conflict, and Communal Movements in Northern India 1923-1928* (Leiden: Brill, 1975), pp. 136-58, and passim.

16. "Hayat-e Sadr al-Afazil," pp. 23-24.

17. Muhammad Jalal ud-Din Qadidri (ed.), *Khutbat-e All-India Sunni Conference 1925-1947* (Gujarat, Pakistan: Maktaba Rizwia, 1978), pp. 122-230. There are several references to the distress caused to Muslims by the Arya-led Shuddhi movement. See, e.g., pp. 143-45, 175-176 (on the related Sangathan movement), 205-9.

18. For Imam Ahmad Raza's position on these questions, see the preceding chapter.

19. This position was also taken in the context of heightened Hindu-Muslim conflict during the 1920s. Thursby points out that as in earlier periods when an upsurge of violent conflict had been noted, this one "correlated with steps in the devolution of political power" along the lines of the Montagu Reform Bill of 1918, and with "the coincidence of the major religious festivals" of the two groups. Thursby, *Hindu-Muslim Relations in British India*, p. 72.

20. Ibid., p. 150.

21. *Khutbat-e All-India Sunni Conference*, pp. 143-50.

22. A fiqh book, written by one of Imam Ahmad Raza's close followers *(khalifas)*, the *Bahar-e Shari'at* (currently available in 18 volumes) is widely used among the Ahl-e Sunnat. Its language is much simpler than Imam Ahmad

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Raza's *Fatawa-e Rizwia*, but follows the latter in argument and thinking.

23. *Khutbat-e All-India Sunni Conference*, pp. 146, 148-150.

24. Ibid., pp. 179-80.

25. Ibid., p. 181.

26. Maulana Hamid Raza went into great detail on the problem of indebtedness in this speech. Among other remedies, he suggested the creation of a bait al-mal or treasury. See ibid., pp. 183-90.

27. *Al Sawad al-Azam*, vol. 4, no. 12 (Muradabad: Rabi al-Akhir 1347 A.H./September 1928 A.D.), p. 2.

28. Gilmartin writes of Pir Jama'at Ali Shah (1841-1951) that he came from a line of Qadiri pirs in Sialkot district, but was active in the reformist Naqshbandi order. "Pir Jamaat Ali Shah's most burning religious concern was work in *tabligh* . . . He made extensive tours of Punjab and much of India, stressing the importance of the performance of religious duties according to *shari'at* and establishing mosques in towns and villages. This work greatly expanded his influence and led to contacts with powerful Muslims whose wealth he tapped for religious causes. By the opening of the twentieth century, Pir Jamaat Ali Shah could claim an extensive following, both in rural northern Punjab and among powerful Muslims elsewhere, which made his political influence comparable to that of any Chishti revival *pirs*." David Gilmartin, *Empire and Islam: Punjab and the Making of Pakistan* (Berkeley: University and California Press, 1988, p. 60.

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29. The khutba is reproduced in *Khutbat-e All-India Sunni Conference*, pp. 195-217, from Sayyid Munawwar Husain Shah, *Malfuzat-e Amir el-Millat* (Lahore: 1976), pp. 171-203.

30. *Khutbat-e All-Indian Sunni Conference*, p. 252. Introductory comment by the compiler of the book.

31. Maulana Sayyid Muhammad (1311 A.H./1893-94 A.D. to 1383 A.H./1963 A.D.) was born in Rae Bareilly district. He was brought up by his maternal grandfather, Maulana Sayyid Ali Husain Ashrafi (1849/50-1936/7), who had addressed the first All-India Sunni Conference in 1925. Sayyid Muhammad studied the *dars-e nizami* at the Madrasa Nizamia, Firangi Mahal, Lucknow where Maulana Abd ul-Bari was one of his teachers. After eight years there, he went to Aligarh and studied from Maulana Lutf Ullah Aligarhi at Aligarh, then to Pilibhit, where he studied hadis from Maulana Abd ul-Muqtadir Badayuni. His maternal uncle, Maulana Ahmad Ashraf, was his pir. Sayyid Muhammad's accomplishments included the founding of a madrasa, Madrasa al-Hadis, in Delhi, converting some five thousand non-Muslims to Islam, and writing books, both prose and poetry. See Mahmud Ahmad Qadiri, *Tazkira-e Ulama-e Ahl-e Sunnat*, pp. 235-36.

32. That support of the League was the central interest of Ahl-e Sunnat Ulama.

33. *Khutbat-e All-India Sunni Conference*, pp. 270-71.

34. Ibid., p. 270, and passim.

35. Ibid., p. 276.

36. Ibid., p. 277.

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37. Ibid., pp. 276, 278.

38. Ibid., p. 278.

39. Ibid., p. 283.

40. "Hayat-e Sadr al-Afazil," pp. 28-29. At Lahore, he is said to have stayed with Maulana Abu'l Barakat Ahmad Qadiri, the manager (nazim) of the Anjuman-e Hizb ul-Ahnaf, an influential Panjabi organization that was part of the Ahl-e Sunnat movement. For more on this body, see Gilmartin, *Empire and Islam*, pp. 104, 164; Metcalf, *Islamic Revival in British India*, p. 312.

41. Muhammad Hamid Siddiqi Raza Salami Burhani, *Tazkira-e Hazrat Burhan-e Millat* (Jabbalpur: Astana Alia Rizwia Salamia Burhania, 1985), pp. 9, 12.

42. Ibid., p. 12.

43. Maulana Burhan ul-Haqq Jabbalpuri, *Ikram-e Imam Ahmad Raza* (Lahore: Markazi Majlis-e Riza, 1981), pp. 30-31.

44. Ibid., pp. 42-45.

45. For details on the Ahl-e Sunnat's reasons for opposing the Nadwa, see Chapter V above.

46. Whether the sanad was in hadis, fiqh or some other field is not specified. *Ikram-e Imam Ahmad Raza*, p. 52.

47. Ibid., p. 35.

48. Ibid., pp. 36-38.

49. Ibid., pp. 55-56. Several years later, a similar event occurred in which Imam Ahmad Raza was believed to have saved Maulana Burhan ul-Haqq's wife from almost

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certain death from the plague. Again, the cure followed a vision in which Imam Ahmad Raza appeared to her, soon after which a ta'wiz was received in the mail. Ibid., pp. 64-65.

50. See Chapter VI above.

51. See *Tazkira-e Hazrat Burhan-e Millat,* op. cit., pp. 15-16; *Ikram-e Imam Ahmad Raza,* pp. 54-55.

52. For details on this dispute, see Chapter IV above. Maulana Burhan ul-Haqq does not specify what Imam Ahmad Raza wanted his father to do in this connection.

53. Maulana Mustafa Raza Khan and Maulana Amjad Ali Azami were his constant companions during these years. See *Ikram-e Imam Ahmad Raza,* p. 57.

54. Ibid., pp. 67-68. Also see Chapter I for more on Imam Ahmad Raza's Jabbalpur trip.

55. As to this last, we infer that he opposed the Hijrat movement from the fact that many years later he accused Gandhi of having encouraged the Muslims to do hijrat in 1920. See Burhan ul-Haqq Jabbalpuri, *Khutba-e Sadarat,* Muslim League Conference, District Jabbalpur, 1-3 January 1940 (Jabbalpur: n.d.), p. 2.

56. *Ikram-e Imam Ahmad Raza,* pp. 106-9; *Tazkira-e Hazrat Burhan-e Millat,* p. 20.

57. Ibid., pp. 23-24, 26-27, 37.

58. The complete omission of any reference to Maulana Burhan ul-Haqq's membership of the Muslim League in the available biographical literature is curious. Perhaps it is connected with the inherent contradiction suggested by

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the fact, referred to below, that despite his League membership he chose to remain in India after Partition.

59. There are several sources on Muslim League history. For the 1930s period, see, e.g., Stanley Wolpert, *Jinnah of Pakistan* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), pp. 14-54.

60. Muhammad Burhan ul-Haqq, *Khutba-e Sadarat*, 15 pp.

61. Ibid., pp. 8-9.

62. Ibid., pp. 6, 8. As a means of underscoring the absurdity of the idea that either Europe or the subcontinent could ever form single states, he added that if the European nations would agree to merge all their countries and become a single nation, the Muslim League would drop its demand for a separate state!

63. C.P. & Berar I: 67, *Correspondence of Qaide Azam Mr. M. Jinnah and other Papers*, Shamsul Hasan Collection. This collection is owned by Mr. Khalid S. Hasan, son of Shamsul Hasan, of Karachi. We are grateful to him for permission to photocopy Maulana Burhan ul-Haqq's correspondence included in the collection.

64. Wolpert, *Jinnah of Pakistan*, p. 142.

65. C.P. & Berar II: 13, in *Correspondence*. The letter was dated April 3, 1943, and was acknowledged by Jinnah in an unsigned letter dated April 9, 1943.

66. C.P. & Berar II: 17, in ibid. The municipal resolution prohibiting the sale of meat by hawkers was dated June 10, 1943. A mass meeting of Muslims, including dealers in the meat trade, protested the decision on June 24, 1943.

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67. C.P. & Berar II: 19, in ibid., This was the subject of a resolution of the Working Committee of the Muslim League of Jabbalpur, dated October 12, 1943.

68. C.P. & Berar II: 64, in ibid. Letter to the Deputy Commissioner, Jabbalpur, dated October 21, 1946. The Hindu Mahasabha, led by M.M. Malaviya, was a violently anti-Muslim revivalist organization.

69. *Tazkira-e Hazrat Burhan-e Millat*, pp. 37, 41.

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