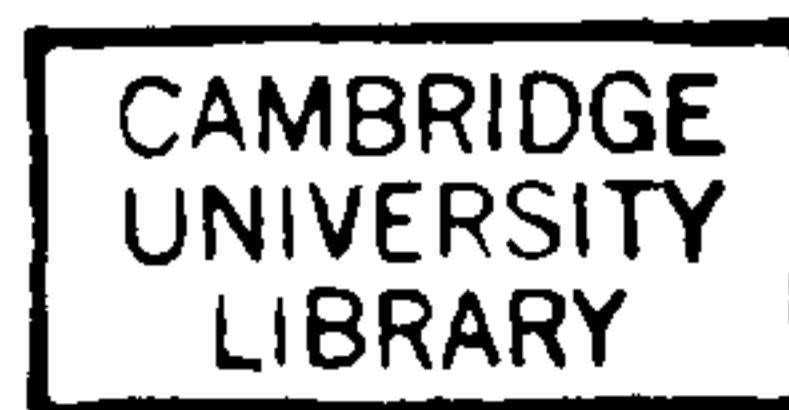


PhD 3203

Contested Identities and the Muslim *Qaum* in northern India: c. 1860-1900

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This dissertation is submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Abstract

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S Akbar Zaidi

Using primarily published sources in Urdu from the second-half of the nineteenth century, my thesis presents evidence with regard to north Indian Muslims, which questions the idea of a homogenous, centralising, entity, at times called the Muslim community, *qaum*, *ummah* or nation. Using a large number of second-tier publicists' writings in Urdu, the thesis argues that the self-perceptions and representations of many Muslims, were far more local, parochial, disparate, multiple, and highly contested. The idea of a homogenous, levelling, sense of collective identity, or an imagined community, seem wanting in this period. This line of evidence and argumentation, also has important implications for locating the moment of separatism and identity formation amongst north Indian Muslims, and argues that this happened much later than has previously been imagined. Based on this, the thesis also argues against an anachronistic or teleological strain of historiography with regard to north Indian Muslims of this period.

The main medium through which these arguments are debated, is through the Urdu print world, where a large number of new sources have been presented which underscore this difference, more than this uniformity. Whether it was in religious debates, debates around the attempt to unify – as part of a *qaum* – or around the reasons for Muslims to be at a point of *zillat* – utter humiliation – the literature points to multiple and diverse interpretations, causes and solutions. Moreover, the question of 'who a Muslim was', was always bitterly contested by those who claimed to be Muslims themselves. The thesis also examines the forum of the *munāzara*, and how pre-print forms of public engagement helped in emphasising individual identity, authority and reputation. The interplay between oral representation and the subsequent written accounts after the event, also raise questions about 'the fixity of print', and about sources for historians.

Using this new print material, the thesis engages broadly, with notions related to the imagined community and the public sphere, arguing that in a colonial context, much of the theory based on the European experience, needs to be rethought, for the nature and development of the public sphere/s and of the formation of communities, may have been somewhat different in this context.

Statement of Length and Originality

This thesis does not exceed the word limit prescribed by the Faculty of History, University of Cambridge. This dissertation is the result of my own work and includes nothing that is the outcome of work done in collaboration except where specifically stated in the text.

S Akbar Zaidi

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Acknowledgments

After having studied, taught and done research in political economy for 30 years, I decided to get an education, and embarked on a journey to learn History. What I thought would be an easy quest, led me to understand how a completely new discipline, was taught, researched, and 'done'. During the four years I have studied and learnt History, I have acquired numerous debts and have learnt from many of the best in this field.

My first debt is to the late Rajnarayan Chandavarkar, who was my first advisor at Cambridge, and welcomed me into his discipline. I started off from a completely vague and highly ambitious project, which I thought would be my thesis, but very soon after becoming a student of History, Raj instructed me on how to do research and what History was all about. Raj was my advisor for but one year before his passing, and I was his last student. I owe him many thanks for his initial advice, guidance and friendship.

I was fortunate to inherit Professor Sir Christopher Bayly as my advisor after Raj's passing, and as all students of Chris know, we have been privileged to learn from and with Chris. Chris has made the material I collected in my first year into my doctoral dissertation. Without his unconditional support, in terms of availability, advice and support, I would have not achieved my goal of finishing the thesis. His encouragement proved crucial at numerous critical moments, for which I am grateful.

I also acknowledge the comments and support from many leading historians, who read chapters and offered comments on various ideas. Professors Barbara D Metcalf and C M Naim, read chapters, as did Javed Majeed. Professors Muzaffar Alam and Mushirul Hasan, offered advice and comments on key issues which helped me clarify numerous issues. I am grateful to all of them for their help. Professor Usha Sanyal deserves particular thanks for taking an interest in my work and for reading the entire thesis before completion. I owe her many, many, thanks.

In order to allow me to do the research essential for this thesis, Dr T C A Raghavan, an historian himself who also discussed the ideas of this thesis with me as they were developing, made it possible for me to get to libraries across India, for which I am extremely grateful. In Delhi, friendship and support from Mohan, Githa, Prabir, Rahul, Ayesha, Aditya, Nivedita, Satish and Mary, made each of my visits memorable.

Perhaps the one person who is most responsible for my staying the course and finishing this thesis, is historian and friend, Charu Gupta of Delhi University. Charu has been part of this thesis, from well before it began. She was instrumental in helping me to understand how History 'was done', and I know, that this thesis would

not have been possible without Charu's constant help and encouragement. Her support has been critical in seeing this thesis through.

On a personal note, there are a number of people who I need to thank for their support, understanding and encouragement during the course of this journey. Even in my middle-aged years, both my parents took a great interest in this project and were eager that I see it through and I am very grateful for all their support and encouragement. The last year of the thesis owes much to the coffee and friendship with Afiya S Zia in Karachi, who made it far easier to deal with life's multiple challenges and tribulations. Rabab, Faiz, Amar and Laila, deserve all the thanks possible, for giving me the permission to chase my windmills, while they waited for me to return.

Preface

I have transliterated Urdu words into English primarily on the pattern laid out in John T Platts', *A Dictionary of Urdu, Classical Hindi, and English*.¹ and also use Barbara Metcalf's schema where she builds and simplifies Platts' in her *Islamic Revival in British India: Deoband, 1860-1900*.² I transliterate without diacriticals except where I feel an emphasis makes the word closer to the Urdu original. For instance, one word which is used a great deal in writings regarding the Muslim north Indian well-born, is incorrectly written as 'ashraf'. The word needs an accent on the 'a', and needs to be written as 'ashrāf, similar to 'akhlāq' or 'ajlāf'. I also differ from Platts' use of the Urdu letters غ and چ which he transliterates as 'g' and 'c' respectively, and I use the far simpler gh and ch. Also, for the Urdu word 'in' and 'I', Platts uses the same form meñ; I use meñ for 'in' and maiñ for 'I'. In some cases my use of Urdu terms differs from other scholars, and one particular case is the use of the Urdu alphabet 'vao' or 'wao'. Some scholars use the 'softer' version, 'wao', such as Barelwi, Nadwa. I, however, use the 'stronger' version, 'vao', as in Barlevi, Nadva. I do this for all uses of 'vao', except in the case of *fatwa* and *Nawab*, both of which are now fairly standardised, where I use the softer 'wao'. Following Barbara Metcalf, I too, simply add an 's' to many transliterated words to make a plural, particularly, *qaums*, *fatwas*, *raises*, etc, but use the Arabic for other more standard ones like *mazāhib*, etc. For proper names, I use what has now become convention, for example, Khan, rather than Khān.

In this thesis, I also use the original names as transliterated by Urdu newspapers themselves, in particular, the *Oudh Punch* and the *Oudh Ukhbar*, both of which were given on the mast-head of the two papers from Lucknow.

¹ John T Platts, *A Dictionary of Urdu, Classical Hindi, and English*, Oxford University Press, London, 1974; first published 1884.

² Barbara D Metcalf, *Islamic Revival in British India: Deoband 1860-1900*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2002; first published Princeton, 1982.

Chapter One Introduction

I

Contemporary historiography on north Indian Muslims of the second half of the nineteenth century, for the most part, has been over-shadowed by the history of, and around, Sayyid Ahmad Khan and his Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College at Aligarh, and by Muslim separatism, which for some scholars, arose as a consequence of the cultural and political praxis of both. Within and around this tradition of doing history, there has also been work of considerable influence and quality on religious institutions and processes which moulded the Muslim Public, the Muslim *qaum*, giving it a sense of community and identity after 1857. No one can deny the influence and role of Sayyid Ahmad Khan, Altaf Hussain Hali, Dipti Nazir Ahmad and Shibli Naumani – to name perhaps the most important north Indian Muslim intellectuals of the latter half of the nineteenth century – over the Muslim imagination in the late nineteenth century and subsequently. In addition, the institutions of Deoband, at Bareilly, Farangi Mahall and later Nadvatul Ulema, played an equally powerful role for, and over, Muslim consciousness, not just in northern India, but all across the Indian sub-continent, and beyond. Indisputably, this strain of historiography shows, that these individuals, institutions and trends, defined a wider Muslim public sphere for many Muslims of that period and helped define a certain Muslim identity.¹

¹ For a short list see: Ram Gopal, *Indian Muslims: A Political History (1858-1947)*, Asia Publishing House, London, 1959; Qeyamuddin Ahmad, *The Wahabi Movement in India*, Firma KL Mukhopadhyay, Calcutta, 1966; Muhammad Mujeeb, *Indian Muslims*, London, 1967; Shan Mohammad, *Sir Syed Ahmad Khan: A Political Biography*, Meenakshi Prakashan, Meerut, 1969; Peter Hardy, *The Muslims of British India*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1972; Paul Brass, *Language, Religion and Politics in North India*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1974; Francis Robinson, *Separatism Among Indian Muslims: The Politics of the United Provinces' Muslims 1860-1920*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1974; Christian W Troll, *Sayyid Ahmad Khan: A Reinterpretation of Muslim Theology*, Vikas Publishing House, New Delhi, 1978; David Lelyveld, *Aligarh's First Generation: Muslim Solidarity in British India*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1978; Hafeez Malik, *Sir Syed Ahmad Khan and Muslim Modernisation in India and Pakistan*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1980; Rafiuddin Ahmed, *The Bengal Muslims 1871-1906: A Quest for Identity*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1981; Barbara D Metcalf, *Islamic Revival in British India:*

It is much of this direction in contemporary western historiography which has informed our notion of the Muslim 'public' and of the Muslim *qaum*, and has influenced our understanding, not only of personalities and processes during the nineteenth century, but perhaps more importantly, of subsequent events and developments in the first half of the twentieth century. Clearly, for better and for worse, the influence and importance of this strain of historiography on our understanding of the north Indian Muslim cannot be denied. Our notion of the north Indian Muslim of the late nineteenth century, is framed by this analysis.

Apart from these very well-known processes, however, there were different trends and influences taking place all across north India amongst the Muslims. Despite the active presence of these often local and regional influences and developments, our knowledge and understanding of the less-familiar developments has been somewhat obscured especially in the light of the larger trends and the bigger picture. My thesis tries to document and understand some of these other less-known trends and influences on the Muslim being in north India and tries to show that only when one considers developments outside the main field, on the sidelines, does one get a more complete picture of the Muslim of north India in the nineteenth century. 'It was', as one contemporary scholar argues, 'the local, decentralised networks of knowledgeable people on the fringes of these pretentious controversies which carried the deepest power of social change'.²

Deoband 1860-1900, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2002; first published Princeton, 1982; Farzana Shaikh, *Community and Consensus in Islam*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1989; Usha Sanyal, *Devotional Islam and Politics in British India: Ahmad Riza Khan Bareilwi and His Movement, 1870-1920*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1999; Ayesha Jalal, *Self and Sovereignty: the Muslim Individual and the Community of Islam in South Asia since c.1850*, Sung-e-Meel, Lahore, 2000; Mushirul Hasan, *From Pluralism to Separatism: Qasbas in Colonial Awadh*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2004; and, Harlan O Pearson, *Islamic Reform and Revival in Nineteenth-century India: The Tariqah-i Muhammadiyah*, Yoda Press, New Delhi, 2008.

² C A Bayly, *Empire and Information: Intelligence Gathering and Social Consciousness in India, 1780-1870*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1999, p. 314.

My thesis looks at these (perhaps, secondary, or second-tier, local) trends, and examines some of those lesser-known, hidden, less-researched, debates and ideas which may have helped form the Muslim public sphere and the Muslim imagination. Perhaps, more importantly, a study of this literature may suggest that through it, it helped create and accentuate the fissures and differences which resulted in not one, but *many* Muslim public spheres being created, despite our perhaps unconscious acceptance of a particular notion of the north Indian Muslim public sphere of the late nineteenth century, accepted by some as conventional wisdom today.

II

One of the surprising features of north Indian Muslim intellectual history in the latter half of the nineteenth century, was the extent of vibrant and often, violent, debate and argumentation that took place amongst Muslims talking to each other and to representatives of other religions. Often such debates took place in the form of a *munāẓara*, a public forum for debate, frequently held in small towns and cities across north India, which was usually attended by a few thousand onlookers of the lay public who would cheer on their religious leaders. Before the spread of print and, in fact, it persisted well after the dominance of print forms, this public forum was the main space which allowed religious discourse to take place between adversaries and with people of different beliefs and faiths. Yet, despite severe differences which were often reflected in the nature of debates that took place, there was an underlying sense of tolerance – or at least, acceptance – for the other, and even when some speakers were ridiculed and jeered by the public present, speakers were given room to state their views.

This tradition of talking to, or at times, at, one's opponent, became far more systematic and perhaps 'scholarly', and spread far and wide, once the print medium developed and Muslim scholars started writing in Urdu. This, at a time when literacy levels would have been not more than 5-8 percent of the male population in the region. Yet, despite this apparent lack of a reading public, the press and publication

industry, as early as the 1870s, held sway over the beliefs, minds and actions of many Muslims who could read and write Urdu. The printed word acquired a sense of importance perhaps far greater than it was intended, even prior to 'print-capitalism' in the sense used by Benedict Anderson,³ having taken root and before it helped in crystallising the formation of identity and community, imagined or otherwise. Much contemporary research examining the impact of print on the intellectual formation of north Indian minds (largely men, but some women as well), and subsequently on their cultural and political praxis, suggests that this was indeed the case.⁴ Yet, despite this very rich analysis that has been undertaken recently, two areas which have been less well studied and documented from the late nineteenth century are, writings in Urdu, and writings of Muslim publicists writing to each other .

Of the Muslim publicists writing in Urdu in north India, the best known have been Sayyid Ahmad Khan, Nazir Ahmad, Altaf Hussain Hali and Shibli Naumani, all having made a huge impact on Muslim consciousness and identity in the late nineteenth century, and subsequently. Their work has been reproduced, debated, contested and examined in great detail in scholarship related to Muslims in north India over much of the last century, by those who made use of their work to support their own particular style of politics and ideology, or dismissed by those of a different political or even, religious, persuasion. Moreover, in the 1970s (but for a

³ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Verso, London, 1991.

⁴ See amongst many: Uma Das Gupta, 'The Indian Press 1870-1880: A Small World of Journalism', *Modern Asian Studies*, 11, 2, 1977, pp 213-35; Barbara D Metcalf, *Islamic Revivalism in British India: Deoband 1860-1900*, Princeton University Press, 1982; Francis Robinson, 'Technology and Religious Change: Islam and the Impact of Print', *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol 27 No 1, Feb 1993; Francis Robinson, 'Islam and the Impact of Print in South Asia', in Nigel Crook (ed), *The Transformation of Knowledge in South Asia: Essays on Education and Media*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1996; C A Bayly, *Empire and Information: Intelligence Gathering and Social Communication in India, 1780-1870*, Cambridge University Press, 1999; Francesca Orsini, *The Hindi Public Sphere 1920-1940: Language and Literature in the Age of Nationalism*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2002; Stuart Blackburn and Vasudha Dalmia (eds), *India's Literary History: Essays on the Nineteenth Century*, Permanent Black, New Delhi, 2004; Dietrich Reetz, *Islam in the Public Sphere: Religious Groups in India 1900-1947*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2006; and, Ulrike Stark, *An Empire of Books: The Naval Kishore Press and the Diffusion of the Printed Word in Colonial India*, Permanent Black, New Delhi, 2007.

brief period only) much of the work of these well-known thinkers of the Indian Muslim world was scrutinised in academies in the US and in Britain, as well as in South Asia and has formed the basis of admirable scholarship.⁵ What are not known, however, are the writings of second-tier publicists writing on issues related to Muslims, issues perhaps more narrowly defined and located within narrower cultural and geographical boundaries than the grander ideas and schemes of Sayyid Ahmad, Nazir Ahmad, Hali and Shibli. While the latter four hover high over the Muslim imagination, the lesser known writers were writing in a different public sphere altogether, and may have had a far greater influence on smaller, localised, communities. Yet, their contribution has largely been overlooked in the grander, more sweeping, narrative of the Muslim history of north India, which has usually been designed to approve, deplore or at best explain, the Partition of 1947.

Muslim writers of the nineteenth century, as is evidenced by the large number of published tracts and pamphlets available today, were speaking to each other far more than they were speaking to the Christian British or their fellow north Indian Hindustani Hindus and Sikhs. There was a hugely active and fierce engagement with each other, with members of their own heterogeneous community who could read or understand Urdu. Debates were largely intra-Muslim, rather than across different communities. In fact, amongst writers located in north India, there is an almost indifference towards the rest of non-Urdu speaking India and to other religious communities. What concerned Muslims almost exclusively, were other Muslims belonging to the region called 'Hindustan'. For many Muslims, it was this vague geographical boundary which determined their notion of the Muslim *qaum*.⁶ The term 'Hindustan' too, is ambivalent. I use it here as the region in which Urdu and Hindi were spoken in the nineteenth century, largely around Delhi and the North-

⁵ See references in Footnote 1, above.

⁶ Although I use the term '*qaum*' on a number of occasions in this chapter and in the thesis, I highlight the ambiguity of the use of the term in Chapter Three. It was used in so many ways, often very opportunistically, that it became difficult to clearly specify its exact meaning. Broadly, it is a 'shifting signifier', not a deep sense of identity. I use the term as an identifier, or signifier, of Hindustani Muslims, but do not give it any sense of specific identity, community or nation.

Western Provinces and Oudh of colonial India. The Punjab is a borderline case, where although Urdu and Hindi were spoken, it lies strictly outside the realm of a cultural 'Hindustan', just as much as perhaps parts of Bihar, which was part of Bengal, might be included. It was perhaps as much a cultural entity, as one bounded broadly by language or geography.

What comes through reading the tracts of Muslims of that period, is a realisation that the Muslim community was a severely fractured community, at verbal war with itself. There was no single entity united by religion called 'Muslim' and markers of identity within Islam and amongst Muslims were sharp, numerous, and varied in the nineteenth century. Muslim publicists defined themselves and each other as Sunni, Shia, Wahabi, Deobandi, Bareilvi, *Nechri*, Ahle Hadis, Ahle Quran, Ahmadi, and often called all those belonging to a sect other than their own, *kafir* or innovators, all condemned to burn eternally in hell. Only they themselves were righteous, true and the chosen ones;⁷ all other Muslims were infidels. A sense of any sort of 'community' was lacking, and all attempts at identification and identity, were narrow and highly fractured. One can argue, that while there was a sense of 'connectivity' with each other through some broadly shared, though highly contested, Islamic symbols, there was little sense of a 'collectivity', in the sense of a community, nation or identity.

Examples abound of religious tracts in Urdu which talked about this sense of acute fracture and divisiveness, and usually began with statements such as:

What I intend to say is that, at the moment, in the world of Islam, I see a fight/disagreement/controversy [*fasād*], which is pointless, but where everyone has become each other's life enemy [*jani dushman*]. Someone says that he is a Wahabi and is the enemy of the prophet, someone says that some do not believe in God ... On account of this, in every single town and hamlet, nay, in every single *bazār* and tiny settlement, everyone distrusts the other

⁷ A saying (*hadis*) of the Prophet states that there will be 73 sects in Islam but only one of these will be the true believers, the rest condemned to damnation and Allah's wrath.

and vilifies them ... That is why, on the request of some people, I am writing this [pamphlet] so that this conflict amongst people of Islam [*ahle Islam*] is resolved.⁸

Perhaps there may have been real and substantial differences, as opposed to imagined ones, between different sects, but just one of numerous examples will show the extent of trivial differences that had led to major divides between the Muslim *qaum* in Hindustan. Maulvi Muhammad Kasim Ali wrote a pamphlet which in English translated to, 'The safe handle for uttering 'Amen' in a low voice', of which 500 copies were printed in Mooradabad, December 1886.⁹ The *Statement of Particulars Regarding Books, Maps & c., Published in the North-Western Provinces, and Registered Under Act XXV of 1867, During the First Quarter of 1887* stated:

This is a work on the modern controversy which has arisen amongst the Muhammadans as to whether the word "Amen" should be uttered in a loud or in a low voice at the conclusion of the prayers. According to the tenet of Abu Hanifa, Malik, Shafi, and Hanbal, the word "Amen" should be uttered in a low voice ... According to the modern sect of the Wahabis the word "Amen" should be uttered in a loud voice, this difference of opinion has led to frequent disputes amongst the Muhammadans.¹⁰

These differences between sects amongst the Muslims were frequent and actively debated. There was a vibrant public which was involved in or concerned with keeping the divide amongst the Muslim *qaum* alive. However, despite these virulent and violent attacks on each other, what is striking is the extent of a public space which was permitted to all to make such allegations. Equally, people were allowed to respond, a fact taken as a key accepted norm. Importantly, publicists responded, in writing, to those who had accused them of blasphemy and such like, giving rise to

⁸ Muhammad Ameer, *Anvār-e Muhammadi*, Lucknow, September 1875.

⁹ The exact title of the tract is: 'Urwat-ul-waska fit Tamin bil *ikhfa*'. The title is in Arabic but the pamphlet is in Urdu.

¹⁰ *Statement of Particulars Regarding Books, Maps & c., Published in the North-Western Provinces, and Registered Under Act XXV of 1867, During the First Quarter of 1887*, p. 29.

further engagement and debate, often resulting in each author writing three or four books or pamphlets in the process of clarifying their own position.¹¹

Many publicists, having been bruised, humbled and abused, would return to the public arena to re-engage with their opponents, starting yet another round of lively debate. Perhaps what is more surprising is the fact, that many authors replied within a few days of the publication of a tract by their adversaries, suggesting the urgency of the need to respond, itself a fascinating area of investigation – Imdadul Ali, Deputy Collector Kanpur and later Aligarh, wrote a pamphlet called *Nurul Huda* in reply to another pamphlet, within a week of the original publication, and had as many as 500 copies of it printed and distributed free.¹² With 3-500 copies of a pamphlet being published and sold – as many as 2,000 copies in one case, and as early as 1869¹³ – we know that there was probably a wider public following this debate rather than just the two polemicists engaged in their own war of ideas and interpretation. With the advent of the print world, the barriers to entry had been removed for anyone wanting to start or join an argument or debate. There was active and fierce engagement with other religions as well, all in an environment of, while not quite bonhomie, but certainly of an acceptance of the other to have his say, even though both may have been staunch believers of their own position (as was usually the case) unwilling to give an inch of ground. It was a very lively period of discourse, engagement and condemnation. The rules of the game allowed for such tolerance, and although there were violent clashes between different schools of thought, much of the war was one of words rather than of brickbats, staves and knives.

¹¹ As I show in Chapter Four, the publication process started by *Zafar-ul Mubin* in 1879, gave rise to at least seven books, one over 700 pages long.

¹² Imdadul Ali, *Nurul Huda*, Kanpur, 1868.

¹³ *Radd-e Rawafiz*, written by Muhammad Yahya, published in Shahjehanpur, 24 November 1869, by Asghar Ali Printers and Publishers, which 'refuted' the maxims of the Shia sect. See: *Statement of Particulars Regarding Books, Maps & c., Published in the North-Western Provinces, and Registered Under Act XXI of 1867, During the Third Quarter of 1870*, p. 6.

III

This thesis attempts to engage with some of the earlier well-established ideas and conclusions about north Indian Muslims of the later nineteenth century, and re-emphasise some key notions in light of a different set of sources and material. While some of the earlier understanding concerning north Indian Muslims, is assumed rather than stated, these assumptions have given rise to understandings which perhaps need to be rethought. For the most part, this thesis offers a re-examination of what is seen to be the 'dominant narrative of consolidation of communal solidarity among Muslims in colonial India'.¹⁴

While often not always stated, but sometimes assumed, this 'dominant narrative' implies, that while there were differences in interpretation of the scriptures, and while different sets of schools of faith had been formed, the north Indian Muslims, belonged primarily to one community, or *qaum*. The differences that are recorded and recognised are based largely on the basis on the study of more formal institutions, 'sects' and groupings, rather than on writings of the Muslim public in general. An aspect of the otherwise excellent work done on Muslim differentiation on the basis of schools of belief – such as the incorrectly-designated 'Wahabis',¹⁵ Deobandis,¹⁶ Barelvis,¹⁷ Tablighi Jamā'at,¹⁸ Farangi Mahall,¹⁹ as well as on Aligarh,²⁰ -- has been based on looking at these particular institutions, rather than on the debates taking place in the larger Muslim community in which they were embedded.

¹⁴ Justin Jones, 'The Shi'a Muslims of the United Provinces of India, c. 1890-1940', Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Cambridge, 2007, p. 9.

¹⁵ Qeyamuddin Ahmad, *The Wahabi Movement*.

¹⁶ Barbara D Metcalf, *Islamic Revival*.

¹⁷ Usha Sanyal, *Devotional Islam*.

¹⁸ Yoginder Sikand, *The Origins and Development of the Tablighi Jama'at (1920-2000): A Cross-Country Comparative Study*, Orient Longman, New Delhi, 2002

¹⁹ Francis Robinson, *The Ulama of Farangi Mahall and Islamic Culture in South Asia*, Hurst and Company, London, 2001.

²⁰ David Lelyveld, *Aligarh's First Generation*.

The more prominent Muslims of the era, were writing about grander ideas and were addressing a body of Muslims which they called the '*qaum*', talking to them about their lost past, how they were to emerge from their present predicament and where they ought be heading in the days to come. While the stature of these Muslims in the nineteenth century was unparalleled, as it is even today, they were assumed to have become the representatives and spokesmen for *all* Muslims. Hence, if this handful of men who were most articulate and more visible on the social, cultural and political map of colonial India, began to speak for and to the Muslim community, addressing Indian Muslims as a community, contemporary scholarship has assumed the presence of a notion of a Muslim *qaum*. The dominant narrative of contemporary analysis of nineteenth century north Indian Muslims has been determined by the discourse and narrative of a handful of Muslim men who dominated the public sphere at that time. Whether they actually 'represented' a large Muslim community, has seldom been questioned. It is assumed that these handful of men, spoke for all Muslims, and their particular views were the views of the Muslim community. A reading of writings outside this dominant frame, however, suggests that it is perhaps erroneous to assume that a few *ashrāf*, well-to-do and well-born men, spoke for all Muslims. The concerns of other, lesser-known writers and publicists were very different from the grand ideas of a few grand men who spoke for and have been claimed to represent the Muslim 'nation'. Whether other Indian Muslims saw themselves as part of this imagined *qaum*, was not their concern.²¹

Yet, outside the pale of this dominant narrative, there were hundreds, if not thousands, of writers in Urdu, actively engaged in debates with each other, writing about parochial, local, mundane, and perhaps, trivial and ritualistic issues, almost indifferent to the grand ideas about the *qaum* and its designs, that their co-religionists were floating. These debates, most of which still remain unknown and have not been considered by contemporary writers, apparently seem to be very different from what

²¹ I deal with this theme in Chapter Three, but also see Rafiuddin Ahmad, *The Bengal Muslims*.

the dominant discourse has assumed. Their concerns were with issues of religious ritual and practice, about whether to say *amin* silently or loudly, whether the hands should be above the waist at the time of prayers or below, whether a certain *hadis* meant one thing or another, and so on. Such writers were more concerned with immediate issues which troubled them in their daily lives and in their practices. As I show in subsequent chapters, a great deal of writing, even 'religious' writing, was about highly personal religious issues. Their identities and references seemed to be narrower and particular, not like the grand and broad ideas being elaborated by some of their most prominent brethren. Debates were often replies to specific issues raised by someone else and engaged with minute details about a point of religious practice, for example. Why is it that contemporary notions of the identity of Muslims in the nineteenth century refer largely to the ideas and works of the great men of Muslim north India and overlook or ignore, the many thousands of voices which were creating different types of identities? While the more prominent Muslims were trying to address the Muslim *qaum*, these lesser writers were actively engaged with a different Muslim world of many Muslim identities, often oblivious to the grand narratives taking place on their behalf.²²

This question of other voices in the formation of identity is an important one, for it also reveals how colonialism appropriated certain voices, giving them the status of being representative, while other voices were ignored altogether. Moreover, contemporary scholars make similar choices by giving authenticity to the colonial narrative by not questioning the choices made or by examining other voices and how they perceived themselves and how they too could speak for some Muslims. Our picture of who the nineteenth century Muslim was, is incomplete, unless one hears the voices of the 'smaller people' and examines them in the wider context of colonial India. If indeed, our contemporary dominant narrative is created as a result of the

²² See for example Robert Darnton, *The Forbidden Best-sellers of Pre-revolutionary France*, HarperCollins Publishers, London, 1996, who in a different context says, that such sources 'will certainly look different from the world made familiar by the great-man, great-book variety of literary history' (p. xxii).

political choices and social preferences of colonial India, there is a need to recover a lost past. While it may not change our views about identities in north India in the nineteenth century, it will certainly make them richer.

I am here not arguing for a reclaiming of the smaller voices in the tradition of the influential Subaltern Studies history project initiated in India some decades ago, for mine is not a 'subalternist' history.²³ My 'other', alternative voices, are equally elitist and perhaps also hegemonistic, as is the colonial archive. My history here, is also one of the elite, the well-born, those who could read and write, were in positions of power and influence, usually on behalf of the colonial order. As I show, while some of these writers may have chosen not to participate or belong to the social, administrative and public orders institutionalised by the British, and while many have been marginal to that order, perhaps even 'turning within', they did not receive the 'authenticity' of the Subaltern Studies school.

The implications for why we need to look at other, and many, diverse voices can be gauged from the following statement from Ayesha Jalal, who states that 'territorial nationalism and Islamic universalism were the two main strands informing discourse on Muslim identity after India's formal loss of sovereignty in 1857'.²⁴ Following a different reading of Muslim writing than Jalal undertakes, one can see that this sort of thinking and formulation is limited to a few of the Muslims writing. In fact, very few and largely those of the Sir-Sayyid or Aligarh, school of thought of the nineteenth century subscribed to this view. Jalal subsumes these handful of Muslim men to represent all, or the majority, of Muslims. While Sayyid Ahmad Khan and Altaf Hussain Hali were certainly engaged with these sorts of issues and were writing about them, the question that interests us here is: Do Hali and Sayyid Ahmad create

²³ See Vinayak Chaturverdi, *Mapping Subaltern Studies and the Postcolonial*, Verso, London, 2000, for a selection and its critique.

²⁴ Ayesha Jalal, 'Negotiating Colonial Modernity and Cultural Difference: Indian Muslims' Conceptions of Community 1878-1914', in Leila Tarazi Fawaz and C.A. Bayly (eds), *Modernity and Culture: From the Mediterranean to the Indian Ocean*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2002, p 230.

the dominant paradigm of discourse on identity, or are there other Muslims who also speak for the Muslims? *Who speaks for the Muslims?* Who represents them in the public sphere? A second problem which emerges from Jalal's formulation, is that for a larger number of Muslims, their identity was local, sectarian, partial to their own communities, rather than one which had some broad notion of 'territorial nationalism or Islamic universalism'. Moreover, both these terms were seen by different Muslims differently. 'Islamic universalism' meant different things to different Muslims. Thirdly, words such as *qaum* (territorial nationalism) and *ummah* (Islamic universalism) were less-prevalent in the writings of nineteenth-century Muslims other than Sayyid Ahmad and his *hum-khayāl* (fellow thinkers). Fourthly, Sayyid Ahmad and his group's notion of territory, and hence territorial nationalism, was highly problematic as I show in Chapter Three. And finally, Ayesha Jalal's statement implies the possibility that a nation/community may have existed and that it was territorially bounded, as early as 1857. Clearly, the choice of writers selected, in this case a certain section of the Muslim *ashrāf* being part of the Sir-Sayyid school of thought, creates an analysis and a view which can be shown to be partial, and perhaps, even incorrect.

While looking at other, lesser-known, writers allows us to question the notion of there being a Muslim *qaum* or an *ummah*, it also allows us to see the very wide discord amongst Muslims regarding who a Muslim was and which Muslims, from amongst them, were to be excommunicated as members of their community. The notion of who a Muslim was, and how he was defined, was central to the understanding and needs of both the Muslims and the British. Both identified, however, 'the Muslim' differently. While the 'Census Muslims' were one such homogenous category for the purposes of administering a subject people, for many Muslims there was no such category. Much of the writing in Urdu by Muslims in this period is classified as 'religious' writing, and much of the time of the Muslim writers is taken up in labelling their own sects and followers as 'Muslim', to the exclusion of many who considered themselves to be as Muslim as any other. This labelling and

differentiation also questions the idea of there being a single 'Muslim community'. Moreover, once again we have to deal with the issue of who determined who a Muslim was. The British had their own way of classifying Muslims, while different sects of Muslims used very different, often narrower, criteria.

Another point worth emphasising, one linked to the type of historiography that has taken place, is that many of the historians writing on Muslim north India in the latter half of the nineteenth century, use very few sources from the Urdu original. Those who do, moreover, for the most part, use the more familiar and well-known Urdu texts, seldom delving into archival material which is not well publicised. This could be due to a number of reasons. In recent years far more material in Urdu has been made available in libraries around the world and is now easily catalogued and available; perhaps when the earlier spate of studies in the west were being conducted in the 1970s and 1980s, material was difficult to acquire. Many historians have relied on colonial sources and this has helped frame their arguments, where Urdu sources may not have been essential to their main arguments, and thus historians have not needed to search for such Urdu material. In addition, the lack of familiarity of some western historians with Indian languages may have hindered access to such material.

However, it is quite possible that had some historians been familiar with Indian languages, particularly Urdu, and had access to archival material, their analysis on north Indian Muslims would have been more nuanced and better informed. Perhaps one can even suggest that, had some of the better-known and established contemporary writing on Indian Islam and on Muslim India of the nineteenth century been more thoroughly informed by original Urdu material, we may have been reading very different accounts and stories about that era, accounts which have failed to emerge from the colonial archive alone. While one need not fetishise the need and use of indigenous languages, by turning to Urdu sources it is probable that an historian's analysis would be more complete. Hence, by using material which has not been made much use of by modern historians, I hope to bring a fuller flavour to the

debates around issues and themes concerning north Indian Muslims of the second half of the nineteenth century. If nothing else, this will compliment the already existing research and rich historiography on this era; perhaps through this new evaluation, it might just throw some new light on many established concepts and beliefs. Or, perhaps, it may complicate and even question the existing framework and notions in which the category of the north Indian Muslim is framed.

One must ask the question, that given the very rich and detailed scholarship that has been undertaken in the past, why is it important to reconsider/re-evaluate nineteenth century north Indian Muslim identities afresh? If we can show from sources not examined earlier, that some, or many, Muslims were concerned about and writing about themselves, almost in a self-obsessed manner, rather than about other religious communities such as the Hindus and the Christians in the second half of the nineteenth century, then the origins and the moments of departure of the idea of Muslim 'separatism', or the 'two-nation theory', need to be reconsidered and re-mapped. If the concerns of Muslims were largely other Muslims rather than 'other Others' in the nineteenth century, the roots of the origin of difference between Muslims and Hindus may have to be sought in another century. Clearly, this is not to deny the fact that while differences did exist well before the nineteenth century, their germination, especially increasingly politically, may have taken hold in the events of the early twentieth century rather than somewhere soon after 1857.

The Muslim *ummah* is believed to have existed from the time of Prophet Muhammad, but largely in recognition of belonging to one religion with a shared religious imagery, but not as a religious community and nor as a political entity. The *ummah* as political category in north India, emerged probably at the very end of the nineteenth century or even later, not after 1857 as some scholars may have assumed. This line of reasoning, if it is supported by the evidence provided in this thesis, may also support the argument that Muslim 'separatism' emerged out of politics rather than out of religion, as the nineteenth century was one in which religious issues

dominated the lives of Muslims, while the early twentieth century became markedly 'political'. Again, this is not to suggest that religious issues and those of identity were in anyway 'outside of politics' in the nineteenth century, but perhaps one can state that once the Muslims became a political community – as opposed to a religious one – their religious writings and debates also became far more political.

In summary then, my thesis, using primarily printed material in Urdu, of which earlier studies have made little use, focuses on the differentiation and differences amongst the Muslims of north India, rather than on their homogenising tendencies. While supporting studies from other historians, this material questions the highly teleological and anachronistic conclusions of those who find a largely unified community before one existed. For Muslims, there was a sense of recognition of who Muslims were – although this too, was hotly debated – but the belief in a sense of identity or community, territorial or universal, is not supported by the Urdu writings of numerous lesser-known publicists, all of whom were equally part of a very wide and diverse north Indian Muslim public sphere.

The Outline of this Thesis

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the notion and form of north Indian Muslim identities afresh, looking at writings of individuals who have not been part of the discourse on Muslims in the scholarship that has been undertaken over the last four decades. Moreover, rather than examine the writings and works of one prominent individual or of individuals linked to a particular school of faith (sect. *firqa*), my thesis will examine the writings of unknown and lesser-known writers, making the point that there were many real worlds out there and many different debates were taking place other than those which have come to dominate contemporary analysis. The main medium through which this re-examination is to take place, is through writings in Urdu. As I argue above, not much use has been made of the huge Urdu primary published material which exists, and much, if not most, of the material

considered in this thesis, is being examined for the first time. This use of Urdu also allows for the self-representation of Muslim writers to come through and shows the variety in diverse voices.

A key, recurring, theme that emerges in much of the writings of Urdu writers, whether the best known scholars such as those named above, or the unknown ones, sitting outside the mainframe of Muslim intellectual discourse, is a sense of *zillat*, or utter humiliation. The second chapter to this thesis examines what the fall from previous glory meant to many Muslim Urdu writers, and how they fell from being the undisputed rulers of a mighty Empire, to mere minority subjects, 'natives', of another Empire. This idea of a fall, or loss, pervades the imagination of most Muslim writers and appeared throughout the second half of the nineteenth century, from after 1857 to as late as the end of the nineteenth century, in many ways, demonstrating an idea of their self-worth. However, I make the critical distinction in this chapter, between the sense of lamentation and loss, of the poet, compared to how this realisation of *zillat*, gave *agency*. I argue that once the Muslim well-born realised that they were at their lowest ebb, they were able to rebuild their lives, and of their communities, afresh, albeit differently from the past. The lamentation and sense of loss is best captured in Urdu poetry, and best represented by Hali's *Musaddas* – an area which is outside the purview of this thesis – but also forms part of the more general and scholarly writings of Muslims. Writings in Urdu in this period gave a clear sense of a feeling of humiliation amongst Muslims, of showing how they had declined, although perhaps, never clearly acknowledging the reasons for why this had happened. This chapter, in some ways, provides the backdrop for the other chapters, capturing the mood of the Muslims over half a century. Perhaps one of the most important arguments made in this chapter, other than showing that it gave rise to *agency* amongst Muslims, re-enacted through very differently, is the acknowledgement in Urdu writings, that the Muslims were *themselves* responsible for bringing upon this condition of *zillat* upon themselves.

Chapter Three will address the question of who a Muslim was in the nineteenth century for, as I show, labelling and self-expression and self-identification, gave very different answers to this otherwise very simple question. This chapter will examine the different categories the British created for Muslims in India for the purpose of the decennial censuses. It will examine the nature of the debates around the classification of Muslims, and will show, using colonial sources, that the notion of 'caste' for the Muslims, was based on the colonial 'discovery' and formalisation of caste amongst Hindus and was replicated as a defining census category for Muslims, based largely on occupational classifications. This chapter will also examine the debate over the category 'Wahabi', which became a particularly contentious label for the British but also for the Muslims. While the category Wahabi had a very particular – mainly seditious – meaning for the British, it had a very different meaning for Muslims, who used it for other Muslims in a derogatory manner, but related it primarily to particular beliefs and practices, rather than to politics, as did the British. While there has been considerable scholarship on the Wahabi issue based on the colonial archive and on how the British perceived this category, the main contribution by this section of this chapter is, that based on writings in Urdu by different groups of Muslims, I bring in the Muslim notion of who a Wahabi was, for the Muslims, and not for the British. This chapter will examine the nature of labelling and self-identity amongst Muslims, largely from their own point of view.

The new medium of print was central to how we understand how Muslims felt about themselves and about what and how they communicated with each other. The fourth chapter will examine the print world in northern India in the second half of the nineteenth century, and then examine what it was which concerned most second-tier publicists. A key idea from this chapter which emerges, is that while some prominent Muslims were writing about grander ideas and were trying to address the Muslim *qaum* – however contradictory and ill-defined this notion was – other Muslims were actively writing about parochial, local, mundane and perhaps, trivial and ritualistic issues, almost indifferent to the grand ideas their co-religionists were propagating.

Moreover, this chapter also questions one of the key ideas that has emerged from contemporary history about Indian Islam. Historians have argued that the ‘pamphlet wars’ of the late nineteenth century defined each ‘sect’ or group against other Islamic groups, and scholars wrote against each other, positioning themselves and their opponents in such a light in order to score points and build constituencies. While there is no denying this point, what it fails to account for is the huge growth in the writings of Muslims prior to the organised *maslaks* in Indian Islam. While there are explanations of why organised groups were writing against other organised groups in the 1880s and 1890s, few historians have explained why a very large number of Muslims were writing in the 1860s and 1870s before the existence of such organised institutions within Islam. Using material from the earlier period, this thesis tries to examine what it was that motivated Muslims to write to each other.

While the print world was growing from strength to strength in this period, some earlier forms of debate and dialogue not only survived and persisted, but were invigorated through the print medium, making a curious link between the two. Chapter Five will examine the nature of the *munāẓara*, a public debate between representatives of different religions, and shows how the oral form through print, created myths, personalities and reinforced identities. This interplay between orality and print makes interesting reading and shows how ‘truth’ and ‘fact’ was always partial and manipulated, dependent on who was observing and reporting it, reminiscent in some ways of Shahid Amin’s seminal *Event, Metaphor, Memory*.²⁵ Yet, interestingly, in this chapter, by bringing in examples from third century Islam in Arabia and from Baghdad, we also see many parallels that ran through to an Indian Islam, a millennium later, showing a very clear link in the continuity of Islamic religious forms and debates. Even ten centuries later, the Muslim scholars and their Christian counterparts in north India, were discussing almost the identical debates first publicly debated in Baghdad. Moreover, this chapter also throws light

²⁵ Shahid Amin, *Event, Metaphor, Memory*, University of California Press, Berkley, 1995.

on, and questions, the idea of the 'fixity of print', showing how one particular oral encounter was documented subsequently in many publications, contradicting each other, showing that despite print 'fixing' a particular account or narrative, so many different versions of the same event, questioned what was fixed about print. In addition, this chapter also perhaps suggests how the selective choice of source material in contemporary scholarship, can influence historiography.

The concluding chapter to the thesis will look at the themes which emerge from an examination of the literature mentioned above. The themes that seems to emerge from a reading of writings in Urdu by Muslims in the nineteenth century in northern India suggest the following: that there was no single homogenous notion of a 'Muslim', that there was an ill-defined *qaum*, that identity was seen largely as local rather than part of a larger *ummah*, and that many Muslim writers were apparently oblivious to the grand debates and writings by some Muslims and were far more concerned with rituals, details and specificities. As a consequence, there existed decentralised systems of knowledge, and perhaps, localised communities who may have been a world unto themselves. The argument in this thesis is that while religion may have defined the Muslim community at a very broad level, despite the presence of an over-arching Islam, Muslim communities defined themselves very differently, through public debates. Islam in an Indian environment, gave rise to many Muslims, many communities and many identities, yet in so many ways all identifiably Muslim.

A key critique which emerges from this thesis is, that the notion of a Muslim *qaum* emerged much later than has previously been thought, and the idea of an *ummah* based in some notion of pan-Islamism, even later, much after 1857, sometime perhaps, in the 1910s or 1920s, with the rise of the Khilafat Movement, when religion had become increasingly political. Moreover, it may just have been this very Movement, which not only gave the Muslims the sense of an identity, a community, or even a 'nation', but which also helped finally sweep away the baggage of *zillat*. If the evidence supports these claims, it becomes important to once again look at key

developments in South Asian history and to reassess processes that have taken place since the later nineteenth century.

Chapter Two

Zillat

One of the key ideas that is emphasised in this thesis, is that the Muslims of north India, largely the North-Western Provinces and Oudh, during the second-half of the nineteenth century, were a disparate sort, fractured, bickering and fighting with each other, and seldom agreeing on any issue that affected their diverse, fragmented and varied communities. It is near impossible to find any argument, political or educational, or opinion regarding colonial India, on which all agreed. Not only were the two main oppositional groups, those Muslims who were considered ‘modernising’ or the ‘enlightened Mahomedan’ according to the *Pioneer* (as early as 1866),¹ those seeking western and modern ways and education, and the more traditional, the ulema, collectively opposed to each other, but within these two broad groupings, there was as much disagreement as there were groups. A lack of unity or a lack of common understanding, was the main feature of this period. The one single idea on which there was complete unity, however, regardless of sect or worldly or religious dispensation, was the notion which Muslim writers used, that of *zillat*, utter and complete humiliation and disgrace.

Zillat was both a location/place and a condition or state-of-being where a people had fallen to. *Zillat ka maqām*, a phrase very frequently used by Muslim writers in Urdu after 1857, signified a condition of being humiliated, as much as it showed that people had fallen to a place where they had been subject to this humiliation. Another phrase also used frequently – *zillat ki hālat* – related simply to the condition of *zillat*, such as ‘*maujuda zamane meñ musalman ... har qism ki zillat va nakbat ki hālat meñ mubtala haiñ*’² (our Muslim *qaum* is embroiled in a condition of utter humiliation and misfortune) or, ‘*agar hum musalmanu ki zillat o khvari par ah-o-zari karaiñ, tau be*

¹ *Pioneer*, Allahabad, 8 October 1866.

² Honourable Haji Muhammad Ismail Khan Sahib, *Guzashta aur Maujuda Zamāne ke Musalman*, Muhammadan Press, Aligarh, 1898, p. 1. These articles were first published in the *Aligarh Institute Gazette* (1895) and then after *nazr-e sani o islah* [review and correction] published as a pamphlet.

*mauqa nahi ... Afsos, hum kya the, kya ho gae*³ (If we lament at the state of [our] Muslims' humiliation and debasement, it would be timely/appropriate ... [we are saddened] about what we were, and by what we have become).

Zillat was both a condition and a location, where the transition, the process of being humiliated (*zalil hona*), had reached fruition and had reached its end. It was the rock bottom where a people had fallen to, their lowest depths. The cry '*humari qaum zalil ho rahi hai*' (our *qaum* is being humiliated) was qualitatively very different from '*ye zillat ka maqām hai*' (this is a condition/place where we have been utterly humiliated). Importantly, the process of being humiliated – *zalil hona* – a more passing, transitory, phase and condition, need not always end up at the *zillat ka maqām*. This distinction is critical to our understanding of the huge significance and meaning of this phrase – *zillat* – compared to that of *zalil hona*. Moreover, the Urdu terms *zavāl* or *tanazzul*, imply a *process* of decline and deterioration. While *zavāl* and *tanazzul* may lead to a condition of *zillat*, *zillat*, as I use the notion here, is a *point* which has been reached, a *maqām*, below which it becomes difficult to fall further. Although terms such as *zavāl* and *tanazzul* are easier to translate into their English equivalent of decay and decline, the English translation of the term *zillat* does not fully convey the sense of dejection and defeat in the emotion in the Urdu original.

Yet, and importantly, *zillat* was not a melancholic lamentation, as some might expect. Some poets may have created a sense of sadness based on the motif of decline, degeneration, despondency, but for political actors, whether those religiously motivated and concerned about the fate and state of their people, or those for whom religion may have been a separate, perhaps more personal, matter, the condition of *zillat*, was not one of lament. In fact, the *zillat ka maqām*, the lowest depths, acted as a clarion call for change, rejuvenation, reform and revival. Lament, sadness,

³ *Hami-e Islam*, Lucknow, Jamadi-ul Aval, 1305/1887. A monthly paper, 625 copies printed of this edition.

melancholia and pitiableness were more part of the sentiments of poets who were distraught as to where the *qaum* had fallen to, but this sentiment did not feature in the spirit of those who started fighting back. For example, Mushirul Hasan has written that, Sayyid Ahmad Khan too, was concerned with the motif of decline, and the ‘theme of decline mattered to him a great deal, though his own discourse was remarkably free of ceaseless lamentations over the eclipse of Muslim power and the declining Muslim culture and civilization’.⁴

It is indeed very interesting to note, that the ‘voice of the conscience’ of the Muslims, the *Musaddas* of Altaf Hussain Hali, the ‘Flow and Ebb of Islam’, does not use the term ‘*zillat*’. Hali while talking about the decayed and degenerate condition of Muslims, used words such as ‘*tanazzul*’ (decline, decay), ‘*pasti*’ (abasement, downfall), and said ‘*qaum ki hālat tabah hai*’ (the condition of our people is ruined). More interestingly, Christopher Shackle and Javed Majeed have pointed out, that in the first 1879 edition of the *Musaddas*, Hali in the fifth stanza replaced the word ‘*mazallat*’ (ignominy) with ‘*tanazzul*’ (decline) toning down the sentiment. While *mazallat* is a stronger word, it is still not *zillat*.⁵

As this chapter shows, *zillat* became that place or that condition, from which people began to fight back in very different ways. Having realised where they were and what they had become, and also having given numerous different reasons on why they had suffered decline, these fallen Muslims attempted to reinvent themselves and their people. The response to *zillat*, for the most part, was powerful, aggressive and far from one that was despondent, pitiful or self-deprecatory. This interpretation of *zillat* has important implications for our understanding of the Muslim response to events, conditions and processes after the eighteenth century, because it emphasises the element of *agency*.

⁴ Mushirul Hasan, ‘Resistance and Acquiescence in North India: Muslim Responses to the West’, *Islam and the Modern Age*, August 1993, p. 158.

⁵ See Christopher Shackle and Javed Majeed, *Hali's Musaddas: The Flow and Ebb of Islam*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1997.

Much historiographical writing on Muslims in the post-1857 nineteenth century argues that the revival and reform efforts of the two broad categories of Muslims, those who were considered to be moderate modernising Muslims – including those who supported Sayyid Ahmad and Aligarh, and those who opposed him – and the numerous new groups of reform-minded ulema, were responding to the new conditions which came about as a consequence of British rule.⁶ While this is an undisputed and obvious fact, perhaps the element of agency, may have been somewhat understated in these accounts. By bringing in the key notion of *zillat*, I focus on the role of agency, where *zillat* acts as a major instrument of creating active agency. The somewhat smoother and passive responses to structure or context, were affected by the understanding by the Muslims of their condition of *zillat*, which then resulted in causing far greater, and far more urgent, agency.

Moreover, if the link between *zillat* and agency can be sustained, and indeed if it is persuasive, it will throw light on the debate for the reasons or instigation of responses to British colonialism. In other words, if the decline and degeneracy amongst Muslims leading to their *zillat ka maqām*, was instigated by an internal process and was recognised well before the consolidation of Imperial rule, their sense of rejuvenation and reform, whether *dunyāvi ya dini* (worldly or religious), may also have been an internal response only to be strengthened by colonial rule. When Barbara Metcalf states that Maulana Muhammad Ilyas Kandhalvi (1885-1944), the founder of the Tablighi Jamā`at, founded in the 1920s in Mewat, asked, ‘What is the cause of Muslim decline and how can Muslims again be great?’, she argues that this ‘is in itself very much a question of the twentieth century colonial world’, she may

⁶ Peter Hardy, *The Muslims of British India*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1972; Paul Brass, *Language, Religion and Politics in North India*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1974; Francis Robinson, *Separatism Among Indian Muslims: The Politics of the United Provinces' Muslims 1860-1920*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1974; David Lelyveld, *Aligarh's First Generation: Muslim Solidarity in British India*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1978; Hafeez Malik, *Sir Syed Ahmad Khan and Muslim Modernisation in India and Pakistan*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1980; Barbara D Metcalf, *Islamic Revival in British India: Deoband 1860-1900*, Princeton, 1982; and, Usha Sanyal, *Devotional Islam and Politics in British India: Ahmad Riza Khan Barelwi and His Movement, 1870-1920*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1999.

be unaware that this was a far older concern, and many Muslims had asked this question even prior to colonialism.⁷ Perhaps the claim that British colonialism provided the ‘immediate and most important context’ for the emergence of different schools of thought and for being in the world,⁸ may require a greater rethinking in light of the internal processes underway. When Muslims acknowledged that they had brought about *zillat* upon themselves – ‘*apne hathoñ se*’⁹ – and when important spokesmen warned other Muslims not to inflict damage upon themselves – ‘*apne paoñ meñ āp kulhari na maru*’¹⁰ – and said ‘*hum āp hi apni tabahi ke mujib haiñ*’¹¹ (we are the creators of our own destruction), the role of agency and that of responsibility, becomes as important as that of external factors, both as cause and as response.

I argue in this chapter, that *zillat* was the motif which framed the Muslim imagination and their subsequent responses. With the underlying theme in this thesis, of difference and fracture amongst multiple identities within the broad category ‘Muslim’, there were also numerous interpretations of the causes and responses to *zillat*. A broad typology of the understanding of *zillat* will help further articulate this idea of fragmentation even with regard to a sentiment that was collectively recognised and shared. The way *zillat* was used and implied varied with different types of Muslims. Some looked at their humiliation in terms of an historical decline, of Islam and of Muslims more generally, and kept referring back to the earlier period of Islam, of the Prophet and his Companions. Others looked at political decline or humiliation, where the mighty Mughal Empire had crumbled and Muslims were now

⁷ Barbara D Metcalf, ‘Living Hadith in the Tablighi Jama’at’, *J of Asian Studies*, 52, 3, Aug 1993, p. 605.

⁸ This is not an uncommon perception. See for example, Barbara D Metcalf, *Ibid*; Muhammad Qasim Zaman, ‘Commentaries, Print and Patronage: “Hadith” and the Madrasas in Modern South Asia’, *Bulletin of the SOAS*, 62, 1, 1999, p 61.

⁹ Maulvi Hafiz Nazir Ahmad Sahib, *Asbāt Asul Islam*, Anjuman Himayat Islam Lahore, Matba-e Gulzar Muhammadi, Lahore, *ba-ehtemām* Munshi Gulzar Muhammad, owner press, 1892.

¹⁰ *Risala Himāyat Islam*, (*yāni Janāb Maulana Maulvi Hafiz Nazir Ahmad Khan Sahib ka lekchur*), given at the Seventh Annual Ijlas of the Anjuman Himayat Islam, Matba-e Gulzar Muhammadi, Lahore, 1309 AH, p. 23. (800 copies).

¹¹ *Ibid*, p. 5.

seeking appointments from the new rulers of India. A third type of *zillat* was manifest in cultural terms, in deportment, and about lifestyles being compromised and corrupted. For others, it was a manifestation of many forms. As I show in this chapter, different categories and groups of Muslims used the idea differently, and hence, their responses and understanding of the notion also differed, often markedly. In fact, as early as 1880, Nawab Maulvi Muhammad Abdul Aziz Khansahib, member of the Anjuman Islamia Bareilly, was quite clear about the different typologies of *zillat*. He wrote, that ‘when we talk about the decline and progress of any *qaum*, we need to consider four aspects’, which were: *hukumat* (government, rule), *daulat* (position, wealth), *ulum-o-funun* (literature, letters, arts), and *akhlāq o adab* (deportment, manners).¹² As I show in this chapter, while Nawab Maulvi Muhammad Abdul Aziz Khansahib may have been amongst the few Muslims who saw many aspects and types of *zillat* – although he emphasised *hukumat* most and found its loss responsible for the other three – there were many Muslims who saw far more specific and compartmentalised types of *zillat*.

Zillat was perceived by different categories and groups of Muslims in different terms and emanating from different sources or elements in their lives. For some, as I argue, it was religious decline, for others, it was social and cultural decline, for yet others, it was a loss of social position related to their job and economic status. As I demonstrate below, questions of deportment, dress, ‘everyday living’ as well as morals and mores, depicted notions of *zillat* to certain sections of the elite, the *ashrāf*, and to their *akhlāq*.¹³ This was a class perception of *zillat*, which resulted in a loss of face. On the other hand, for some Muslims, imagined or real restrictions on religious practices and rituals, as well as pollution into Islamic practices from Hinduism (*bid’at*), or the absorption of ‘western’ social values and practices, implied

¹² Nawab Maulvi Muhammad Abdul Aziz Khansahib, *Taraqqi-o-tanazzul ke sabab*, Matba-e Mutla Darakshan, Bareilly, First Edition, 1297/1880, 1000 copies, p. 2.

¹³ See Seema Alavi *Islam and Healing: Loss and Recovery of an Indo-Muslim Tradition 1600-1900*, Permanent Black, New Delhi, 2007, for how the *akhlāq* of the *ashrāf* were affected as they negotiated colonialism and the changes underway in the nineteenth century.

that they had fallen to a *zillat ka maqām*. For others, it was some combination of religious, social, economic, cultural and moral decline, leading towards *zillat*.

As I also illustrate in this chapter below, *zillat* was also counterpoised with the term *taraqqi*, or progress, with the growth/demise of religion, of status, etc. Clearly the decline narrative leading to *zillat* reflected a barometer of some earlier glory, progress, or *taraqqi* in an earlier age. The Golden Age of Islam in the first centuries of Islam, or the Muslim position in India, their growth and *taraqqi*, were contrasted with where Muslims were now located. Similarly, just as the past was an age of *taraqqi* which had transformed into *zillat*, the Muslim *ashrāf* wanted to rise again to a position of *taraqqi*, although, as this chapter shows, *taraqqi* meant different things to different groups of the *ashrāf*, for whom the particular notion depended on how they imagined the past and how they explained *zillat*. Hence, for the north Indian ulema, the Golden Age of Islam was the past of the Prophet's and his Companions' era, and they wanted to revert to that very same era, resulting in the huge literature which glorified Islam's earliest period, resulting in a reformulation and redirection towards foundations and fundamentals. For some of the modernising Muslims, *taraqqi* meant European *taraqqi*, and hence they invoked their understanding of Europe and the West in their projects for reviving and rejuvenating the Muslims out of the *zillat ka maqām*.

I must make the important point here, that one cannot see the north Indian Muslims, and especially the literati, most of whom were the well-born, in binary terms. The 'modern', moderate, westernising Muslims cannot be seen simply in opposition to the supposedly 'traditionalist' ulema. As this chapter shows, the trope of *zillat* is an important corrective to the thinking of Indian Muslims of the nineteenth century in either/or terms. The different types of responses to the theme of *zillat*, demonstrates how insufficient our terms of 'modern' and 'traditional' have become.

Zillat: Political, Religious, Social, Cultural

There is no denying the fact, that there was a marked decline in the fortunes of the north Indian Muslim *ashrāf*, since sometime in the first half of the eighteenth century. After the end of Aurangzeb's rule in 1707, in the twilight of the Mughals, the decline narrative took shape, perhaps reaching a particularly low point when Nadir Shah and Ahmad Shah Abdali on numerous occasions, sacked Delhi, the heart of the Indo-Persian Islamic civilisation as it was imagined in the eighteenth century.¹⁴ With the rise of the Marathas, Jats and Sikh kingdoms around them, and with the growing rumblings of a new encroaching entity, the British, the sense of decline, decay and the beginning of an end, must have been very real. Yet, at least for some decades, perhaps it was more a fear than a reality that took hold of the Muslim *ashrāf* imagination. While change did take place in the social structures of society, in terms of economics and demography, with newer social groups emerging, the extent of decline in the fortunes of the Muslim *ashrāf* was perhaps limited till the early nineteenth century. The large scale actual transformation, in terms of the loss of material possessions – primarily land and property¹⁵ – happened much later, yet there was a sense of realisation in the process of decline in the fortunes of the Muslim *ashrāf*. Importantly, the fact that Delhi, which was seen as the heart of north Indian Muslim identity in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century, was in decline, needs to be considerably contrasted with rise of other, smaller, Muslim kingdoms, particularly Awadh,¹⁶ and the rise of *qasba* towns as cultural entities.¹⁷ Delhi's

¹⁴ See, Percival Spear, *Twilight of the Mughals: Studies in Late Mughal India*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1951; and, Narayani Gupta, *Delhi Between Two Empires 1803-1931: Society, Government and Urban Growth*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1981

¹⁵ Lance Brennan, 'The Illusion of Security: The Background of Muslim Separatism in the United Provinces', *Modern Asian Studies*, 18, 2, 1984.

¹⁶ See, Rosie Llewellyn-Jones, *A Fatal Friendship: The Nawabs, the British and the City of Lucknow*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1985; Michael Fisher, *A Clash of Cultures: Awadh, The British, and the Mughals*, The Riverdale Company, Maryland, 1987; and, Juan RI Cole, *Roots of North Indian Shi'ism in Iran and Iraq: Religion and State in Awadh, 1722-1859*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1988. The classic Urdu text is, of course, Abdul Haleem Sharrar, *Guzashta Lucknau: Hindustan mein Mashriqi Tamaddun ka Akhri Namona*, Maktaba-e Jamia, New Delhi, 2000.

decline resulted in the rise of Awadh as a cultural home for many Muslims of north India, while perhaps not replacing Delhi fully, it at least offered an alternate to it. Culturally, Awadh was considered to be very ‘Mughalized’ and the emperor remained the reference point of legitimacy until the early nineteenth century.¹⁸ However, it was Awadh’s opulence which caused it to be considered degenerate by many Muslims.¹⁹

It was not just the propertied Muslims, or those with status, who began to sense the broad outlines of a decline in relative (perhaps, if not absolute) terms, in both standard and status, but it was also felt by those who were keepers of the morals of the faithful of north India. The sense that their flock had gone astray and was in need of a renewer of their faith, a *mujaddad*, was not lost on the ulema of the Muslim community. This, especially so, when they could cite *hadis* stating that after the Prophet, there was a need to have a reformer every century, to put his *ummat* back on the right path,²⁰ and other *hadis* which showed that things would deteriorate after the Prophet: ‘The best century is the one in which I live, then the next century, then the century after that. Then there will spread falsehood at the hands of people who will take pride in their wealth and riches and will grow fat on the earnings of others’.²¹ As William Graham states with regard to Muslims more generally, and not just in India, ‘Muslim scholars in later times developed an explicit concept of *fasād az-zamān*, or ‘the degeneration of the times’, to express the increasing temporal (and similarly,

¹⁷ C A Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars: North Indian Society in the Age of British Expansion 1770-1870*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1998 (1983); and, Mushirul Hasan, *From Pluralism to Separatism: Qasbas in Colonial Awadh*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2004.

¹⁸ Seema Alavi, ‘Introduction’, in Seema Alavi (ed), *The Eighteenth Century in India*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2002, p. 14. Also see the collection of articles in PJ Marshall (ed), *The Eighteenth Century in Indian History: Evolution or Revolution?*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2003.

¹⁹ See `Abdul Haleem Sharrar, *Guzashta Lucknau: Hindustan mein Mashriqi Tamaddun ka Akhri Namona*, Maktaba-e Jamia, New Delhi, 2000; and, Veena Talwar Oldenburg (ed), *Shaam-e-Awadh: Writings on Lucknow*, Penguin, New Delhi, 2007.

²⁰ A *hadis* attributed to the sources of Abu Dawood states: ‘Verily God will appoint for this Ummat in the beginning of every century, one who will restore for it its faith’. From the internet site: <http://www.alislam.org/library/links/00000087.html>

²¹ A *hadis* attributed to the sources of both, Tirmizi and al-Bukhari. See: <http://www.alislam.org/library/links/00000087.html>

moral) distance from the time of the Prophet and the model Ummah. However, this idea was never elaborated into anything like the Hindu notion of *Kaliyuga*, or final age of full devolution of the universe'.²² Further, Ignaz Goldziher adds, that 'every age that passes since that of the One True God's revelation to His last Prophet brings a dreadful distancing from the ideal. With time comes changes and accretions. Whether large or small, matters of ritual, or dress or social ceremony, differences are inherently consequential for a faith that holds all human activity to be a sacred concern ... In a salvatory sense, far from healing all wounds, time is itself wounding'.²³

Mushirul Hasan has argued, that 'the trauma of decline' was a recurrent theme in world-wide Islamic literature (in the nineteenth century).²⁴ Even that great 'pan-Islamist' and reformer, Sayyid Jamaluddin Afghani (1838-97) wrote an article entitled, 'Why has Islam become so weak?', probably written in the 1890s.²⁵ Ha'iri summarises Afghani's arguments and writes, that he wrote, that the Muslims' number had

increased two thousand fold over what it was at the time of their great conquests; yet they are now disgraced, humiliated and oppressed by foreigners who have occupied most of *Dar al-Islam*. What is the reason for this sad state of affairs? The answer to this question lies in the fact that the Muslims have lost their courage and strength and can no longer fight; their rulers "humble themselves before the non-Muslim kings in order to live a few days longer;" and the people are apathetic and want only peace of mind. The decline is not due to God's failure to keep His promise; rather, it results from the Muslims' failure to keep theirs and their having turned away from the right path. The responsibility for this decline, according to Afghani, lies with

²² William A Graham, 'Traditionalism in Islam: An Essay in Interpretation', *J of Interdisciplinary History*, 23, 3, Religion and History, Winter 1993, pp 505-6.

²³ In Ignaz Goldziher, *Muhammedanische Studien*, II, London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1971 (1889-90), 21-22, quoted in *Ibid*, p. 506.

²⁴ Mushirul Hasan, 'Resistance and Acquiescence in North India'.

²⁵ Abdul-Hadi Ha'iri, 'Mitteilungen: Afghani on the Decline of Islam', *Die Welt des Islams*, New Ser., Vol. 13, Issue 1/2, (1971), pp. 121-125.

the Muslims themselves and it is therefore up to them to reverse the situation.²⁶

Many of these arguments and reasons for the decline of Islam, were echoed in the writings of ulema in north India as well, as I show below, although the latter may not have read Afghani's writings, suggesting a greater realisation regarding the idea of a decline amongst Muslims in and outside India. Perhaps this was also what modern-day scholars may mean by a sort of 'pan-Islamism', a concept which has not been fully analysed by scholars on Indian Islam under colonialism.

For the ulema in India, moral decay took place even when material prosperity was at its height; in fact, this is probably when moral degeneracy and debauchery were considered to be at their peak. The sea of riches, the opulence of the nawabs and the *ra'ises*, who celebrated life in its full glory, very publicly, caused great concern to the guardians of the faithful. Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi (c 1564-1624) *mujaddad al-fanni* (the Reviver of the Second Millennium),²⁷ Shah Waliullah (1703-62) and his son, Shah Abdul Aziz (1746-1824), were the main exponents of this view who played a key role in renewing Islam at the time when it was in crisis in (north) India.²⁸ Shah Waliullah in his *Hujjatu'llahu'l-Balighah* and his *Tahfimat-i-Ilahi*, had already confessed a sense of dismay regarding the morals and virtues of the Muslims, just as Shah Abdul Aziz had in his famous 1803 *fatwa* calling Hindustan a *daru'l-harb*.²⁹ Hindustan was no longer an abode of Islam (*daru'l-islam*) but had become an

²⁶ Ibid, p. 121.

²⁷ See Aziz Ahmad, *Studies in Islamic Culture in the Indian Environment*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1999 (1964), p. 189.

²⁸ See, Shaikh Muhammad Ikram, *Āb-e Kausar* (1941), *Raud-e Kausar* (1957), and *Mauj-e Kausar* (1962), Taj Company, New Delhi, 2004; and, S Moinul Haq, *Islamic Thought and Movements in the Subcontinent (711-1947)*, Pakistan Historical Society, Karachi, 1979.

²⁹ See S A A Rizvi, *Shah Wali-Allah and his Times*, Ma'irafat Publishing House, Canberra, 1980, and S A A Rizvi, *Shah 'Abd Al-Aziz: Puritanism, Sectarian, Polemics and Jihad*, Suhail Academy, Lahore, 2004.

abode of war, with the *kuffar* (plural of *kafir*, infidel) in power.³⁰ It is important to note too, that Shah Abdul Aziz, who had seen the rise of the Jat, Maratha and Sikh power grow around him, directed his *fatwa* against the British, rather than these more 'indigenous' 'Indian' groupings which had already taken shape some years prior to British control of Delhi in 1803.³¹ Sayyid Ahmad Barelvi, on the other hand, who was the only one to follow-up on Shah Abdul Aziz's *fatwa*, launched his *jihād* in the 1820s against the Sikh kingdom of Ranjit Singh.³²

The process of being humiliated and losing face – *zalil hona* – took many decades, but many observers saw this coming. Through the *zavāl* and *tanazzul*, once that point of *zillat* had been reached, the battle for the Muslim soul began. The project of revival, reform and rejuvenation out of this lowest ebb, is no less a struggle for defining and fighting over the turf of who a Muslim was. Once the condition of *zillat* had been reached, and once realisation had set in that people had fallen, and it was unlikely that they would fall any further and, furthermore, once it was understood that this was a pervasive condition affecting all Muslims regardless of status or position, the struggle for the self, began in earnest.

As this chapter shows, once it had been ascertained that 'we' were at the point of *zillat*, or that 'they' from amongst us were there, explanations were given as to why the Muslims were where they were and, more importantly, what constituted *zillat* in the first place. The perspective of who was doing the defining, varied markedly. For the traditionalists, ulema, as well as some modernists (such as the satirical poet Akbar Allahabadi).³³ the place of *zillat* was described in cultural terms: how people

³⁰ Ibid; and, Taufiq Ahmad Nizami, *Muslim Political Thought and Activity in India during the first half of the 19th Century*, Three Mens Publication, Aligarh, 1969, p. 20 ff; also, *Fatawa-i-Azizi*, Matba i Mujtabai, Delhi, 1311/1894, p. 17.

³¹ Taufiq Ahmad Nizami, *Muslim Political Thought*, p. 23.

³² Harlan O Pearson, *Islamic Reform and Revival in Nineteenth-century India: The Tariqah-i Muhammadiyah*, Yoda Press, New Delhi, 2008.

³³ Ralph Russell and Khurshidul Islam, 'The Satirical Verse of Akbar Allahabadi (1846-1921)', *Modern Asian Studies*, 8, 1, 1974.

dressed, who they used to eat with, what they used to eat, and so forth. For another school which also completely accepted the fact that the condition of *zillat* had been reached, the problem was not so much of culture, but of position: jobs, status, access to power. These two different world views played themselves out throughout nineteenth century north India, never more so with regard to the location or state of utter humiliation.

Not surprisingly, the transition which took place from the Mughal Empire to the British Empire over a century and-a-half, affected the Muslim nobility, the *ashrāf*, and the well-born, far more than it did any other social or cultural group amongst the Muslim. While the ulema may also have lost their position near the court or the throne, their social status and prestige, unlike poets who vied to find benefactors, was not strictly dependent on the benevolence of the Emperor or his many cronies, or on local and minor nawabs.³⁴ The position of the ulema was in some ways, outside of the Imperial household and court, unlike that of the *ashrāf*, for whom social and cultural links and relations with the court were critical.³⁵ Once the court collapsed, so did its patronage. For the *ashrāf*, this was a decline, which led to their humiliation, where not just their status and jobs suffered and were undermined, but so did the patronage which was bestowed upon them from a shrinking court, but they too, in some ways far more than the ulema, felt a sense of cultural decline as well.

Once having defined what culture was, the court and the *ashrāf*, both saw their power and influence shrink, as social and economic changes were taking place, as well as military and territorial ones. With regional influences, including Hindu influences, successfully contesting Delhi and Agra's Muslim hegemony, the sense of the loss of the old elite would have been marked. Yet, other, new, and equally vibrant

³⁴ Harlan O Pearson, in his *Islamic Reform and Revival in Nineteenth-century India*, argues that the *ulema* were closely associated with and dependent on, if not tied to and appointed by, the Mughal Court (pp 3-4), although in a personal communication Professor Muzaffar Alam has confirmed that this was not the case.

³⁵ See, for example, Rosie Llewellyn-Jones, *Engaging Scoundrels: The Tales of Old Lucknow*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2000; and Abdul Haleem Sharrar, *Guzashta Lucknow*.

Muslim settlements and *qasbas*, and states, too emerged – such as Awadh and later, Rampur – where there was some perceived perception of survival. In fact, there was a vibrancy of a different kind, where different elites were creating, perhaps richer, forms of capital. Yet, after 1857, most illusions about dominance, power, as well as social standing, for the Muslims, were put to rest.

While some contemporary scholars have spoken of a ‘Delhi Renaissance’ around the Delhi College,³⁶ Mushirul Hasan has argued, that ‘the theory of a Delhi renaissance is a grand myth invented by no other than [C F] Andrews’, and that, ‘even at the best of times, the so-called Delhi renaissance found no resonance in the lives of the common Muslims’.³⁷

For the religious fraternity, rather than material goods or position, it was the freedom to preach and to pray, which determined their sense of change. Once Hindustan became the *daru’l-harb* from the *daru’l-islam*, or when the *khutba* on Friday was not read in the name of the Mughal Emperor, a sense of change set in. The new reality was responded to by resistance in the form of *jihad*, and much later in the 1860s and beyond, by renewal and organisation.³⁸

While sections of the Muslim well-born and former nobility gravitated towards the colonial government to seek favour in order to emerge out of their position and status of *zillat*, the ulema – many of whom were also of the former elite, the well-born – ‘turned inwards’,³⁹ and built numerous institutions for their community.⁴⁰ Since the notion of *zillat* for both sections of the Muslim community was so opposed to each

³⁶ See, for example, some suggestions to this in Margrit Pernau (ed), *The Delhi College: Traditional Elites, the Colonial State, and Education before 1857*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2006.

³⁷ Mushirul Hasan, ‘Maulawi Zaka Ullah: Sharif Culture and Colonial Rule’, in *Ibid.*, pp 277-78.

³⁸ See S A A Rizvi, *Shah Wali-Allah and his Times*, and his *Shah ‘Abd Al-Aziz*, as well as Harlan O Pearson, in his *Islamic Reform and Revival*.

³⁹ Barbara D Metcalf talks about the ‘inward-looking strategy’ of some Muslim groups; see her *Islamic Revival*, pp 11-14.

⁴⁰ Barbara D Metcalf, *Ibid*; Usha Sanyal, *Devotional Islam*.

other, so too were their explanations of why they were in this state. This chapter documents and illustrates the nature of difference which was so much part of the creation of multiple identities of the north Indian Muslims of the nineteenth century using the motif of *zillat*, as a marker.

Qaum ki halāt -e maujuda: In Times Like These

The idea of the condition of *zillat*, had a different meaning for different Muslims while many did not even clearly articulate what they meant by this idea. Nevertheless, in much of the literature produced by Muslims in north India in the second half of the 19th Century, there is a strong underlying idea of a *zavāl* having taken place amongst the Muslims of Hindustan. There is a sense of a loss of something tangible as well as imagined. For Peter Hardy, it was 'the establishment of British rule in India [which] affected different classes of Muslims in different ways. For a majority it destroyed not a livelihood, but a way of life, and damaged not so much their pockets but their pride'.⁴¹ For Kenneth Jones too, it is 1818, when the 'British had become militarily dominant throughout the subcontinent', when this process began. He writes, 'during this process of conquest Indians sank from undisputed rulers to the status of 'natives', a conquered and subjugated people. This reordering of relationships created one of the most important dimensions to the overall context within which all social, religious and cultural change took place'.⁴²

Maulvi Fakhrul Hasan, who compiled the book *Taqrir-e dil Pazir* written by Maulana Qasim Nanautāwī, one of the founders of the Deoband *Dāru'l-'Ulūm*, wrote in 1881, in the book's Preface, one year after Maulana Qasim Nanautāwī died and 14 years after the founding of the Deoband *madrasa*, that 'there is no *qaum* in this world today which is faced with such an abject situation as are the Muslims. Whatever

⁴¹ Peter Hardy, *The Muslims of British India*, p. 49.

⁴² Kenneth Jones, *Socio-religious Reform Movements in British India*, The New Cambridge History of India 3.1, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1987, p. 25.

misfortune comes this way, it comes the Muslims' way ... The Muslims are now extremely humiliated [*ab musalmano ki zillat intiha ko paunhch gayee hai*] and it won't be surprising that their sense of honour and God's fear comes into play and liberates them from this humiliation and wretchedness'.⁴³

For some religious scholars, the fall occurred as Muslims strayed from the path of the righteous, and in particular from the path of the Prophet and his Companions of the first Century AH (7/8 Century). Sayyid Muhammad Abdullah opens his book *Haqiqat ul Islam* (The Truth About Islam) by saying that he was not interested in having a debate or exchange with any opponent and that his pamphlet was not against or rejecting (*radd*) any book, but he was only interested in finding out what were the *Saltanat Āsmani* and *Adālat* [Sacred Kingdom and Tribunal] which were mentioned in many places in the sacred books, and the meaning given to this by the learned scholars [*ahle kitab*]. He finds that all the principles of the *Saltanat Āsmani* are found in the Quran and the *hadis*, and in information about the Prophet's Companions. The purpose of him writing this book was to put down those principles which distinguished between the *Saltanat* and the rules of government so that everyone could know the difference between the worldly and sacred *Saltanats*. The author takes a very cautious approach throughout his intellectual journey and said, that 'I have no intention to comment on any government's rules or to disagree with any *Saltanat's* government'.⁴⁴

By examining the sayings of the Prophet and by quoting from the Quran in his examination of what type of government was best, Sayyid Muhammad Abdullah ended his pamphlet by urging Muslims to return to the original path. 'The shamelessness and the low spirit/courage of Muslims is on account of accepting the ways and means of others, and because of this they have not been able to maintain

⁴³ Maulvi Fakhru'l Hasan Maulana Qasim Nanautāwī, *Taqrir dil Pazir*, 1299 1881, p. 1.

⁴⁴ Sayyid Muhammad Abdullah, *Haqiqat ul Islam*, Nizami Press, Kanpur, 1291 1874, p. 2-3.

their respect and dignity’, he argued.⁴⁵ If they want to achieve respect and dignity then they would have to embrace and acquire the energetic ways and means of their guides [*peshwa*], and through the medium of learning and the strictures of the Shariat, and through truth and honesty, they should get what their hearts’ desire.⁴⁶ He went on to argue, that ‘precisely because of the lack of these qualities, your condition is such that [you suffer] adversity and your spirit is broken [*behemia*]’.⁴⁷ Sayyid Abdullah added that one should beware those who came in the form of ‘Ahmad and Mahmood’⁴⁸ and entice you and lead you down the garden path and showed you the pleasures of the world, to lead you astray from the favourite ways of your Prophet.

Another example of writers delving into earlier Islamic history to revive contemporary Muslims, was the Honourable Haji Muhammad Ismail Khansahib, Member Legislative Council North-Western Provinces and Oudh, a *ra'is* of Aligarh, who wrote a series of articles first published in the *Aligarh Institute Gazette* (1895) and then after ‘review and correction’ published as *Guzashta aur Maujuda Zamane ke Musalman*, from the Muhammadan Press in Aligarh in 1898. These articles were very long stories and accounts from early Islam, including from Prophet Muhammad’s life and from his Companions, with the author linking them up with the current condition of Muslims. The main purpose of Haji Ismail writing, was to be able to understand why it was that in the earliest period of Islam, Muslims were able to achieve all kinds of progress (*taraqqi*) and increased their stature and prestige, and why it was that in the last centuries, i.e., ‘in the present time, that in the same manner, Muslims have suffered decline, and are afflicted/occupied by all types of *zillat* and misfortune/adversity’.⁴⁹

⁴⁵ Ibid, p. 86.

⁴⁶ Ibid, p. 86.

⁴⁷ Ibid, p. 86.

⁴⁸ The reference here being to Sayyid Ahmad Khan and his son Mahmood, Ibid, p. 86.

⁴⁹ Honourable Haji Muhammad Ismail Khan Sahib, *Guzashta aur Maujuda Zamāne ke Musalman*, Muhammadan Press, Aligarh, 1898, p. 1.

As in much of this type of literature, there is the idea of a certain type of 'progress' or development (*taraqqi*), which Muslims and Islam achieved in the past, but now they had slipped into a state of decay, degeneration. Haji Ismail asked: 'If the reasons for *taraqqi* in the early centuries was only Islam itself, then it is still here and there are around 20 crore people who follow this religion, but the conditions of all is worrisome and poor; if Islam is the cause of the present *khvari* [distress/wretchedness], then how was it that in the earlier centuries just becoming a Muslim used to give people great grandeur and magnificence?'.⁵⁰ He continued: 'these arguments show that no religion or faith on its own can be a basis/cause of either progress or decline and religion has no role in this. In fact, worldly *taraqqi* and decline are separate issues, not related to religion'.⁵¹

There are numerous stories and accounts from the Prophet's life and experiences, and Haji Ismail stated that while they seemed all trivial (*mamuli*) the absence of these had caused the condition of the Muslims to continuously deteriorate further. He argued, that at the time of the Prophet, there was freedom of speech (*āzadi-e ra'e*) 'despite the Prophet's wishes, and one could clearly say what one wanted'.⁵² He continued, that if we look at the present day Muslims, and especially the descendants of the Companions, 'then it is very clear that this world and that world was very different'. Hypocrisy, and back-biting, rudeness, selfishness and vindictiveness, have all left no place for free speech. Recounting other stories about the disagreement after the Prophet's death and after the murder of the third Caliph Usman, Haji Ismail argued that we can take a lot of 'useful results from all the incidents mentioned', which throw a light on the present day Muslim decline. One of the most important reasons for the downfall and decline of present day Muslims, he argued, was the

⁵⁰ Ibid, p. 1.

⁵¹ Ibid, p. 2.

⁵² Ibid, p. 6.

widespread weakness due to their disputes and disagreements, and due to the their ‘differences in wants [*khwahishat*]’.⁵³

For Muslims of his day, bigotry was the rule, and Muslims had done everything ‘to make Islam look bad in the eyes of the *ghair mazhab* [non-Muslims] and *ghair qaum* [other *qaums*]’.⁵⁴ Due to a lack of unity, he argued, Muslims had made no progress. This argument of a lack of unity, and the continuous infighting amongst Muslims, was a theme repeated perhaps far more than any other in the literature on the conditions of the Muslims in the nineteenth century, and has important implications for the relationship between colonialism and *zillat*, discussed in the last section of this chapter.

Munshi Sayyid Muhammad Hussain Sahib, *Aghlab*, Mohani, former editor of the *Koh-i-Nur* newspaper published from Lahore wrote his *Kitab Islam o Musalman*, in July 1886 in Lucknow of which 600 copies were published.⁵⁵ The author informed us that an earlier edition was published from Hyderabad which was now out of print and he had revised and expanded this Lucknow edition. The book was about an history of Islam and its prophets. However, the author related it to the current context of Muslims and Islam in India, and used Hali’s *Musaddas*’ opening verse to underscore his point:

If anyone sees the way our downfall passes all bounds, the way that
Islam, once fallen, dose not rise again,
He will never believe that the tide flows after every ebb, once he sees the
way our sea has gone out.⁵⁶

⁵³ Ibid, p. 21.

⁵⁴ This differentiation between *mazhab* and *qaum*, is an interesting one and the issue of what a *qaum* is, is taken up in some detail in Chapter Three. Moreover, this pamphlet by Haji Ismail, on its title page states, that by ‘*maujuda zamane ke musalman*’, he emphasises that he means only Muslims from Hindustan.

⁵⁵ Sayyid Muhammad Hussain *Aghlab*, *Kitab Islam o Musalman*, Lucknow, 1886.

⁵⁶ Christopher Shackle and Javed Majeed, *Hali’s Musaddas*, p. 103.

He wrote about the presently developed and advanced nations saying that once upon a time, the Muslims ruled them and had made greater advances, yet it was God's way of doing things, that these countries learnt from the Muslims and overtook them and achieved astonishing progress in the sciences and arts, and we were left behind. He wrote that the present day Muslims were caught in a strange mental bind:

they are dazzled by the splendour by the developments and progress of Europe, yet they are compelled by their prejudices and their conceit. They can neither do these things themselves and nor do they provide any help to their *qaum*. The elite [*umra*] is arrogant and haughty, drunk on its wealth. They cannot even fully help two poor souls from their *qaum*, but instead consider them extremely wretched and vile. How can one expect them to provide help to the *qaum*, and where will they help in the betterment and welfare of the *qaum*. And regarding the common people [*awam*], our *ulema* have kept them neither of this world nor of God's [*na din ka na dunya ka*]. Our *ulema*, through their poetic sermons and their alluring counsel, have not only put a devastating spell on them, but on members of the *qaum* and on respected followers, they have poured the poison of prejudice and conceit.⁵⁷

Maulvi Sayyid Ulfat Hussain a Shia from Lucknow who was taught by Master Ramchander and by Ajodhya Prasad, wrote a number of tracts about Shias in the 1870s, including one condemning the practice of *tabarra*⁵⁸ by some Shias. In another of his publications in the 1870s, *Risala Munāzara*, he wrote about the condition of the Muslims as follows:

Oh Muslims! You are in a position of great abasement; may God not create a situation where everyday you continue your decline, because we are not aware of our own precarious situation. Those who are a little happy are a little content with their material well-being, but they have no idea about the future, and no concern about the consequences, have no care about the consequences or about their wealth. You do not even care about your own close Muslim brothers, while thousands of your brethren are in a deplorable state; it is this habit that has lost you both the worlds, this selfishness and carelessness, that has

⁵⁷ Sayyid Muhammad Hussain *Aghlab*, *Kitab Islam o Musalman*, Lucknow, 1886, p. 42.

⁵⁸ *Tabarra* was the secret practice of Shias of cursing the first three Caliphs as some Shias believed that these three had usurped the right of Ali, the fourth Caliph revered by the Shia, to become the legitimate heir of Prophet Muhammad. See SAA Rizvi, *A Socio-Intellectual History of the Isna 'Ashari Shi'is in India*, Vols 1 and 2, Munshiram Manoharlal, New Delhi, 1986.

drowned us. It is sad that we do not even care about the education of our own children and our closest relations, so how will we be able to correct/rectify our *qaum*? For God's sake, respected sirs, consider this era of peace a great blessing and be grateful for it, and try to gain both worldly and spiritual benefit. This is the only time and the opportunity, or else you will just be left by the wayside.⁵⁹

The Report of the *Dastār Bandi* of the *Madrasa Faiz Āmm* in Kanpur⁶⁰ of March 1893 documented the speech of Maulana Abu Muhammad Abdul Haq as reported in the 21 March 1893 edition of *Najamul Akhbar* from Etawah in which there was a report of the *jalsa*. According to the report, more than 3,000 people were present on the first day of the *jalsa*, and that the *jalsa* was such a success, that before the start of the second day, as many as 2,000 people had already turned up! The Maulana who had no objection to Muslims learning English in order to acquire worldly progress, talked about the loss of a past. He argued that

we have lost countries due to the decadence of Muslim kings; there is much poverty, we continued to lose wealth and dignity and respect, and only tall claims (*zabāni davē*) remained. Although Hali and many others have written elegies, but every single person has become an elegy himself. Every house is faced with the same calamity which befell Hazrat Imam Hussain. What sort of qualities do the *ghair qaum* [non-Muslims, British] have that you lack? Muslims after acquiring their BAs and MAs are still not equal to an ordinary man from London.⁶¹

The Report mentions Munshi Mir Ikram Ali Sahib Ikram who 'has written a lot of *qaumi* poems, which have been published in newspapers; readers acquainted with his work would know that he is so concerned about the lowly condition of the Musalman brothers, and that how he reads a *marsia* with such great sadness and pathos [*kis qadr ranj aur afsos*] about the Muslims' previous splendour [*guzashta shan aur shaukat*], and he reads with such pain'.⁶² A long *marsia* and *musaddas* of Munshi

⁵⁹ Maulvi Sayyid Ulfat Hussain, *Risala Munāwara*, Matba-e Yousufi, Delhi, nd, (ca. 1878), p. 30-31.

⁶⁰ The madrasa was founded in 1859 by Mufti Inayat Ahmad. Report of the *Dastār Bandi* of the *Madrasa Faiz Āmm*, Kanpur, March 1893, p. 2.

⁶¹ Ibid, p. 7.

⁶² Ibid, p. 23.

Ikram is added to the Report, where he spoke about the condition of *zillat* in which the Muslims existed, about how those Muslims had become ‘angrez’ had lost their religion and their *millat* [sense of community], how they dressed so differently, making a distinction between two sets of Muslims.⁶³ The conditions of Muslims had fallen to such a nadir, Munshi Ikram wrote that: *Dushman ki ho na aisi jo hai hamari hālat / Loge ham par hans rahe haiñ, hum un ko ro rahe haiñ* (May our enemies be spared our condition/People are laughing at us, we just lament at their condition).⁶⁴

The Report also reproduced Munshi Muhammad Basheeruddin editor *Najamul Akhbar* Etawah, speech given to those who were graduating where he said: ‘you are aware of how Islam is coming under attack from outside (*beruni hamlē*), how philosophers of Europe are attacking Islam and how Islam is being damaged on account of that’.⁶⁵ Christians, Arya Samajists, Buddhists, Brahmo Samajists, all were said to be attacking Islam. Munshi Basheeruddin argued that Muslims had lost touch with their religion and were spending a great deal of time arguing and fighting with each other. He was clearly concerned about the minor divisive issues and differences which had emerged amongst different types of Muslims and about the huge amount of damage this was causing.

Muslims are practising less, they are less concerned about each other, and are losing touch with their religion; the whole *qaum* has become bankrupt and ignorant and stupid (*iflas aur jahl meñ tamam qaum mubtala ho gayee hai*). The sad thing is that rather than confront the opponents of Islam, instead they are infighting with each other over minor and frivolous issues and attack each other (*takfir karte hain*). They write books and magazines against each other, in their sermons they attack each other and create antagonism and ill-will against each other, they are arguing over splitting hairs (*zualin aur dualin ki awaz par jhagarte haiñ*) ...⁶⁶

⁶³ For the importance of dress in a colonial setting see, Emma Tarlo, *Clothing Matters: Dress and Identity in India*, Hurst & Company, London, 1996. Also see Seema Alavi, *Islam and Healing*.

⁶⁴ Report of the *Dastār Bandi*, p. 29.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid, p 32-33.

He continued,

in courts non-Muslims decide on controversial issues, which causes mutual hatred/enmity and causes a lot of money to be wasted, but also causes humiliation [*zillat*] and disgrace/dishonour to Islam. I have seen this Islami *zillat* with my own eyes in Etawah. The judge was of an opposing religion (*khilaf-e mazhab*) and wore a tilak on his forehead: his chair was on the dais/platform, and the Quran, *tafsir*, *hadis* and *fiqh* bundles that the ulema used to take [for presenting their case] used to lie below [on the ground] (*niche*). Well known ulema used to appear as witnesses and were cross-examined, and whether the *hadis* was correct or weak (*za'if*) was determined by the Hindu judge. Can there be any greater humiliation of Islam than this?⁶⁷

He added: 'I cannot bear to see these trials and tribulations (*nazuk hālāt*) upon Islam and Muslims in this age'.⁶⁸ A letter from Munshi Muhammad Abdul Ghafoor Sahib, Deputy Collector Faizabad, was read at the *dastār bandi* ceremony, in which he showed how much sympathy he had with his destroyed [*tabah-shuda*] *qaum*. In his letter read out he said that, 'the progress [*taraqqi*] and decay/descent [*tanazzul*] of a *qaum* depends on the *taraqqi* and *tanazzul* of their religion ... At the moment, on this earth, the extent of disagreements and disputes amongst Muslims are greater than that of any other *qaum*'.⁶⁹

Dipti Nazir Ahmad was better-known for his literary work than for his views about Muslims and Islam, although his contribution on the debate on the condition of Muslims, was equally important.⁷⁰ His books on fiction focusing on women and their education, won him many laurels and became important vehicles for attempting to change the backwardness of Muslims.⁷¹ For him too, Muslims were in a condition of crisis and had fallen from their earlier position, and were in decline (*zavāl*), and as he

⁶⁷ Ibid, p. 34.

⁶⁸ Ibid, p. 35.

⁶⁹ Ibid, p. 40.

⁷⁰ Numerous collections of Nazir Ahmad's *Lekcharo ka Majmua* (Collection of Lectures), on 'qaumi masail', were published.

⁷¹ See C M Naim, 'Prize-Winning Adab: Five Urdu books written in response to the Gazette Notification No. 791 (A) (1868)', in CM Naim, *Urdu Texts and Contexts: The Selected Essays of C M Naim*, Permanent Black, New Delhi, 2004.

reminded his audience at the Anjuman Himayat Islam in Lahore that when he was young ‘almost always a *sadru’s-sudur* (sub-judge) used to be only a Muslim; we used to think at that time that to be a *sadru’s-sudur* one had to be a Muslim. When I first heard of [someone] a Hindu becoming a *sadru’s-sudur* I was surprised that how could a Hindu become a *sadru’s-sudur*. How did I know that I would see the day where I am as surprised at finding a Hindu as a *sadru’s-sudur*, as I am that a Muslim is one.’⁷² This led him to suggest that ‘there is no *qaum* which is in such a precarious situation under the British as are the Muslims ... The cause cannot be the rules of British government, since they are the same for all. ... *We alone are responsible for our tabahi* (destruction) ... The reasons for this is that the Muslims have not changed with the times’.⁷³ After urging his Muslim brethren to recognise the changes that had taken place in the world and to change with the times, Nazir Ahmad ended his lecture by saying that, ‘I have very little hope that Muslims will take any action on my advice, where the Sunni, Shia, Wahabi, *Bid’ati*, *muqallid*, *ghair muqallid*, all one God’s people, the *ummat* (community/followers) of one Prophet, believers in one Quran, keep fighting with each other. How can one expect them to live with and be at peace with other *qaums*?’⁷⁴

Even Nawab Viqar ul Mulk, who was a key lieutenant to Sayyid Ahmad Khan at Aligarh, writing from Langham Hotel in Nainital as late as in 1894, was concerned about the fact that Muslims were not getting religious education in government schools and were losing touch with their co-religionists.⁷⁵ He made a number of arguments why it was necessary to teach children of all religions, but particularly Muslims, English education, as well as to give them some understanding of their own religion. He was concerned that English education was alienating them from their

⁷² *Risala Himayat Islam*, (yāni Janab Maulana Maulvi Hafiz Nazir Ahmad Khan Sahib ka lekchar), given at the Seventh Annual Ijlas of the Anjuman Himayat Islam, Matba-e Gulzar Muhammadi, Lahore, 1309 AH, p. 3. (800 copies).

⁷³ Ibid, p 5-6, emphasis added.

⁷⁴ Ibid, p. 41.

⁷⁵ Viqar ud Daulah Viqar ul Mulk Nawab Mushtaq Hussain Khan Bahadur Intisaar Jang Amrohvi, *Ek Tajvis: Bagharz jari karne mazhabi talim ke gormint kalijo aur iskoolo me*, 1894.

religious roots and hence this intervention was necessary. However, he was also conscious of the fact that there would be some concern on behalf of the government if they were to follow this suggestion. 'I wish to clarify and emphasise', he said, 'that through this education in government schools and colleges no religious scholars will be created, but my only purpose [to argue] is that students [do] not [remain] negligent of the issues of their sects. The situation today is that from one hundred English educated Muslims, [there is] not a single one who can make arrangements for the burial of a deceased and [nor can he] lead the burial prayers, issues which arise daily in our society'.⁷⁶ He argued that a 'few years of religious education should be enough to end the *jahālat* of the Muslim student about his religion'.⁷⁷ Viqar ul Mulk felt that thousands of Muslim boys, the progeny of the well-to-do, despite being educated, had not understood the spirit of the times even now, and read neither newspapers and nor had they had the opportunity to hear the lecture of any one sympathetic to the Muslims. The one thing they were united by was that after studying English, the boy no longer stayed religious [*namaz rozē ka nahin rehta*], because in such institutions where English is being taught there is no religious instruction, and this is why the Muslim well-to-do do not want to send their children to such institutions.⁷⁸

Many ulema and other Muslims while realising that the position of Muslims had fallen, and that they were no longer in an imagined or real position of power in which they may have been prior to the changes that occurred in British Indian political society, began to resent the British and chose not to interact with them.

The extent of anger and resentment of some of the ulema against the British can be gauged by the fact that some of them did not want to work in their service or even to meet with them, a very different story from those who graced their 'charmed social

⁷⁶ Ibid, p. 23.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid, p. 24.

circles’, a fact which also shows the differences that had been created amongst the Muslims in their way of responding to colonial rule. There is a mention of an incident in *Anvār-e-Razzaqia*, the biography of Hazrat Maulana Hafiz Shah Muhammad Abdul Razzaq *quddus-sara* Farangi Mahali (1818-89), where the biographer stated that when the Chief Commissioner of Oudh wanted to meet the Maulana, the Maulana said ‘that after the *ghadar* [1857 Mutiny] I have not seen the face of any *kafir harbi* [infidel ruler/warrior]: he should be told not to come to see me otherwise I will deal with him severely’.⁷⁹ When the Maulana’s father who worked for the Government died, he and his mother were entitled to pension of a considerable amount – Rs 250 ‘at half pay’ – but he refused to accept the pension. When the Governor of Madras wanted to meet him, the Maulana refused.⁸⁰ The Maulana was given the title of *Shamsul Ulema* by the British, but this honour was kept secret from him for a long while in fear that he would turn it down. He was very angry and upset and started crying when he eventually found out, and decided that he would not step out of his house and became more of a recluse.⁸¹ Although the Maulana’s father had worked for the British in some capacity, he said that after the Mutiny working for a Christian was *kufir* [sacrilege].⁸²

For many articulate members amongst the Muslims who were part of the times where the Muslims felt they were in a period of decline and were undergoing humiliation, changing cultural practices and symbols became important markers which helped them argue that their *qaum* had been brought to a *zillat ka maqām*. While there were many such commentators who observed and commented upon how and why the Muslims had fallen, there was none more active or articulate than Maulvi Sayyid Imdadul Ali Sahib, Deputy Collector Bahadur, Kanpur, who was one of Sayyid Ahmad Khan’s earliest and most vociferous critics. In 1290/1872 he published his

⁷⁹ Maulana Haji Shaikh Muhammad Altaf ur Rahman Sahib Qidwai, *Anvār-e-Razaqia*, 1347 1919, Lucknow, p. 22

⁸⁰ Ibid, p. 21.

⁸¹ Ibid, p. 22.

⁸² Ibid, p. 59.

Imdadul Afāq Ba-javāb Parcha Tahzibu'l-Akhlāq, as a forceful reply to the publication *Tahzibu'l-Akhlāq* started by Sayyid Ahmad Khan. The very last page of the text of Imdadul Ali's eighty-eight page diatribe against Sayyid Ahmad told us why he wrote this tract. His spirit and core beliefs about Islam were provoked, he said, and he became angry and immediately wrote this tract in reply to *Tahzibu'l-Akhlāq*. He continued by saying that *Tahzibu'l-Akhlāq* is not only far removed from Islam, but is actually blasphemous. In order to protect the beliefs of his Muslim brethren, he had this published and *was distributed free*.⁸³ Imdadul Ali also wrote, as he said, because 'there is a feeling without a doubt that our *qaum* is being ruined (*kharab hoti jati hai*) and that is why we should do something about it'.⁸⁴

Sayyid Ahmad Khan had written to many individuals seeking their help when he began to start his College. He also wrote to Maulvi Sayyid Imdadul Ali, Deputy Collector Kanpur, whom Hali called one of the two most important people who campaigned against Sayyid Ahmad. Imdadul Ali argued, that he had not given any particular opinion about the *madrasat-ul-Islam* but found that in the *Tahzibu'l-Akhlāq* No. 3 of 10 Sufr 1290, he had been listed as one of the College's opponents.⁸⁵ Imdadul Ali wrote that Sayyid Ahmad Khan listed seven types of opponents to the *madrasa*. Someone was called a '*khabis ul nafs* [wicked] and *bad-batin* [malicious]': some were called 'prejudiced Wahabis or Jews', while others were called 'selfish and ego-centred, bankrupt journalist, uncivilised', while still others were called 'foolish Muslims'.⁸⁶

Imdadul Ali cited numerous references to Sayyid Ahmad Khan's views from his writings in *Tahzibu'l-Akhlāq* No 3 of 10 Sufr 1290 and much of Imdadul Ali's reply

⁸³ Sayyid Imdadul Ali, *Imdadul Afāq Ba-javāb Parcha Tahzibu'l-Akhlāq*, Nizami Press, Kanpur, 1290/1872, p. 85. This publication is useful also because it contains a large number of interventions and fatwas made by numerous ulema, which gives a wide range of the type of opposition to Sayyid Ahmad Khan's planned College for Muslim men.

⁸⁴ Ibid, p. 9.

⁸⁵ Ibid, p. 2.

⁸⁶ Ibid, p. 3.

and criticism was based on this particular publication. He stated that Sayyid Ahmad wrote that he did not consider the worldly disciplines which were taught as having any usefulness, and did not even consider them to be correct, and that is why he wanted to teach those worldly disciplines which were useful and essential in this age, in order to become a 'proper person'.⁸⁷ Sayyid Ahmad wrote that if one did not know these disciplines, even a literate person of the *qaum* would be incomplete. Quoting Sayyid Ahmad, Imdadul Ali wrote that in Sayyid Ahmad's opinion, 'in this world, *qaumi* respect, *qaumi* welfare, *qaumi* well-being, *qaumi* being, are dependent on knowing these disciplines [this knowledge] and is also a means to gain sources of income, whether that is through government employment or trade or any other profession; in order to establish this learning the setting up of this *Dāru'l-Ulūm* is suggested'.⁸⁸

Imdadul Ali defended the existing and older disciplines and said that they were very useful for dealing with the world and understanding it. He argued that to 'think that these [existing] disciplines are not useful, is due to a lack of awareness/knowledge, and it is even worse to think that these disciplines are not correct'.⁸⁹ He made a plea to supporters of the proposed *madrasa* to see the times (*waqt aur zamana*) and to take mercy on the *qaum's* current situation and not to come into Sayyid Ahmad's slick and articulate pleas.⁹⁰

Questioning this desire by Sayyid Ahmad Khan to change the curriculum of what was taught, by replacing the older disciplines [*qadim ulum*] by more modern ones [*jadid ulum*], Imdadul Ali illustrated the example, that by wearing a jacket and trousers, eating seated at a table using a knife and fork, no Hindustani Shaikh or Sayyid, or a *bhangi* or *chamar*⁹¹ could become a European. Similarly, he argued, that

⁸⁷ Ibid, p. 50.

⁸⁸ Ibid, p. 54.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid, p. 15.

⁹¹ Low caste Hindus.

by becoming a committee member of the proposed *madrasa* and by hearing the name of some disciplines and by learning their names, an uneducated person would not become a scholar.

Imdadul Ali believed that government colleges were more than adequate for worldly teachings which were meant for government employment and were very useful for this purpose, and were also somewhat useful in the *zamindari* and administrative system prevalent for which government schools were adequate; that is why, he argued one does not see the need for a new *madrasa*. But, he argued,

all these disciplines are but to get a job [*pet palne ke liye*] and are not considered essential to make a proper person [*insān*]. Many of those of our *qaum* who are literate are very superficial and foolish and there is no civility in them; a person gets civility from old disciplines, both religious and non-religious, and *qaumi* respect and personal recognition are dependent on knowing these disciplines. And we cannot consider *qaumi* welfare, *qaumi* well-being and *qaumi* being on account of knowing any *ilm* or craft – lots of those who know English [*angrezi dān*] and those who know disciplines [*ulum*] and crafts are trapped in poverty and are contemptible and wretched, and thousands who don't know English, uneducated and not aware of these crafts are respected, affluent and with honour in the world.⁹²

Ulema from Kanpur also opposed Sayyid Ahmad's project for what it would make Muslims: 'all one thinks about this *madrasa*, is that its students will have one tattered English book under their arms and will be asking for charitable funds, or they will have a picture of one of the members [of the Committee] around their necks with dogs and puppies in their laps kissing their faces'.⁹³ They felt that the purpose of Sayyid Ahmad setting up *madrasatul ulum* and 'wearing a black alpaca over-coat and red hat and British shoes and socks, and sitting at a chair and table and eating with a knife', was meant to attempt to be equal to the Government and to dominate it.⁹⁴

⁹² *Imdadul Āfāq*, p. 56.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

After spending many pages on what constituted a Muslim dress and how Muslims ought to dress, Imdadul Ali moved on to Sayyid Ahmad Khan's planned dress code for the *madrasiatul ulum*.⁹⁵ He quoted Sayyid Ahmad writing in *Tahzibu'l-Akhlāq* No 3 10 Sufr 1290, that each student would have to come to the *madrasa* wearing socks and shoes. Imdadul Ali said that Muslims objected to this, saying that while this *madrasa* was supposed to be meant for Muslims, by imposing a condition of wearing *angrezi joota* [British shoes] it would repulse people from the Islamic dress as they would find the British dress pleasurable and pleasing. Imdadul Ali argued that on the basis of a *hadis*, Muslims had to be distinguished on the basis of their dress from the infidels and they had been prohibited to copy them and look like them.⁹⁶ There is a discussion on wearing a red hat and black alpaca over-coat as part of the dress code and why this was unacceptable [*naja'iz*] and difficult for students and particularly, poor students, to acquire.⁹⁷

Imdadul Ali citing some *hadis*, also said that according to the Hanafī religion, 'which is in the majority in Hindustan', the wearing of red clothes was not permitted. He argued that in the scheme of things for Sayyid Ahmad Khan's *madrasa*, Muslims were to eat on a raised platform; Muslims would object to this even though it was a raised platform 'because that too is like a little table, [and] this would make them like the Christians who eat at tables. In our country only they eat at tables and in the Islamic religion, Muslims have been prohibited to copy/resemble Christians and they have been commanded to oppose them'.⁹⁸ Imdadul Ali argued that Sayyid Ahmad said that he would have photographs taken and put in the *madrasa*: but this, according to Imdadul Ali, was against Islam and would result in angels staying away from those houses where there were pictures. He quoted numerous *hadis* stating that those who make pictures will burn in hell. Perhaps the extent of ridicule and

⁹⁵ See Emma Tarlo, *Clothing Matters*, although her book on sartorial politics, looks mainly at Hindu India and Hindu dress codes.

⁹⁶ *Imdadul Āfāq*, p. 49.

⁹⁷ *Ibid*, p. 49.

⁹⁸ *Ibid*, p. 50.

contempt for those who were imbibing 'British ways', was best illustrated by Imdadul Ali's statement: 'they urinate while standing so that they can become civilised'.⁹⁹

This cultural notion of *zillat* was emphasised further and repeatedly by Imdadul Ali in the bimonthly newspapers from Kanpur, *Nurul Āfāq*. In the 6 June 1874 issue of the *Nurul Āfāq*, when Imdadul Ali was Deputy Collector Aligarh, he wrote a reply to articles by Mazhar ul Haq and Maulvi Mahdi Ali Sahib, Deputy Collector, Mirzapur. Addressing these heretics/infidels (*mulhid*), he said that they had destroyed their faith for jobs worth a mere ten or twenty rupees. They had abandoned their Islamic dress, code and conduct, and wore jackets, pants, socks, shoes and red caps. he argued, and they stood and urinated, ate un-koshered chicken cooked in impure water, and ate in impure plates with a knife and fork, and sat and ate at tables. They tried to copy the Europeans to become more like them, he argued.¹⁰⁰ In this *Nurul Āfāq* article as well as in earlier one, Imdadul Ali also gave references to the tradition of why Muslims were not supposed to urinate while standing and how urinating while sitting, was the correct, '*Islami tariqa*'.¹⁰¹ Clearly, Imdadul Ali, like many others, but unlike the ulema, represented the idea of *zillat* in cultural terms, in how Muslims in Hindustan had given up their more traditional cultural mores – their *akhlāq* – by acquiring British (or European) ways, which according to some, was the manifestation, if not cause, of *zillat*.

The *Oudh Punch* published from Lucknow in Urdu in the middle of the 19th Century edited by Muhammad Sajjad Hussain, was one of the iconoclastic periodicals of its era, widely read and never ignored. It was a humorous paper, often very sarcastic.

⁹⁹ Ibid, p. 11. The exact phrase is: '*khare ho kar peshāb kar ke muhazzib bun sake*'; some of the more religious minded Muslims believed that they should be seated (or on their haunches) while urinating and would argued that this was based on the tradition of the Prophet. This question of the Prophet standing and urinating was also discussed in the 30 August 1873 and 6 June 1874 issues of *Nurul Āfāq* from Kanpur, by Imdadul Ali as part of a debate with other writers.

¹⁰⁰ *Nurul Āfāq*, Kanpur, 6 June 1874.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

though very serious in intent and subject matter. It was read by Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs and the British alike, and had Nawabs, Munshis, Divans, Pandits, Maulvis and various categories of government officials subscribing to it from all across north India.¹⁰² While it was a 'Muslim' newspaper, it was syncretic, where one did not see either pro-Muslim, pro-Islamic or anti-Hindu sentiments expressed, and with stories about Eid and Divali, both equally celebrated, stood out amongst the many newspapers in north India.¹⁰³ The *Punch* even wrote an article against its competitor, the *Oudh Ukhbar*, for writing anti-Muslim articles.¹⁰⁴ Akhtar Shahnshahi in his biography of newspapers written in 1888, listed 1,512 newspapers between 1840-80 and said that there was no better humorous newspaper than the *Oudh Punch* in entire Hindustan.¹⁰⁵ It had amongst its readers Maulana Shibli Naumani (b 1857) who was said to have read the paper with great enjoyment.¹⁰⁶

The *Oudh Punch* spoke of a very different culture in a very different language, witty and sarcastic. In 1878, with the redefinition of the term *tahzib* [culture/civilisation] being debated amongst Muslim writers, having major implications for how groups of Muslims reacted to colonial rule, and how they imagined themselves and each other, it carried an article which defined *tahzib*, in ways very similar to Imdadul Ali's, as follows:

To call one's countrymen semi-barbaric; to call one's elders 'old goose'; to wear a jacket and pants; to whistle while walking; to swirl one's umbrella and hit one's shoe [on the ground]; to urinate taking aim on the walls' of one's neighbours; to wear a cap with a tail; to enjoy eating potatoes; to drink wine; to eat a non-koshered chicken; to give up using

¹⁰² See *Oudh Punch* issues of 5 February, 26 March, 23 April, 11 June 30 July, *passim*, of 1878 for numerous lists.

¹⁰³ One of the more interesting aspects about the *Oudh Punch* was that unlike most, almost all, in fact, Urdu newspapers run by Muslims, which carried either only the *hijri* date on its mast-head, or both, the *hijri* and Georgian dates, the *Punch* did not carry the *hijri* date at all, and only carried the Georgian date.

¹⁰⁴ *Oudh Punch*, 10 August 1880.

¹⁰⁵ Akhtar Shahnshahi, *Savaneh Umri Akhbarat*, Part 1, Akhtar Press, Lucknow, 1888, p. 53.

¹⁰⁶ Muhammad Mahdi, *Tazkira Shamsul Ulema Maulana Shibli Marhum*, Shama Mission Press, Agra, 1925, p. 5.

oil and use the fat of a bear in one's hair; to get a foreign wife; reading a newspaper [in English] whether they know English or not ...¹⁰⁷

The *Oudh Punch* was also a major vehicle for attack on the Naturies (or *nechris*) and on Sayyid Ahmad Khan. There were numerous articles and letters to the Editor printed in it which criticised the *nechri* school of thought. For instance, F.H., sent a letter to the *Oudh Punch* with the published title 'New Religion' mocking the *nechri*. The letter asked what the *nechri* fiend was, replying that it was a new religion which had been invented by a 'Sayyid Sahib'. The letter stated that these days there was a lot of hue and cry about it, and when the letter writer asked: what were its principles? the answer given was that it really had no principles, and because of this façade, religious benefits accrued. The writer then wrote, that 'for fame and progress, this is a good scheme [i.e., not to reveal its principles]'.¹⁰⁸ Dozens of articles and poems – one entitled 'Natural Poetry' -- (and even cartoons) against the *nechri* appeared in the *Oudh Punch* in the issues of 1880 and it is identified specifically as an Aligarh-based ailment, where it could be found in its most articulate form. The newspaper gave a description of its followers as follows: '[they wear] a red cap with a tail; a cigarette holder in the mouth; ... with a dog alongside; wearing a jacket ... hating the natives, friendship with the British ... saying 'good morning' rather than 'salām' ...'.¹⁰⁹

This attack on the *nechris* and on their cultural values, accounting for the decline and humiliation of Muslims, continued in the *Punch* well into the 1880s. Usually blaming the *nechris* for bringing about this condition of slavery to the British, the *Oudh Punch* argued, that the Muslims were the most useless (*nikamme*) because they had recently lost their kingdom (*saltanat*), and that they were still living in an older world.¹¹⁰ In another attack on the Aligarh College, in an article entitled *Tahzib ki Tarraqqi* (The Progress of Culture), the *Punch* made the astonishing link between the

¹⁰⁷ *Oudh Punch*, Lucknow, 22 January 1878.

¹⁰⁸ *Oudh Punch*, Lucknow, 17 February 1880.

¹⁰⁹ *Oudh Punch*, Lucknow, 10 August 1880.

¹¹⁰ *Oudh Punch*, 29 January, 1885, p. 2.

condition of the Muslims' *zillat*, with the students being obsessed with playing cricket! In a sarcastic piece, it asked, 'Is it going to be this cricket which is going to correct the present and future condition of Islam?'.¹¹¹ (The reference here to Islam, rather than to Muslims, is interesting). In yet another of its many articles on the condition, decline and humiliation of Muslims, it stated the generally more common reasons for all the ills that had befallen Muslims, that this was on account of their disunity.¹¹²

Magazines like *Muraqqa-e 'Ālam*, edited by Maulvi Hakim Muhammad Ali, published from Hardoi in the 1890s, and *Dilguzār*, edited by Maulvi Muhammad Abdul Haleem Sharar, published from Lahore in the late 1880s from the Mercantile Press, whose proprietor was Lala Diwan Chandar, were not typical religious monthly magazines, but journals of social commentary for the more sophisticated and discerning reader, in some ways very 'liberal', modern, and open-minded in approach. They had a far greater vision and scope in their selection of articles and included articles on history, literature, as well as fiction. *Dilguzār* carried articles on Spain and the Arabs and on the history of Medina,¹¹³ one entitled 'The development of knowledge amongst Muslims in the past',¹¹⁴ a number of articles on the early history of Baghdad, numerous articles on Damascus,¹¹⁵ as well as some articles by Maulana Shibli Naumani. Similarly, *Muraqqa-e 'Ālam*, had articles on Ghalib, Modern Egypt, Damascus, magnets, electricity, Science, Chemistry, and essays on Muslim historical figures, but was not an 'Islamic' magazine.¹¹⁶

Dilguzār was a great supporter of the *Anjuman daru'l-salam* (the Muhammadan National Welfare Fund) based in Lucknow, whose Secretary was a Persian teacher from the Church Mission School, Maulvi Muhammad Sajjad Sahib. The Anjuman,

¹¹¹ *Oudh Punch*, 7 May, 1885.

¹¹² *Oudh Punch*, 5 November, 1885.

¹¹³ Both in the *Dilguzār*, Lahore, May 1889.

¹¹⁴ *Dilguzār*, Lahore, January 1888.

¹¹⁵ Three in the 1888 Volume alone.

¹¹⁶ *Muraqqa-e 'Ālam*, Hardoi, 1896.

according to the journal, within a short time had created much fervour in Hindustan's Islamic world (*Hindustan ki Islami dunya meñ ek josh paida kiya*) and had created 'qaumi' awareness. But it also complained that the ulema had put pressure on the Anjuman and it began to fall apart: 'because of our *qaum*'s lackadaisical attitude and because of our Muslim brethren's carelessness, all our Muslim brethren have become weakened (*be-dast-o-pa*); on account of this, the Anjuman had also weakened'.¹¹⁷

For my purposes here, what is surprising, however, is that an apparently literary and historical, non-religious journal, was also part of the discussion of the Muslim condition of how they had fallen and, particularly, how the Muslims were *themselves* responsible *for their own* humiliation, suggesting perhaps, that the recognition that Muslims had fallen to the *zillat ka maqām*, was far more pervasive than we imagine. Moreover, since *Dilguzār* was a more sophisticated journal, its use of example, particularly from history to make this point, was interesting. *Muraqqa-e Ālam* argued that Muslims suffered from disrespect, penury and misfortune, because they had strayed from the original path of an Islam of the times of the Prophet.¹¹⁸

In its October 1889 issue, *Dilguzār* carried an article entitled 'Humare Mazhabi Jhagre' (Our Religious Disputes), and argued that because of the dispute between the Shia and Sunni, the Muslims had brought upon themselves humiliation in the eyes of the others. It said that the dispute between the Shia and Sunni started 1300 years ago over the succession of the Prophet, and that Muslims had still not been able to resolve this issue which continued to increase everyday, and nor would they ever be able to resolve these issues. The magazine argued that the times are such, that 'the enemies of Islam can stand on street corners and can publicly insult our Prophet, but our defenders of the faith are not interested in these people for they are too embroiled in their own disputes'.¹¹⁹ It argued that neither the Sunnis nor the Shias have

¹¹⁷ *Dilguzār*, Lahore, March 1889.

¹¹⁸ *Muraqqa-e Ālam*, Hardoi, 1896, p. 24.

¹¹⁹ *Dilguzār*, Lahore, October 1889.

anything of their grand past left. These disputes and fights between the Shias and the Sunnis, *Dilguzār* argued, did not benefit any of 'us', and instead damaged 'our' religion further. For *Dilguzār*, these Shia-Sunni disputes had made Islam become *zalil* in the eyes of the others, and it had lost everything in the past through its own hands – *khud apne hāth se khoya*. Sadly, *Dilguzār* lamented, that even now both these groups continued to fight with the same ignorance and the same stupidity (*jahālat aur himāqat*) as they did in the past.¹²⁰

Response and Agency: Emerging from *Zillat*

One response by Muslim scholars to the condition of *zillat* later in the 19th Century was, the writing of biographies, books, accounts and histories of the Muslim Golden Age and of north India's Muslim heroes. One school of thought amongst the Muslims perceived the fall to have occurred on account of Muslims turning away from their religion, and so they wrote books highlighting the ideas and exploits of (religious) Muslims in the past, both from India and Arabia. Two such books published at about the same time, give the reason why their authors thought it important to write.

Ibn Hanif, a student of the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College in Aligarh, wrote his *Risala Musanifān Islam* in 1895, which was an unusual book since it contained biographical notes on Muslim writers from Arabia (rather than simply Muslim ulema, as was the trend) between the fourth and ninth Islamic Century (10-13 CE).¹²¹ This book listed a number of books which each of the writers wrote, and Ibn Hanif gave his reasons for writing his book by saying that foresight is particularly important for a *qaum* that has lost its place and purpose. He argued that the activities and accomplishments of a successful *qaum* raise the spirits of a 'saddened people'. By learning from the misfortunes of its past and by overcoming its handicaps, a

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Ibn Hanif, *Risala Musanifān Islam*, Khadim ul Qayum Press, Lahore, 1895.

people would once again begin to progress, and he argued that the misfortunes of 'our ancestors tell us how we could improve our lives'. Ibn Hanif informed his readers that his book included the names of the best known writers from the world of Islam who had written numerous books and which were considered authoritative texts meant for their descendents. However, he lamented, that there were very few amongst the Muslims who could learn from them, for they did not have that spirit, that determination or that zeal.¹²²

A better known text was the 1897 *Tazkira-e Ulema Hāl*, by Maulvi Muhammad Idris of Lucknow (b 1275/1858) which mapped the life-stories of 466 ulema of north India.¹²³ The encyclopaedic *Tazkira* had entries of their names, their year and place of birth, who their teachers and students were, where the ulema migrated, and taught, etc. On Hali, Maulvi Idris wrote: 'it is unlikely that anyone in Hind is not familiar with him';¹²⁴ writing about one of the ulema from Delhi, he wrote: 'His home was Delhi, which is a ruin [nowadays] and reminds us of the magnificence of the Empire of Islam'.¹²⁵ However, Maulvi Muhammad Idris stated that in the course of research for his book, he wrote hundreds of letters all over India trying to get information about the ulema mentioned in it, but said that his enthusiasm was thwarted by a lack of response and appreciation for his work. Only seventeen ulema gave him help and lists of people and offered advice and suggestions.

Maulvi Idris presented his book to the Muslim *qaum* but regretted the fact that Islam in Hind had become so 'poor and friendless, forlorn'. The Islam which came with a lot of fanfare from Arabia to Hind and consolidated itself as a ruling power, had fallen from its zenith to its disgraceful nadir. In general, Maulvi Idris wrote, belief and faith receded from the hearts of Muslims and because of this, God snatched away the blessings of Islam. Islam, he said, existed in the population merely in name, but

¹²² Ibid., p. 1.

¹²³ Maulvi Muhammad Idris, *Tazkira-e Ulema Hāl*, Naval Kishore Press, Lucknow, 1897.

¹²⁴ Ibid, p. 14.

¹²⁵ Ibid, p. 21.

even in these trying times. God sent someone to awaken those who slept in their stupor.¹²⁶

It was customary in that era for books to carry an announcement on the last page of the text often by another writer – or the publisher – about the book or something related to it. Maulvi Muhammad Ahsan Sahib Nigrami who, the blurb stated, ‘is a well-known *alim*’ had written a paragraph at the end of *Tazkira*.¹²⁷ The Maulana added his woeful lament about a lost era when Islam’s pendant flew over Granada and the Indus, when even the greatest rulers trembled with fear hearing the name of Islam, but now the wind had changed, he lamented, and now no one heard of the sword of Islam or the cry which resonated across the world. In Hind, he went on, things were far worse, where hypocrisy, malice and deceit left asunder the ‘garden of Islam’.¹²⁸ However, he said, there were those who then brought the drifting ship ashore, and established the Nadvatul Ulema, and Maulana Idris wrote this *Tazkira* and showed great and pious men the way to getting together. Both Maulana Idris and Maulana Ahsan spoke about the despondency and downfall of Islam in north India, yet end their discourse on a positive note saying that now they had found a solution to their problem in the guise of the Nadvatul Ulema in Lucknow.

While some Muslim scholars and ulema did not clearly articulate the reasons for the Muslim decline and why the fall had taken place, and did so often in only vague terms, and in presenting a solution or a response did not explicitly define a role for themselves personally and may have alluded to the fact that they ought to lead a movement for Muslim revivalism, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian, in the Punjab, did not suffer from any such illusions. In a pamphlet in 1893 he gave a very clear

¹²⁶ It is interesting to note that the list of ulema in *Tazkira-e Ulema Hāl*, included Altaf Hussain Hali, Maulana Shibli Naumani, ‘Abdul Halim Sharar and even *Dipti Nazir Ahmad*, but not Sayyid Ahmad Khan.

¹²⁷ *Tazkira*, back flap.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

idea of what his particular role was at that juncture.¹²⁹ Mirza Ghulam Ahmad informed every Muslim that they should awaken for the cause of Islam because Islam was in the throes of such severe discord and dissension, and everyone should help it as it was suffering. He then wrote, ‘I have come [into this world] for this purpose and God has granted me the knowledge of the Quran and I know the truth of this book, so come towards me so that you can also benefit from the blessings of this book ...’.¹³⁰ (Earlier in the tract he made no bones about his purpose in life and said that in each century God chose an heir to his ulema, and ‘in this Century God has sent me to rectify the ills of our times’).¹³¹ He ended by saying that ‘Islam is in a state of extreme crisis and the enemies of Islam have surrounded it from all sides ... In such times we should show our belief with sympathy and find our place amongst the true believers of God’.¹³²

In his *Risala Josh Mazhabi*, Haji Ismail, examined early Islamic history to draw lessons for the condition of Muslims at the end of the nineteenth century, and made some very interesting suggestions.¹³³ He used Islamic history to show that ‘we are proud of the progress the Muslims made’, and that Muslims can once again make progress and the situation was not as distressing as it seemed to be, but this progress could only be acquired after the condition of the Muslims was corrected and they amended their ways.¹³⁴ He argued, that although he found it insulting, reluctantly, one had to accept the fact that Muslims in Hindustan, in which they were once the victorious *qaum*, now lived as the conquered *qaum*. However, he argued, that if we saw with open eyes, the conditions in which the Muslims lived now, they were, in fact, a great blessing in their favour.

¹²⁹ Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, *Barkāt ud Dua*, Steam Press, Lahore, 1893. It is interesting to note that this is the Third Edition of this tract and 1,000 copies were printed in this print run suggesting that it had already been widely circulated and read.

¹³⁰ Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, *Barkāt ud Dua*, Steam Press, Lahore, Third Edition, 1893, p. 30.

¹³¹ Ibid, p. 19.

¹³² Ibid, p. 31.

¹³³ Honourable Haji Muhammad Ismail Khan Sahib, Rais Aligarh, *Risala Josh Mazhabi*, Muhammadan Press Aligarh, ca 1895, pp 79, 1000 copies.

¹³⁴ Ibid, p. 56.

Haji Ismail, typical of many others who also saw much benefit from the presence of the British in India and had a lot of praise for the British rulers, said that 'I am saying over and over again that I prefer being ruled (*mahkumiat*) rather than ruling, because of the *qaum* that rules us; it is a very gracious and civilised *qaum* and its directives (*ahkām*) want to uproot our stupor (*kahili*) and they do not want to leave us until they make us into useful human beings (*kār-āmad insān*)'.¹³⁵ He was amongst those who did not see the *zillat ka maqām* necessarily as a catastrophe, and was amongst those Muslims, many of whom were in some ways partial to the Aligarhist view of reemerging from the past, who felt that British rule should be seen as an opportunity. He argued:

There is no doubt that the country is very fortunate that is ruled by the *qaum* that lives in the island of Britain; and fortunate are those Muslims who although have lost their kingdom and their honour (*izzat*), but God almighty has given them in the care of the British nation. I am not praising them (British) out of false praise, but history and understanding (*mushāhada*) prove that that *qaum* which is in their support (*himāyat*) will prosper in freedom (*āzadi*) and education (*talim*).¹³⁶

Like so many of his generation and position – he was after all a Member of the Legislative Council – Haji Ismail felt that the only way to make Muslims progress (*taraqqi-yafṭa*) was to give them western education (*ulum maghrabi*).¹³⁷ He felt that there was no better enterprise or endeavour, than the *qaum* taking education into its own hands. Haji Ismail criticised the ulema, and said that they were unaware (*ghāfil*) and had limited vision. The ulema, he argued, had no affinity towards English education, and because of this would lose out: 'the modern philosophy that is available in western languages is not available in any eastern language, and our ulema are not familiar with real conditions (*asli hāl*)'.¹³⁸ He felt that Muslims could

¹³⁵ Ibid, p. 57.

¹³⁶ Ibid, p. 58.

¹³⁷ Ibid, p. 59.

¹³⁸ Ibid, p. 66.

rise in their position because of education, but then made the rather surprising remark, that there had been no attention or initiative towards this. This coming from someone who was in favour of English education based in a city in which an institution had been doing precisely what he suggested, for over a quarter century, is most surprising, a point discussed in the Section below.

A mention of the Report of the *Dastār Bandi* of the *Madrasa Faiz Āmm* in Kanpur in March 1893 has already been made above. In front of 3,000 people, Maulana Hakeem Shah Muhammad Sulaiman Sahib (of Phulwari Sharif, District Patna), a disciple of Maulana Maulvi Abdul Hai *marhum* Lukhnawai, made a speech which was also reproduced in the newspaper. The Maulana was considered to be a scholar and someone concerned with the plight of the Muslims; he was also an Honorary Magistrate and Municipal Commissioner. He said that this *jalsa* was being held so that the *din-e-Muhammadi* (Islam) could achieve progress. The main point that he emphasised in his speech, was that ‘all the great philosophers have accepted that in the world the only thing of importance is *ilm* (knowledge)’.¹³⁹

Not surprisingly, education/*talim* and knowledge/*ilm* were the main themes and at the heart of the speeches of those who spoke at the graduation (*dastār bandi*) of the students of the *madrasa*. In his speech, also reproduced in the newspapers, Maulana Abu Muhammad Abdul Haq had said: ‘*angrezi parho aur dunyavi taraqqi karo: is meñ koi harj nahin; Islam tang mazhab nahin hai keh hum angrezi ki talim ya dunyāvi taraqqi se mana karain, lekin kuch ākhirat ki bhi fikr kijye*’ ([you should] study English and gain in worldly stature, there is nothing wrong in this; Islam is not a narrow [minded] religion that we should stop [you] from English education or worldly progress, but you should [at least] think about the Day of Judgment).¹⁴⁰ He warned his audience about the values of the newly educated Muslims who were only

¹³⁹ *Dastār Bandi* of the *Madrasa Faiz Āmm*, p. 5.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid*, p. 6.

interested in frittering their lives away making merry, and even after acquiring their 'BAs and MAs' were still 'not equal to an ordinary man from London'.

Maulvi Muhammad Habibur Rahman who spoke about the *qaum ki ghaflat* (negligence) with regard to *madrassa* education by stating that the *madrassa* had not received a single penny from the *umra-e-qaum* (nobles, lords, grandees), felt that 'the right education which gives Muslims values, fear of God, honour, respect, power, pure and correct knowledge, etc, can be only given in Arabic'.¹⁴¹ He quoted a recent speech of the Lt Gov Charles Crosthwaite saying that in the modern education given in Hind (*Hind ki jadid talim*) the students repeated what was taught without knowing what they were saying – without understanding – and that this education had created a *nim-talimiyasta firqa* (half-educated group) which could only undertake government jobs and could not find any other form of employment. He argued that this modern education was making Muslims suspicious of their own *ulum* (knowledge/disciplines). He hurriedly concluded, that 'please do not think that I am against modern *ulum*. In my opinion there is no alternative to modern education and the way to *izzat* (honour) in the world is through European *ulum*, but I am not so infatuated by them that in my interest I eliminate my own *ulum*'.¹⁴²

Munshi Muhammad Basheeruddin editor *Najamul Akhbār* Etawah, talking to those who were graduating reminded the students that they had taken this path because of their beliefs, and due to the traditions of the Prophet, because,

if you wanted worldly respect and worldly dignity and wanted to accumulate wealth and wanted to become rich and wealthy, you would have definitely studied English and instead of becoming Maulvis, you would have taken BA and MA degrees, passed engineering exams or passed your barristery exam and become lawyers, and would have amassed a lot of worldly wealth and goods. But despite the fact that you knew all this and you knew that there is no worldly gain/benefit in reading Arabic, you still studied Arabic. This is

¹⁴¹ Ibid, p. 12.

¹⁴² Ibid, p. 13.

obvious that you kicked aside worldly prestige (*dunyāvi azmat ko lāt mārte huwe*) you showed through your practice and have demonstrated, that amongst the Muslims in this era, there are such people who consider the world insignificant in front of *din*.¹⁴³

Talking about the great disunity amongst Muslims which was a key cause for the crisis confronting them, Munshi Bashiruddin emphasised that it was the duty of the graduating students from the *madrassa* 'to support and patronise Islam and work for the welfare of Muslims' by working on 'those issues on which there is general agreement rather than controversial and disputed issues'.¹⁴⁴ He continued: 'rather than building new *madaris*,¹⁴⁵ you should further develop and consolidate the existing *madaris* as this would be preferable. You should work for the improvement of existing *madaris* so that you can think of ways and means to prevent the irreligious ideas that are spreading amongst the *angrezi-khwān* (English-speaking, English-educated) Muslims and can be rectified'.¹⁴⁶

While there were many forms and types of responses to the conditions of the Muslims in the late nineteenth century, many of which recognised the *zillat ka maqām* where Muslims had fallen to and wanted to do something worthwhile to improve the conditions of their brethren, perhaps there was none so clear as the mission statement of the Lahore-based Anjuman Himayat Islam, founded on 22 September 1884 with Qazi Hamiduddin as its first President.¹⁴⁷ The Anjuman had a flourishing and important relationship with the leaders of the Muslims at Delhi and Aligarh, and Sayyid Ahmad Khan and *Dipti* Nazir Ahmad, amongst many others, spoke at the Anjuman on many occasions. In fact, *Dipti* Nazir Ahmad had spoken at both the Fifth and the Seventh Annual gatherings of the Anjuman, and both lectures

¹⁴³ Ibid, p. 32.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Plural of *madrassa*.

¹⁴⁶ *Dastār Bandī*, p. 35.

¹⁴⁷ Ayesha Jalal gives the date of the founding of the Anjuman as 1866. This is obviously incorrect. See her *Self and Sovereignty: the Muslim Individual and the Community of Islam in South Asia since c.1850*, Sung-e-Meel, Lahore, 2000, p. 53. Various internet sites give different dates for the formal start of the Anjuman, ranging from March 1884 to sometime in 1885.

were eventually published at the Anjuman's press subsequently.¹⁴⁸ The Preface to his lecture delivered at the Fifth Annual session began with the following: '*ahle Islam ki hālat har tarah se qābil-e reham hay*' (from every aspect, the condition of the *ahle Islam* [Muslims] is pitiable).¹⁴⁹

The reasons for establishing the Anjuman were clearly stated in the publicity flap printed in both the lectures and were based upon the conditions that afflicted Islam and Muslims. The Anjuman felt that in the past, well-meaning Muslims, who on account of their religious beliefs and practices, their honesty and honour, their deportment and their ability, and numerous other merits and because of their wealth and knowledge used to be the *ustād* (teacher[s]) even of those who were the opponents of Muslims.¹⁵⁰ Yet, today, it was the progeny of those people who were completely *jahil* (unlettered, uneducated, unrefined), were unskilled and far away from the discipline of their religion.¹⁵¹ As a result of this new generation of *jahil* Muslims, those who worship idols and do not even have any written testament about the truth of their religion, all stood opposed to Islam, 'and due to our *be-ilmi* (lack of knowledge) and *na-liaqati* (lack of ability) we do not even have the *jur'at* (courage) to reply to them. The Christians, whose current methods even a person with a little intelligence can prove wrong, say hundreds of derogatory things about our Prophet in front of common people. But it is tragic that we cannot even answer their base and stupid objections'.¹⁵² According to the Anjuman, this was happening on the one hand, while 'in mission schools, regarding our beloved Prophet and our religion, they make the boys (students) say all those appalling things, which it is even forbidden to listen to, (leave alone to speak). But just look at our *be-ghairati* (shamelessness), that

¹⁴⁸ Maulvi Hafiz Nazir Ahmad Sahib, *Asbāt Asul Islam*, Anjuman Himayat Islam Lahore, Matba-e Gulzar Muhammadi, Lahore, ba-ehtemām Munshi Gulzar Muhammad, owner press, 1892, 800 printed; and *Risala Himayat Islam*, (yāni Janab Maulana Maulvi Hafiz Nazir Ahmad Khan Sahib ka lekchur), given at the Seventh Annual *Ijlas* of the Anjuman Himayat Islam, 1309 AH, Matba-e Gulzar Muhammadi, Lahore, 800 copies.

¹⁴⁹ *Asbāt Asul Islam*, p. 1.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid*, inner flap.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid*, inner flap.

¹⁵² *Ibid*, inner flap.

we cannot even make arrangements to protect our children from this misfortune'.¹⁵³ It argued that even the Muslim girls in these schools were being targeted and spoilt, in the pretext to educate them, but 'we do not even have the courage to save our girls from these Christian women who lead them astray'.¹⁵⁴

The Anjuman stated that on account of being unskilled and uneducated, all the despicable professions were mostly Muslim: thieves, loafers, lay-about, destitute, as were eunuchs, gypsies, liars, tricksters, *dome*, were all Muslim. Muslims were also uneducated, uncultured, unrefined and rude. It was the Muslims who did not study worldly disciplines; it was Muslims who did not prosper on higher posts; and it was Muslims who were selling off their properties. By abandoning the purer principles of Islam, according to the Anjuman, even those *qaums* 'who not long ago started wearing clothes' had begun to realise that Islam was not beneficial to the human race. Hence,

in both worldly and religious affairs, in both conditions, [we] are getting *past* (abased) and *zalil* (dishonoured, humiliated). But despite this, [we] are separated from each other, and rather than work collectively to get out of this condition, [we] are getting into *firqas* (sects) and are intriguing against each other. But through our own very hands, we are completely destroying our Muslim brothers and are ourselves attacking Islam itself.¹⁵⁵

In order to get rid of these features amongst the Muslims, the Anjuman Himayat Islam was founded, which had the following purposes/objectives:

1) To reply with respect, both in writing and through speeches, to the opponents of the revered religion of Islam; 2) to arrange for the education of Muslim boys and girls so that they are protected of the influence of the non-Muslim's religious education; 3) to provide education to poor, orphaned, destitute children, so that they do not abandon their faith and religion and live a life of neglect and suffer Hell; 4) to give the desire to the *ahle Islam* to

¹⁵³ Ibid, inner flap.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid, inner flap.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid, inner flap.

undertake correction in their life-styles. and to give them culture and manners, and the desire to quest for both, worldly and religious disciplines. and to give them the desire for greater unity: 5) to inform the *ahle Islam* of the positive benefits of loyalty to the British government; 6) in order to fulfil these objectives, [the Anjuman will] arrange for lectures, publications and magazines to be published.¹⁵⁶

This interpretation of the conditions and state of the Muslims by the group that founded the Anjuman Himayat Islam, is important to our understanding of how different groups responded to the state they were in. The Anjuman set up a number of schools, mainly in the Punjab, as well as the Islamia College in Lahore in 1892. Moreover, the Anjuman became an important focus for inter-religious debates, as is evident from a Report of a grand debate between different religions held in December 1896, which some 7-8,000 people attended, and as many as 1,425 copies of the debate were published.¹⁵⁷

Making Sense of *Zillat*

An examination of the writings of different groups of Muslims in the second half of the nineteenth century about their own *qaum*'s condition, in 'times like these', is revealing for a number of important reasons. Perhaps most important is the fact that while all realised that the great Muslim *qaum* was at a particularly low ebb, at a *zillat ka maqām*, and had been humiliated and disgraced yet, they did not apportion blame on anyone other than themselves. While the British were the new rulers and Hindus had become more prominent in public positions often affecting and debasing Muslim traditions and values yet, neither community was blamed for the condition to which the Muslims had fallen. The Muslim *qaum* was held responsible for its own *zillat ka maqām*. And in particular, it was the theme of a complete lack of unity amongst Muslims which was at the core of this crisis. Not just the ulema from different sects and from varied persuasions, but also some of the supposedly 'moderate modernising

¹⁵⁶ Ibid, inner flap.

¹⁵⁷ Anjuman Himayat Islam, *Report Jalsa Āzam Mazahib*, Lahore, 26-29 December 1896, 1897/1315.

Muslims', also argued that Muslims had been humiliated and disgraced on account of their constantly fighting with each other. or as one opinion stated, 'by our own hands'.

Two other streams which explained why Muslims were where they were, were based on the notion that, for one group, enough change had not taken place, and that the Muslims had failed to adapt to the new conditions; while for another set of Muslims, the Muslims were themselves to blame for their own downfall because they had acquired non-Muslim, 'British', lifestyles and ideas. While cultural practices, dress, how they ate, etc, determined the differences between these two groups, the most important arena where the battle between these two groups was fought, was that of education. For one group, it became necessary to bring about reform amongst the Muslims in what they learnt, so that they could become more 'useful' in the world; for the other, this moment of *zillat* required a turning back, returning to a tradition, to older, more fundamental beliefs and practices.

An important aspect of the *zillat ka maqām* was that it caused a further divide between groups of Muslims, with education and knowledge being one field in which the future for the Muslim soul was fought. Although most groups of Muslims recognised that they were in a pitiable condition, and that they needed education to rise from this condition, the nature and purpose of education differed sharply. For some, education was a means to emerge from this catastrophe by reclaiming government jobs which in the past had been perceived to be the right of the Muslim *ashrāf*. Education meant jobs and that meant access to the new *darbār* of the British. For others interested in educating their brethren, education meant knowledge and understanding, *ilm*, not the desire and ambition for jobs and acceptance. While one group emphasised *dunyāvi ulum* ('worldly' disciplines) the other focused on *dini talim* (religious instruction), with the same goal, to emerge from this abysmal *zillat ki hālat*. The intention was the same, but the methods, path and direction, very different.

Another important revelation in examining the writings of Muslims is, that while a glorious past was important to many, this was not the past of their immediate (Indian) history of the last three centuries, but the past of Arabia a thousand years ago, in the 7th and 8th centuries CE. What appears odd, is that for those whom *zillat* had occurred on account of their abandoning earlier practices, the Muslim Indian past seemed almost absent. The spate of books in Urdu about the glorious period of Islam in the first century after the Prophet Muhammad, testified to this fact, and many religious scholars found salvation in returning to a pristine, original, Islam. This perhaps also helps to explain the surge in Islamic reformist movements in the last quarter of the nineteenth century across north India. Recognising this condition of *zillat*, it acted as an instrument for young learned men to set up their own *madrasas* to emerge from this period of grave crisis.

Muslims had to recognise that they were at rock bottom in order to act to emerge from their lowest depths. It is evident that there was this recognition across different classes of those who could read and write, and this gave an impetus to the agency for reform. Different groups of people understood the causes of their *zillat* differently, and responded the best they could. This meant that some set up grand colleges where 'British education' was taught, while others set up institutions where their traditional beliefs and practices could be protected, in times like these, and turned 'inwards'. Others, such as the Anjuman Himayat Islam in Lahore were somewhere in-between and adopted to new challenges by moving with the times, yet protecting what they felt were their core beliefs and values. Along with *zillat*, also went its paired concept of *taraqqi*, progress, where, different groups of Muslims invoked different notions of progress in response to *zillat*.

What is most surprising, perhaps, is the observation that the *zillat ka maqām* persisted long enough till the very end of the nineteenth century, if not longer, two generations after formal British rule and after the establishment of a number of Muslim and Islamic institutions in response to the *zillat ka maqām* had been set up

and had been functioning. With Nawab Viqar ul Mulk writing in 1894 almost two decades after the founding of the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental College, which had been established precisely to deal with the deplorable condition of the Muslims, questioning the nature and type of education available for Muslims, one is led to believe, that many Muslims had still not emerged from the *zillat ka maqām* in which they had been pushed at some point in the past, and nor did they know how to get out of this condition.

For the purposes of this thesis, this *zillat ka maqām*, acts as a canvas which determined the condition of the Muslim *ashrāf*, very broadly, as a backdrop, which possibly helps explain the considerable energy which the *ashrāf* found to reclaim their agency which manifested itself in different forms and mechanisms to acquire *taraqqi*. The recognition that Muslims were themselves responsible for the condition of *zillat*, largely because they were so disunited, leads on to the next chapter on the continued theme of the nature of disunity and fracture amongst the broad and large body of the north Indian Muslims. Who a Muslim was, was not just a question for the census for the British, but perhaps more so for Muslims themselves, who created their own particular categories and definitions, often excluding huge majorities of their co-religionists in their definition of *musalman*. It is to this issue of labelling, identification and exclusion, to which I now turn.

Postscript: *Zillat* as Teleology?

It is impossible to put a date to that moment when Muslims in India recognised that they were at the point of *zillat*. This is not surprising, for the condition of being humiliated and disgraced, as well as decline (*zavāl, tanazzul*) which led to the *zillat ka maqām*, was a process, and not a one-off event, even though 1857 could be considered to be a dividing marker. The problem of dating the start of the fall is particularly difficult, for as kingdoms decayed, other Muslim kingdoms rose. While some learned and articulate men may have felt that their community was at its lowest

ebb, other Muslims may have celebrated the rise of new, smaller, principalities. Hence, for the poet Mir Taqi Mir, the decline had begun sometime in the eighteenth century, while for Shah Abdul Aziz, it was the fact that in Delhi in the early nineteenth century the imam of the Muslims wielded no power, and the real power rested with Christian officers, which was the moment of the *zillat ka maqām*. Also, the nature of *zillat* mattered much to different people: for some it was the loss of legal authority or of decision making power. For the poet Asadullah Khan Ghalib, it was far more personal, where he felt humiliated and disgraced when he was not received appropriately (by his standards) by an English official who knew him well, when he had gone for an interview for a desperately needed teaching job. And this was 1842, when ‘Ghalib’s Delhi was a Mughal garden undergoing its final ‘spring’ before the ‘autumn’ of the Revolt’s aftermath destroyed it forever’.¹⁵⁸

Two of Altaf Hussain Hali’s (1837-1914) three most important publications make interesting reading when we try to locate the moment when *zillat* dawned upon Muslims. It is very probable that Muslims of all positions recognised that their position had changed markedly after 1857. They must have felt humiliated and disgraced on account of the changes that had resulted in them losing position, access, and face, as is testified by their writings. Yet, Hali’s *Musaddas* written in 1879 and his *Yadgār-e Ghalib* published in 1897 more than four decades after he visited Delhi for the first time, provide interesting reading.

The theme of *zillat*, that of the utter humiliation and disgrace of India’s Muslims, must have played on the mind of the poet Altaf Hussain Hali for at least half a century. Hali wrote his *Musaddas* in 1879. Yet his *Musaddas* had not put the matter to rest for Hali, for it had not calmed his soul by speaking out about his feelings and concern for his brethren. Writing twenty years later, he wrote his outstanding

¹⁵⁸ C M Naim, ‘Ghalib’s Delhi: A Shamelessly Revisionist Look at Two Popular Metaphors’, in his *Urdu Texts and Contexts: The Selected Essays of C M Naim*, Permanent Black, New Delhi, 2004, p. 251.

Yadgār-e-Ghalib. the biography and his appreciation of Asadullah Khan Ghalib's poetry, where the very first words of the Preface stated: 'In the thirteenth century *hijri* [c. 1785-1882 CE] the decline of the Muslims had reached its lowest ebb, and along with their *izzat* (respect, honour) and government [power/authority] they had lost their knowledge and virtue, and achievements. ... Even at the time when I first went to Delhi [1854] the decline had begun; many people had left Delhi'.¹⁵⁹ Moreover, Hali wrote, 'Although Mirza [Ghalib] was not particularly a follower of the scriptures, but whenever he heard something concerning the Muslims' *zillat*, he became extremely saddened. Once recounting such a story to me, he said that "there is nothing of the Muslim in me, so I don't know why the Muslims' *zillat* causes so much grief and remorse".¹⁶⁰ From the time of Hali's first visit to Delhi, till the end of the nineteenth century, the theme of *zillat* must have weighed heavily on the minds of the Muslims of north India. What is not surprising is that in 1854, men like Hali and many more before him, had felt that Delhi or the Muslims more generally, were in a state of decline but, that it was as late as the end of the nineteenth century, when Hali continued to think so despite apparent changes that had been brought about by the Muslims precisely to deal with the condition of *zillat* that they had collectively felt some decades earlier.

Was Hali's reference to Ghalib's mention of the phenomenon of *zillat* an afterthought, constructed at the end of the nineteenth century, or had Ghalib really said this perhaps four decades earlier? C M Naim argues, that

the Delhi of the first half of the nineteenth century was an exciting and wonderful place for those who experienced it, particularly the intelligentsia, because it contained something new and vital and was perceived by many as the harbinger of a future markedly different from its past, and not because it displayed some re-vivified past as so many later Urdu writers, confusing the

¹⁵⁹ Altaf Hussain Hali, *Yadgār-e Ghalib*, Maktaba-e Jamia, New Delhi, 2002 [1897].

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid*, p. 86.

citadel with the city and overwhelmed by the rising tide of political and cultural nationalism in the country, convinced themselves to believe.¹⁶¹

Another example of the same phenomenon is the fictional account of a *mushaira* in Delhi of 1845, which was imagined in 1927 by Mirza Farhatullah Beg (b 1883). Originally titled ‘1261 AH mein Dehli ka ek mushaira’ when it was published in *Urdu Adab* in July 1927, it was brought out as a book by Khwaja Hasan Nizami in 1928 under the title ‘Dehli ki ākhri shama: 1261/1845 mein Dehli ka ek mushaira’.¹⁶² An imaginary *mushaira* of 1845 was interpreted and represented as Delhi’s last candle in 1928.¹⁶³ At a time – 1845 – when Delhi ‘was an exciting and wonderful place for those who experienced it’, what was it in the imagination of a publisher in 1928 which made him conceive of this *mushaira* as Delhi’s last candle?

¹⁶¹ C M Naim, ‘Ghalib’s Delhi’, p. 272.

¹⁶² Mirza Farhatullah Baig Dehlavi, *Dehli ki ākhri shama: 1261 [AH] mein Dehli ka ek mushaira*, Anjuman Taraqqi Urdu, New Delhi, 2003 [1927].

¹⁶³ C M Naim, ‘Ghalib’s Delhi’, p. 274.

Chapter Three

Who is a Muslim? Labels and Self-identity

The overall environment in which Muslim identities were being forged, was one in which Muslims had realised that they were in a condition where they had suffered humiliation, a *zillat* which they had suffered on their own account, through their own hands. Different sections amongst the Muslims defined and responded to *zillat* differently, which helped fractions emerge and consolidate under the broader rubric of 'Muslim'. Yet, who a Muslim was, even if it was understood by Muslims themselves and by non-Muslims, was a highly contentious issue, and in some ways, as the previous chapter shows, added further to the condition of *zillat* where Muslim writers continued to lament the huge disunity and differences amongst Muslims. The condition of *zillat* was further exacerbated by the fact, that Muslims excluded their coreligionists from the fold of their own religion by accentuating differences in belief, ritual and practice. In the last chapter I argued that in the minds of many writers, *zillat* occurred and persisted because Muslims were constantly arguing and fighting with each other. In this chapter I will argue, that different groups of Muslims were fighting with each other because they were trying to appropriate the term 'Muslim' only for their own group excluding all others. The divisiveness which was a key manifestation of *zillat*, was caused by issues related to the labelling and self-identity of Muslims themselves, a theme which this chapter explores in detail.

Of the many thousands of sayings attributed to the Prophet Muhammad, his *hadis*, there is one which states that his *ummat* (followers) will be divided into 73 *firqas* (sects)¹ of which only one will be the true believers and the righteous and will follow his path; the rest will face hell and damnation like all other unbelievers. The

¹ The term 'sect' as it has come to be used and as it applies to Christianity, is perhaps not the best translation for the numerous 'schools of belief' or faith – *maslaks, firqas* – which have emerged from within the Prophet's Islam of the 7th Century CE, but because of a lack of alternatives, is used here nevertheless. Even more troublesome is the term 'sectarian' or sectarianism when used for Muslim 'sects', as it does not translate completely with the notion of sectarianism in Christianity.

Prophet's *hadis*, which were documented, collected, and published some 150 years after his passing, all follow a very rigorous system of transmission from the time of the Prophet himself, through his Companions, to his Companions' companions, and so on. There are six collections of *hadis*, the two most authoritative being that of Imam Bukhari (d AH 256/AD 870) and Imam Muslim (d 261/875); the other four are that of Abu Daud (d 275/888), al-Nasai (d. 303/915), Tirmizi (d 273/892), and Ibn Maja (d 273/886). This particular *hadis* pertaining to the 73 sects comes from Tirmidhi, and is considered to be a *za'if* (weak) *hadis*.

With the Prophet having himself said that only one sect of his followers, out of 73, would follow him to Paradise, it gave rise to a tendency amongst his followers to claim to belong to that one sect.² Clearly there were divisions amongst his *ummat*, numerous sects, even if there were not as many as 73, with each vying to claim the mantle of the Prophet. If, indeed, only one was certified to be the righteous one and all the others were considered to be heretic groups of infidels, *kafirs*, then it is not surprising that each group would call all others *kafirs*. Defining who a Muslim was became crucial for their own path of salvation, and each sect or group required that it appropriate that authenticity. It is not surprising then, to find, as I show, that a great deal of time and energy of many Muslim writers was taken up on issues around labelling and self-identity. In fact, as I demonstrate in Chapter Four, most of the writings of Muslims, concerned, and were addressed to, other Muslims. The interaction of Muslim writers through print with those of other religions, such as the Hindu, Sikh or British Christians, seems to be considerably limited when compared to with their co-religionists. Muslims had to create their own constituency amongst

² These so-called 'sects' or groupings, range from constituting a mere handful, to the hundreds of millions. One can get their names from numerous sources on the internet, such as <http://muslimonline.org/forum/lofiversion/index.php?t582.html>, although some Islamic scholars and historians argue that the '73' is an arbitrary or imaginary number, merely indicating the fact that numerous such divisions would occur. Professor Qasim Murad, former Professor of Islamic History, Karachi University, personal communication. Equally unclear is whether the number quoted is 72 or 73. Contemporary debates, largely on the internet, state that the Prophet used the number 72 because there were 72 sects/groupings amongst the Jews.

Muslims: they had to convince Muslims alone, about who they were, and what they represented. Such sects and groups had to position themselves *against* other, competing, groups, identifying with other belief systems, all within the Sunni *mazhab*. Their constituency was largely Muslims, and primarily those who could read and write Urdu – largely north Indian Hindustanis – and not north Indians of other faiths, or Muslims of other regions. Only the ‘great-men’ who wrote ‘great-books’, engaged with a much larger ‘Indian’ community.

This debate in Urdu, of who a Muslim was, was an internal debate, in which Muslim scholars representing different schools of faith within Islam, argued with other Muslim scholars and representatives. It does not seem to be the case, that Hindu writers or the British – except for a few exceptions, on which more below – were concerned much with these multiple, fragmented, and fractured, Muslim identities, and for the most part, they tended to treat most Muslim groupings as largely ‘Muslim’. The British had become familiar with Muslims in India from at least the sixteenth century when they came as traders to the Mughal Court. Three centuries later, the roles had been reversed in many ways, and from the end of the eighteenth century, through the takeover of Delhi in 1803, but more formally in 1857, it was now the British who ‘held court’. As the British consolidated their hold over India from the eighteenth century onwards, not surprisingly, they confronted many groups of Muslims of different sects and groupings, such as the Shias of Awadh, as well as the majority Sunnis. Yet, it seems, that it was probably in the 1820s, when they had to deal with Muslims of sects which were collectively, and in an organised (often armed and militant) manner, opposed to British rule in India. In the region of Hindustan and on its western borders next to Afghanistan, these Muslim followers of Sayyid Ahmad ‘Shaheed’ Bareilvi of Rae Bareilly, called their own group the *Tariqah-i Muhammadiyah*. The British – as well as some Muslim writers -- called them the ‘Wahabis’, an epithet which continued to have serious connotations many decades after the end of this armed movement against the British.

Following the formal and real subsumption of power after 1857, the British felt the need to document and count their native subjects. Early attempts at a partial census in the 1860s, with a wider mandate in 1871, was followed by a full-scale decennial census in 1881. Yet, the categorisation of 'religion', 'nationality', and most of all 'caste', for Hindus and for Muslims, was beset with numerous problems and complications, as confessed to by many Census Commissioners of the North-Western Provinces between 1871 and 1901.³ The categorisation of individuals by religion, became a key element of the nature of the censuses. The classification of Muslims by the British – the 'census category' of Muslims in the words of Peter Hardy⁴ – gave formal recognition to different sub-categories of Muslims, classified by 'caste' and by 'sect'. However, these classificatory schemes were very different from the ones used by Muslims in their own self-labelling. In fact, many of the terms and labels used by the British, were non-existent in the Urdu writings of Muslims who were using other criteria to classify who they themselves were.

This chapter essentially deals with multiple and conflicting classificatory schemes, used by, and pasted upon, the Muslims of Hindustan. While the British cast much of their classificatory scheme of naming on the basis of caste, Indian Muslims were in a process of self-identification of a very different kind, almost completely rejecting the British labels imposed on them. Labels became important because they created boundaries of exclusion and inclusion in particularly defined religious communities within the broad umbrella of the category of the Muslim. For Muslims, their *firqas* acted as such, often antagonistic, communities, in contrast to very different schema created by the British. Both were very different ways of labelling and identity, of belonging and exclusion.

³ See for example, N Gerald Barrier (ed), *The Census of British India: New Perspectives*, Manohar, New Delhi, 1981; Bernard S Cohn, 'The Census, Social Structure and Objectification in South Asia', in Bernard S Cohn, *An Anthropologist among the Historians and Other Essays*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1990; and especially, Nicholas B Dirks, *Castes of Mind: Colonialism and the Making of India*, Permanent Black, New Delhi, 2002.

⁴ As cited by Barbara D Metcalf in, 'Living Hadith in the Tablighi Jama'at', *J of Asian Studies*, 52, 3, Aug 1993, p 592.

I begin this chapter by looking at the multiple divisions within Indian Islam, which created multiple labels imposed internally, by Muslims themselves, as Sunni Islam in India fractured into numerous schools of faith in the nineteenth century. Islamic scholars labelled their own *maslak* by contrasting differences in ritual, practice and belief, with other sects.⁵ After looking at who Muslims, by their particular, and often narrow, definition, were, I then turn to an examination of one of the more controversial sects in Indian Islam, the Wahabis. Both Muslim and the British, for very different reasons, labelled sections of the Indian Muslims as Wahabi yet, all those Muslims who were identified as Wahabis, rejected that appellation. The reasons for being called a Wahabi by the British and by Muslims themselves, were very different, and hence, so was the reaction by those who were actually called Wahabi. This contrast in how and why a particular group of Muslims was called a Wahabi, and their subsequent reaction, sheds light on very different ways of naming and categorisation, by the colonialists and by the colonised, in nineteenth century north India. Moreover, while there is considerable scholarship, both from the 19th Century and far more recent, on the British categorization of the Wahabis, my analysis, using Urdu sources, includes extensive discussion on being labelled a Wahabi from a Muslim perspective, by Muslims themselves.

The last two sections of this chapter, continue with this process of labelling, and on creating boundaries amongst Indian Muslims. The Muslim notion of *qaum* is analysed for its utter ambiguity and even duplicity, as it was put to use by certain groups of Muslims in north India. Using the ambivalent, but important, notion of *qaum*, we see that while some Muslims were busy trying to create a notion of a more unified community encompassing diverse sections of Muslims under their idea of a *qaum*, the British, in contrast, were trying to use their censuses to further breakdown religious categories into hundreds of castes. This unifying/diversifying project is

⁵ This was done not only by the more 'traditional' scholars and ulema, but even by those considered 'modern' in the nineteenth century context. See, for example, Honourable Haji Muhammad Ismail Khan Sahib, *Guzashta aur Maujuda Zamāne ke Musalman*, Muhammadan Press, Aligarh, 1898, p. 48.

another dimension of how the colonised and colonisers saw Muslims in India. Another aspect of the use of the term *qaum*, for labelling, and for exclusion/inclusion, by Muslims themselves of their own community, is also very interesting, and in some ways very similar to, yet also very different from, how Muslims saw their own Islamic sects. Just as some traditional Muslim scholars decided whether another Muslim was indeed a Muslim on the basis of practice and belief, 'modern' Muslims who were equally interested in Muslims as a political category, used the term *qaum*, to determine who qualified as a member of the Muslim *qaum* excluding large sections of other Muslims. The main argument in this chapter is that the British and the Muslims saw the category Muslim, on the basis of very different criteria, and also within Indian Islam, there was an active debate on who qualified to be within the many folds of the Muslim in colonial India.

A Muslim by Any Other Name? Division, Self-definition and Denial

Sects, mazhab and differentiation

If Muslims recognised that there were 72 or 73 sects in Islam, it is not surprising that the notion of there being a single category of Muslim, was always fraught with serious problems. All those who in some identifiable manner came under the umbrella of Islam, were labelled Muslims, by themselves and by outsiders, but those who were the *musalmans* of Hindustan, as much of this thesis reiterates, constantly distinguished between themselves. While there were many Muslim sects or schools of faith in India who drew their direct links and heritage from the early Islam from Arabia and its surrounding region, there were many other Muslim sects which originated in an Indian environment, although they necessarily had to show that they too were part of an unbroken tradition begun in the seventh century. It is important to emphasise the *Indian-ness* of Indian Islam and the specific germination of an Indian Islam, as the experience and history of Islam in different regions globally, even within India, varied very widely. The second half of the nineteenth century and early

twentieth century in colonial India, continued to fulfil the Prophet's prediction made thirteen centuries earlier.⁶

In order to understand this sharp division between the Muslims of north India, one needs to understand the nature of the core differences between them, a task easier said than done. However, before we do that, there is a need to give a broad chronology to the formation of the different schools of Islamic practice and belief in the nineteenth century. In the North-Western Provinces and Oudh, the two main schools in north India have always been the majority Sunni (around 95 percent according to the censuses at the end of the nineteenth century), and the Shia.⁷ The differences in belief and practice between both have been marked, since the formation of the Shia *mazhab* in the eighth century.⁸

The concept *mazhab* is even more difficult to translate into English and from Islam, than are sect and sectarian – see Footnote 1. Although *mazhab* is translated as 'religion', which is what it is when one speaks of the religions of Islam, Hinduism, Judaism, etc, but is also, *within* Islam, used as a 'school of thought', but is larger than a 'sect' or *maslak*. Hence, the four Sunni jurists of the 11/12 century CE, Ibn Hanbal, Shaḥī, Abu Hanifa, and Mālik, each represent a *mazhab*, such as the Hanafī *mazhab*, Shaḥī *mazhab*, etc, but the Deobandi or Bareilvi 'sects' would not be called a *mazhab*. Some scholars of Indian Islam make the grave mistake of not recognising these minute nuances related to Urdu and to Islam and, for example, talk about the Shia *mazhab* as a separate 'religion'. It is a separate *mazhab*, but not a separate 'religion'.

⁶ Numerous schools of belief in Islam originated in India in the 19th century, the most prominent of which, amongst the Sunnis, were the Deobandis, *Ahle Sunnat wa Jamā`at*, Ahle Hadis, Ahmadis, and the Tablighi *Jamā`at*.

⁷ *Census of India 1881, North-Western Provinces and Oudh, Part 1: Report*, Allahabad, 1882.

⁸ See, for example, SHM Jafri, *The Origins and Early Development of Shi`a Islam*, Oxford University Press, Karachi, 2000.

In the context of northern India, given Islam's fruition in an Indian environment, there had been some cross-pollination between the two schools since the advent of Shia Islam into India from the 16th century; both have also been up in arms with each other.⁹ Along with this formal separation between the two main Islamic 'sects', there have been, since the 11th century, a large series of Sufi *silsilas*, or traditions, four of which have achieved a higher, perhaps more formal, codified, status amongst all the Sufi *silsilas*, each having many devotees and disciples. These four are the Chistia, Suharawardy, Naqshbandi and Qadiriya *silsilas*. This huge simplification illustrates the broad division in Indian Islam at the turn of the nineteenth century.¹⁰

From the beginning of the nineteenth century we see the early beginnings of the more formalised 'sects' or *maslaks* in Indian Islam. The 'Wahabees' of the British, or the *Tariqah-i Muhammadiyah*, as they called themselves, was one of the earlier groups, preceded by the Faraizis in Bengal which, while differentiating themselves from other Sunnis on the basis of certain beliefs and practices, are remembered more for being a peasant movement.¹¹ Until the end of the 1860s, Muslim Urdu literature spoke about the large identity of Muslims as *ahle-Islam* (those who belong to Islam), which included any sub-grouping within Islam. It differentiated between the *ahle-Sunnat*, the Sunnis and the *ahle-Tash'hi*, the Shia. The main and most organised, schools within Islam that emerged from the late 1860s, consisted of those who graduated from the *Dāru'l-'Ulūm* at Deoband, and were referred to as the

⁹ For a history of Shia Islam in India, see, SAA Rizvi, *A Socio-Intellectual History of the Isna 'Ashari Shi'is in India*, Vols 1 and 2, Munshiram Manoharlal, New Delhi, 1986; and Juan RI Cole, *Roots of North Indian Shi'ism in Iran and Iraq: Religion and State in Awadh, 1722-1859*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1988.

¹⁰ Not surprisingly, there is a huge literature on the history of Indian Islam. See, amongst many, the three volume *Kausar* series by Shaikh Muhammad Ikram, *Āb-e Kausar* (1941), *Raud-e Kausar* (1957), and *Mauj-e Kausar* (1962), Taj Company, New Delhi, 2004; and, S Moinul Haq, *Islamic Thought and Movements in the Subcontinent (711-1947)*, Pakistan Historical Society, Karachi, 1979.

¹¹ See Qeyamuddin Ahmad, *The Wahabi Movement in India*, Firma KL Mukhopadhyay, Calcutta, 1966, but more importantly, Harlan O Pearson, *Islamic Reform and Revival in Nineteenth-century India: The Tariqah-i Muhammadiyah*, Yoda Press, New Delhi, 2008.

‘Deobandis’.¹² Then there were the followers of Ahmad Raza Khan Bareilvi, the *Ahle Sunnat wa Jamā`at*, also known as the ‘Bareilvis’, who emerged in the 1880s, although at that time they did not have a formal ‘school’ or *madrasa* the way the Deobandis did.¹³ The Ahle Hadis, in some ways the successors of the ‘fanatical Wahabees’, emerged through the 1870s and 1880s as well,¹⁴ and were followed by the Ahmadis, followers of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad from Qadian in the Punjab, in the 1890s.¹⁵ The Nadvatul Ulema Islam, another ‘school’ founded on the banks of the Gomti in Lucknow in 1896, produced much literature, and many scholars and politicians in the twentieth century. Much of the debate, contestation and argumentation that took place between the ‘organised’¹⁶ Urdu-writing ulema and their readers, within the Sunni *mazhab*, was primarily between the Deobandis, Bareilvis and the Ahle Hadis, but also, to some extent, included the Nadvatul Ulema of Lucknow and the Ahmadis, as well as the Shia.

In the rhetorical and polemical writings of many a religious scholar, one could count the names of many ‘sects’, as they poured out their venom against each other, and one may have been led to believe that there were not just four or five, but numerous well-established *maslaks* in northern India in the nineteenth century. For example, Ahmad Raza Khan, the founder of the *Ahle Sunnat wa Jamā`at*, in his fatwas which were collected into twelve volumes, each many hundred pages long, on many occasions mentioned ‘sects’, saying in this one instance, that if a ‘Muslim’ (i.e., of the *Ahle Sunnat*) was physically touched by any of the following ‘*kafirs*’, he would have to take a bath: the Qadianis, Chaktralvis, *Nechris*, Rafizis, Kharjis, Bahais,

¹² The seminal work is Barbara D Metcalf, *Islamic Revival in British India: Deoband, 1860-1900*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2002 (1982).

¹³ The main text is Usha Sanyal, *Devotional Islam and Politics in British India: Ahmad Riza Khan Bareilvi and His Movement, 1870-1920*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1999.

¹⁴ Saeedullah, *The Life and Works of Muhammad Siddiq Hasan Khan, Nawab of Bhopal*, S M Ashraf, Lahore, 1973.

¹⁵ Yohanan Friedmann, *Prophecy Continuous: Aspects of Ahmadi Religious Thought and Its Medieval Background*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1989.

¹⁶ This mention of the form ‘organised’ is important, for as I make a key point in Chapter Four, much of the religious writing was being done by *unorganised*, lay, writers.

Shaitanis, Khawatmi, Wahabis, etc.¹⁷ In another publication, written on the behest of Ahmad Raza Khan, ten *firqas* were identified on the basis of their beliefs and practices, differentiating them from what the *Ahle Sunnat* believed and practiced.¹⁸

Yet, many such groups, while they did probably exist, were too small to have been 'sects' in any effective manner, and were more imaginary than real constructions rather than proper sects. Moreover, they were never a threat to the well-established sects, not that one would think this from a reading of the critique of them. A case in point were the so-called '*nechris*', those who subscribed to the modernist Islamic beliefs of Sayyid Ahmad Khan. This was only a loosely defined following, never a *maslak* or sect, yet a reading of the virulent critique of this 'school' by other Muslims, particularly Barelvis, puts it at par with the well-established, large, organised sects such as the Deobandi and Barelvis. While a *nechri* way of thinking did exist, as did a Barelvi or Deobandi one, the latter two were organised religious movements.

Since much of the argumentation and debate between the main sects was theological and religious, as well as based on ritual, it is important to highlight some of the key differences in theological interpretations between different sects. This is important in order to understand the basis of the charge of 'Wahabism' placed on any sect, and will help us return to the question, who, in the eyes of the Indian Muslims, was a Wahabi.

Perhaps the best way to distinguish between the main Sunni sects, is to begin with marking the main distinction seen by them and their detractors, concerning their being either *muqallid* (conformists) or *ghair muqallid* (non-conformists). This is the most marked and most important difference between different sects within the Sunni

¹⁷ Ahmad Raza Khan, *Al 'ataya al nabuiya fil fatāwa var raziqa, Kitab ul tahirat ta bāb ul tamaye-um*, Vol 1 of 12, published at the *Ahle Sunnat wa Jamā'at*, Bareilly, not dated (ca. 1905), p. 191.

¹⁸ Maulvi Muhammad Naqi Ali Khan, *Hidayat ul Bari*, Matba-e Subha e Sadiq, Sitapur, January 1881.

mazhab. Those who are conformists, are said to extract meaning regarding issues of *fiqh* (law, jurisprudence), from the four main Imams: Abu Hanifa, Shaf'i, Mālik, or Ibn Hanbal and consider all four *mazāhib* (plural for *mazhab*) to be correct. The *ghair muqallid*, on the other hand, consider this unimportant and do not follow any of these four schools of thought and believe in the essence of the *hadis* and *sunnah*, the Prophet's sayings and his life, his tradition, and on the Quran. These non-conformists believe in making judgments and issuing *fatwa* on a case by case basis, relying largely on the *hadis* and the Quran, rather than on any of the four schools of jurisprudence. They do not conform to any of the later schools of law and thought, and return to the fundamentals of pristine Islam. Hence, they are called the 'orthodox' and the 'traditional' practitioners of Islam. For direction, the *ghair muqallid* rely on the practices of the Prophet, his Companions, and his Companions' companions.¹⁹

The *muqallid* derive their beliefs from the Hanafi school of jurisprudence, the Hanafi *mazhab*, although there were sharp differences between the groups that constitute the *muqallid* in the context of north Indian nineteenth century Islam, as between the Deobandis and those who called themselves the *Ahle Sunnat wa Jamā`at*, the followers of Ahmad Raza Khan, better known as the Barelvis. The Ahle Hadis (people of the *hadis*), who are the successors to the 'fanatical Wahabees', were called many names by other Muslims in the nineteenth century including 'Wahabi', 'salafi' (orthodox, archaic), 'Najdi' (emanating from, or following the school of thought, from Najd, in Arabia) and, most importantly, in the texts were referred to as the *ghair muqallid*.

While this is the first set of broad distinctions on which most scholars belonging to all three schools are agreed, that between the *muqallid* and *ghair muqallid*, the differentiation becomes far more complicated when differences within the *muqallid*

¹⁹ On different trends in Indian Islam see, Shaikh Muhammad Ikram, *Kausar* series, and S Moinul Haq, *Islamic Thought and Movements in the Subcontinent*.

are highlighted. In fact, the *Ahle Sunnat wa Jamā`at* (the devotees of the Prophet's practice and the broad community)²⁰ Barelvīs, do not even consider the Deobandis as *muqallid*, and as I shall show, call them *ghair muqallid*. Wahabi, *salafi* and Najdi, very similar to how they perceived the Ahle Hadis. This difference between *muqallid* and *ghair muqallid* was perceived to be so sharp, so foundational, that Maulana Shibli Naumani who belonged to the Hanafi school of thought and was associated for some years with the College at Aligarh and with Sayyid Ahmad Khan and was instrumental in setting up the Nadvatul Ulema in Lucknow believed, 'that a person [a Muslim] can become a Christian but cannot be a *ghair muqallid*'.²¹ Hence, at one level of association or similarity, we have the Deobandis and the so-called Barelvīs sharing their beliefs as *muqallid*, with the 'Wahabis' or Ahle Hadis being *ghair muqallid*. At another, as I show below, the Deobandis and the Ahle Hadis have more in common with each other, than do the Deobandi and Barelvi do, who both happen to be *muqallid*.

The Ahle Hadis did not follow the four schools of Islamic thought, the four *mazāhib*, while the Deobandis were strict followers of the Hanafi school of jurisprudence, yet both had opinions regarding the Prophet Muhammad which were fairly similar. Both accused the *Ahle Sunnat wa Jamā`at* of being innovators (doing *bid'at*), and indulging in *shirk* (associating partners to Allah, or equating individuals, particularly the Prophet, in some ways to Allah). With both *bid'at* and *shirk*, in the eyes of the Deobandis (and, quite naturally, amongst the Ahle Hadis) being the biggest sin that a Muslim could commit, the *Ahle Sunnat wa Jamā`at* were, not surprisingly, excluded from the pale of Islam by both.²² Hence, the *Ahle Sunnat wa Jamā`at* were considered *kafirs*, or infidels, and no longer Muslims. In terms of practices, both the Ahle Hadis and the Deobandis wanted their religion to be 'free of all customs that could be criticized by non-Muslims', and there was a desire 'to purify, to change

²⁰ Usha Sanyal, *Devotional Islam and Politics*.

²¹ Muhammad Mahdi, *Tazkira Shamsul Ulema Maulana Shibli Marhum*, Shama Press, Agra, 1925, p. 5.

²² Usha Sanyal, *Devotional Islam and Politics*.

what now appeared as accretion and deviation'. Both opposed those ceremonies 'that were the foundations of the communities that surrounded the shrines. They prohibited *urs* and *qawalli* ...';²³ practices accepted and encouraged by the *Ahle Sunnat wa Jamā`at*.

The accusation of *shirk* on the *Ahle Sunnat wa Jamā`at* emerged from the extreme reverence and love they had for the Prophet Muhammad who, for them, had no parallel in the history of mankind. The *Ahle Sunnat wa Jamā`at* also differed from the other two, because it allowed and accepted, in fact encouraged, 'innovations' that had emerged in the Indian Islamic environment, and had termed them to be part of Islam. They accepted the intercession of saints, allowed, and in fact, encouraged the visits to tombs of Sufis and pirs, and passionately celebrated the birth anniversary of the Prophet, the *maulud sharif*. The *Ahle Sunnat wa Jamā`at* also believed in the custom of saying *fateha* (prayers for the deceased) at the graves of the dead, observing customs such as the *soyem* (on the third day after death), the *chehlum* (after forty days), observing *barsis* (death anniversaries), and in building permanent graves and tombs.²⁴

The Ahle Hadis, far more than the Deobandis, abhorred all such rituals and practices, saying that they were innovations from Hindus, and that celebrations like the *maulud sharif* was a replica of the Ram-Lila celebrations. The Ahle Hadis did not accept the intercession of Sufis and pirs in the least, calling this *shirk*, while the Deobandis, who also rejected such intercession were, nevertheless, less strict in this regard – Usha Sanyal writes that they were 'ambivalent' towards such practices, 'discouraging but not completely condemning them'.²⁵ The Ahle Hadis also prohibited the pilgrimage to the grave of the Prophet Muhammad. The practices of the Ahle Hadis, and in some respect the Deobandis, were considered to be 'severe'.

²³ Barbara D Metcalf, *Islamic Revival*, p. 273.

²⁴ Usha Sanyal, *Devotional Islam and Politics*.

²⁵ Usha Sanyal, *Ahmad Riza Khan Bareilwi: In the Path of the Prophet*, Oneworld, Oxford, 2006, p. 36

‘rigid’, literalist and austere by many, including those subscribing to the *Ahle Sunnat wa Jamā`at* system of practicing Islam. However, lest it be misunderstood, the *Ahle Sunnat wa Jamā`at* were in no way watering down Islam, making it ‘folksy’ and any less ‘traditional’. As S A A Rizvi argues, they ‘strictly adhered to the orthodox practices enjoined by the traditional theologians and the Sufis’,²⁶ although some scholars of Indian Islam talk about the school’s ‘permissive thinking’ on Islamic practices.²⁷

While these three sects were the main schools of belief and practice that existed in Indian Sunni Islam in the nineteenth century, the colonial British, seem to have been preoccupied with one particular group from Sunni Islam, the Wahabis. Having delineated some key differences between the three most important and active sects in later nineteenth century northern India, we should address the question of who a Wahabi was in the eyes of the Muslims, since for the British, as I show below, the set of criteria for identifying who a Wahabi was, was very different from how Muslims themselves, perceived the Wahabi. The British had applied the term primarily to Sayyid Ahmad Shaheed and his disciples in the *Tariqah-i Muhammadiyah*, and were also using it for the Faraizis, as well as for people such as the Buner and other Pathans, who were involved in the campaigns against the Sikh and the British, and who were implicated by association.²⁸ It was the armed nature of their resistance to colonial rule which qualified them to be called ‘Wahabee’, not merely their austere and orthodox beliefs. Moreover, all of the organised Muslim sects that I mention here, came into existence after the start of the Wahabi trials of the 1860s, and the first organised group, the Deobandis, came into existence only in the late 1860s. Hence the British, when they were using the term ‘Wahabee’, had not been exposed to the many subdivisions that were to emerge later in Sunni Islam. For the Sunnis,

²⁶ S A A Rizvi, *The Breakdown of Traditional Society*, Cambridge History of Islam, p. 88.

²⁷ Francis Robinson, *Separatism Among Indian Muslims: The Politics of the United Provinces’ Muslims 1860-1923*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1974, p. 268.

²⁸ Qeyamuddin Ahmad, *The Wahabi Movement*.

however. the term Wahabi had a very different meaning, based on religious interpretation and practices.

The Wahabis amongst the Muslims

The term Wahabi in the Muslim context, was an oppositional term whereby, no Sunni sect embraced the appellation voluntarily and, for the most part, it was used by one sect for the other in a clearly facetious manner. The *Ahle Sunnat wa Jamā`at* could, and did, call both the Ahle Hadis and the Deobandi, Wahabi – which for the *Jamā`at* was often preceded by the word ‘*kafir*’ – while the Deobandis called the Ahle Hadis, Wahabi. None of the many sects could call the *Ahle Sunnat wa Jamā`at* Wahabi, for they were the furthest distance from those characteristics which apparently constituted the term ‘Wahabi’, by any definition of the term. It seems that an *alim*, Fazal Rasool Badauni (1798/99-1872), the leader of the Qadiriya sect, who was one of the earliest and most vociferous critics of Wahabism in India,²⁹ is credited to being the first Indian Muslim (probably as opposed to the British who had already been using this term – see below) to use the term Wahabi in the Indian context for Sayyid Ahmad Shaheed, and to popularise it extensively through his critique of their beliefs and practices.³⁰ In fact, Nawab Siddiq Hasan Khan, who went to great pains to show why he and his followers were not Wahabis – see below – stated, that Fazal Rasool not only called them Wahabis, but he also stated that these people were the enemies of the British.³¹

The *Ahle Sunnat wa Jamā`at*’s founder and inspiration Ahmad Raza Khan, called the Ahle Hadis ‘Wahabis’ and also called the Deobandis Wahabis and *kafirs*. Since the *Jamā`at* revered the Prophet to an extraordinary degree, they were quick to condemn anyone who did not place the Prophet on the same pedestal, accusing them of

²⁹ Rahman Ali, *Tazkira Ulema-e Hind*, Pakistan Historical Society, Karachi, 2003 (1891), p. 330. For a biography of Fazal Rasool, see Maulvi Anwarul Haq, *Tawali al Anvār*, Matba-e Subha Sadiq, Sitapur, 1880.

³⁰ Nawab Siddiq Hasan Khan, *Tarjumān-e Wahabiya*, Mufid Āmm Press, Agra, 1300 1883, p. 65.

³¹ *Ibid*, p. 75.

gustakhi-e Rasul (disrespectfulness, or worse, to the Prophet). and hence, Ahmad Raza Khan used the term Wahabi for such people, as well ‘as a general term of abuse for anyone he deemed to be disrespectful of the Prophet’.³² Sanyal argues, that the *Ahle Sunnat wa Jamā`at* described rival Muslim movements as Wahabi.³³ Just as the term ‘Wahabi’ was used by the *Ahle Sunnat wa Jamā`at* in their literature in a pejorative and derogatory sense, so also was *ghair muqallid*. They were either used interchangeably or often together, such as: *ye Wahabi ghair muqallidin* (these Wahabi *ghair muqallid*). Hence, in the context of the other two sects, the Ahle Hadis and the Deobandi, for the *Ahle Sunnat wa Jamā`at* it was not difficult to call the Ahle Hadis Wahabi as they were *ghair muqallid*, and on this many scholars were agreed that the *ghair muqallid* were Wahabis, but the difficulty arose when the *Jamā`at* resorted to calling the Deobandi, who were *muqallid* like the *Ahle Sunnat*, as Wahabis.

Both Usha Sanyal and Barbara Metcalf have argued that the ‘pamphlet wars’ of the late nineteenth century played a key role in the formation and consolidation of different fractions and fragments of Muslim identity, particularly those based around the sects that they represented.³⁴ As I show in Chapter Four, a different kind of pamphlet war took place prior to when ‘organised religion’³⁵ began to dominate the Muslim public domain. However, it is clear that once organised sections from amongst the Muslims began to represent Muslims, the publication of pamphlets against each other grew exponentially, and who a Wahabi was, and hence, who a ‘Muslim’ was, played a key role in this pamphlet war. Many pamphlets were written about a group’s own particular theological explanations about certain practices, and perhaps as many were written against other, competing, groups. In fact, the titles of a

³² Usha Sanyal, *Ahmad Riza Khan Bareilwi*, p. 105.

³³ *Ibid*, p. 112.

³⁴ Usha Sanyal, *Devotional Islam and Politics*; and Barbara D Metcalf, *Islamic Revival*.

³⁵ By ‘organised religion’, I mean representatives of those sects or *maslaks*, which had become institutionalised having a clear communitarian identity, such as the Deobandis, Barelvis, Ahmadis, etc. This term contrasts with those writers who either wrote before the formation of such schools, or wrote from unaligned, or ‘non-institutionalised’ positions.

publication would usually make it obvious which group had published it and which it was against. This was most marked in the manner Wahabis were being classified by other Muslims.

The *Jama'e ul shwahid fi ikhrāj al Wahabin un al Masjid* (Concrete/full evidence/proof why Wahabis should be expelled from the Mosque). an eight page tract from Jaunpur in 1305/1887, is typical of the *Ahle Sunnat wa Jamā`at* publications which were, as I argue above, the most active in labelling most opponents as Wahabis.³⁶ In this pamphlet, as was common, the author referred to two earlier Muslim sects from the first two centuries of Islam, the Rafazi and Khariji, both of whom were supposed to have been expelled from Islam by the Sunnis, and related their fate with that of the *ghair muqallidin* in India. It recounted a number of practices – thirteen – that were typical of the Ahle Hadis, such as saying *amin* loudly after their prayers, keeping their hands on their chest while praying, and reading a verse from the Quran aloud when praying, and said that since these practices of 'the Wahabis' were different from those of the *Ahle Sunnat*, these *ghair muqallidin* should be expelled from Sunni Islam. A key element of this short tract was that it cited numerous references to books and pamphlets written by the 'Wahabis' on issues of belief and practice.

In 1292/1875 Muhammad Ameer Akbarabadi, in a pamphlet entitled *Anvār-i Muhammadi* (God's Light on/of Muhammad), was dismayed at the state of *ahle Islam* to whom the pamphlet was addressed who, he said, were caught up in such turmoil (*fasād*) that everyone had become everyone else's enemy and was willing to kill on any pretext.³⁷ He said, some say that so-and-so is a Wahabi and the enemy of the Prophet, while others said that there are those who were influenced by the Sufis and were innovators, and hence, without religion. The Wahabis said that they were the true Sunnis, he stated, while other Sunnis said that the Wahabi were the *murdud*

³⁶ Anon. *Jama'e ul shwahid fi ikhrāj al Wahabin un al Masjid*, Jaunpur, 1305/1887.

³⁷ Muhammad Ameer Akbarabadi, *Anvār-i Muhammadi*, Naval Kishore, 1292 1875.

(despicable). Muhammad Ameer stated, that this is how it was in every town, *qasba*, as well as in every settlement and *bāzār* (*kucha-o bāzār*), that all one heard was this condemnation of the other. His own position was that he condemned the Wahabis as those who had bad faith (*bad mazhab*), as well as those who supported the Sufis for being ignorant (*jahil*) and said that everyone ought to return to the true historical path of the Sunnis.

In the eyes of some Muslims then, a Wahabi was anyone who belonged to the *ghair muqallidin*, but in the eyes of the *Ahle Sunnat wa Jamā`at* a Wahabi could also have been a Deobandi *muqallid*. Ahmad Raza Khan's most famous fatwa, the *Husam al-Harmain 'ala Manhar al-Kufr wa'l Main* (The Sword of the Harmain at the Throat of Kufr and Falsehood), published first in 1902 and then in 1906 with the approval of some ulema in Mecca, condemned the founders and leaders, alive and deceased, of the Deobandi movement, to Wahabism.³⁸ Ahmad Raza Khan identified four different groups of Wahabis, three having characteristics which he said were to be found amongst the Deobandis, and the fourth amongst the Ahle Hadis. All were accused of denigrating Allah or his Prophet in some way, and not only were they all labelled 'Wahabi', but *kafirs* (infidels) as well.³⁹ Hence, those called Wahabi by the *Ahle Sunnat wa Jamā`at* were not just called that, but worse, were called *kafirs*, and hence, did not qualify to be Muslims. In a pamphlet published in 1889, Ahmad Raza Khan accused the Deobandis for being *kafirs* '78 times over' (*Wahabi jadid par 78 dafa kufr lazim*), for raising the question in one of their pamphlets, of whether God could lie. Moreover, Raza Khan added, that even that person who does not call a *kafir* as such, is also a *kafir*.⁴⁰ This audaciousness of such belief and accusation, needs to be contrasted with another *hadis* of the Prophet which stated, that if a Muslim charged a fellow Muslim with *kufr*, he was himself a *kafir*, if the accusation should be proven to be untrue. Yet, despite this warning, not only in north India but

³⁸ Ahmad Raza Khan, *Husam al-Harmain 'ala Manhar al-Kufr wa'l Main*, Barielly, 1902.

³⁹ Usha Sanyal, *Devotional Islam and Politics*, p. 232, *passim*

⁴⁰ Ahmad Raza Khan, *Subhan-us-Sabuh un Aib Kazab Muqbuḥ*, 1307/1889.

more generally too, it seems that *kafir* 'in theological terms [was] a fairly frequent term for the Muslim protagonists of the opposite view'. and was accepted as such.⁴¹

Clearly, the very large literature on who a Wahabi was in north India, was produced by the *Ahle Sunnat wa Jamā`at* against the Deobandis and the Ahle Hadis. The Deobandis too, attacked the Ahle Hadis for being Wahabi. The Wahabi was, then, an oppositional, negative, derogatory, title in India, but much venerated in Arabia. Moreover, being labelled a Wahabi by an opposing sect in the context of nineteenth century British India, also meant being called an infidel and excluded from the religion of the Muslims. Hence, the important question then arises: how did those who were called Wahabi respond to this allegation?

Denial and Refutation

The Ahle Hadis, as they called themselves, were the successors of the religious ideas of Shah Waliullah and of Sayyid Ahmad Barelvi. The two most important men who organised the Ahle Hadis and set it up as a *maslak*, were Nawab Siddiq Hasan Khan Bhopali (1832-90),⁴² who was the son of Maulvi Sayyid Hussain Qanauji, one of the many *khalifas* of Sayyid Ahmad Barelvi and, Maulana Sayyid Nazeer Husain Muhaddas of Bihar (d 1902). Although Nawab Siddiq Hasan Khan wrote more than a hundred books, including perhaps the most famous 'Wahabi' testament *Tarjuman-e Wahabiya*, Maulana Nazeer Husain is considered the spiritual head and founder of the Ahle Hadis.⁴³

The *Tarjuman-e Wahabiya* (Wahabi Representation), is as mistitled as one of the most famous works of the eighteenth century written by Shah Waliullah's son, Shah Abdul Aziz, called *Tuhfa-i Ithna `Ashariyya* (Gift to Ithna `Ashariyya). For just as the *Tuhfa* is not a gift to the Shias and is a resounding condemnation of the Shia

⁴¹ *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Vol IV, E J Brill, Leiden, 1997, p. 407.

⁴² On Nawab Siddiq Hasan Khan, see Saeedullah, *The Life and Works of Muhammad Siddiq Hasan Khan, Nawab of Bhopal*, S M Ashraf, Lahore, 1973.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

mazhab, so too, the *Tarjuman-e Wahabiya*, does not represent or defend the Wahabi point of view, but in fact, argued why Nawab Siddiq Hasan Khan and the Ahle Hadis, were not Wahabis.

The title of *Tarjuman-e Wahabiya* published from Agra in 1300/1883 announced that it was written by Nawab Siddiq Hasan Khan, the husband of Nawab Shahjahan Begum Sahiba, the ruler of Bhopal. One thousand copies were printed from the Mufid Āmm Press in Agra, and were distributed free of charge.⁴⁴ The early pages of the *Tarjuman* tell us about the history of mankind, about Adam (‘who was sixty yards long and seven yards wide’)⁴⁵ and Noah (‘who lived till he was 640 years old’),⁴⁶ and listed the exact dates for when Noah and Abraham lived; the world was created ‘3,218 years ago’.⁴⁷ However, the substantive part of this tract was about the history of the term ‘Wahabi’, and what it meant in an Indian context; there was detailed analysis of what *jihad* meant, but the main argument was about who a Wahabi was and why the author was not one. He argued that the British used the term incorrectly, and like many of the writers of the time, Nawab Siddiq Hasan Khan quoted from and referred to scores of newspapers and books which he had read.

He wrote, that while there had been a great deal of commotion and debate amongst the ‘Muslims of Hind’ about the beliefs and practices of the Wahabis, most of this debate was confined to the Doab, and had not even been heard in the rest of Hindustan earlier.⁴⁸ Now, he argued, due to an expansion in communications, this news and information had spread to the other parts of Hindustan. The people of Bhopal, he argued, were the most illiterate and ill-informed of Hindustan, and that is why there had never been a religious debate, whether in writing or verbally, here before, and nor had anyone ever written a pamphlet or book in reply to any *mazhab*.

⁴⁴ Nawab Siddiq Hasan Khan, *Tarjuman-e Wahabiya*, Mufid Āmm Press, Agra, 1300/1883.

⁴⁵ Ibid, p. 9.

⁴⁶ Ibid, p. 11.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid, p. 2.

He wrote, he said, because people of this area were being accused of being Wahabis and because the Government was unhappy with such state of affairs.⁴⁹

After citing evidence about the Wahabi allegations from numerous editions of the *Pioneer* and the *Hindu Patriot*, Siddiq Hasan Khan went on to state that he was writing this pamphlet after doing a lot of research on Wahabis, so that the British knew that ‘amongst the Muslim states in Hind they have no ill-wisher in this state and the allegations that is put on Muslims such that they are Wahabis’, are absolutely incorrect and that they were not at all Wahabis.⁵⁰ He wrote that he had been living in the state of Bhopal for thirty years and never had anyone in the past ever called him or his wife, a Wahabi. But now, he argued, some from the Shia *mazhab* and some ‘so-called Sunnis’ had made this allegation against him and against the state, and had informed the authorities as well.

Siddiq Hasan Khan recounted the history of the Najdi (Arabian) Wahabis, and made the important point that they belonged to the Hanbali *mazhab*, while there is ‘not a single Hanbali in Hindustan since all Sunnis belong to the Hanafī *mazhab*’.⁵¹ He talked about Shah Waliullah and defended his followers for rejuvenating Islam in ‘Hind’, getting rid of numerous practices which related to *shirk* and *bid’at*. He argued that the Najdi Wahabi tradition was very different from what was practiced in Hindustan, and both responded to their own particular cultures. Despite these differences, these simpleton Muslims of Hindustan, he argued, had started this new past-time (*tamāshā*) of sculpturing a new meaning to Wahabi everywhere in India.⁵² In the Doab, a Wahabi was considered to be one who stayed away from graves, *tazias*, did not go to Sufis and pirs, stopped people from celebrating the Prophet’s birthday, and who stopped people from saying ‘yah rasul allah’ and ‘ya ali’ (seeking help from the Prophet, and for the Shias from the fourth Caliph, Ali): in Hyderabad

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid, p. 6.

⁵¹ Ibid, p. 15.

⁵² Ibid, p. 17.

Deccan a Wahabi was one who kept his pyjama above his ankles and did not trim his beard and said his prayers and kept his fasts, or someone who did not drink the local liquor; in Lucknow, Kanpur and Delhi, a Wahabi was someone who did not follow the Hanafi *mazhab* but followed the Quran and *hadis*; in Bombay, a Wahabi was one who did not consider Shaikh Abdul Qadir Jilani, who was a Hanbali and was a Sufi-scholar, as the great man that he was and considered the celebrations of the Prophet's birth an innovation; for those in Eastern Hindustan, the *purbis*, a Wahabi was one who was not a *muqallid* or followed the four *mazāhib*, and instead followed the true and original path of the Prophet keeping away from innovation and false practices.⁵³ He argued that all these practices designated people, incorrectly, as Wahabis, and this meant that 'in every city, a Wahabi meant something different and separate'.⁵⁴ Only the enemies of these people called them Wahabis, he argued, and that none of them were Wahabis; to call someone who followed the Quran and *hadis*, said his prayers and kept his fasts, and followed the principles of Islam, a Wahabi, was a grave injustice, he argued.

A key point that Siddiq Hasan Khan made in this tract, was the distancing from Najdi Wahabism. He gave numerous examples of why the Hanbali Wahabis could have no followers in India, largely because, he argued, that the Indians had no contact with, or information about, Arabia until very recently.⁵⁵ He said, that not a single person had come from Najd as a learned scholar to Hind, and there had been no relationship between Hind and Najd on the basis of which people here could have been familiar with the Najdi traditions. Siddiq Hasan Khan argued that 'not a single book' of Muhammad bin Abdul Wahab had been published anywhere in 'Hind' and nor was his work taught in *madrasas* or discussed by Islamic scholars. He also stated that there was no contact between the people of Hind with Arabia through newspapers,

⁵³ Ibid, pp 17-18.

⁵⁴ Interestingly, the Bengal Census Commissioner for 1881, JA Bourdillon, also saw some traits in how the Faraizis dressed which would help identify them: 'the Ferazi [sic.] is known by certain tricks of clothing and gesture, and by the ostentatious austerity of his demeanour', *Report on the Census of British India Taken on 17 Feb 1881*, Vol 1, London, 1883, p. 27.

⁵⁵ *Tarjuman*, p. 20, 29..

nor through the telegraph or through the rail. 'the way there is contact and information at the moment, with the people of England, Germany and France'!⁵⁶

A further ploy in distancing the Ahle Hadis from the Wahabis, for Siddiq Hasan Khan, was his explanation of the term *jihad*, and by saying how certain types of *jihad* were against the traditions of the Prophet. Most importantly, Siddiq Hasan Khan argued, that for Wahabis it was obligatory that they undertake *jihad*, but since 'Hind' was an 'abode of freedom and peace' one could not think of undertaking *jihad* at all. On numerous occasions in this tract, Siddiq Hasan argued, that he was being framed by his enemies, and whenever someone wanted someone to look bad in the eyes of the Government, they called him a Wahabi.⁵⁷

The cultural and religious particularities that Nawab Siddiq Hasan Khan mentioned above, from all over India, were precisely those that the *Ahle Sunnat wa Jamā`at* considered to be of Wahabi origin, and hence called such people whom Siddiq Hasan Khan defended, as Wahabis. Although he never defined or explained in this pamphlet what the religious practices of the Ahle Hadis were, he did state that while the Wahabis had been around (in Arabia) for a mere 70 years, the true religion of the *Ahle Sunnat* had been around for 1300 years. While these aspects were directed at other Muslims who were calling the Ahle Hadis Wahabi, the other main defence in this tract was to denounce *jihad* and state that he and his followers too, were 'Loyal Mohammadans', for to call any sect of the Muslims 'Wahabi' and especially to consider them rebellious and *jihadis*, 'is against reason (*khilāf-e-aql*)'.⁵⁸ Many of the Muslims who were called 'Wahabis' by Muslims themselves, rejected this appellation because they did not agree with the religious practices and belief system which went along with the name, while others rejected it because they did not want

⁵⁶ Ibid, p. 20.

⁵⁷ Ibid, p. 21ff.

⁵⁸ Ibid, p. 77.

the British definition of the 'fanatical Wahabees', who were thought to be rebellious, treacherous and seditious, imposed upon them.

As I show in the next section, in some ways, the debate about who a Wahabi was, comes full circle. For the British, the term 'Wahabee' was imposed on those Muslims who they considered to be rebellious and seditious, while their particular brand of orthodox and rigid religious beliefs may have been of little consequence. For those Muslims who were doing the name-calling and branding others as Wahabis, the concerns hinged largely on the basis of religious interpretation and practice. However, it seems that for those who were actually called Wahabis, the concerns were very similar to those of the British.

Perhaps this was the reason why, as the *Punjabi Akhbār* from Lahore reported, that Maulvi Muhammad Hussain, editor of the *Asha'at ul-Sunnat*, and a member of the Ahle Hadis Secretariat wrote to the Secretary of the Punjab Government in May 1886, that the term Wahabi should not be applied 'to the Muhammadans of his class in official correspondence'. The Punjab Government referred the matter to the Supreme Government who had 'forbidden the use of the term in question in official papers'. According to the newspaper, the Government of India's orders asked other 'classes of Musalmans to refrain from calling the Ahle Hadis Musalmans Wahabi in future, otherwise they may be criminally prosecuted for defamation'.⁵⁹ However, despite this notification, both the Muslims as well as the British, continued to use this term for the Ahle Hadis, many years after it was issued.

The 'Fanatical Wahabees' of the British

The Wahabis were one of the handful of the 73 sects of Islam, which were formally recognised as a sect by the British. With the Sunnis, the Shias, and the Faraizis, an

⁵⁹ *Selections from Vernacular Newspapers published in Punjab, North-Western Provinces, Oudh, Central Provinces, Central India and Rajputana, 1887*, p. 81.

equally troublesome sect for the British, they made up the four main sects which achieved recognition in the censuses conducted since 1871, over which, in the eyes of the British, there was little 'vagueness or elasticity'. These four were consistently part of the censuses and were recognised as sects, unlike other sects such as the Khojas and the Bohras, who were at times considered castes, and at others, were included as one of the Islamic sects. Yet, in the 1871 census, very few individuals had returned themselves as 'Wahabees', and in the 1881 census, out of the 50 million Muslims of the whole of India, only 9,296 returned themselves as 'Wahabees' and 2,173 as 'Farazis' [sic.], far fewer than Khojas, Bohras and many other Muslim sects. From Patna, which was the headquarters of the Wahabis, only 27 persons 'professed the Wahabi doctrine', and in all the North-Western Provinces and Oudh, only 28 Wahabis were counted in the census. From Bengal, 'not a single Farazi [sic.] appears in the Census table'.⁶⁰ If indeed, the Wahabis and the Faraizis were so insignificant in number, why were they given the importance and recognition to be called a sect and to be counted separately from all other Muslims?⁶¹

The group of Muslims whom the British called, at various times, the 'bigoted', 'puritan', 'fanatical', 'militant', 'purist', 'rebel', 'traitor', 'Wahabees', or 'those Hindusthanie Moulvies', did not call themselves Wahabis, although they certainly knew that they were being referred to, when the British identified them as Wahabi.⁶² The term had a particularly seditious meaning in the lexicon of the British, or a 'religio-political' one, as one authority explains.⁶³ However, for the Muslims in

⁶⁰ *Report on the Census of British India taken on 17 Feb 1881*, Vol II, Table IIIB, London, 1883, p. 26.

⁶¹ I do not deal with the Faraizi movement as it was specific to the Bengal. On the Faraizi movement, see Rafiuddin Ahmed, *The Bengal Muslims 1871-1906: A Quest for Identity*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1981.

⁶² It is interesting to contrast these appellations for the Wahabis, with other Muslim sects in India. For example, the Shia Bohras of the Bombay Presidency, were considered to be 'exceedingly quiet and law abiding'. *Gazetteer of the Bombay Presidency*, Vol VII, Baroda, 1883, p. 71. For a history of the Bohras, see Maulvi Muhammad Najmul Ghani Khansahib *ibne* Maulvi Abdul Ghani Khansahib, *Bohro ki Tarikh*, Matba-e Mutla-ul-Ulum, Muradabad, Muharram 1322/June 1906. 500 copies printed.

⁶³ Qeyamuddin Ahmad, *The Wahabi Movement in India*.

general, and particularly for those who were called Wahabis, their identity was sharply religious, based on a particular meaning, interpretation and understanding of Islam and its 'politics', more specifically, on the philosophy of *jihad*, which emerged as a consequence of those religious beliefs.⁶⁴ While these 'Wahabis' were primarily a phenomenon of the early half of the nineteenth century, and their rebellious movement had died down completely by 1870, as I show above, the term continued to be used to identify a certain group of Muslims in north India. In the second half of the nineteenth century, for Muslims and for Islamic scholars and religious leaders, the term acquired a very different meaning from the one originally used by the British. The term 'Wahabi', from being seditious in the second quarter of the nineteenth century for the British, went back to a purely religious connotation for Muslims in the last quarter of the century, as Fazal Rasool Badauni had intended, and was once again used by Muslims exclusively as part of their intra-religious, internal, critique of one another.

The group of people whom the British in India called the Wahabis, were the followers of Sayyid Ahmad, later 'Shaheed' (1786-1831), of Rae Bareilly in the North-Western Provinces. Sayyid Ahmad Bareilvi was the founder of the movement, or school, which was called the *Tariqah-i Muhammadiyah*, or the Way of the (Prophet) Muhammad.⁶⁵ The *Tariqah* bore its ideological roots in the first revivalist movement of India, that of Shah Waliullah (1703-62) and his son Shah Abdul Aziz (1746-1824). Shah Abdul Aziz is remembered by contemporary scholars most for his famous fatwa of 1803, in which he declared Hindustan to be a *daru'l-harb*, or abode of war, as he was astute and far-sighted enough to realise that by then, the Mughal Emperor 'no longer ruled in spite of the fiction maintained by the British'.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Harlan O Pearson, *Islamic Reform and Revival*.

⁶⁵ Sir Denzil Ibbetson believed, wrongly, that the 'Muhammadi' in this title came from the name of their 'founder', Muhammad Ibn Abdul Wahab, and hence, was one of many of the British who linked Sayyid Ahmad with Wahabism. See below.

⁶⁶ Kenneth Jones, *Socio-religious Reform Movements in British India*, The New Cambridge History of India, 3.1, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1987, p. 52.

All subsequent Islamic movements in north India, originate from, and bear some degree of allegiance to, Shah Waliullah's original ideas, although the nature of interpretation has varied far and wide.⁶⁷ Shah Waliullah is accredited as being the creator of the religious system of Islam in an Indian, at least north Indian (Hindustani), environment.⁶⁸ Like Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahab at-Tamimi (1703–1792), Shah Waliullah's Islamic system is said to be based on the 13/14 century Islamic scholar Ibn Tamiyya's interpretation of Islam. Ibn Tamiyya (d 1328), Abdul Wahab of Najd in Arabia, and Shah Waliullah and their later followers, have been called 'purists' for wanting to return to what they believed was the original Islam of the seventh century, shorn of all innovation and local influence.⁶⁹ It was this tradition, and these series of influences, which formed the Islamic beliefs of Sayyid Ahmad Barelvi, who was the first, and probably the last, Islamic scholar and Muslim leader, who put into practice the meaning of Shah Abdul Aziz's *fatwa*, about Hindustan being a *daru'l-harb* (the abode of war, as compared to *daru'l-islam*, the home of Islam), which gave rise to British interest in a group of people they began to call the 'Wahabees'.⁷⁰

There are two marked features of Sayyid Ahmad Barelvi's interpretation of Islam, one based on theology and religion, and the other which emerges from the first and gives rise to political action in the form of the *jihad*. For the British, it was both features, his belief and religious practices, which were of concern, but more so, not surprisingly, his call to *jihad* against the British.⁷¹

Kenneth Jones summarises Sayyid Ahmad Barelvi's belief system as follows: He

⁶⁷ S A A Rizvi, *Shah Wali-Allah and his Times*, Ma'irafat Publishing House, Canberra, 1980.

⁶⁸ Shaikh Muhammad Ikram, *Mauj-e Kausar* (1962), Taj Company, New Delhi, 2004, p. 586; and, Aziz Ahmad, *Studies in Islamic Culture in the Indian Environment*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1999 (1964).

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ Harlan O Pearson, *Islamic Reform and Revival*.

⁷¹ See Qeyamuddin Ahmad, *The Wahabi Movement*, Harlan O Pearson, *Islamic Reform and Revival*, and S A A Rizvi, *Shah Wali-Allah*. Also see Ayesha Jalal, *Partisans of Allah: Jihad in South Asia*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 2008.

preached his own version of a purified and restored Islam. accepted the basic teachings of Shah Waliullah and like him, called for the removal of erroneous innovations, all elements of polytheism, and idolatry. He rejected customs and rituals from the Indian, Roman and Persian civilizations unless they were consistent with the Quran and Sunnah. Sayyid Ahmad Barelvi was adamant against the concept of an intermediary between God and man, telling his listeners that they could not seek aid from 'saints, apostles, imams, martyrs, angels, and fairies'.⁷²

Sayyid Ahmad Barelvi had returned to India in 1823 after spending two years in the Hijaz and set up his *Tariqah-i Muhammadiyah*.⁷³ This was also the time when the British began to consolidate power over much of India, and Sayyid Ahmad's group was one of the first unified religious entities which the British encountered in northern India.⁷⁴ A few years earlier they had come up against the Faraizi Movement founded by Haji Shariatullah (b. 1764) of village Bahadarpur in Faridpur district in Bengal. His Movement for the social reform of Muslim society (but limited largely to Bengal) started in 1802, was also said to be 'quite similar to that of Muhammad-ibn-'Abdul Wahab of Najd'.⁷⁵ However, it was Haji Shariatullah's son Dudu Mian, who gave the Movement mass scale and it had a wide following, and was considered by some to be 'as much (or largely) a class struggle between peasants and landowners, mostly indigo growers and their oppressed peasantry'.⁷⁶

Sayyid Ahmad took Shah Abdul Aziz's 1803 fatwa far more seriously than had anyone earlier, or since. Organizing his followers under the banner of the *Tariqah*, Sayyid Ahmad urged them to undertake *jihad* as Hindustan was no longer the *daru'l-islam* and had become the *daru'l-harb*. According to one interpretation of *jihad*

⁷² Kenneth Jones, *Socio-religious Movements*, p. 54.

⁷³ My main sources for Sayyid Ahmad Barelvi and his *Tariqah*, are Qeyamuddin Ahmad, *The Wahabi Movement* and Harlan O Pearson, *Islamic Reform and Revival*.

⁷⁴ Some contemporary writers consider this to be the first 'anti-colonial' movement against the British. See: Iqtidar Alam Khan, 'Anti-Colonial Resistance and the *Jihad* Movement of Nineteenth Century', in Delhi Policy Group, *War and Peace in Islam*, Seminar Proceedings, New Delhi, 2003.

⁷⁵ Qeyamuddin Ahmad, *The Wahabi Movement*, p. 87

⁷⁶ Ibid.

which Sayyid Ahmad professed, any such military action needed to be launched from outside the boundary of the region that was to be liberated. Hence, Sayyid Ahmad collected a number of people from Patna, the Wahabi headquarters, and started moving towards the north-western frontiers of India, collecting followers and supporters along the way. Sayyid Ahmad's *mujahidin*, ended up making their base in the Hazara region and began their *jihad* against Ranjit Singh and his Sikh Empire, as well as against the British.⁷⁷

Sayyid Ahmad found numerous allies amongst the hardened Pathans of the north-western frontiers of India, and many tribes from Buner, Kotha, and other places, joined him against Ranjit Singh and the British. The involvement of the Pakhtun tribes in the *mujahidin* movement was probably as much political, based on issues of territoriality with the Sikhs with whom there had been many skirmishes, as it was 'religious'. The Pakhtuns belonged to an area of India and to the part of the world, where it seems, religious customs and practices were as 'hardened' as was the terrain. The British and the Sikhs had encountered the 'fiery Pathans', on many occasions in the past, and knew of their fighting abilities and skills. The fact that they were also called 'those bigoted Sunnis, the Pathans'⁷⁸ by the British, also made them belong to the seditious traitors, the *mujahidin*, and were also implicated in the category, 'Wahabee'.

Sayyid Ahmad Barelvi 'Shaheed', and Shah Ismail 'Shaheed', who was the second in command of the *mujahidin* and the grandson of Shah Abdul Aziz, were killed fighting the Sikhs in 1831 in Balakot. In the next quarter century, the movement continued to be involved in military skirmishes with the British, particularly in the

⁷⁷ What is interesting and surprising, is that in the contemporary literature on Sayyid Ahmad and his Movement, there is still a great deal of confusion over the question whether his *jihad* was against the British or the Sikhs. Even the main authority on the Movement, fails to give a satisfactory answer to this question; cf. Qeyamuddin Ahmad, *The Wahabi Movement*.

⁷⁸ Sir Denzil Ibbetson, *Punjab Castes: Being a reprint of the chapter on 'the Races, Castes and Tribes of bathe People' in the Report on the Census of the Punjab published in 1883 by the late Sir Denzil Ibbetson, KCSI, Lahore 1986, p 222.*

frontier regions, but the movement seems to have lost its organisational hold. Moreover, because the frontier Pakhtuns continued to fight their battles with the British, and because they were thought to be 'bigoted Sunnis', it does not necessarily follow that they continued to fight for the same cause as were the original *mujahidin*. Yet, the British continued to believe that the insurgency was based on the same principles, and the 'Wahabees' were also implicated in the 1857 Mutiny. However, the military power and the organisational basis, if any still left, had been completely routed by around the early 1860s, following which a number of the followers of Sayyid Ahmad Barelvi were arrested and tried.

The 'Wahabee Trials', received extraordinary coverage in the English press – as well as in the vernacular newspapers, one must add – in colonial India. The trials were held in Ambala in 1864, Patna 1865, Malda 1870, Raj Mahal 1870, and finally again in Patna in 1871. A number of people, including some prominent and respected men such as the 'well known' hide merchant of Patna, Amir Khan, were convicted in the trials and sent to the Andaman Islands.⁷⁹ By sometime in the 1870s, the Wahabi threat had been completely terminated, and all the prisoners had been released in 1883 under a general amnesty once the Government of India had realised that these men and their movement were no longer a threat to them. Yet even at the time when the movement had been subdued and tamed, the British continued to (wrongly) implicate the Wahabis in many acts of murder and insurgency. The most well known allegation concerned the murder of Lord Mayo when he visited the Andaman Islands in February 1872. He was murdered by a Frontier Pakhtun, named Sher Ali, and it was assumed that the murderer was a Wahabi. However, the Wahabis were not involved or connected with this affair, although an 'attempt was made to involve them in it', which caused the island's officers to take revenge on the prisoners on the island.⁸⁰ Another such case was the assassination of the Chief Justice of Bengal, Justice Paxton Norman in 1871 which was also wrongly attributed to the Wahabis.

⁷⁹ Qeyamuddin Ahmad, *The Wahabi Movement*.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 256.

The assassin was a Punjabi named Abdullah, who was officially declared to be an insane man and had no connections with the Wahabis. but an 'anti-Wahabi group of officials as well as some public men thought it a good opportunity to involve the Wahabis in this foul deed'.⁸¹

The impact of the Wahabis on the British imagination and in the way they managed their political lives, must have been huge, given the plethora of articles and books published on them by Britishers during the nineteenth century. Numerous articles in the early volumes of the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* and the *Calcutta Review*, suggest a great preoccupation with the Wahabis.⁸² The *Englishman* and the *Pioneer* from Allahabad, as well as the *Bengal Harkaru*, published regular accounts about the Wahabis including numerous pages on accounts of their trials. A number of books too were published about the Wahabis and about the trials.⁸³ including perhaps the most important account of Indian Muslims, published in 1873, in which opinions about the Wahabis played an important role in forming both, British and Indian perspectives about the Wahabis.⁸⁴

The way public opinion was being framed with regard to the Wahabis, can be gauged by the tenor in the British press, which filtered into the 'native' newspapers as well. On 11 January 1865, the *Pioneer* carried an article in which it heavily criticised an article in the *Englishman* on a number of counts for pointing out certain facts contrary to what were being suggested by the *Pioneer*, regarding the arrest and trial of Maulvi Ahmadullah, one of the earliest to go on trial. The general tone of the

⁸¹ Ibid, p. 301.

⁸² See, for example, the early volumes of *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, London (Vol XIII 1852, XIII New Series 1881), Bombay (Vol XIV 1880) and Calcutta (Bengal Vol 1, 1832). James O'Kinealy 'A Sketch of the Wahhabis in India Down to the Death of Sayyid Ahmad in 1831', *Calcutta Review*, 50, 100, 1870. Shahmat Ali, *Asiatic Society of Bengal*, 1, 1832; and *Royal Asiatic Society*, 13, 1852.

⁸³ For example, see: CC Macrae, *Report on the Proceedings in the Case of Amir Khan*, Calcutta, 1870; LA Mendes, *Report of Proceedings in the matter of Amir Khan and Hashmatdad Khan*, Calcutta 1870; AH Mason, *Report on the Hindustani Fanatics*, London, 1878.

⁸⁴ WW Hunter, *The Indian Musalmans*, Rupa & Co, New Delhi, 2004 (1871).

Pioneer can be appreciated by the following excerpt: 'The folly of Fanaticism is one of the most mysterious of phenomena, and in no country, and among no sect, is the folly more conspicuous than in India, among the Wahabees'. The paper spoke about how these fanatics, with their gullible intellects, 'greedily' accepted 'monstrous' ideas.⁸⁵ On 16 January, the paper criticised Fagan, the lawyer for Maulvi Ahmadullah who had come from Calcutta to defend the man and had since returned, by stating that, 'the impropriety of an officer of Government defending a prisoner charged with treason against the State, is so obvious and indefensible, that we think it very probable that his retirement was suggested'.⁸⁶ The 'native newspapers', at least in translation, echoed the opinion that had been created by the British about the Wahabis, and papers like the *Oudh Ukhbar* of 26 December 1865 spoke about the 'rebel Wahabis' who lived by plunder, and suggested, in its 13 February 1866 edition, that the Government should imprison the leaders of the Wahabis. The *Gwalior Gazette* and the *Kohinur*, from Lahore, continued the same pitch, and the latter 'mentions that the Wahabees are said to be very talkative about their religion in the city of Lahore. In the mosques great meetings are held and arguments take place concerning it'.⁸⁷ The Wahabi presence between the 1840s to the 1880s, was reported all over India, in the North-Western Provinces of course, and in the Punjab, but also in Bombay, Madras and Hyderabad.

In the imagination of the British, the crucial link between Sayyid Ahmad Barelvi and the Wahabis of Arabia, assumed that Sayyid Ahmad had some connection with Muhammad Ibn Abdul Wahab in Arabia, and both shared many similar views on the status and place of Islam in the world, at around the same time. Marcia Hermansen argues that the category 'Wahhabi', has long been recognised as 'problematic' in the Indian context, and suggests that its origin into the Indian frame may have come from the military activities of the followers of Abdul Wahab, who sacked and

⁸⁵ The *Pioneer*, Allahabad, 11 January, 1865. Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi.

⁸⁶ The *Pioneer*, Allahabad, 16 January, 1865.

⁸⁷ *Selections from the Vernacular Newspapers published in the Punjab, North-West Provinces, Oudh, and the Central Provinces*, 1866

captured Hijazi holy cities in 1803 and 1804. These military successes may have attracted the attention of the British and, Hermansen asks, whether British officers in India were 'disturbed' at the military activities of Shah Ismail Shaheed and Sayyid Ahmad Bareilvi and their successors, and hence 'extended the name from an Arabian to an Indian phenomenon?'⁸⁸ This is probably the most likely case, as I have tried to argue above, a view that continued to persist for many decades later. The Memorandum on the 1871-72 Census repeated what had become conventional wisdom and 'fact' by then, by stating that the tenets of the puritanical sect founded by Abdul Wahab in Najd, were brought to India by Sayyid Ahmad in 1823, 'and caught up the fiery Pathans of the north-west frontier'.⁸⁹

Yet, in passing, it is also worth citing other recorded cases where this connection was not made. If all references to India's militant *mujahidin* Wahabees were determined by association with the Arab Wahabis, it is surprising that this is not mentioned by one visitor to the 'Wahabee Capital of Riyadh in Central Arabia' at a time when the Wahabi issue was at its peak in India. In 1865, Lt Col (later, Sir) Lewis Pelly, who had a long and illustrious career spanning over four decades in British India, who was then Her Majesty's Political Resident in the Persian Gulf, set out on a journey to the Riyadh. He concurred with the general sentiment about Wahabis, talking about the 'fanatical structure of Wahabeeism', and about how Wahabis, 'and indeed the Arab mind in general, is so perfidious, so changeable, so volatile, so vindictive, and so fanatical that there was no trusting to the look of affairs for an hour', yet no mention or connection is made with the Indian Wahabis, and this at a time when there was already enough going on with regard to them in India.⁹⁰ Pelly's account may have been one of the very few which did not draw this connection. While there is no way of knowing whether the 1881 Census Commissioner of Bengal, J A

⁸⁸ Marcia Hermansen, 'Fakirs, Wahabis and Others', in Jamal Malik (ed), *Perspectives of Mutual Encounters in South Asian History 1760-1860*, Brill, Leiden, 2000, p. 30.

⁸⁹ *Memorandum on the Census of British India 1871-72*, London 1875, p. 18.

⁹⁰ Lt. Col Lewis Pelly, *Report on a Journey to the Wahabee Capital of Riyadh in Central Arabia*, Bombay, Education Society's Press, 1866, p. 59.

Bourdillon. had read Lewis Pelly's opinion about the 'Arab Wahabees'. it is noticeable that Bourdillon expressed the same sentiment regarding the Faraizis in Bengal, when he stated, 'they are a class of intensely bigoted. turbulent and litigious. and with a few exceptions they are as ignorant and intolerant as fanatics have mostly been in the history of the world'.⁹¹ It seems then, that British opinion about the Arab Wahabis, or their assumed Indian counterparts in the form of those who followed Sayyid Ahmad Bareilvi or Dudu Mian, were identical.

Before I conclude this section, it is perhaps worth examining the 1881 Census to examine the 'Census Wahabis'. In fact, the reasons given by Census Commissioners for why so few Wahabis returned themselves as Wahabis, only underscores the arguments made in this section above. The Report on the Census of 1881 admitted, that since so many 'Mahomedan' had not given any information about their sect, the tables lost some of their value 'especially in relation to the knowledge it affords us to the members of the Puritan sects, the Wahabis and Farazis [sic.]'.⁹² However, the Report did realise why members of these two sects were reluctant to come forward: 'the feeling with which Wahabyism is looked upon by the authorities is not in favour of its members being openly declared by any enumeration of the people. Nor are persons professing doctrines which are distinguished as Farazi [sic.] likely to return themselves by a term which they do not regard as complimentary'.⁹³ Mr White, who filed his report from the North-Western Provinces wrote that he had been 'informed by Mahomedan gentlemen, that since the Patna prosecutions the Wahabis object to declaring themselves lest they should incur the suspicion of the Government', a sentiment shared by Census Commissioner Bourdillon from Bengal who said that only 2,144 persons had returned themselves as Wahabi, and they no longer considered it wise to openly profess this fact.⁹⁴

⁹¹ *Report on the Census of British India Taken on 17 Feb 1881*, Vol 1, London, 1883, p. 27.

⁹² *Report on the Census of British India Taken on 17 Feb 1881*, Vol 1, London, 1883, p. 26.

⁹³ *Ibid*, p. 26.

⁹⁴ *Ibid*, p. 26.

While the Faraizi Movement may have quickly become a political movement, a ‘class struggle’ of peasants, there is little doubt that the *Tariqah* seemed to have had a far richer and deeper ideological and religious mooring, and hence the label ‘purist’, attached to it by the British. Yet, importantly, what seems less clear, is whether there was a much later – a teleological – reading into the ideology and methods of the *Tariqah* by the British, only once their seditious and treacherous side had been revealed. In other words, had the *Tariqah* not resorted to an armed struggle to expel the British from the soil of Hindustan, would the British have made as much of the ‘Wahabeeism’, of the followers of Sayyid Ahmad, as they did?

Since the British constructed the image of the fanatical Wahabees based on their reading of the Wahabis of Najd in Arabia, some of them, but only a very few, realised that some of those who they classified as belonging to the sect ‘Wahabee’, were not very comfortable with this classification. Part of the reason, some Census Commissioners realised, was the fact that both the Wahabi and the Faraizi, had been branded as traitors and rebels, and hence many Muslims who may have belonged to such groupings, were reluctant to ‘return’ themselves as Wahabi or Faraizi during the census, categories which were part of the many castes, sects and subdivisions, which bifurcated the religious groupings in the 1871-72 and 1881 censuses. Not realising that this was a very modern form of *taqiya*,⁹⁵ the British continued to lament the fact that they could count only a few thousand Wahabee and Faraizis when they were convinced there were many more. However, occasionally, some Commissioners realised that the problem went somewhat deeper.

The accompanying commentary to the *Report on the Census of British India* of 1881, stated that those who were called Faraizis by the British, did not find the term ‘complimentary’. J A Bourdillon, the Census Commissioner in Bengal, made the

⁹⁵ *Taqiya* is the Shia tradition of not disclosing their *mazhab* when they think they are under threat under hostile, usually Sunni, rule. In one of the references cited in this Chapter, the nineteenth century Bombay Khojas, when the issue of whether they were Sunni or Shia came up in the Bombay High Court in 1866, claimed that they were always Shia and were simply practicing *taqiya*.

astute observation, that while Wahabism had been ‘out of favour’, an important reason why people did not state that they were Wahabis was because they ‘do not adopt or admit that designation, but adopt some other periphrasis, so that it is certain that some of them are included among the Mahommedans of unspecified sect’.⁹⁶ Importantly, Bourdillon realised that the reasons why the Faraizis did not report themselves as Faraizi’s was that ‘this name is not one which members of the sect use when speaking of themselves, but it is an entirely exotic epithet ...’.⁹⁷ Indeed, as I have tried to argue in this chapter, this was the crux of the issue: many members of a Muslim ‘sect’ did not use the name that the British had given them, and for the Muslims, the Wahabis were a very different category altogether. The Muslims classified and labelled themselves very differently from the way the British defined them.

Throughout the nineteenth century, while the British continued to label the Wahabees as seditious, rebels and traitors, there were a handful amongst the British, who understood that in terms of religious belief and practice, this group seemed different from other practicing Muslims. For Muslims themselves, when it came to categorising who a Wahabi was, unlike the British, it was only the issue of religious faith and practice which marked out this group from others. Yet, for the most part, the appellation ‘Wahabi’, even by many Muslims, was rejected and was always applied to some other group, never to themselves. The term was perceived to have such severe derogatory connotations, that the successors of whom the British had called the ‘fanatical Wahabees’, filed a petition to have their official title changed and had being called a Wahabi made into a punishable offence. How the most austere, traditional, orthodox and bigoted branch of Indian Sunnism was made to rely on one of the most modern, ‘foreign’, innovative, institutions planted onto Indian soil – the colonial legal system – is another story.

⁹⁶ *Report on the Census of British India Taken on 17 Feb 1881*, Vol 1, London, 1883, p. 26

⁹⁷ *Ibid*, p. 27.

The Boundaries of the Muslim *Qaum*

Within the context of the Muslims of nineteenth century colonial India, a key notion that emerged with regard to their identity, representation, and exclusion, was the fluid and vague, though extremely important, concept of a Muslim *qaum*. At the time when the colonial empire was busy differentiating Muslims by different ‘castes’, ‘sects’ and subdivisions through their censuses, a section of the Muslims *ashrāf*, were constructing an alternate idea of a united Muslim entity which they called the ‘*qaum*’. Unlike the construction of the idea and image of the Wahabis by the British as demonstrated above or, for that matter, of what a caste was and what was a sect, the boundaries and features of the Muslim *qaum*, were defined exclusively by Muslims. Yet the way the term was derived in the nineteenth century, and the way it became legitimated in the Muslim lexicon, reveals the continuing story of hegemony and domination of certain groups amongst the Muslims of British India, and links to the ideas to be discussed in Chapter Four, related to the great-man-great-idea theme, of writing to and for the *qaum*.

Defining the *qaum* and speaking on behalf of it, became an acutely political task for some members of the Muslim community who imagined a grand vision for the *qaum*. On the other hand, for those who were concerned with more local, parochial, or even primarily religious, issues, the need to define and stake claim over such a notion, seemed to be less important. This section will argue, that the development of the idea of the *qaum* was a ‘modern’ one, and was linked to politics, and not much to religious belief, and as religion became more political, so did the notion of the *qaum*. For this reason, the evolving and contradictory use put of the term ‘*qaum*’ by Sayyid Ahmad Khan and his ‘Sir-Sayyid’ or Aligarh school, becomes particularly relevant. Focussing on Sayyid Ahmad and his ‘school’ is important, for it was his notion of the *qaum*, and that of Altaf Hussain Hali’s, which becomes the dominant, perhaps the

only, notion of what the Muslim *qaum* was,⁹⁸ an idea on which the poet-philosopher Muhammad Iqbal built considerably in the twentieth century.⁹⁹

For Muslims in northern India, and particularly for their leaders, the *qaum* was a northern Indian, Hindustani, Muslim, *qaum*, and was fractured geographically, with little concern for Muslims elsewhere in the empire. In this way, the notion of *qaum* as a signifier, was very different from any of the ‘Muslim’ or ‘Islamic’ categories, such as Wahabi, Deobandi, Shia, etc. The *qaum* was non-sectarian in a religious sense, and in many ways, was far more inclusive than any of the Islamic *maslaks*. Yet, it was largely the vision of an Urdu-speaking Muslim *qaum* which emerged amongst the *ashrāf* or well-born Hindustani Muslim leadership, itself almost exclusively north Indian, while Muslims whose mother tongue may have been Bengali, Deccani or Malayalam, were never included in the broad category of ‘the Muslim *qaum*’. The few non-north Indian representatives also began to speak about the Muslim *qaum* as if it were a Hindustani Muslim *qaum*, often forgetting their own geographical roots and Muslim constituencies. The whole notion of a Muslim community, in the colonial state of British India, was reduced, by its most vocal and eloquent spokesmen, to a section of the Muslims who resided in the Hindustani belt of northern India. As Rafiuddin Ahmed argues, ‘if there were two religious “nations” in India, there were many more cultural and linguistic “nations”’. Certainly what was true of the UP Muslims was not so of their co-religionists in eastern India, notwithstanding that they both professed the same faith’.¹⁰⁰

The use of the notion *qaum* in the context of nineteenth century India, has raised numerous problems with regard to its English equivalent. It has and can be used as:

⁹⁸ Ayesha Jalal, ‘Negotiating Colonial Modernity and Cultural Difference: Indian Muslims’ Conceptions of Community 1878-1914’, in Leila Tarazi Fawaz and C.A. Bayly (eds), *Modernity and Culture: From the Mediterranean to the Indian Ocean*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2002.

⁹⁹ Ayesha Jalal, *Self and Sovereignty: the Muslim Individual and the Community of Islam in South Asia since c.1850*, Sung-e-Meel, Lahore, 2000.

¹⁰⁰ Rafiuddin Ahmed, *The Bengal Muslims 1871-1906: A Quest for Identity*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1981, p. x.

nation, community, sect, religious group and country. For my purposes, I use it to mean a community which is nonterritorial, such as a Muslim *qaum* in India or Hindustan. Javed Majeed points out that, 'a diversity of terms are used to refer to the category of the community and location, such as 'qaum', 'mulk', 'ahl', 'watan', and 'vilayat', which are employed in varying senses. The word 'qaum' is used to refer to religious community (the 'qaum' of Muslims and the 'qaum' of Hindus) as well as rank, as for example the 'sharif qaum' is used to refer to high ranks, both Muslim and Hindu, in north Indian society'.¹⁰¹ Majeed cites two cases from the *Aligarh Institute Gazette* saying that in one, "'qaum" is used to refer to Hindustanis generally (i.e., North Indians)' while in another, 'the same term is used to refer to the upper ranks in Hindustani society'. Farzana Shaikh defines *qaum* as follows: 'a term used by *sharif* Indian Muslims in the late 19th century and 20th century to suggest their distinct religious, racial and social ancestry'.¹⁰² Much contemporary writing on the nineteenth century in English, translated *qaum* almost exclusively as 'nation'. This causes a serious problem, as 'nations' in the modern usage of the term did not exist when the term was in its particular usage. To call *qaum* 'nation', gives it greater meaning than is implied by its use in the nineteenth century meaning and context.

It is important to state that the term '*qaum*' for Muslims, is of recent vintage, perhaps from the middle of the nineteenth century. It is not clear how and when the term *qaum* entered into the Urdu vocabulary and how it began to be used as identity, but in the first half of the nineteenth century, and also probably some years later, the main term used by Muslims for themselves, was *ahle Islam* [those of Islam] or *musalman*. Even *ummah* was seldom used, and if used at all, was always used as a religious category – the Prophet's *ummah*, his people – and never as a *political* category, till well into the twentieth century, where it acquired overtly political

¹⁰¹ Javed Majeed, 'Narratives of progress and idioms of community: Urdu periodicals of the 1870s', in David Finkelstein and Douglas Peers, (eds) *Negotiating India in the Nineteenth Century Media*, McMillan, London, 2000, p. 150.

¹⁰² Farzana Shaikh, *Community and Consensus in Islam*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1989, p. 1.

connotations. To differentiate between the two large groups of Muslims, *ahle Sunnat* (Sunnis) and *ahle Tash'ih* (Shias) were in use. Jones has argued that the Shias started using *qaum* to define their Shia *qaum* as distinct from the mainstream Muslim or Sunni *qaum*, in the 1880s.¹⁰³

The term *qaum*, *in loco* and in translation, has created far more problems than one can care to admit. In most cases the English translations 'nation' or 'nationality' are used, but often, so are 'country', 'community', 'brotherhood', and so on. Nevertheless, the understanding of the term *qaum*, and the use that it has been put to, is essential to enable us to plot the map of location and difference amongst Muslims and others in north India. Trying to disentangle the meaning of the use of the term *qaum*, and the use put to it by Sayyid Ahmad Khan, is not an easy task. One can find countless examples and contexts where the term has been used by him, revealing perhaps to some, the complete arbitrariness in the meaning of the term, and perhaps even his use of it. While the far too numerous examples of a separate Hindu and Muslim *qaum* abound in his writings, and have probably correctly been taken to mean Sayyid Ahmad's idea of the term *qaum*, there are other examples which only help make a proper understanding of this notion difficult, ambiguous and highly controversial. Perhaps some examples from just twenty days of Sayyid Ahmad's life might indicate the extent of the ambiguity and controversy.

On 22 January 1884, Sayyid Ahmad Khan departed from Aligarh with three other travelling companions for a twenty day tour of the Punjab, in which he visited and spoke -- often three or four times a day -- in eight towns and cities, visiting Amritsar and Jullandhar, both twice. Sayyid Ahmad Khan spoke in front of numerous audiences, including journalists, members of the Anjuman Himayat Islam,¹⁰⁴ the Indian Association Lahore, an Arya Samaj delegation in Lahore, and at the

¹⁰³ Justin Jones, 'The Shi'a Muslims of the United Provinces of India, c. 1890-1940', Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Cambridge, 2007, p. 75.

¹⁰⁴ In the last chapter I give the possible dates for the formation of the Anjuman which seem to be after Sayyid Ahmad's Punjab tour. It is possible that the Anjuman was not formally inaugurated or formed at the time Sayyid Ahmad spoke there, and was officially launched soon after.

residences of a number of *ra'ises* and nawabs, as well at public gatherings at schools. This was a very public tour with news of the travels and talks/lectures of Sayyid Ahmad Khan reported in local and regional newspapers, often with the newspaper's own commentary and 'remarks'. The entire trip, along with all addresses and delegations received by Sayyid Ahmad, and Sayyid Ahmad's reply to those addresses as well as his other numerous speeches, were recorded by one of Sayyid Ahmad's three travelling companions, Sayyid Iqbal Ali Sahib, acting sub-judge Barabanki, and published by the Aligarh Institute Press the same year.¹⁰⁵

On 2 February 1884, an Arya Samaj deputation was presented to Sayyid Ahmad led by Munshi Jiwan Das, Secretary of the Arya Samaj, along with 'forty to fifty honourable and respected members'. Lala Sangam Lal spoke, thanked 'Sayyid Sahib' for coming to Lahore and said that the purpose of their delegation was as follows: 'that your coming to Lahore brings respect and honour, especially to the Muslims, but the Hindus of our *mulk*, on whose behalf we have come, also feel the same respect and honour due to your arrival and presence, even though you are not a Hindu; it is a great sense of pride/honour that there is such a reformer like you in our *mulk*, and that you are involved in the reformation of the respected and large *qaum* such as the Muslims, with your true heart [sincerity]'.¹⁰⁶ Sayyid Ahmad replied as follows:

This word that you have used, Hindu, in my opinion, is not correct, because in my opinion, Hindu is not the name of any religion, but everyone who lives in Hindustan, can all himself a Hindu. I am very disappointed, that despite the fact that I belong to [live in] Hindustan, you do not consider me a Hindu (very loud cheers). I am sure you recognise this fact, that for the welfare [progress] of Hindustan, it is essential, that the people of Hindu and the people of Islam,¹⁰⁷ should work together for their *mulk*. Until this does not happen, the progress of Hindustan cannot be considered as the true progress of all of Hindustan, because the '*ghair qaum*' all call us, whether we are

¹⁰⁵ Sayyid Iqbal Ali, *Sayyid Ahmad Khan ka safarnama-e Punjab*, Aligarh Institute Press, Aligarh, 1884.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 139.

¹⁰⁷ In the original: '*ahle Hindu and ahle Islam*', i.e., those who belong to, of.

Muslims or Hindus – forgive me for I am using the term Hindu in this very particular sense – one word, which is ‘Hindustani’. Our progress cannot be seen [or cannot happen] separately, as the progress of the people of Hindu and the progress of the people of Islam, but instead, [must be] the complete [full] progress and stability of all of Hindustan’.¹⁰⁸

On the next day in Lahore, Dayal Singh, President of the Indian Association Lahore, along with eighteen signatories¹⁰⁹ presented their Address to Sayyid Ahmad Khan, which lauded his contribution in the Viceroy’s Legislative Council, to which he replied:

It was my earnest and sincerest desire that I faithfully should serve my *mulk* and *qaum*.¹¹⁰ By the term *qaum* [nation, in the English translation] I mean both Hindu and Muslim. This is the way I define the term nation (*qaum*) In my opinion, it does not matter what their religious beliefs are, because we cannot see anything in this [difference], but what we can see is that all of us, whether we are Hindus or Muslims, live on the same land, are governed by one and the same ruler, have the same sources for our advantage, equally share similar hardships of famine. These are the different reasons [grounds] on the basis of which, I designate both these *qaums* [communities, in the English translation] that live in Hindustan [India, in the English translation] with one word [expression] which is ‘Hindu’ [‘Hindu nation’, in English translation], in other words, those *qaums* that live in Hindustan.¹¹¹

Both these speeches made by Sayyid Ahmad on his visit to the Punjab, were made in front of mixed religious audiences. In the speeches that he gave which were organised by Muslim organisations or by the *ra’is* and nawabs, Sayyid Ahmad Khan referred to the *qaum* simply as the Muslim *qaum*. The niceties which were conveyed to the inter-religious conglomerations about odd notions of the term ‘*qaum*’, now seem lost, though nowhere does Sayyid Ahmad ever make derogatory remarks against the Hindus.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 141.

¹⁰⁹ Of whom five were Muslims, one a Parsee, and thirteen Hindus.

¹¹⁰ *Mulk* and *qaum* are in the Urdu original; in the English translation provided, *mulk* is translated as ‘country’, and *qaum* as an italicized ‘nation’.

¹¹¹ Sayyid Iqbal Ali, *Sayyid Ahmad Khan*, p. 167. This is from the Urdu original. The English translation given to this last sentence is as follows: ‘These are the various grounds on which I designate both the communities that inhabit India by the expression Hindu nation’. Ibid., p. 160.

The most challenging stage in the latter half of Sayyid Ahmad Khan's public career came after the Indian National Congress was formed in 1885. It was striving to be an 'Indian' and a 'National' organisation, representing all 'qaums'. Muslim, Hindu, Bengalis, Madrasis, and many others as well. While Sayyid Ahmad Khan did not see the Indian National Congress as a Hindu organisation, he did argue that it did not represent the Muslim *qaum*. By claiming to be both 'Indian' and 'National', the Congress was also challenging the idea of a Muslim *qaum* outside of the idea of what was 'India' and what was 'National'. If it was an Indian and a National entity, which was beginning to claim to speak for all Indians, the enclave of the Muslim *qaum* was bound to be encroached.

In his now famous Lucknow and Meerut lectures, two-and-a-half months apart, both with the same title, Sayyid Ahmad was able to summarise many of his political ideas and once again, his notion of the Muslim *qaum*. Much of his virulent attack against the Congress came in the form of an attack, not on the supposedly 'Hindu' Congress, but on the fact that it was run and controlled by Bengalis. He argued that 'Hindus should stay together with the Muslims in their *mulk*, and the people of our *mulk* will gain nothing by going ahead and joining with them [the Bengalis]'.¹¹² While there is not a single statement against the Hindus in either of these speeches, about the Bengalis, Sayyid Ahmad Khan had a great deal to say. More than anything else, this defined his notion of the territoriality of his Hindustan, and suggested that the Sir-Sayyid school's idea of a Muslim *qaum*, was exclusively a Hindustani Muslim *qaum*.

Sayyid Ahmad's geographical boundaries of *qaum* and his vision of a Hindustan suggested that his ambitions were related to the Muslim *qaum* located only in the North-Western Provinces and Oudh, the Punjab and perhaps in Bihar, a region with which he was familiar, culturally, more than anything else, and a region which he could aspire to 'represent'. Almost all his life was spent within the confines of what

¹¹² Ibid.

became the UP, and while he was the secretary of the Muhammadan Educational Congress (set up in response to the Indian National Congress in 1886), for ten years. between 1886-96, the Congress – later renamed the Muhammadan Educational Conference -- met only once outside the UP under his tenure. During the next ten years under Mohsin ul Mulk, the Conference met five times outside the UP. While this change between 1896-1906 was also a sign of the changing times, it was also a reflection of Sayyid Ahmad's constituency and his limited view of the (Hindustani) Muslim *qaum*. Moreover, in his *Lekcharo ka mujmuā*,¹¹³ the collection of his lectures published in 1892, between 1864 and 1892, forty-two lectures are recorded. Yet, only one is delivered in Calcutta, and that too, as early as 6 October 1863 at the house of Maulvi Abdul Lateef. With the exception of the Punjab tour made in early 1884, and some other lectures in the Punjab, and two at Patna, all lectures were delivered in the North-Western Provinces and Oudh.

In contrast, Sayyid Ameer Ali of Calcutta, who was another Muslim of importance towards the end of the nineteenth century who set up the Central National Muhammadan Association in Calcutta, travelled far and wide across India and his Association had as many as 53 branches in Bengal, Bihar, Bombay, Madras, the Punjab, and the United Provinces.¹¹⁴ This suggests, though tentatively, that for Sayyid Ahmad, his constituency was almost exclusively the Muslim *qaum* in Hindustan, not India. In a signed statement in the *Aligarh Institute Gazette* of 4 May 1886, when he was describing the main aims and objectives of the Muhammadan Educational Congress, Sayyid Ahmad Khan described the need to gather Muslims into the Congress from the following areas: 'People from the North-Western Provinces, Oudh and the Punjab, and also people from Bihar whose language, manners and customs are more akin to those of this province and Oudh, should be

¹¹³ *Lekcharo ka mujmuā*, with a Preface by Munshi Sirajuddin Ahmad Sahib, Bilal Press, Sadhora, end December 1892. There is also an earlier version of the same, with fewer lectures, published by the same press, in 1890. All the lectures in the 1890 edition are included in the 1892 one.

¹¹⁴ Gopal, Ram, *Indian Muslims: A Political History (1858-1947)*, Asia Publishing House, London, 1959, p. 51.

admitted as members of the Congress'.¹¹⁵ Not mentioned or included in this membership drive were the many millions of Muslims from Bengal, Bombay or Madras. His Muslim *qaum* excluded vast majorities of Muslims in colonial India.

It is interesting to compare this use of the term *qaum* as used by the Aligarh modernists and reformers, and to contrast it with the use of '*ummat*' or '*millat*', as Faisal Devji points out.¹¹⁶ Devji writes, that Sayyid Ahmad and the Aligarh school call it 'a *qaum* rather than one of the terms, *ummat* or *millat*, used for specifically religious groupings that were localizable neither in time nor in space: groups that were not, in other words, communities in the modern sense. The word *qaum*, of course, had been used in reference to religious groups before, but not in any national sense, which is to say any sense in which a natural belonging together was implied'.¹¹⁷

Moreover, the use of the Muslim *qaum* as a collective entity, marks a distinct separation from the way the British were busy identifying and marking Muslims into 'castes' or even 'sects' during their censuses – see next Section. *Qaum* acts as a modern, unifying, political, force across class, 'caste', Shia/Sunni, and against all other divisive schema, except that it was geographically bounded. Since the political constituency of those who claimed to represent Muslims in politics and in the public sphere was north Indian, the Muslim *qaum* was also limited to north India. Moreover, given the social stratification between *ashrāf* and *ajlāf* in the nineteenth century, *qaum* was representative primarily of the *ashrāf*. It was only in the beginning of the twentieth century, when politics began to dominate the lives of Muslims in north India and elsewhere, that *qaum* became far more representational, both in terms of region, as well as in terms of class. Hence, it must be remembered, that the notion and term '*qaum*' had a very different meaning in 1880, compared to

¹¹⁵ *Aligarh Institute Gazette*, 4 May 1886.

¹¹⁶ Faisal Devji, 'Qawm', www.soas.ac.uk/academics/centres/southasianstudies/Keywords/24810.pdf

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

what it did in. say, 1912. a fact that should alert us to how the term is put to use. In the earlier period, despite its vague and fluid definition, *qaum* was defined far more in terms of language than religion, but much later acquired a more encompassing religious, political, definition.

The Census Muslims

Although religion was probably the most important category and difference which defined and marked communities in India, to the extent that geographical boundaries were redrawn as a consequence in the middle of the twentieth century, in their earlier years of marking and counting in the nineteenth century. British authorities were at a loss of words at identifying religious communities based on belief or practice. In fact, even the broad, well-known, though apparently not well-defined, religious communities were defined 'against' one another. W Crooke in his 1897 edition of *The North-West Provinces of India*,¹¹⁸ made the rather startling and revealing confession, that 'it is all but impossible to frame a working definition of a Hindu: Muslims of the lower class cling to many of the beliefs of the faith from which they were originally drawn; everywhere in the lower strata the forms of faith known as Brahmanical or animistic, overlap'.¹¹⁹ He acknowledged that for 'Indian' sociologists, it had been a 'vexed problem' to frame a 'working definition' of who a Hindu was, due to the sharp differences of practice and customs amongst Hindus. He went on to state, that 'we know clearly enough who is a Musalman and who is a Christian, but the faith of the low class Musalman is largely made up of Hindu beliefs, and the low class Hindu has almost a special creed of his own', the solution to which was, that, 'for the purpose of religious statistics we are obliged to strike out first the numbers of fairly recognisable religions, and we call everyone else a Hindu'.¹²⁰ Yet, if the Muslims belonged to one of those 'fairly recognisable

¹¹⁸ W Crooke, *The North-West Provinces of India*, Methuen and Co, London, 1897.

¹¹⁹ Ibid, p. 234.

¹²⁰ Ibid, p. 240.

religions', J A Baines, who was then responsible for the Census of the Bombay Presidency and later became the Census Commissioner for the 1891 Census, in his 'Caste and their Social Dimensions in the Bombay Presidency', as part of the Report on the 1881 Census of British India, published fifteen years before Crooke's book, had also stated in detail the problems of identifying and classifying who Muslims were, hoping 'that by the time the next census has to be taken some more comprehensive and systematic scheme for this classification of this community will have been devised'.¹²¹ Despite these very serious issues and problems of classification on account of India's great diversity, one marvels at the optimism and ingenuity of Henry Waterfield who sent a Note to the India Office, dated 26 January 1876, in which he suggested, that with regard to tabulating the returns, 'our Indian tables should, as much as possible, confirm in shape to English models'.¹²²

When he wrote his book in 1897, W Crooke was only echoing what census officials had been saying since the 1870s, and what is surprising in this case, is that as late as the end of the nineteenth century, these classificatory issues had still not been resolved. The 1881 census was the first in which such an 'exhaustive' treatment of religious classification was made of the Indian population, and while it was considered to be 'not complete', it was still considered to be a 'great advance upon the methods adopted in previous Census Reports'.¹²³ However, the Report admitted, that many Census Commissioners in their reports spoke about the difficulty in classifying who a Hindu was. E J Kitts, who had submitted an 'excellent' report on the Berar Census had written that the 'vagueness of the term Hindoo, as the name of a religion',¹²⁴ was apparent. The main Report acknowledged that the difficulty that Kitts faced 'in the way of correct classification by religion, occasioned by the vagueness and elasticity of Hindooism', was shared by other Commissioners, such as

¹²¹ *Report on the Census of British India taken on 17 Feb 1881*, Vol 1, London, 1883, p. cxii.

¹²² *Report by the Officers Appointed to Consider the Suggestions for a General Census in India in 1881*, 1881, p. 19.

¹²³ *Report on the Census of British India taken on 17 Feb 1881*, Vol 1, London, 1883, p. 16.

¹²⁴ *Ibid*, p. 19.

J A Bourdillon in Bengal. The main Report had pages and pages of quotes from other Commissioners filing their Reports. all reporting on the similar issues that they and their men faced about the 'problems of what is a Hindoo'.¹²⁵

If the 'vagueness and elasticity of Hindooism' caused such challenges with how to classify who a Hindu was, dealing with that ubiquitous phenomenon of caste, could not have been much easier. And, if a Hindu was defined by striking out those with fairly recognisable religions, how could one define caste, which was primarily, if not exclusively, a Hindu phenomenon?

Ideas and definitions concerning caste, nationality, sect and tribe, were vague and changing as far as the census were concerned. Henry Waterfield in his Note to the India Office in 1876 had argued, that 'caste and nationality should be thrown into one column, the former applying to the four main divisions of Hindus, and the latter to persons of other religions',¹²⁶ a suggestion to which Major Graham agreed, saying that 'the census need not recognize all the distinctions of caste which are of no statistical importance'.¹²⁷

The Report to the Secretary to the Government of India, Department of Revenue, Agriculture and Commerce, by the Officers Appointed to Consider the Suggestions for a General Census in India in 1881, with regard to the forms of schedule to be used, suggested that with regard to religion, two columns should be drawn, 'one showing the main religious divisions of the people and their caste in the case of Hindus, and the sect in the case of other religions'. It felt that 'any enquiry into the religious sects among Hindus we consider unnecessary and fruitless. The Hindu sects are not very sharply defined, and we imagine that most Hindus would have some difficulty in specifying the particular sect to which they belong ... We consider a

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ *Report by the Officers Appointed to Consider the Suggestions for a General Census in India in 1881*, 1881, p. 2.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

mistake was made at the last census in showing the castes of Hindus in the statement of nationality, and in introducing into that statement the religious terms Hindus and Muhammadan. which have nothing in common with nationality'.¹²⁸ There was little clarity about where the defining categories of caste, sect, tribe or nationality would demark particular populations. In the end, the Census Form for the 1881 census, had the category 'Religion' in column 7, followed by 'Caste', if Hindu, and sect if of another religion.

The Officers Appointed to Consider the Suggestions for a General Census in India in 1881, submitted to the Secretary to the Government of India, included W C Plowden, who was President of the Census Committee, and H Beverley and W R Cornish, as Members. The eventual published Report of the Committee constituted numerous memoranda submitted by Committee members and others. One such submission from the Secretary of State for India to the Governor-General of India in Council, dated 4 March 1880 from London, gave yet another interpretation to the meaning of caste and its place in the forthcoming Census. The Secretary of State stated, that it appeared to him, that caste was 'essentially a tribal, not a religious distinction, and if shown at all, it should not be shown under the heading 'Religion'. Under that heading should be shown the main religious divisions and the sects. Thus under the main head 'Mahomedan' would be shown 'Sunnis', 'Shiahs', 'Wahabis', 'Khojas', and any similar sects'.¹²⁹ C L Tupper, Officiating Under Secretary to the Government of India, Home, Revenue and Agricultural Department, had issued a Circular to the Secretary to the Government of all provinces and Chief Commissioners, in which he had stated, that 'the term 'NATIONALITY' seems to us to lend colour to a misconception, as the Indian Empire does not consist of nations in the sense in which that word is used in European history and politics.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Ibid, p. 58.

‘NATIONALITY’ should be substituted by ‘Mother-tongue’ and ‘Place of Birth’’,¹³⁰ a proposal that was actually carried through for the 1881 Census forms.

Despite these debates suggesting much unclarity, J A Baines, Census Commissioner for the Bombay Presidency, was able to come across and classify more than 230 subdivisions of the Muslims in the Presidency, although most of these ‘titles’ were returned by very small populations, largely in the north of Gujarat.¹³¹ Nevertheless, 10 ‘castes’ or divisions constituted 84 percent of all Muslims, and of the rest, a large proportion was simply classified as ‘Mahammedans’. In the case of Bombay City, over 54 percent were returned under the heading ‘Mahammedan’ without any qualification of any sort. Baines said he divided the Mahammedan ‘castes’ into two sectors, as ‘indicating the race to which each class nominally belongs’, one of which ‘claims a foreign origin’.¹³² These ‘Mahammedan’ foreign titles included Shaikh, ‘Saiad’, Pathan and ‘Mogul’; ‘Shaikhs’ returned more than 55 percent of the whole Muslim community in Bombay City in 1881. In addition to these of foreign origin, Baines included the category of ‘Local Converts’, which included the following: ‘Bohrah Shiah, Bohrah Sunni, Khoja, Memon, Molesatan, Malik’, the last of whom ‘claims a foreign origin’.¹³³

Many years later, when Baines had become Census Commissioner of India, a conference was held in Agra for the preparation of the 1891 census, between 17-27 December 1889, and was attended by all the Superintendents of the 1881 Census, with Baines in the Chair. The Proceedings of the Conference from its experience of the 1881 Census felt, that ‘the return of Mussulman sects was found incomplete and of no practical utility in 1881, nor is it considered worthwhile to endeavour to obtain a return of the more emphatically theological schools or sects of that religion’, and

¹³⁰ Ibid, p. 51.

¹³¹ *Report on the Census of British India taken on 17 Feb 1881*, Vol III, Appendix H: Mr Baines on Caste and their Social Dimensions in the Bombay Presidency, London, 1883, p cvii.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Ibid, p. cxii.

hence, instructions were given to the enumerators, to enter the main religious denomination of respondents in column 6, and in column 7, where they were to state their caste or sect, where Musalman should simply state whether they were 'Shiahs, Sunnis, Faraizis, or Wahabis'.¹³⁴

Baines recognised, as did other Census Commissioners, that 'the term caste, whatever its derivation and original meaning, is colloquially applied to the subdivisions of the Hindoos and Jain community alone', and not to the Mahammedans and Forest Tribes of the Presidency Division. Yet, he felt, that it was not inappropriate, 'to extend its use with reference to a large portion of the Mahammedans, the majority of whom ... are descendants of local converts to that faith from Hindooism'.¹³⁵

An examination of the classification schemes for caste and tribe, but much more for religion, for the 1871-72 Census shows, that this classification had created a great deal of ambiguity with regard to the nature of 'caste' amongst Muslims, as well as who constituted a Muslim in the minds of the British. The 1871-72 Census acknowledged that in some provinces, there were two 'great rival sects' of the 'Soonees' and the 'Sheas', but no classification by sects was given in the reports for the Punjab and North-Western Provinces.¹³⁶ However, the question of who a Muslim was and who could be classified as a Hindu, continued to be a complicated one where, in the case of the Bombay Presidency, one of the Hindu castes, with a population of 712,000, was listed as 'Aboriginal Tribes and semi-Hindooised Aborigines'.¹³⁷ Yet, the Memorandum revealed, that despite the fact that all 712,000 were listed as 'Hindu', 'nearly three-fourths are more or less Hindooised, and the

¹³⁴ *Census of India – Part 1, Report 1891*, India Office, London, 7 February 1889, p. 59.

¹³⁵ *Report on the Census of British India taken on 17 Feb 1881*, Vol III, Appendix H: Mr Baines on Caste and their Social Dimensions in the Bombay Presidency, London, 1883, p xcii

¹³⁶ *Memorandum on the Census of British India 1871-72*, London 1875, p. 18.

¹³⁷ *Ibid*, p. 24.

remainder would more properly be ranked with the Mahomedans'.¹³⁸ The reason for this ambiguity was based on the perception of the British, that the caste system was 'almost as prevalent among the Mahomedans as among those professing the Hindoo religion, from which a large part of their numbers are probably converts, but it partakes rather of the nature of a tribal classification than of the exclusive character of what is commonly termed caste'.¹³⁹ This point was further elaborated in the Report on the Census of the North-Western Provinces, which stated that, 'in these Provinces the impress of the Hindoo religion has left its mark on the invader as well as the aboriginal tribes and castes; and we can find instances of the descendants of Mahomedan converts, who embraced the Mahomedan faith often at the edge of the sword, retaining Hindoo customs and adhering to observances and ceremonies which are purely Hindoo'.¹⁴⁰

This arbitrariness and lack of any precision in key definitional concepts, meant that for the 1871-72 Census, for the whole of India, out of a total Muslim population of 40,227,552, only 7.5 million were categorised as what were then considered to be the 'four main divisions' amongst Muslims, that of Shaikh, Sayyid, Pathan and Moghuls, or J A Baines' 1881 Census Muslims of 'foreign origin'. The remaining 32.6 million, or 81 percent of the Muslim population, the 'local converts' of the 1881 Census were classified as 'unspecified Muslim castes', of which the *julaha*, the weaving caste, was the largest.¹⁴¹ Lewis McIver, the Madras Presidency Census Commissioner in 1881, had noted that 'the difficulties created by the overlapping of 'caste', 'sect' and 'locality' have defeated the purpose of the returns'; as many as 19,044 types of castes were documented for Madras in 1881.¹⁴²

¹³⁸ Ibid, p. 26.

¹³⁹ Ibid, p. 27.

¹⁴⁰ *Census for North-Western Provinces 1872, Report on the Census of the North-Western Provinces 1872*, Allahabad, 1873, p. xx..

¹⁴¹ *Memorandum on the Census of British India 1871-72*, London 1875, p. 28.

¹⁴² Nicholas Dirks, *Castes of Mind*, p.209.

The fact that 'caste' was an appropriate substitute for hereditary occupation, as Nicholas Dirks, amongst others points out,¹⁴³ is reaffirmed by the 1871-72 classification of Muslim castes across north India. Some converts from Hinduism were given the appellation 'Mahomedan' next to their old caste, such as the Mahomedan Rajputs, to distinguish them from their Hindu cousins, and to mark the fact that these were more recent local converts. While upper Muslim 'castes' were treated as such, a category existed for 'lower castes' amongst Muslims, as it did for Hindus, where occupation-specific castes were enumerated and classified. In Awadh, for example, 35 such lower Muslim castes were identified and included the *Julahas* and other weavers – the most numerous of all castes – the *Dhuniyas* or cotton cleaners, *Durzees* or tailors, the *Ghoses* or milkmen, *Khujras* or greengrocer, *Manihar* or bangle maker, and the *Kasaees* or butchers.¹⁴⁴

The distinction between tribe and caste was particularly blurred when it came to counting those groups of Muslims who continued to identify themselves as affiliated to tribes rather than to castes. Amongst the Pathans in the Punjab province, the Census enumerators classified a group which they called the 'Mahomedan Rajpoots', whose largest 'tribe' were the Bhutees, while in the Delhi and Hasaar Divisions, their largest tribe were the Ranghars. Other tribes included the Jat, Goojurs, Cashmerees, and Meos, who were chiefly resident in Goorgan. In Berar, the Muslim castes were divided into 28 subdivisions, and the largest category, of a mere 1,900, were of the 'Mahomedan Fakir'.¹⁴⁵ In the Bombay Presidency, interestingly, what were considered Muslim sects in later censuses, the Memon, Khojah, Borah, were classified as castes in this earlier census.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴³ Nicholas Dirks, *Castes of Mind*

¹⁴⁴ *Memorandum on the Census of British India 1871-72*, London 1875, p. 28

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁶ See Jim C Masselos, 'The Khojas of Bombay: The Defining of Formal Membership Criteria During the Nineteenth Century', in Imtiaz Ahmad (ed) *Caste and Social Stratification Among the Muslims*, Manohar, Delhi 1973, on how they contested their claim to be a sect, in the British High Court in 1866. The judge defined the Khojas as 'a sect of people whose ancestors were Hindu in origin, which was converted to and has throughout abridged in the faith of the Shia Imamia Ismailis, and which has always been and still is bound by ties of spiritual allegiance to the hereditary Imami of

Yet despite a decade of thinking about the classification of caste, tribe, nationality and religion, from the time of the 1871 Census, even a decade later, as I argue above, with numerous conferences, memoranda and reviews later, many very basic issues regarding the labelling of Muslims and their 'castes' had not been sorted out. Perhaps one of the most curious classifications of Muslim caste in the 1881 Census, listed by Sir Denzil Ibbetson in his *Punjab Ethnography*,¹⁴⁷ is in his chapter entitled 'Religious, Professional and Other Castes', where he lists scores of such 'castes'. Caste No. 70, was listed as the 'Ulama caste', where we are told that approximately 21,000 people returned themselves as *ulema* in the Census.

If caste was largely a construction – though not an 'invention' – of the colonial British, in order to 'express, organize and systematize' India's 'diverse forms of social identity, community and organization',¹⁴⁸ and if 'caste was appropriated and reconstructed by colonial power',¹⁴⁹ with the result that India became an 'ethnographic state', caste was still, primarily based on the criteria of 'race' and occupation, and as I have also documented above with regard to Muslims, caste and occupation were interchangeable categories.¹⁵⁰ Despite this overlap with occupation, caste was recognised primarily (perhaps, originally) as a 'religious' phenomenon, particularly for Hindus, but was perceived by the British to extend well beyond the Hindu community, and J A Baines as Census Commissioner in 1891, had instructed his enumerators to record caste differences amongst Muslims and Christians.¹⁵¹ Since Indian Muslims were living under the 'Indian sun' as H H Risley had argued, and caste was 'in the air', it was believed that its 'contagion has spread even to the

the Ismailis' (p 112). Masselos argues that 'it was possible to achieve a definition of the Khoja identity only in the circumstances of British India' (p. 114). A Judge's decree gave them the status of a sect before the 1871 Census, but they were still classified as a 'caste'.

¹⁴⁷ Re-printed as, *Punjab Castes: Being a reprint of the chapter on 'the Races, Castes and Tribes of the People' in the Report on the Census of the Punjab published in 1883 by the late Sir Denzil Ibbetson, KCSI, Lahore 1986.*

¹⁴⁸ Nicholas Dirks, *Castes of Mind*, p. 5.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid, p. 14.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Ibid, p. 211.

Muhammadans'.¹⁵² The justification of Muslims having a caste was based on these assumptions. Moreover, the social divisions which were said to be recognised by Muslims themselves, 'closely resembled caste'.¹⁵³

There is no denying the fact that there was substantial social stratification amongst Muslims in the nineteenth century, based on class and 'up-bringing'. The differences between *ashrāf* (the elite, well-born) and the *ajlāf* (the commoners), were recognised by Muslim writers, and it is fairly obvious, given the Muslim social structure and the 'Muslim public sphere', that such differences were visible and recognisable. The differences between the nobles and the commoners, the distinction between the 'foreign' Muslims, in particular the Sayyids, and the local converts, was marked. Yet while 'social' stratification was marked, 'religious' stratification amongst Muslims was accepted and accommodated, even if only hypocritically, and certainly, compared to the Hindus, issues of pollution and ostracisation were less severe.

Moreover, Islamic institutions such as the mosque, allowed recognition and contact with all classes of Muslims. If lower class Muslims worked in the homes of the *ashrāf*, they too had some access to the private and personal spaces within the home, perhaps far more than Hindu lower castes did in the homes of higher castes. The Islamic institutions of charity, particularly *zakāt*, also provided support to lower class converts to Islam, probably more so than any similar institution in Hinduism. The British had codified caste in all religions and had also created a ranking of castes, listing them by social status, as they perceived the ranks to be, to the extent that the 'census itself became a register of social precedence' and became the 'official record of social status'.¹⁵⁴ But probably not for the Muslims. There is no evidence to suggest, that many Muslim groups would have taken these specific caste-based

¹⁵² Ibid, p. 218-9.

¹⁵³ H H Risley, quoted in Ibid, p. 219.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid, p. 206.

hierarchies and constructions within their own community, very seriously. However, they did recognise the consequences of conversion.

Although multiple codified caste-based hierarchies, as constructed by the British, and perhaps more appropriate for Hinduism, did not formally exist in Islam, the entire Islamic 'revivalist' process since the early eighteenth century, but more forcefully with the coming of print in the second half of the nineteenth century, recognised the presence of 'deviant' and 'impure' Islamic practices. The rise of the *Tariqah-i Muhammadiyah*, the Faraizis, the Deoband *Dāru'l-'Ulūm*, the *Ahle Sunnat wa Jamā'at*, and most other revivalist movements, were all meant to cleanse Islam from practices that they considered to have been imported into practising Islam by new converts. The extent to what they considered to be 'pure' and perfect Islam, of course, was what divided these different schools of belief and faith, but all wanted to improve on the practices in actually existing Islam. While some groups welcomed and accommodated 'local' rituals and practices, many of them emerging from what Aziz Ahmad called, 'Islam in the Indian environment'¹⁵⁵ or H H Risley's 'living under the Indian sun', others vehemently opposed and rejected these very same rituals and practices on the grounds that they were 'un-Islamic'.

While social stratification was present amongst Muslims, the Islamic 'Great Tradition' opposed any rigid system of ethnic or religious stratification, an understanding which runs through the writings of Islamic and Muslim writers. Moreover, the British had encountered Islam outside of India as well and were fairly cognisant of the fact, that elsewhere, while there was stratification, it did not 'approximate even remotely to the Indian model'.¹⁵⁶ Even in the case of the Bengal Muslims where we see a greater divide than in north India between the 'foreign'

¹⁵⁵ Aziz Ahmad, *Studies in Islamic Culture*.

¹⁵⁶ Imtiaz Ahmad (ed) *Caste and Social Stratification Among the Muslims*, Manohar, Delhi 1973, p. xxxi.

ashrāf Muslims and the local converts, the *ajlāf*, there seem to be far fewer Muslim-created categories resembling ‘caste’ than the British had counted.¹⁵⁷

A key point that emerges from the way the British classified and counted Muslims, and the way the Muslims constituted this entity, concerns the use that was made of these concepts and numbers, by some Muslims and by the British. For the British, if the Census was about control and classification, towards the end of the nineteenth century, some Muslims used it as a weapon to claim representation. For the British, the numerous sub-categories based on caste and sect may have been useful in identifying variation and difference amongst the Muslims, however, for those who began to speak about, and for, the Muslims, it was precisely this sub-classification which was rejected. For those Muslims who began to speak for the Muslim *qaum*, it was the larger category of ‘Muslim’ which became essential. However, for those other Muslims for whom differences mattered, it was not the classificatory scheme of the British – of caste, sect, tribe or nationality – that mattered, but a very different schema based on their own immediate reality, that of the language and categories of Islam. While both groups of Muslims rejected the British classification of Census Muslims, both had diametrically opposite reasons to do so.

The two key arguments that emerge from this chapter are, firstly, that while attempts were being made by the British and by some Muslims to construct broad categories of some notion of ‘the Muslim’, this attempt was resisted by the numerous groups within Indian Islam who had their own, markedly different, classificatory schemes, and who rejected, or disassociated with such broad inclusive categories. Secondly, each group devised its own set of criteria to determine who a Muslim was, and hence, excluded numerous other Muslims who also laid claim to being Muslim, resulting in a ‘lack of unity’ amongst them with Muslims fighting each other, a key cause for them being at the *zillat ka maqām*, as I argue in the previous chapter. It was

¹⁵⁷ See Rafiuddin Ahmad, *The Bengal Muslims*.

these claims and counterclaims to Muslimness and of identity, which occupied much of the time of religious scholars, and the arena where these issues were bitterly contested was the public arena of Urdu print, with each writer or group of writers attempting to create their own particular spheres of influence. Who a Muslim was, was a question which many Muslim publicists saw being discussed and articulated in the print public sphere, and it was this multiple sense of identity, or differentiation, which for many, was the cause for *zillat*. Hence conflicts and debates over identity, largely through the print medium, accentuated if not caused, the Muslims to persist in their *zillat ki hālat* or at their *zillat ka maqām*.

Chapter Four

Print, Identity, Differences

The print medium plays a particularly important role in this thesis, as a tool which reveals how multiple identities were forged and imagined, and how different identities positioned themselves against each other in north India in the second half of the nineteenth century, as the previous chapters emphasise. Clearly, in a world where male literacy was between 5-8 percent and female literacy one-fiftieth of that, identities were formed by numerous mediums related to a pre-literate context. The oral tradition, for one – on which more in the next chapter – and the lived experience of culture, economics and social norms and practices – everyday life – must have played a key role in how communities imagined or constructed their own multiple identities, both in private and in public, both at an individual level, and collectively, as part of one or many ‘communities’. While the print medium had existed for some decades in India, from the beginning of the nineteenth century it began to gain importance in the lives of both the rulers and the ruled, especially as the languages of the printed form developed towards those which were nearer to those actually spoken by larger numbers. In our context, as Arabic and Persian began to be displaced by Urdu as the largest print language for Muslims (but for non-Muslims in north India too, till near the end of the nineteenth century), the importance of print cannot be denied.¹ Perhaps it would be no exaggeration to state, that from the last quarter of the nineteenth century onwards, print played a particularly important role in consolidating, and certainly, in distinguishing, identities, one from the other, within religions, and across religions as well.²

¹ See Francis Robinson, ‘Technology and Religious Change: Islam and the Impact of Print’, *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol 27 No 1, Feb 1993; Francis Robinson, ‘Islam and the Impact of Print in South Asia’, in Nigel Crook (ed) *The Transmission of Knowledge in South Asia*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1996; and in particular, the expansive work by Ulrike Stark, *An Empire of Books: The Naval Kishore Press and the Diffusion of the Printed Word in Colonial India*, Permanent Black, New Delhi, 2007.

² See *ibid*, as well as Barbara D Metcalf, *Islamic Revival in British India: Deoband, 1860-1900*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2002 (1982); Usha Sanyal, *Devotional Islam and Politics in British India: Ahmad Riza Khan Bareilwi and His Movement, 1870-1920*, Oxford University Press.

This chapter explores the medium of print to show how pamphlets and books became part of many public spheres, where members of different Muslim groups and communities, argued and contested their, and their adversaries', points of view. A major purpose of such engagement, was not necessarily to convert or even to convince the other, but to reaffirm belief and faith within one's own community, strengthening imagined identities.³ While there were instances of some who changed their faith and even religion on account of what they had read, such as Maulvi Shaikh Ahmad Deobandi – see below – and also through what they had heard through sermons and discussed with learned scholars, as Ulfat Hussain, below, revealed, it is difficult to say with anything but conjecture, what impact such tracts had on the reading public, although, as I show in a number of places in this chapter, we do have some idea in many cases as to who was reading what. However, while we do have limited information of who subscribed to certain newspapers, as in the case of the *Oudh Punch*, and *Oudh Ukhbar*,⁴ and there are occasional references to who was reading what, this is one area where information is relatively limited. We know far more about what was being written, by whom, and for what purpose. However, as I show in this chapter, a great deal of writing was reactive and oppositional.

Clearly, there were many genres or categories of writing by publicists and polemicists, often engaged with each other, but at other times, as I show, oblivious to some of the presumed central debates and writers of the time. There was the great-man great-book variety of writing, where some of the more prominent members of the Muslim intelligentsia posed and framed questions which helped determine broad and grand narratives and visions for the Muslim community, where a notion of the

New Delhi, 1999; David Lelyveld, 'The Fate of Hindustani: Colonial Knowledge and the Project of a National Language', in Carol A Breckenridge and Peter van der Veer (eds), *Orientalism and the Postcolonial Predicament: Perspectives on South Asia*, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 1993; and David Lelyveld, 'Urdu as a Public Language', in *Systems of Communication and Interaction*, eds Peter Gaeffke and Susan Oleksiw (eds), Philadelphia: South Asia Regional Studies, University of Pennsylvania, 1981.

³ Barbara D Metcalf, *Islamic Revival*.

⁴ See Chapter 6 in Ulrike Stark, *An Empire of Books*.

Muslim *qaum* was articulated. Much contemporary historiography on north Indian Muslims has focussed on these men, largely because it is presumed that they conceived and formulated the boundaries of the Muslim *qaum*. Given the large amount of modern scholarship on these men and their ideas, I do not directly engage with their work, and refer to some men, such as Imdadul Ali, who engaged with and refuted the ideas of some of these great men, where I emphasise that there was a lively debate even within the great-men great-book tradition. A second category of writing is the very broad religious genre, where issues of ritual, practice and faith were debated amongst Muslims. Within this genre, I look at the debates between individuals rather than between schools of thoughts – *maslaks* – and show how minor details and rituals mattered to many writers and believers. I argue that for a lot of publicists, the ideas of the great men may have mattered little, as these other publicists were engaged with their own varied debates about practice and belief. Religious controversy, as I show, was of a very personal nature, specific to individuals, as is explained by the multiple responses to tracts on apparently trivial issues. There were even prominent publications which formed part of this public sphere, which were enlightened and which one would today call ‘secular’, such as the *Oudh Punch*, and many other such publications. The point that this chapter makes and demonstrates, is that there were different modes of writing and different categories of debate and argumentation. In order to understand how multiple Muslim identities were being formed, we need to examine much more of the material than has been looked at. There were far more men writing, other than the few great men usually cited, and numerous categories of writings were influencing different types and categories of identity. The Urdu print public sphere was far wider than the one hitherto constructed largely from the writings of a few great men. It was diverse, had multiple layers and spheres of influence, and affected how different categories of Muslims perceived themselves and each other differently.

Publishing, Writing, Readership

Publishing

Ulrike Stark, in her expansive study on the print industry in India in the nineteenth century, focusing on the largest publisher and employer in northern India, the Naval Kishore Press in Lucknow, shows how the ‘commercialization’ of print created a new class of professional authors.⁵ Using Benedict Anderson’s notion of ‘print capitalism’, a notion which he does not fully explain, Stark considers it to be, ‘in its most basic sense of the “convergence of capitalism and print technology”’,⁶ the best exemplifier of which, for her, was the House of Naval Kishore. Neither Anderson nor Stark fully explore the meaning of capitalism and its articulation, with regard to the print world, but as her narrative unfolds, it is possible to interpret its manifestations in the following manner. The capitalism of the print world in the period she (and I) examine, is based initially largely on a perfect competition variety, where there is easy entry and exit of firms with low barriers to entry. As the industry begins to grow, there is mass production of books, innovative techniques of production, perhaps even some forms of specialisation, all resulting in the lowering of prices. All these are early manifestations of print capitalism, and as the industry progresses and matures, consolidation takes place, with new firms emerging and others collapsing, and with some larger firms buying up less profitable publishing houses.

Stark shows, that while the first commercial presses in north India were in production in the 1830s, ‘the era of commercialization in Hindi and Urdu publishing, with its concomitant phenomenon of “print capitalism”, really only dawned in the second half the century’.⁷ In 1868, the first year of official registration, over 600,000 printed books were recorded in Hindi and Urdu, and the number of private and

⁵ Ulrike Stark, *An Empire of Books*, p. 4.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 64-65.

commercial presses operating in the North-Western Provinces, had risen to fifty. Two decades later, in 1888, over 110 presses were in operation with the marked concentration of presses in six urban centres – Benares, Allahabad, Lucknow, Aligarh, Agra and Kanpur. During the period 1868-1900 these cities accounted for about 80 percent of total production in the provinces.⁸ With the growth in the publishing trade, prices fell markedly and the ‘low-priced book’ emerged in the 1850s and 1860s, with mass-produced cheap formats. Large print-runs also brought down prices where, for example, in the 1850s the Lucknow-based Musta’i Press had print-runs of around 5-600; three years later, average print runs had gone up to 1,000 copies, and by the 1870s 3-5000 copies were printed for educational books on the first print run.⁹

Between 1868-95 there was a fourfold increase in Urdu books and a threefold one of Hindi books.¹⁰ With over seven hundred newspapers and magazines started in Urdu in the last thirty years of the nineteenth century, with tens of thousands of editions of the Quran and of religious tracts available since the 1870s, and with a newspaper circulation also of ‘tens of thousands’ by the end of the century, one can be quite sure that the medium of print, would have changed and transformed far more than just identity over the period beginning in 1860.¹¹ The Urdu printed word dominated the written public space – at the end of the first week of February in 1887, it was for the first time when as many as one hundred newspapers and magazines were published from the Punjab, North-Western Provinces, Oudh, the Central Provinces, Central India and Rajputana combined, of which only 13 were without any Urdu.¹²

⁸ Ibid., p. 65. The conspicuous absence is Delhi, perhaps further suggests that the city was a cultural ruin.

⁹ Ibid., p. 67 passim.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 70.

¹¹ Francis Robinson, ‘Technology and Religious’, p. 232.

¹² *Selections from Vernacular Newspapers Published in Punjab, North Western Provinces, Awadh, the Central Provinces, Central India and Rajputana*. (hereafter *Selections*), 1887, p 80.

For Francis Robinson, one of the reasons why this explosion in the Urdu print world took place, was because the Muslim religious leaders, the ulema, had lost political power, and 'used the new technology of the printing press to compensate for the loss of political power',¹³ and through this with their invisible flock, created the most appropriate and convenient means of engagement, openly, in public, with numerous and multiple audiences. Print became the main medium through which religious – and all other – debates were conducted in the late nineteenth century. It became a public space in which anyone, either as active participant as a writer or even listener, or merely as an observer, could respond to and take part in, and many thousands did. Discussions and opinions became 'public', rather than private as they had been in the pre-print era – although, as I show, some older pre-print forms did persist – and barriers to entry, in true perfect competition, print-capitalism style, were removed.

Government patronage was perhaps the most crucial financial factor in the growth of Indian printing firms in that period. The print medium was directly supported financially and through other means – such as through prizes and other forms of recognition – by the colonialist power itself, such that its evolution in nature and form, and its eventual consequences, were bound to have been very different compared to experiences elsewhere. Graham Shaw shows the extent of direct and indirect government support for the growth of printing in Delhi and the North-Western Provinces in general, showing the significance of government patronage for the emergence of literary culture in the period and how, 'government purchases often kept these experiments in public print afloat'.¹⁴

Writing

People wrote because, they argued, they were compelled or forced to write (*majbur hua*), as if they had no alternative but to respond to a certain text which had provoked

¹³ Francis Robinson, 'Technology and Religious', p. 242.

¹⁴ Graham Shaw, cited in Stuart Blackburn and Vasudha Dalmia (eds), *India's Literary History: Essays on the Nineteenth Century*, Permanent Black, New Delhi, 2004, p. 20.

or disturbed them enough. One of the features of writing, particularly religious and in some cases, ‘*qaumi*’ writing, seems to be that books were often written in pairs, or at times, a series of pairs, where two writers were intensely engaged in polemics, in writing books in response to a single author who also wrote books in reply. Newspapers emerged, openly declaring that they were being produced to counter another periodical or series of writings, against a particular way of being in the world, such as the *Nurul Āfāq* from Kanpur, which openly stated on its front page – in all its first nine issues – that it was being produced *against* Sayyid Ahmad Khan’s *Tahzibu’l-Akhlāq*.¹⁵ It stated that it was compulsory – *vajib* – for the editors to produce the bimonthly in response to *Tahzibu’l-Akhlāq*.¹⁶ Perhaps what is more interesting about the style and format of *Nurul Āfāq*, was that in this announcement, the editors stated that they would carry verbatim excerpts from *Tahzibu’l-Akhlāq*, and then would respond and critique the original text. This, they said, they were doing so that their own readers would not have to purchase *Tahzibu’l-Akhlāq*.¹⁷ Whether it was the Shia and Sunnis, the *muqallidin* and *ghair muqallidin*, the Ahle Hadis and the Deobandis, the Deobandis and the *Ahle Sunnat wa Jamā`at*, those against the *nachris*, or against the Aligarhists, there is no denying the fact, that there was a most vibrant public arena of written debate taking place amongst Muslims in north India in the last three decades – if not earlier – of the nineteenth century.

Just as there were different types of writers writing from different positions representing different traditions and backgrounds – social, cultural, economic and locational – there were different ways to write, to argue and to contest, factors which, perhaps, reveal a little about the authors’ backgrounds. There was no shortage of derogatory, abusive or libellous language, and to call an adversary a *jahil*, Wahabi, or *kafir*, was not uncommon. Yet, in this atmosphere of crudity, there were many writers and some papers, such as the *Oudh Punch* and the *Nurul Āfāq*, which were

¹⁵ *Nurul Āfāq*, Kanpur, 30 August 1873.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

exemplary in their sophistication and style, revealing a far more dignified and decorous manner of engagement. This is not to say that the debates amongst such writers and periodicals were any less intense, but the level of sophistication and language, was marked. This distinction also probably underlined the fact that different audiences read different types of material, distinguishing it perhaps on how it was written as well as on its contents. This distinction between different styles of writing also allows us to distinguish between different spheres of writing, and different spheres of influence, as I proceed to show.

An important distinction must be made between those men who wrote largely for and to the Muslim *qaum* – which, as I show in Chapter Three, was a highly political category – and those who wrote primarily to each other, or with a narrower, perhaps localised focus. The great Muslim men who wrote the *Musaddas* about the Flow and Ebb of Islam, or those who wrote about the reasons why Muslims rebelled, and engaged with British writers who accused Muslims of rebelling against the Queen, wrote with a grander canvas, talking to and about a larger entity, a constructed identity of the Muslim *qaum*. The *qaumi* writings of Sayyid Ahmad, Altaf Hussain Hali, Shibli Naumani, and *Dipti* Nazir Ahmad, to name perhaps the four main exponents of this genre, are different in scope, vision, scale, and perhaps objective, from a large number of other writings. One must add, however, that all four were extremely learned and erudite men who wrote on literature, religion, theology, history, and numerous other topics as well. Their *qaumi* writings were one, and later perhaps the most important, of their voluminous output, and in fact, publishers and editors used to distinguish between ‘*qaumi*’ writings and other writings. For example, Mir Karamatullah who edited a collection of *Dipti* Nazir Ahmad’s lectures stated in his Preface, that he was only including his *qaumi* lectures in the collection and not the others.¹⁸

¹⁸ Janab Maulana Maulvi Hafiz Muhammad Nazir Ahmad Sahib Dehlavi, *Lekcharo ka Majmua*, collected by Mir Karamatullah, BA, Lahore, 1890, pp. 192.

Religious (or theological) writings constituted a larger proportion of what was being written, but while meant for Muslims – who a Muslim was, was always a contentious issue, though – to cleanse their souls and correct their ways, at least in the nineteenth century, these writings were less ‘political’ than were the *qaumi* writings of the great men of Muslim India. Moreover, it seems that there were numerous writers writing about issues not particularly related to *qaumi* dimensions or issues, embroiled, and as intensely as were the writers writing to and for the *qaum*, writing about issues related to rituals and practices, often writing numerous pages in splitting very thin hairs. Nevertheless, they formed a significant part of what constituted the printed public arena, where their books too, were published and sold in the market, as much as were those of Hali, Shibli and Sayyid Ahmad. Hence, the notion that the great men who wrote great books, in any way defined a written public space and that the *qaum* was defined through their writings, needs to be considerably tempered with the recognition of an equally vibrant space of a very non-*qaumi* sort of writing. It was perhaps later, in the early twentieth century, when issues of the *qaum* and issues of faith, intersected, as religious writing became more political rather than insular, as it had been in this formative phase in the modern era, post 1857. While the literature of the *qaum* was always Muslim, it was never exclusively Islamic. And it was a shift amongst religious writers and organised *maslaks* – sects – towards a broader, ‘national’, perspective, which brought the two streams together.

While Hali, Shibli, Sayyid Ahmad and Nazir Ahmad certainly wrote highly influential books, and through their lectures were important representatives of the Muslim, others also created their ‘spheres of influence’ making their niche through their writings of a very different kind. From the quarterly *Statement of Particulars Regarding Books, Maps & c., Published in the North-Western Provinces, and Registered Under Act XXV of 1867*, we get an idea of what was being published and who was writing in Urdu. Amongst those writing general (non-technical books), we find the following categories of writers: Deputy Collectors, Inspectors of Police, Headmasters of Government Schools, Persian Teachers, Deputy Inspectors of

Schools, Clerks, Pleaders, Magistrates, Tehsildars, Assistant Commissioners, Maulvis, Khatib Masjid, etc.¹⁹ If the print medium was in any way playing a role in creating and strengthening identities, and if people were being influenced by the printed word, we must keep reminding ourselves that because of the huge diversity and variety in what was written and what was read, the impact and influence of print, must have had equally varied and diverse repercussions even amongst the small reading public. Hence if print was allowing for a 'strengthening of religious identity among Muslims',²⁰ it was simultaneously working against any unifying quality. This multiplicity of voices allowed for numerous representations to contest for spaces within the public sphere. In this cacophony of competing claimants for representation, it is difficult to claim with certitude which voice was dominant.

In the historiography of the Muslims of north India, some excellent analysis by scholars has been undertaken of the writings of great prodigious religious scholars, such as those belonging to the *Dāru'l-'Ulūm* at Deoband,²¹ or those related to the *Ahle Sunnat wa Jamā'at*.²² Likewise, the writings of Sayyid Ahmad and those related to the College at Aligarh, have also been widely discussed.²³ This chapter does not examine their writings directly and looks at other, perhaps lesser known writers, whose work has not been examined enough. Besides, the purpose is not to examine the writings of any single person or school, but to examine broadly, the degree and extent of difference, in writing in the public sphere in north India in that period. However, it is not possible for anyone writing about Muslims in north India to

¹⁹ See various issues of the quarterly *Statement of Particulars Regarding Books, Maps & c., Published in the North-Western Provinces, and Registered Under Act XXV of 1867*, or for example, the issues for 1881-87.

²⁰ This is not an uncommon perception. See, for example, Muhammad Qasim Zaman, 'Commentaries, Print and Patronage: "Hadith" and the Madrasas in Modern South Asia', *Bulletin of the SOAS*, 62, 1, 1999, p 62.

²¹ Barbara Metcalf, *Islamic Revival*.

²² Usha Sanyal, *Devotional Islam*.

²³ Christian W Troll, *Sayyid Ahmad Khan: A Reinterpretation of Muslim Theology*, Vikas Publishing House, New Delhi, 1978; David Lelyveld, *Aligarh's First Generation: Muslim Solidarity in British India*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1978; Hafeez Malik, *Sir Syed Ahmad Khan and Muslim Modernisation in India and Pakistan*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1980.

completely ignore the work of, and be oblivious to, the writings of Sayyid Ahmad, Hali, Shibli or those from the schools at Deoband and Bareilly. As this chapter shows, while not directly dealing with these writers, their shadow hangs over much of the texts discussed here and elsewhere in this thesis, even if obliquely.

Altaf Hussain Hali had no illusions about the great task and responsibility he had taken upon himself when he wrote his epic poem, the *Musaddas* in 1879. The poem was addressed to the Muslim *qaum*, caught up in a pitiable condition of decline and humiliation. The theme was as vast and grand as was the intention of the poet, who was writing to and for his countrymen, his *qaum*, to arouse them from their slumber, and 'in order to make my friends and fellows feel a sense of outrage and shame'.²⁴ Hali's Introduction to the second edition of 1886, acknowledged the fact that the poem had been a huge success and had achieved many of its original objectives. He wrote that the poem had 'spread in this quite brief period to all corners of the country and has already gone through seven or eight editions in various districts of northern India'; many people were 'unable to stop themselves weeping and shedding tears' as they read it, and 'because of its general popularity, it had been introduced into the syllabus of government schools'.²⁵ By every account, the *Musaddas* had affected the Muslim *qaum* as its author had intended.

Just as Hali was writing for the Muslim *qaum*, so was his mentor, and that great reformer who was the inspiration for the *Musaddas*, Sayyid Ahmad Khan, a very public and political man, who lectured and wrote for and to the *qaum* at every opportunity he received. Sayyid Ahmad wrote very consciously to and for the Muslim *qaum*, and his mission was far grander and ambitious than that of the younger poet. Titles of talks published as, 'What action should our *qaum* take with

²⁴ From the Introduction of the First Edition. See the full text original and its translation by Christopher Shackle and Javed Majeed, *Hali's Musaddas: The Flow and Ebb of Islam*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1997, p. 97.

²⁵ *Ibid*, p. 99.

regard to the political affairs of the state?',²⁶ are one of numerous such attempts meant for, and to be heard and read by, the *qaum*.²⁷ Yet then, perhaps, it is a little ironic that Sayyid Ahmad began one of the most important political speeches of his very long career, addressed to the Muslim *qaum* as follows: 'I am not in the habit of giving lectures on political issues, and nor do I recall *ever* having given *any* lecture on political issues.'²⁸

While such great men as Hali, Sayyid Ahmad and *Dipti* Nazir Ahmad were busy writing to and for the *qaum*, representing and leading the *qaum* out of its condition of *zillat*, there were many others who were writing to each other, to other Muslims, often specifically identified and named, and not to the Muslim *qaum* in general. These other writers – and there were many – seemed to be involved in their own debates with each other, often far more intense and heated than were the polemics of the great men of their community.

Readership

Despite the fact that we know about the number of copies printed of different newspapers and of other information from the publisher's side, not much is known about the readership of newspapers and journals or tracts. We sometimes learn from the published document, where it was sold and made available, which gives us some idea about the geographical spread of the paper, about the publisher's connections and network. For example, in an advertisement about a religious book in the *Oudh Punch*, we learn that the book was available from 'Chowk, Lucknow, from Abdul

²⁶ *Indian National Congress pur Syed Ahmad Khan ka Lecture: Hamari qaum ko nisbat political amur saltanat ke kya tariqa ikhtiār karna chahiye?*, published as a pamphlet in numerous places, including Kanpur (not dated), Amritsar 30 April 1888, in the *Amritsar Press Gazette*, etc. The lecture was also translated into English and published in the *Pioneer* from Allahabad, and also published as a separate pamphlet by the Pioneer Press.

²⁷ See Shan Muhammad, *Syed Ahmad Khan: A Political Biography*, Meenakshi Prakashan, Meerut, 1969; Christian W Troll, *Sayyid Ahmad Khan*; and, Hafeez Malik, *Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan*.

²⁸ *Indian National Congress pur Syed Ahmad Khan ka Lecture*, p.1. Emphasis added; the Urdu original is: 'Meri kabhi ādat political amur pur lecture dainay ki nahin hai aur na he mujhe yād hai ke mai ne kabhi political amur me koi lecture diya ho'.

Sattar Khan Sahib and from Abdul Wajid Khan Sahib; from the Nizami Press in Kanpur; from Illahi Buksh Sahib in Kashmiri Bazaar Lahore: and from Calcutta and Delhi: the surprising omission here was the Deccan.²⁹ Similarly, the twenty page, monthly, *Hami-e Islam*, a magazine published from Lucknow in 1305/1887, gave a long list of individuals it could be bought from, from all across Hindustan showing a vast network of booksellers and, probably, readers. The *risala* could be bought from:

Lucknow: Asghar Ali Sahib, *tajir itar*, Hafiz Abdul Sattar Khan Sahib, *tajir kitāb*; Sitapur: Maulvi `Abdul Ghani Sahib, *vakil*, Qazi Altaf Hussain Sahib; Lakheempur: Hafiz Nisar Hussain Sahib, *vakil*; Rae Bareilly: Maulvi Muhammad Mashooq Ali Sahib, *mukhtār āmm*; Bans Bareilly: Allahyaar Khan Sahib; Badayoon: Maulvi Abdul Qadir Sahib; Aligarh: Maulvi Muhammad Ismail Sahib; Bulandshehar: Qazi Muhammad Abdul Hai Sahib; Deoband: Maulvi Rafiuddin Sahib; and Delhi: Maulvi Sayyid Nazeer Husain Sahib and, Maulvi Muhammad Shah Sahib.³⁰

I assume, probably correctly, that religious tracts published by a certain school, were read perhaps more by their own supporters than their adversaries who were usually the target of the attacks, although the presence of a lively and engaging debate between adversaries, as this chapter shows, meant that they were also read, by those who needed to respond to allegations and aspersions made about them. Some scholars state, that such texts were read out aloud, in private or in larger gatherings.³¹ As the biography of Bibi Ashraf, who learnt to read and write herself, and was born in 1840 in Bahnera, a small rural community of Bijnor tells us, 'my female relatives would read aloud from books on matters of faith and religious observances ...'.³² Despite this, it is difficult to understand how the very dense religious tracts could have been read in lay public settings, except in front of very specialised and small audiences; many of the religious tracts mentioned in this chapter, often with

²⁹ *Oudh Punch*, Lucknow, 29 January 1885.

³⁰ *Hami-e Islam*, Lucknow, Vol 1, No 1, Jamadi-ul Awwal, 1305/1887.

³¹ See, Usha Sanyal, *Devotional Islam*; Barbara D Metcalf, *Islamic Revival*; and, Barbara D Metcalf, 'Living Hadith in the Tablighi Jama'at', *J of Asian Studies*, 52, 3, Aug 1993.

³² C M Naim, 'How Bibi Ashraf Learned to Read and Write', in, C M Naim, *Urdu Texts and Contexts: The Selected Essays of C M Naim*, Permanent Black, New Delhi, 2004, p. 211.

abundant Arabic from the Quran and *hadis*, must have been difficult to comprehend except by scholars. Readership remains an unsolved problem. However, one can assume that because of its style of language and content, the *Oudh Punch* and many similar papers were actually read out in public, having a greater audience than those who paid for the paper.

Both C A Bayly and Ulrike Stark,³³ raise questions about who the readership of the printed material was in nineteenth century north India, and about the size of this readership. Bayly argues that while the actual number of the literate may have been small, India was a ‘literacy aware’ society, where texts circulated and were read and heard in far greater number than we imagine. However, what is more interesting is, data which Ulrike Stark has provided (but not analysed), which also suggests that perhaps it was not literacy which was a constraint to expanding readership.

Stark shows, for example, that the daily output of the Naval Kishore Press in 1870, was 192,000 printed pages.³⁴ The same year, 20,000 copies of the Quran were sold,³⁵ and by 1876 19,000 copies of the ‘Cawnpore edition’ of the Quran had been issued, and argues that lower prices made the Quran available to a larger audience.³⁶ What is interesting, is that the increase in readership took place not because of rising literacy, but because lower prices due to the mass scale of production and technological innovations. This could suggest that there was perhaps a larger reading public than we imagine, except that they were not able to afford books. Further evidence to this possibility is suggested by figures which Stark provides: in 1871 the Government reduced postal rates by half, and the ‘measure had a catalyzing effect on the Urdu newspaper trade’, with a striking increase in the number of new launches and an increase in the number of subscribers.³⁷ The newspaper distribution system depended

³³ C A Bayly, *Empire and Information*; Ulrike Stark, *An Empire of Books*.

³⁴ Ulrike Stark, *An Empire of Books*, p. 171.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 285.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 357.

almost entirely on the colonial postal system, and perhaps economics caused readership to rise, not literacy rates.

Stark ends her book with what she calls the ‘unresolved question concerning the power and authority of the printed word in a society marked by widespread illiteracy’.³⁸ I deal with some of these issues regarding the authority and power of print in the sections below. Another question she raises is about who read a book, and what effect reading the book had on its audience, and how it affected peoples’ lives. In the following sections of this chapter, I address these concerns as well.

The Power of Print and the Compulsion to Write

Both Barbara Metcalf and Usha Sanyal make the powerful and persuasive argument in their studies of the two most important Islamic institutions or schools in north India after 1860 which emerged as a consequence of British rule, Muslim subjugation and the realisation of their position in this new arrangement – what I call the understanding that they had reached the *zillat ka maqām* – the Deoband branch of Sunni Islam and the *Ahle Sunnat wa Jamā`at* school based in Bareilly,³⁹ and argue that these two institutions and their leaders, used the world of print to further their cause and their mission. Both schools were prolific in their output of tracts and treatises, usually against the other group, challenging it and ridiculing each other’s notion and interpretation of faith and ritual. It was not only the Deobandis or the *Ahle Sunnat* who participated in these ‘pamphlet wars’, but so did the Ahle Hadis, the ulema from the Nadvatul Ulema in Lucknow, and the Ahmadi sect of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad. In fact, perhaps the greatest exponent of inventing themselves through the print medium and using print as a means to propagate their religion and the

³⁸ Ibid., p. 450-1.

³⁹ Barbara D Metcalf *Islamic Revival*; and Usha Sanyal *Devotional Islam*.

personality of its leader, was Mirza Ghulam Ahmad.⁴⁰ Individually, the leaders of each school were credited with having written hundreds of books – as in the case of Nawab Siddiq Hasan Khan of the Ahle Hadis who is said to have written more than 200⁴¹ – or thousands of written *fatwas*, as in the case of Ahmad Raza Khan of the *Ahle Sunnat wa Jamā`at*.⁴²

As different schools emerged throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century, the battle for the soul of the Muslim *qaum*, raged in small *qasba* towns where newly trained *alims* returned from seminaries to run mosques and *madrasas*, but this battle was equally fought in the wide, newly emerging, public sphere of the world of print. Religious tracts were used to score points against opponents, to win an argument, and an attempt was made to ‘make a public’, or create a constituency, with the attempt to add new adherents to their school. Clearly, one of the purposes of writing so profusely, was on account of this struggle within the different *maslaks* – sects, schools – of Islam targeted against different schools of thought and practice. However, some modern historians of Indian Islam have felt that the divisiveness and differences that existed amongst different schools of thought in Indian Islam in the nineteenth century expressed through their writings, were quite futile. K A Nizami writes that ‘the leaders of these different schools of thought were men of eminence and learning no doubt, but by involving Muslim mind [sic.] in unnecessary hair-splitting religious controversies – controversies which had no relevance to the pressing problems of society – evaded and delayed confrontations with realities. For several decades, the energies of the Mussalmans were absorbed in these futile religious squabbles’.⁴³

⁴⁰ Yohanan Friedmann, *Prophecy Continuous: Aspects of Ahmadi Religious Thought and Its Medieval Background*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1989.

⁴¹ Saeedullah, *The Life and Works of Muhammad Siddiq Hasan Khan, Nawab of Bhopal*, S M Ashraf, Lahore, 1973.

⁴² Usha Sanyal *Devotional Islam*.

⁴³ K A Nizami, ‘Socio-religious Movements in Indian Islam (1763-1898)’, in S T Lokhandwalla, *India and Contemporary Islam – Proceedings of a Seminar*, Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Simla, 1971, p. 110.

While the reasons for the huge amount of literature produced by these handful of institutions can be explained on the grounds stated above, it does not account for the probably greater abundance of tracts and pamphlets which were being published all over north India, by people who apparently did not belong to any formal or organised Islamic school or institution, especially prior to that period before organised and formal institutions began to dominate the Islamic frame.⁴⁴ Why were these people writing? What drove them to write at a time when we know that the readership must have been very limited? What were the reasons for the urgency with which they wrote, where they were willing to respond to apparently trivial issues and themes, of ritual and practice, well before the consolidation of the schools of faith? This section tries to examine some of the reasons that writers themselves gave as to why they wrote.

As early as 1868, when the Urdu reading public was even smaller than its miniscule proportion later in the century, and at a point in time when the later ‘pamphlet wars’ had not yet begun – since the Indian Islamic sects (*maslaks*) had still not emerged – there were people like Imdadul Ali who were ‘forced to write’, their books and tracts on religious practices and ritual. Imdadul Ali was a Deputy Collector and Magistrate, first at Kanpur and later at Aligarh, and the son of Maulvi Sayyid Ghulam Mustapha Akbarabadi. In his *Imdad us Sunnat*, he addressed the ‘*ahle Islam*’, and said that a tract written by Maulvi Muhammad Fasih Ghazipuri, Maulvi Sirajuddin and Maulvi Abdur Rahman, on whether Muslims were to read the *taravih* prayers with 8 *rak`at* or with 20,⁴⁵ based on the Prophet’s *sunnah* (his practice) was full of harsh words and offence (*sakht kalami*), to which he had already replied earlier in a previous publication called *Nurul Huda* which he wrote within a week, of which as many as

⁴⁴ In fact, this point raises another interesting issue: What was the nature of individual identity once formal institutions – religious or worldly – became the dominant form of identification? Could people participate in the public sphere without being (or perceived of being) either aligned to, or against, a formal school or grouping? Was all identity always posited with respect to a collective Other?

⁴⁵ The *taravih* is an non-compulsory additional part of the night (*isha*) prayers of Muslims in the month of Ramazan, the month of fasting; a *rak`at* is the act of bowing in the prayers.

500 copies were printed and distributed free.⁴⁶ He then said, that this *Imdad us Sunnat* was his *second reply* to the earlier pamphlet, in which he had explained the same arguments, but this time, in the light of the *hadis*, for which he had consulted many books on jurisprudence and on *hadis*.⁴⁷

He stated that he was writing this second response, so that his Muslim brothers could learn and benefit from it. He then invited readers to respond to his pamphlet, but insisted that they not use harsh and offensive language and that they stay within the bounds of reason and propriety.⁴⁸ Maulvi Abdur Rahman, one of the original authors, responded and wrote a reply to both Imdadul Ali's tracts⁴⁹, to which Imdadul Ali wrote his third tract on the theme of the *sunnat* of the *taravih*.⁵⁰ At around the same time, Imdadul Ali wrote another tract against the *fatwa* of Maulvi Muhammad Bashir Sahsavani, which stated that Muslims could read their five daily prayers in one sitting. Imdadul Ali argued, that not just someone from the *ahle Sunnat*, but anyone from the entire *ahle Islam*, would not accept such a position, and warned his readers to stay away from such perverseness (*kujravi*).⁵¹ Clearly, on both occasions, Imdadul Ali was simply interested in clarifying a particular interpretation of ritual and practice, and nothing more, and it does not seem to be the case that he had any greater ambitions. It was this markedly narrow focus and limited ambition of writers of this sort, which distinguished a substantial stream of writing from the more aggressive inter-'sectarian' or *qaumi* literature.

It was not uncommon for publishers to advertise their own books in their own pamphlets and tracts. Often, they would inform their readers about another book by the same author, or a book of similar interest published by the same press. Often

⁴⁶ Imdadul Ali, *Nurul Huda*, Kanpur, 1868.

⁴⁷ Imdadul Ali, *Imdad us Sunnat*, Kanpur, 25 July 1868

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Abdur Rahman, *Tauzee As-Sunnat al-Huda*.

⁵⁰ Imdadul Ali, *Imdadul Ghavi `un al-sirat al-savi*, Matba-e Shola-e Toor, Kanpur, 1286/1869, pp. 48. The title page said that this is to be distributed free to '*bradiran ahle Islam*'.

⁵¹ Imdadul Ali, *Imdad ahle as-salāt*, Association Press, Muradabad, August 1877, pp. 23.

publishers also advertised books which they did not publish, but sold. While the monetary aspect of selling books was important, so was the belief that print was a powerful medium which could influence readers. In fact, one could argue that for many, particularly the more zealous or those with a mission in life, particular one in which they wanted to reform their falling or fallen Muslim brethren, there was a strong belief in the power of print. This belief, as I show in Chapter Two, generated the response by some Muslims to set up their newspapers and to write and publish books to bring the Muslim *qaum* out of their condition of *zillat*. The contents of the inner flap of a book entitled *Barkāt al Islam*, published by the Islamia Press Lahore in 1890, urging people to read certain books, is one example of many which also shows how print was conceived to be a powerful medium to influence and reform lives.

The blurb is entitled ‘*qaumi dilchaspiyoñ ka namuna*’ (a sample of interest for the *qaum*), and it is the Muslim *qaum* which is addressed. ‘Supporters of Islam’, the advertisement begins,

The following books have to be in your library or book shelves, because these are the books which will draw attention about the poor condition (*khasta hali*) of (our) *qaum*. It is these books which have been saviours for dead souls (*murda diloñ*). It is these books which have added new life to those who have been saddened. It is these books which, for the country and the *qaum*, have been like medicine (*aksir*). It is these books, by examining which, we can see who we are and what we ought to be.⁵²

The list of books included Altaf Hussain Hali’s *Musaddas*, his *Hayat-e Sadi*, *Majālis un Nisa*, and *Shikva Hind*, all of Dipti Nazir Ahmad’s novels, a number of books by Shibli Naumani, Ratan Nath Sarshar’s *Fasan-e Āzād*, many lectures of Sayyid Ahmad, including one on Islam, his Meerut lecture against the Indian National Congress, lectures by Dipti Nazir Ahmad, Shibli Naumani, and many others. What is interesting from my point of view is, that while this belief in the power of print was

⁵² *Barkāt al Islam*, Islamia Press, Lahore, 1890.

strong, this list of books also gives us an idea of the typology of writing and of its hierarchy, about what was considered important to be read for the *islah* (reform) of the *qaum*. Most of the authors listed were the great men writing great books, writing ‘*qaumi* literature’, books written for the *qaum*.

Other magazines and publishers also saw the power of print and felt that it could also be used to emerge from the *zillat* in which the Muslims were embroiled. The monthly *Hami-e Islam*, from Lucknow in its very first issue in 1305/1887 stated, that it would not be surprising if one cried at the pitiable condition of the Muslims or if one was to sigh at the condition of the *zillat* of the Muslims for, it argued, these feelings would be expected and not inappropriate.⁵³ It stated that it was bringing out this magazine, precisely so that it could awaken the Muslims and to unite them once again for, it stated, ‘newspapers are a great means to reform the *qaum*’.⁵⁴ Much of its first issue was concerned with the deplorable condition of the Muslims of Hindustan.

The *Dilguzār*, edited by Abdul Haleem Sharar, understood too, how print could change lives and in the power of print. It published a novel in 1888 along with the journal and was told by its readers that the novel was a huge success, and that it was liked to such an extent, ‘that perhaps no other book’ had been appreciated as much.⁵⁵ The journal argued, that this novel was the best means to spread the fervour for Islam and to encourage sympathy for Islam. As the respected readers of *Dilguzār* were witness, it continued, ‘every single sentence of it [the novel] gives passion in support of Islam, and we are sure, that those people who read it carefully and with pleasure, from cover to end, must be feeling that in their hearts, *qaumi* blood is boiling over with passion, and they are on the road to progress (*taraqqi*)’.⁵⁶ *Dilguzār* used to publish historical articles and ‘*khiyāli aur āshiqi mazāmin*’ (fiction and romantic literature), and said that in the letters it received, there was a great demand for

⁵³ *Hami-e Islam*, Lucknow, 1305/1887.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ *Dilguzār*, Lahore, January 1889.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

historical articles. It believed that it was playing an important role in ‘*qaumi khidmat*’ (the *qaum*’s welfare) a responsibility which it had taken upon itself.

Sayyid Imdadul Ali Sahib was one of Sayyid Ahmad Khan’s earliest and most vociferous critics. In 1290/1872 he published his *Imdadul Afāq Ba-javāb Parcha Tahzibu’l- Akhlāq*, as a forceful reply to the publication *Tahzibu’l- Akhlāq* started by Sayyid Ahmad Khan. The very last page of the text of Imdadul Ali’s 88 page diatribe against Sayyid Ahmad told us why he wrote this tract. His spirit and core beliefs about Islam were provoked, he said, and he became angry and immediately wrote this tract in reply to *Tahzibu’l- Akhlāq*. He continued by saying that *Tahzibu’l- Akhlāq* was not only far removed from Islam, but was actually blasphemous. In order to protect the beliefs of his Muslim brethren, he had this published and was distributed free.⁵⁷ Altaf Hussain Hali had called Imdadul Ali one of the two most important people who campaigned against Sayyid Ahmad.

Imdadul Ali began his attack against Sayyid Ahmad’s ideas by saying that

some of my old friends have been expressing new ideas and strange opinions about different things. I have felt on numerous occasions to tell the truth about these thoughts to the common people, but out of respect that the friends do not take offence [have desisted]. Thinking that other friends and *qaumi* brothers and *mulki* friends⁵⁸ should just be aware of their ideas, in which they have made untruths into truths and facts, and shown impossibilities to be possibilities, I have always desisted with both pen and tongue. In religious matters, however, where they have falsified from the Quran and *hadis* and have gone against the consensus of the Muslims, I have to reveal the truth. In religious issues where they have committed heresy, I have made both Muslim and non-Muslim aware.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Sayyid Imdadul Ali, *Imdadul Afāq Ba-javāb Parcha Tahzibu’l-Akhlāq*, Nizam Press, Kanpur, 1290/1872, p. 85. This publication is useful also because it contains a large number of interventions and fatwas made by numerous ulema, which gives a wide range of the type of opposition to Sayyid Ahmad Khan’s planned College for Muslim men.

⁵⁸ Probably non-Muslim friends in Hindustan.

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, p. 2.

While many Muslim writers seemed to have had great ambitions and had been writing to change the destiny of their *qaum*, others who were writing religious tracts seem to have written in order to popularise their own school of faith in opposition to other schools which emerged in north India more formally. from the 1870s onwards, leading to many types and numbers of series of pamphlet wars. Yet, there were perhaps as many writers who wrote for less ambitious reasons as well. Maulvi Ali Buksh Khan Sahib Bahadur, a judge in Gorakhpur, wrote a number of books, some in reply to Sayyid Ahmad's *Tahzibu'l-Akhlāq* such as his *Ta'id al Islam*, and some for other reasons.⁶⁰ His reasons for writing his *Moid ul Quran* published at exactly the same time as the *Ta'id al Islam*, were simply that a friend of his had sent him some written queries about the Quran, and wanted Ali Baksh to clarify these issues. He said that he had to write this short – 52 page – pamphlet so that his friend would be satisfied, and also so that his Muslim brothers would benefit from this effort so that they could learn something of religious value, and that they would thank him by praying for his sins whenever they read the Quran.⁶¹

What emerges from an examination of the printed literature in Urdu, is that there were a number of typologies of material and of writing, designed for different audiences and with different purposes. For example, there were the writings of many individuals who were simply taking part in debates on practice and ritual matters, and did not necessarily represent or proclaim to belong to a larger community or identity, such as a *maslak*. Their ambitions and issues were more narrowly focussed and specific to certain debates to which they were responding to. Others began to speak for and to the *qaum*, and defined their audiences in clear terms and had political ideas and intentions, even if they denied the fact that their speeches were 'political'. In the nineteenth century, it seems, that a large part of the debates and writings were by those who belonged to organised *maslaks*, and who read and

⁶⁰ Ali Baksh, *Ta'id al Islam*, Naval Kishore Press, Lucknow, Ramazan 1290 November 1873. In 1298/1881 he also wrote *Tanqiyat Masail*.

⁶¹ Ali Baksh, *Moid ul Quran*, Naval Kishore Press, Lucknow, Ramazan 1290 November 1873.

debated each others writings in order to fortify their own positions and strengthen their own `communities`. While the first category may not have had an impact on creating any specific community (or communities) of Muslims, those who spoke for and to the *qaum*, were trying to create and unify such a community of Hindustani Muslims. The third category, those embroiled in the `pamphlet wars` against other *maslaks*, on the other hand, as much of this thesis shows, were responsible for countering any trend to unity, and helped create multiple and antagonistic notions of Muslim identity.

In order to get an idea of the confidence and authority with which ulema debated with each other in the late nineteenth century, the title page of the first Volume of 12, of Ahmad Raza Khan (Barelvi) (b 1856), the head of the *Ahle Sunnat wa Jamā`at* based in Bareilly, is illuminating. This 800 page Volume stated, that in this book `thousands of problems/issues [*masail*] have been elaborated upon with such deep attention/thought and research/verification that they will not be found anywhere else, and lots of unclear issues which for centuries have been under discussion and unsolved, through argument and proof have been made clear and people with knowledge and justice [*ahle ilm o insāf*] will understand`.⁶²

The scale and extent of debate between the ulema of different sects is evident from the list of publications from the *Ahle Sunnat wa Jamā`at* press in Bareilly, provided in this publication. The list goes into the scores with numerous and wide ranging topics. For example, there are three separate publications on the `problem of the *azān* [call for prayers]`, two of which are a refutation/rejection of the writings on this issue of the ulema from Rampur and one rejecting the arguments made by the ulema from Calcutta; another pamphlet against a *fatwa* of the ulema from Rampur on the *azān*, has 35 refutations [*radd*]. Another publication is titled: `A Shia cannot be the heir of

⁶² Ahmad Raza Khan, *Al `ataya al nabuiya fil fatāwa var raziqa: kitab ul tahirat ta bāb ul tamaye-um*, Volume 1 of 12, published at the *Ahle Sunnat wa Jamā`at* , Bareilly, probably after 1905. (One thousand copies printed)

a Sunni'; there are numerous pamphlets against the Bareilvis' main rivals, the Deobandis, where the arguments of the Deobandis are refuted and contested. There is one pamphlet against the faith and belief of the 'Wahabi' Deobandis, another which is entitled: 'Seventy reasons to prove *kufir* [blasphemy] against the leader of the Wahabis', Maulvi Ismail Dehlavi'.⁶³ There are also dozens of tracts rejecting the claims and opinions of the ulema at Nadva and many against the Qadianis. Debates against all the major Islamic sects took place in writing. This short list shows that while there may not have been a very large literate public, there was, nevertheless, an active publishing business taking place.⁶⁴

The polemics of some Muslim ulema were focused less against non-Muslims, but were more forcefully directed against the numerous *maslaks*/sects within Islam. It was the need to declare all other schools -- many of which were in competition with other Muslim sects to claim membership as well as for legitimacy in the eyes of their supporters -- as infidels, and by labelling their deeds and words as blasphemous. Ahmad Raza Khan's Volume 1 of his *Al 'ataya al nabuiya fil fatāwa var raziqa: kitab ul tahirat ta bāb ul tamaye-um*, is highly critical of at least ten Muslim sects. Moreover, he considers all of them to be *kafirs* [infidels] even though he acknowledged that they had said the *kalima* and called themselves Muslim. The Qadianis, Chakralvis, *nechris*, Rafizis (who he said did *tabarra*), the Bahais, Shaitanis, Khawatmi Wahabis, and the 'many *ghair muqallidin*'. He said that it was completely *harām* and was a huge sin [*gunnah kabirah*] for anyone even to shake hands with these ten groups.⁶⁵

In the polemical exchanges between Ahmad Raza and the other sects, he cited extensive references, and documented all their arguments and his replies. He quoted

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Shaikh Muhammad Ikram in the third and final Volume of his *Kausar* series writes, that Ahmad Raza Khan, 'wrote about fifty books on different disputes and on intellectual debates [*ilmi behas*] and with extreme severity propagated traditional Hanafi ways', *Mauj-e Kausar*, Delhi, 2004, p. 70.

⁶⁵ Ahmad Raza Khan, *Al 'ataya al nabuiya*, p. 191.

from dozens of publications of his opponents citing dates of publication and his replies. His writing was like a boxing match, one punch in reply to another, followed by another punch: he said that they said this, he replied, they did (or did not), and so on. It is interesting to note, as David Thomas points out with regard to Islam in the 3/9 century, and argues that at that time, 'polemical writing had become an integral part of theological discourse in Islam. Nearly all of the major theologians active at this time are known to have participated in debates or to have written attacks of some kind'.⁶⁶ In some ways, theologians such as Ahmad Raza Khan were continuing a much older tradition and style of discourse.

Ahmad Raza Khan's writings reveal, as do those of all the ulema of the late nineteenth century, that there was an extensive and aggressive, ongoing exchange between ulema and that they were reading each other's writings and taking the trouble to reply, in writing. Yet, while perhaps many ulema from the organised *maslaks* were involved in talking to larger communities, there were other scholars who were involved primarily in their own 'pamphlet wars', directed at a single author, rather than at a whole school of faith.

Exchanges on the Margin: Writing to Each other

The general belief that print, in the later nineteenth century, was the primary medium for the formation and consolidation of composite identities, whether religious or those which were more political, needs to be contrasted with a parallel process, where the medium of print may have been used merely to engage with specific ideas or individuals, and where the grander designs of speaking for, or behalf of, or representing, an imagined or constructed community, may not have been the motivating criterion. This stream of writing, as the two sets of examples in this Section show, was probably as common as that of those who were trying to build

⁶⁶ David Thomas, (ed, trans), *Anti-Christian Polemic in Early Islam: Abu 'Isa al-Warraaq's "Against the Trinity"*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1992, p. 31.

their *maslaks*, or to create a Muslim *qaum*. These other writings were far more parochial, local and narrow in content, meaning, scope and influence.

I. *Izhār-ul Huda and Anvār-ul Huda*

In the early 1890s, at a time by when Muslim 'national' consciousness and identity was gaining increasing public recognition through speeches and writings of those who were writing to and for the *qaum*, there were those who were engaged in an intense exchange of religious debate, perhaps oblivious to the 'qaumi' debate taking place around them. Hakeem Maulvi Shaikh Ahmad, son of 'the exalted, respected' Maulana Muhammad Wajihuddin Usmani, Deobandi, previously of the ahle Sunnat and now a Shia resident of Muhala Faraash Khana, Wazir Gunj, Lucknow,⁶⁷ and Maulana Muhammad Jahangir Khansahib Shikvabadi, were involved in a most curious exchange of writing and publishing, which suggested that many of the Urdu writers writing religious pamphlets were responding to specific texts – often provocations – from other writers.

The first publication which started this most extraordinary exchange, was *Anvār-ul Huda*, written by Maulvi Shaikh Ahmad Sahib, Deobandi, published in 1308/1890-1, by the Niazmand Press in Agra under the supervision of Mirza Baqir Hussain, a *ra'is* of the city.⁶⁸ In response to *Anvār-ul Huda*, which the title says, presents the truth about the Shia Ja'fari religion, within just a few months, Maulana Muhammad Jahangir Khansahib published his *Izhār-ul Huda*, from the Gulshan Ilm Press in Agra.⁶⁹ Subsequently, in response to this publication, Hakim Maulvi Shaikh Ahmad wrote his *Shams-ud Duha* which was also published within a year, on 2 Ramazān

⁶⁷ Maulvi Shaikh Ahmad, *Shamsud duha javāb Izhār ul Huda*, Isna Asha'ri Press, Lucknow, Muharram 1310/August 1892.

⁶⁸ Maulvi Shaikh Ahmad, *Anvār-ul Huda*, Niazmand Press, Agra, 1308/1890.

⁶⁹ Maulana Muhammad Jahangir Khansahib, *Izhār-ul Huda*, Gulshan Ilm Press, Agra, 1308/1890. Another edition of this was published in 1309/1891.

1309/August 1892, by the Isna 'Ashari Press, Lucknow.⁷⁰ The title of this publication clearly stated that it was being written in reply to the aforementioned publication.⁷¹ Shaikh Ahmad said that he was delighted to see the advertisement for the new book – *Izhār-ul Huda* – because he felt that those who were in search of truth, would be better able to decide between truth and falsehood, and as soon as he got hold of this book, he began studying it. He said, that 'some of my opponents also used to remind me that a book has been published in reply to yours', and hence 'I have written this, based on their urging'.⁷²

Following this, Maulana Muhammad Jahangir Khansahib wrote his *Badar-ud Duja*, the full title of which is : *Badar-ud Duja, maruf ba-takmila Izhār-ul Huda, fī tardid Anvār-ul Huda va takzib Shams-ud Duha, maualiien Shaikh Ahmad Sahib, Shia, Deobandi, Vakil Jaunpur, [Badar-ud Duja, which is in addition to the famous Izhār-ul Huda, which is a rejection of Anvār-ul Huda and the lies of Shams-ud Duha, both written by Shaikh Ahmad Sahib, Shia, Deobandi, Vakil Jaunpur].*⁷³ This is not the end of this exchange, for there seem to be two additional publications between the two. Maulana Muhammad Jahangir writes a *Risala Gumnām*, an appendix to *Izhār-ul Huda*, which was followed by Shaikh Ahmad writing his response to this called: *Bajavāb Risala Gumnām*.⁷⁴ In this period, Shaikh Ahmad wrote another religious text called *Kashf-ul Hijāb un Sirat-ul Ishāb*, Isna 'Ashari Press, 29 Ziqād 1312/1895, which is not related to this exchange. The first edition had 600 copies published. What was it that was so pressing which forced the two authors to write these six substantial tomes, and reply and publish within a matter of months after having read their adversary's books?

⁷⁰ Shaikh Ahmad, *Shams-ud Duha*, Isna Ashari Press, Lucknow, 2 Ramazān 1309/1891. Another edition of this publication was published in Muharram 1310/13 August 1892.

⁷¹ In fact, the Second Edition of 1892 states that the full title of the book is: *Shams-ud Duha dar javāb Izhār-ul Huda*.

⁷² Shaikh Ahmad, *Shams-ud Duha*, Isna Ashari Press, Lucknow, 2 Ramazān 1309/1891, p. 2.

⁷³ Maulana Muhammad Jahangir Khansahib, *Badar-ud Duja*, Akbari Press, Agra, 1312/1894.

⁷⁴ Maulana Muhammad Jahangir Khansahib, *Risala Gumnām*, 18 Jamadi ul Aval 1310/1892.

The Preface of the first book which started the exchange, the *Anvār-ul Huda*, as was customary, told us about its author. Shaikh Ahmad, son of Janāb Maulvi Muhammad Wajihuddin Usmani, resident of Deoband in District Saharanpur belonged to, from the times of his ancestors, to the *tariqa Ahle Sunnat wa Jamā`at* and he said that he was a very strong believer of this religion, and admitted that for the Shia sect, he had a particular hatred.⁷⁵ He said that he often used to wonder why Ali (the fourth Caliph and the son-in-law and one of the Companions of the Prophet Muhammad) was treated as someone separate and unique compared to all the other Companions. In 1870 he was a *Naib Sar-rashtadar Faujdari* in Bijnaur District, and said that very often the thought used to occur to him why it was that the third Caliph (Usman) was so opposed to Ali and why even in Ali's reign, there was so much opposition to him. These thoughts used to bother him and he could not put them out of his mind.⁷⁶ He said that when he began thinking about the process of the succession of the Caliphs after the Prophet's death, his curiosity became even more 'impatient', and so he prayed to God to show him the true path. The ulema, he said, also did not like to talk about this topic and said that one should study the religious books oneself to find truth. Shaikh Ahmad said that he already had lots of books in his house, but only those belonging to his own sect, and none of the Shias. He wrote, that until he had finished writing this particular book – the *Anvār-ul Huda* – he had never read anything about or from the Shia point of view. Yet, he said that after making an in-depth study of religion lasting two to three years, he felt that the Sunnis were wrong and Islamic literature provided proof of all the beliefs of the Shia religion, a fact, which he argued, was confirmed from all Sunni literature and that it is Shiism which bore real truth.⁷⁷

When after completing all this study he returned to his home (*vatan*), he saw a very large congregation of the ulema of the *ahle Sunnat* and thought that he was wrong

⁷⁵ Maulvi Shaikh Ahmad, *Anvār-ul Huda*, Niazmand Press, Agra, 1308 1890, p. 2.

⁷⁶ Ibid, p. 3.

⁷⁷ Ibid, p.4.

about his beliefs and that perhaps he had not understood the basic arguments of Sunnism and that he should discuss these issues with the ulema. He then wrote down a few of the questions and doubts he had about Sunnism for the ulema. He tells us that the response that he got to these queries from the ulema was 'unspeakable', and instead of being based on knowledge and learning (*ilm va fazl*), their reaction was most uncivilised (*jahilana*) and the only explanation for their behaviour was that they had no answers to his queries.⁷⁸ He said that he believed very strongly that the Sunni religion was not the religion of truth and that the Imamia Isna 'Ashari – Shiism – was the way towards truth. *Anvār-ul Huda* was the result of his search for truth in which he laid down all the arguments that came his way along his journey of search. Much of *Anvār-ul Huda*, as was often the case with Shia literature, was based on the issue of the succession after Prophet Muhammad, and about the qualities and attributes required to be a Caliph or an Imam.⁷⁹

Much of the content of this publication exchange between Shaikh Ahmad and Maulana Muhammad Jahangir Khansahib, was based on allegations and refutations between interpretations of Shia and Sunni history, beliefs, doctrine and practice. Not surprisingly, in this exchange while both authors claimed that they themselves were objective and unbiased, they quoted extensively from each others' texts to prove that the other was a liar, misrepresented facts, and was prejudiced. Usually, facts were shown to be incorrect, that the other author was not honest in his representation of either his or the others' point of view, and that their point of view was biased and one-sided. Often, the reading of the other's text was so careful, that authors would cite the number of times a certain idea, name or phrase had been used and detailed references were given to the other's publication. At other times, both authors also often cited the number of times their own work had been quoted, to argue that their own texts had not been read properly and the other author was merely building up a fictitious case against his own arguments.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

What does one make of this personal, particularly narrow, exchange between two authors contesting facts of history, belief, and practice? Of these six publications which were written in response to each other, *Anvār-ul Huda* was 400 pages long, *Badar-ud Duja* 280, *Izhār-ul Huda* 188, and *Shams-ud Duha* 390 pages, clearly showing that a lot of time, energy and resources went into each publication, with some being published in second editions. In addition, Maulvi Shaikh Ahmad had written his 190 page *Kashf ul Hijab*, as well in October 1895. It is not possible to say what role these books were playing in the formation of community and identity, for it is difficult to know whether these books were being read, and more importantly, if so, by whom. On the title page of Maulana Jahangir's *Badar-ud Duja*, the author threw up a challenge to the book's anticipated readers. He stated, that 'if any of you amongst the thinking and educated Shia, can give a word-for-word written reply to this collection, in a civilised manner (*ba-tahzib*), then in that case you can collect fifty rupees from the author'.⁸⁰ It is not known if anyone took up the challenge, but there was no mention of anyone other than Shaikh Ahmad having written a reply, in any of Maulana Jahangir's other publications.

A corollary to this multi-round exchange, which says a great deal about the compulsion for each author to write and to have the need to continue to respond, as well as about the importance of the theme for both contributors, was the following revelation by Shaikh Ahmad. While this exchange was going on, Shaikh Ahmad wrote another 190 page manuscript and sent it to his publisher, Mir Abid Ali, the proprietor of the Isna `Ashari Press in Lucknow. Shaikh Ahmad said that about two or three months later, he found out that the manuscript had been stolen from the premises of the publisher. He then re-wrote the entire book and sent it again for printing which was eventually published under the title *Kashf-ul Hijāb un Sirat-ul Ishāb*.⁸¹ Clearly, writing was a serious, passionate, activity, and many writers were

⁸⁰ Maulana Muhammad Jahangir Khansahib, *Badar-ud Duja*

⁸¹ *Kashf-ul Hijāb un Sirat-ul Ishāb*, Isna Ashari Press, 29 Ziqād 1312/1895. The first edition had 600 copies published.

driven, and must have realised that their writings were influencing at least some readers.

Perhaps the exchange also throws some light on the publication industry, with the two authors writing in different cities publishing at different presses, and were yet part of a stream which was linking both authors. However, because of their very narrow and specific purpose, the books also do not talk about any notion of *qaum*, any relationship or connection to a larger entity, except that they talked about – but not to – the Shia and Sunni belief systems. Not surprisingly, both had completely diverse understandings and interpretations of Islamic history, ritual and practice, and hardly agreed on any point with each other. This polemic was not untypical of the divide between the Shia and Sunni and was a series of debates which had not been resolved for 1,300 years. It is difficult to say whether these books became part of a larger publishing public sphere or to what extent they were in the public domain, and how many of them were being read, and by whom. A reading of the texts makes one suggest, that the two authors were talking only to each other, oblivious of the presence of a real, lived, world out there. Yet, of course, both were very strongly moved by their faith, enough to spend many months going over each word written by their adversary, writing equally voluminous books.

One must add, however, that both writers created straw-men, and then burnt them down, they artificially constructed their imagined others – which had little to do with how each writer imagined himself or his community – and then both broke that image down. A closer reading of the texts suggests that throughout their books, both authors claimed that they would reply in full to the other's arguments, but they frequently got involved in other debates which were not related to the other's arguments. One such example in this exchange was *Izhār-ul Huda*, which while written in reply to *Nur-ul Huda*, did not really refer at all to the original text, and the author went off on a complete tangent on his own. The severe and deep prejudices

between different *mazāhib* and schools of faith. left little room for dialogue and conversation or communication and understanding.

II. *Al Zafar ul Mubin and Fatah-e Mubin*

An even more extraordinary process of writing and exchange compared to the one mentioned above, was started by the publication of a book entitled *Al Zafar ul Mubin*, which gave rise to an exchange, not just between two writers, but included many others as well. Moreover, there were accusations about the pseudonym of the writers, and this exchange allows us also to examine the issue of authorial authority and authenticity, at a time when reputations were critical.

Maulana Muhiuddin Lahori, a bookseller of Lahore, wrote a book entitled *Al Zafar ul Mubin fi radd Muzaltat al Muqallidin*, in 1297/1879, and as the title suggests, was against the *muqallidin* point of view and defended the tradition of the Prophet's *hadis* – see Chapter Three for differences amongst Islamic schools of belief. He said that when he took a good look at books about *fiqh* (jurisprudence), he found that none of them had any affinity with the Quran or *hadis*, and found that a great deal of both had been misquoted and misinterpreted. As a consequence, he found, that these books were discouraging people from following the *hadis*. He decided then to copy down from these books such statements which he felt were misleading and argued why they were incorrect. He said that he was doing this so that 'simple people (*unpurh* lit. illiterate) are not led astray by these misleading statements of the *muqallidin*'.⁸² While this ambition by someone to bring his people back on to the righteous path was not unknown amongst Muslims, it is how Muhiuddin interpreted his triumph at writing this book, which interests us here.

⁸² Muhiuddin, *Al Zafar ul Mubin fi radd Muzaltat al Muqallidin*, Matba-e Muhammadi, Lahore, First Edition, 1297/1880, p. 2.

In the second edition of the book published one year later in 1298 AH. Muhiuddin said, that because of the arguments that he made. and because of the grace of God, the first edition sold out instantly – *hātho* □ *hāth* (lit. hand-to-hand)⁸³ and he was ready to publish another book. Muhiuddin felt that his book had a huge impact and that it had started worrying his adversaries, and mocks them at their inability to respond and to take up the challenge, a requirement it seems, that was necessitated by the rules of the game. He wrote:

I have heard that the Hanafis in Lucknow and in other places have set up, with great fanfare, a number of committees to counter (*radd*) this book, and that they are very angry (*māre ghusse ke dānt pees rahe hai*). Some are crying out that there is no Hanafī in this whole world who can counter this book. Some say that the Hanafī ulema also do not have a response to this book, for if there was someone they would have written one. Some say that if a response is not written, then over time, the Hanafī religion will become extinct and everyone will start following the *hadis* ... The point is that by the publication of my book, the Hanafīs are quite rightly very worried, but they have no option. None of them can do anything about it. for how could they? How can someone who is on the erroneous path stand up against one who is righteous?⁸⁴

It seems that someone did take up the challenge, and a 518 page book entitled *Fatah-e Mubin* with an Appendix entitled *Tanbi al Wahabian*, was written in reply some years later by Muhammad Mansoor Ali, the son of Maulana Muhammad Hasan Ali Muradabadi.⁸⁵ Muhammad Mansoor Ali stated that he was forced to write his own book in reply, because *Al Zafar ul Mubin*, ‘was so devoid of truth’, and even though he could not find time to get away from his religious affairs, he was forced to write the reply on the insistence of his well-meaning friends.⁸⁶ Mansoor Ali stated, that after the original edition of the book was published which took him four years to

⁸³ Muhiuddin, *Al Zafar ul Mubin fi radd Muzaltat al Muqallidin*, Matba-e Muhammadi, Lahore. Second Edition, 1298 1881.

⁸⁴ Ibid, p. 371.

⁸⁵ Muhammad Mansoor Ali, *Al Fatah-e Mubin*, Matba-e Najmul Ulum, Farangi Mahal, Lucknow, nd., 518 pages

⁸⁶ Ibid, p. 12.

produce – ‘which sold out within a year’⁸⁷ – he brought out a second edition in which he had to print a proper page for Contents, and added a new Preface and Appendix. In addition, he said, the later edition contained 466 endorsements from ulema which were collected over the last five years, and no other book has as many: ‘*āj tak dunya meñ koi din ki kitab is qadar mava-hir ke sāth dekhne aur sunne meñ nahin āi*’.⁸⁸

What is even more interesting about the *Fatah-e Mubin*, was the extended advertisement that, of all papers, the *Oudh Punch* carried, in its 1885 editions. The advertisement for his book started appearing from the 29 January 1885 issue up to the 26 March issue of *Oudh Punch*. The advertisement of the book spoke with the same bravado as did Maulana Muhiuddin, about how this book would put an end to, if not ‘destroy’, the *la-mazhabi* (lit. those without religion) ‘Wahabi’ *ghair muqallidin*; few authors were known to suffer from humility.⁸⁹ What was important in this regard was, that while Maulana Muhiuddin and many other writers sang the praises of their books in their own books, here we had a very public display, in *Oudh Punch*’s ‘public domain’, where one author or publisher, let the diverse and varied readership of the *Oudh Punch* know how powerful his book was – assuming that the author/publisher placed the advertisement, in the first place.

To start with, there is a long, twelve line poem, which stated that *Fatah-e Mubin* had, with great fanfare, claimed victory by putting out the fire of the irreligious (*la-mazhabi*); this huge waterfall had extinguished their fire, it declared. It stated that all their claims had been proven false and by using the scriptures, had made all issues crystal clear. It had thrown out the roots of Wahabism, it claimed, and reinstated the truth in the hearts of the true believers, the *muqallidin*.⁹⁰ In this advertisement, as was common, the author tried to convince his potential audience of the power of his writing, how he had ‘destroyed’ his opponent. What is interesting, is that while the

⁸⁷ Muhammad Mansoor Ali, *Al Fatah-e Mubin*, Third Edition [?], Lucknow 1313/1896, p. 640.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ See Chapter Three on the Wahabis and on the *muqallidin* and *ghair muqallidin*.

⁹⁰ *Oudh Punch*, Lucknow, 29 January 1885.

advertisement continued for a number of issues in *Oudh Punch*. the text of the advertisement, though not the sentiment, changed. The poem was replaced by prose, where it stated that this book was produced after a lot of hard work and discipline, and it stated, for some time after it was published. ‘the great *alims* of Hindustan and Mecca wrote many testaments of praise in favour of it and certified it [with their seals]’.⁹¹ In the penultimate advertisement for the book, the author/publisher stated that this book had been so popular that readers had been buying this book up furiously (*hāthoñ hāth*) and many copies had already been bought and very few were left. Hence, it stated, ‘the advertisement is given, for if there is any reader who has not bought it, he is advised to acquire it quickly, for otherwise it may be too late’.⁹²

This exchange between these two writers, also gave rise to many others joining the debate. Maulana Muhammad Abul Hasan Muhadis Sialkoti, wrote his 708 page *Al Kalām al Matin radd al Fateh-e Mubin*, in reply to *Fateh-e Mubin* in 1886,⁹³ which was his third reply to *Fatah-e Mubin*, having written *Al Burahin fi radd al Fatah-e Mubin*, and *Al Kalam al Matin fi Izhār Talbisat al Muqallidin*.⁹⁴ Moreover, Maulana Abul Hasan also stated, that one Maulvi Abdul Hameed Azimabadi had also written a book in this debate, called *Fu`us al Muhaqqiqin Ali Raoos al Muqallidin*.⁹⁵ In this exchange, one Muhammad Abd-al Ali Madrasi, also wrote a tract entitled *Fu`us al Muhaqqiqin*.⁹⁶ Hence, six books were written in response to the original one, and five authors in all, participated in this debate.

While the original protagonists, Maulana Muhiuddin and Muhammad Mansoor Ali, had set the debate going, now others had joined in and had started opening up

⁹¹ *Oudh Punch*, Lucknow, 26 February 1885.

⁹² *Oudh Punch*, Lucknow, 19 March, 1885.

⁹³ Muhammad Abu al Hasan Muhadis, *Al Kalam al Mateen radd al Fateh-e Mubin*, Matba-e Siddiqui, Lahore 1886, pp. 708.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.* Announcement printed on last page.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ Muhammad Abd-al Ali Madrasi, *Fu`us al Muhaqqiqin*. Lucknow, 1900. [This may be a later edition].

further, equally controversial, issues. Maulana Muhammad Abul Hasan Muhadis Sialkoti said that the reason that he had to reply to *Fatah-e Mubin*, was so that people did not come into its deception ‘and leave the true, righteous, path and go towards the path of hell’;⁹⁷ for this purpose, he said, that it was ‘*lazim*’ (compulsory) upon him to reply to the accusations made in *Fatah-e Mubin*. More importantly, however, he made the astonishing revelation, that ‘although *Fatah-e Mubin* bears the name of the author as Mansur Khan, this is a fake, and the real person behind this is Maulvi Abdul Hai’.⁹⁸ For reasons that will just become clear, this was a most astonishing and provocative accusation. Maulana Muhammad Abul Hasan stated, that he knew that this book was by Abdul Hai for many reasons and that he had a lot of proof to support his accusation. He said, that when *Zafar al Mubin* was published, a committee was formed at Farangi Mahal in Lucknow to counter this book, and the main member of this activity was Abdul Hai.⁹⁹ He gave five detailed reasons to prove that Abdul Hai was indeed the actual author.

Abdul Hai (1848-86) – or Abd al-Hayy – was said to be ‘one of the greatest scholars of recent times’;¹⁰⁰ he was ‘an outstanding scholar in [his] field’,¹⁰¹ to the extent that ‘Lucknow was known by some as the “city of Abd al-Hayy”’.¹⁰² He is said to have written at least 109 books, most of which are considered ‘great books’.¹⁰³ Yet, while Maulana Muhammad Abul Hasan was quite convinced that *Fatah-e Mubin* was written by Abdul Hai Farangi Mahalli, it is surprising that Farangi Mahall’s modern-day historian does not mention this possibility at all. If indeed Abdul Hai was Mansur Khan, this would add an important dimension to the biography of Abdul Hai, and to Farangi Mahal.

⁹⁷ Muhammad Abu al Hasan Muhadis, *Al Kalam al Matin*, p. 5.

⁹⁸ Ibid, p. 6.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Francis Robinson, *The Ulama of Farangi Mahall and Islamic Culture in South Asia*, Hurst and Company, London, 2001, p. 109.

¹⁰¹ Ibid, p. 36.

¹⁰² Ibid, p. 72.

¹⁰³ Ibid, p. 80.

This exchange between Mansoor Ali and Maulana Muhiuddin reveals that all writers wrote with supreme authority and confidence about their abilities, always believing that they could ‘destroy’ their opponent’s arguments, and more importantly, that they could convince, if not convert, others to their point of view. This seems to be a feature of much of what was being written as different examples from this chapter indicate. Moreover, the extensive dialogue between Shaikh Ahmad and Maulana Muhammad Jahangir Khansahib Shikvabadi highlighted above, can best be described as taking place in a crude, almost vulgar, knee-jerk, manner, where both antagonists were actively opposed to the religious viewpoint and position of the other. Their language and hostile manner was not very different from many writers who were opposed to another’s religious viewpoint, where both ended up using derogatory and defamatory language against each other. For example, the author of *Fatah-e Mubin* mentioned in this chapter, which was written in response to *Al Zafar ul Mubin*, accused its author, Maulana Muhiuddin of writing in an unsavoury manner and using undignified language – *sakht alfāz khilāf-e tahzib* – and for writing with prejudice and bigotry – *ta’sub* – perhaps the most consistent accusation writers made on each other.¹⁰⁴ As Muhammad Mansoor Ali stated, ‘the level and extent of prejudice and bigotry in this, is unparalleled’ and he accused the earlier author of ‘distorting the truth’ and misleading his readers – *dhoka dainā*.¹⁰⁵ He wrote that, ‘those with knowledge would themselves be aware of the extent of *jahalāt* and *be-ilmi* (lack of knowledge) of the author’.¹⁰⁶ The author, he claimed, had no aptitude for either Persian or Arabic, and ‘even does not know Urdu properly’.¹⁰⁷ At the very end of his book, he himself stated, that he had replied in a dignified and just manner, without any prejudice at all.¹⁰⁸ Perhaps what is even more interesting in this regard, was that Muhammad Mansoor Ali stated that the book he was arguing against, *Al Zafar ul*

¹⁰⁴ Muhammad Mansoor Ali, *Al Fatah-e Mubin*, Matba-e Najmul Ulum, Farangi Mahal, Lucknow, 518 pages, p. 1.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid, p. 12.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid, p. 524.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid, p. 384. The Appendix runs from page 385-518, with a further six pages added on for corrections.

Mubin, was written by one Hari Chand, son of Divan Chand Khatri, resident of Alipur in Gujranwala, who, ‘for the moment, superficially, (*filhāl, bara-e nām*), has decided to keep his name Muhiuddin’. thus discrediting this author completely, implying that a recent convert could hardly know Islam.¹⁰⁹ In both the cases cited above, the author’s integrity and his authority, were questioned. In a world where the written word mattered so much, and because it was perceived to have had such a strong influence in the formation of different, competing, identities, the credibility of authorship was crucial. The next section underscores the point of just how crucial reputation and authorship really was.

Publish and Perish: Authorship and Authenticity

The role of the *fatwa* as a guide, has been central in Islamic understanding and practice for many centuries.¹¹⁰ The *fatwa* was the ‘issuance of a nonbinding advisory opinion’ by a *mufti* (juriconsult), and importantly, was not a judgement but an opinion;¹¹¹ ‘to issue a *fatwa* all that was required was that the person have religious knowledge and piety (*taqva*)’.¹¹² From the second half of the tenth century written collections of *fatwas* began to appear; each collection was identified with a particular school (*mazhab*) of legal thought. Khalid Masud, et al, tell us that, Abu al-Su‘ud who served as *shaykh ul-islam* under the Ottomans from 1545-74, is ‘reported to have claimed that on at least two occasions he wrote more than 1,400 *fatwas* in a *single day*. These *fatwas* issued by the *shaykh ul-islam* were systematically recorded in registers, and those issued by certain distinguished *shaykhs*, such as Abu al-Su‘ud,

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, p. 9.

¹¹⁰ See the excellent collection of essays in Khalid Muhammad Masud, Brinkley Messick and David S Powers, (eds), *Islamic Legal Interpretation: Muftis and their Fatwas*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass, 1996.

¹¹¹ Khalid Muhammad Masud, Brinkley Messick and David S Powers, ‘Muftis, Fatwas, and Islamic Legal Interpretation’, in Ibid, p. 3.

¹¹² Ibid, p. 8.

were collected in book form';¹¹³ many of the replies to questions, often consisted of merely a 'yes' or 'no'.

In the north Indian context, as this thesis has shown, at times *fatwas* have had an important, perhaps even spectacular, impact in one case, in the religious life of Indian Muslims. As Usha Sanyal has shown us, in the life and Islamic movement of Ahmad Raza Khan (1856-1921) the 'founder' of the so-called Barelvi *maslak* (school), the *Ahle Sunnat wa Jamā`at*, the role of *fatwas* was foundational.¹¹⁴ Writing *fatwas*, Sanyal writes, 'became the hallmark of his later career', and he wrote 'thousands' of *fatwas*.¹¹⁵ In the 1890s, Ahmad Raza Khan wrote over 200 *fatwas* against the Nadvatul Ulema alone.¹¹⁶ Yet, Sanyal also reveals and gives examples of many of Ahmad Raza's colleagues and even students, writing *fatwas* addressed to Ahmad Raza Khan, apparently on his behalf.¹¹⁷ We do not know whether Ahmad Raza Khan ever checked or corrected or authenticated what was written on his behalf, probably under his name, but this issue raises some interesting questions.

Clearly, the question of authorship and its authenticity, with regard to what was being written and read, is a non-trivial one, as I have just shown in the Section above, and furthermore, for reasons that are discussed below, and as one example shows, quite traumatised the author. The question of the ownership of a text, and of plagiarism, allow us to open the door to a better understanding of the importance of the printed word in people's lives, and also underlines the point, that the printed word mattered to such an extent, that authors claimed, or distanced themselves from, texts attributed to them. In Chapter Five, where I look at the idea of Orality in the era of Print, I provide further evidence and its consequences, on how different printed

¹¹³ Ibid, p. 12. Emphasis added.

¹¹⁴ See Usha Sanyal, *Devotional Islam and Politics in British India: Ahmad Riza Khan Barelwi and His Movement, 1870-1920*, New York and Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999; and Usha Sanyal, *Ahmad Riza Khan Barelwi: In the Path of the Prophet*, Oneworld, Oxford, 2006.

¹¹⁵ Usha Sanyal, *Ahmad Riza Khan Barelwi*, p. 58.

¹¹⁶ Ibid, p. 64.

¹¹⁷ Usha Sanyal, *Devotional Islam*, p. 180-1.

versions of a very public event, had an impact on issues related to identity, and how myths were created and where 'what actually happened' may no longer be relevant, replaced by a reality authenticated (or challenged) by different printed versions of the same event. In this section below, I document some further examples where the written word and the printed word, at times, were at odds.

As the section above shows, it was widely recognised by the Muslim writing and reading public, that the medium of print was a most powerful medium. Through print one could change the minds and actions of individuals, and so it became important to read certain texts, and to avoid certain others. There was almost a certaintude about the printed word which gave it this sense of authority. For this reason, the matter of the authorship of a text, or its inverse, plagiarism or the malafide practice of distorting another author's text, gained significance in an era where print and identity were closely linked. Here I document the reactions and responses in one case, where authorship and authenticity were contested.

It seems that this problem of different texts saying the same thing, or texts which look alike ending up saying very different things, was not uncommon in the nineteenth century and gave rise to issues about the authenticity of a particular text and to its authorship and attribution. In this particular instance, the urgency that Maulvi Ulfat Hussain showed in having to deny authorship, suggested that he, and perhaps many others, understood and appreciated that not having done so would have caused damage to their reputations. He was forced to publish a pamphlet refuting the authorship of parts of another almost identical one, which accredited the Maulana as author, an act which only helps reinforce the argument developed above, that Muslims knew the power of print, and felt that since they were being read, they had to be careful of what was being published under their name.

In the latter half of the 1870s, Maulvi Ulfat Hussain, originally of Shikarpur in district Muzzafarnagar near Meerut and then *mudarris aval*, Normal School Delhi,

wrote at least five pamphlets on religious issues related primarily to the Shia sect. Four of these were published at the Matba-e Yousufi located at the Kucha Faulad Khan in Delhi, a press owned by Munshi Sayyid Ali Hussain Behrailvi: all four tracts state that they were published under the supervision – *ba-ehemām* -- of the owner. These four tracts were entitled: *Muna-e Tabarra*, *Jalva e Haq: Silsila Mazhab e Islamia*, *Risala Munāzara*, and *Risala Radd-e Tabarra*.¹¹⁸ There was a fifth publication which carried the name of Maulvi Sayyid Ulfat Hussain on its title page and hence attributed authorship to him, entitled *Radd-e Tabarra*, but was published by a different Delhi press, the Nusrat-ul-Mutabah. The pamphlets *Risala Radd-e Tabarra* and *Radd-e Tabarra*, were almost identical in content, in parts word-for-word, paragraph, and page-by-page, although the former is twelve pages shorter than the latter. Maulvi Ulfat Hussain in *Risala Radd-e Tabarra* stated in unequivocal terms that parts of the highly controversial *Radd-e Tabarra* were not written by him and had been added on by someone else.

The *Risala Munāzara* is a publication on the etiquette and falling standards of the *munāzara*, a forum for oral debates and the public exchange of ideas, usually religious, between different individuals and/or groups.¹¹⁹ Maulvi Ulfat Hussain talked about how one ought to conduct *munāzaras* and *mubahisas* and how people should participate only after doing some research. These interactions should be done with consideration for the other and with understanding and gentleness, he stated, and from the outset people should not be prejudiced in their manner and speeches, promoting only their own religion or *qaum*. He lamented the fact that the *munāzara*

¹¹⁸ Maulvi Ulfat Hussain, *Muna-e Tabarra*, Matba-e Yousufi, Kucha Faulad Khan, Delhi, 1296/1878; *Jalva e Haq: Silsila Mazhab e Islamia*, Matba-e Yousufi, Kucha Faulad Khan, Delhi, June 1879; *Risala Radd-e Tabarra*, Matba-e Yousufi, Kucha Faulad Khan, Delhi, undated; and *Risala Munāzara*, Matba-e Yousufi, Kucha Faulad Khan, Delhi, undated.

¹¹⁹ See Avril A Powell, *Muslims and Missionaries in Pre-Mutiny India*. Curzon Press, 1992, and Barbara D Metcalf, *Islamic Revival in British India: Deoband, 1860-1900*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2002 [1982], pp 215-34.

was a *munāzara* in name only – see Chapter Five on the ‘celebrated’ *munāzara* of Chandapur.¹²⁰

The Maulvi was born in a Shia household in a Sunni neighbourhood¹²¹ and his autobiography identified a number of people who had an influence on him and on the formation and ideas early on in life. He said that he became familiar with the main differences between Shia and Sunni, and started listening to both Shia and Sunni polemics and views, but did not like what they were saying about each other’s religions. He used to read and study and analyse books written by both sects and found that both abused each other in their writings.¹²²

Although born a Shia, he said that he ‘increasingly became a Shia’ but said that he never did *mātam*;¹²³ he became a follower of the *Jaʿfria* sect in Shia Islam, but never accepted the tradition of the *tabarra* from the beginning because he never thought it correct. He felt that these things were separate from the Shia religion, but felt that this tradition of most Shias undertaking *tabarra* was strange/astonishing. He wrote that ‘since I became a Shia I always felt that Ali’s name in the *azān* [call for prayers] was odd and was astonished/surprised how such a long unmannerly [*be-tukki*] phrase entered the *azān*; it didn’t look right with the messenger’s [Muhammad’s] name’.¹²⁴ Although born in a Shia household, Maulvi Ulfat Hussain on a number of occasions in his biography wrote that he had the ‘choice’ to ‘become’ a Shia. He wrote, that when he went to Meerut in his youth, had he ‘seen Maulvi Haidar Ali’s writings [earlier], I would not have become a Shia so quickly’.¹²⁵

¹²⁰ For the moment, however, the *Risala Munāzara* only interests us because it carries a fairly extensive autobiography of Maulvi Ulfat Hussain

¹²¹ *mohalla*

¹²² Maulvi Ulfat Hussain, *Risala Munazara*, Matba-e Yousufi, Kucha Faulad Khan, Delhi, June 1879.

¹²³ The Shia ritual of self-flagellation during the ten days of lamentation in the month of Muharram to mourn the loss of the martyrs at Karbala in 61/680. See S A A Rizvi, *The Socio-intellectual History of the Isna ‘Ashari Shi’is in India*, in two volumes, Munshiram Manoharlal, New Delhi, 1986. See in particular Chapter 4 in Volume II: ‘Commemoration of the tragedy of Karbala’.

¹²⁴ Maulvi Ulfat Hussain, op. cit., *Risala Munāzara*, p 22.

¹²⁵ Ibid p. 23.

It is interesting to note this concept of 'becoming' or not becoming, a Shia/Sunni. As I show elsewhere in this thesis with reference to other writers as well, this was not an uncommon phenomenon. Kenneth Jones also writes that, Sayyid Nazir Hussain (d 1902) one of the leaders of the Ahle Hadis, 'had been a Shia but abandoned this when he studied with Abdul Aziz and his successor, Muhammad Ishaq'.¹²⁶

The Maulvi studied under Master Ramchander,¹²⁷ and learnt religion and maths from Master Ajodhya Prasad; he also studied the Christian religion. In this period he went to a Shia *majlis* and heard lots of abuse against the Sunnis, and this left him despondent. As a student, he used to fight and argue all day with the Shia students, and began to despise the *majlis* at that time. He felt that the common [*āmm*] Shia's manner [*tariqa*] was very bad and without a doubt, from this mannerism the true reality of the Shias, particularly the scholarly and doctrinal reality, could not be revealed. He felt that they should leave all their uncivilised and ignorant [*jahilanā*] ideas and speeches aside and show the true colours, essence, and virtue, of their religion, and the Maulvi considered all the key rituals as part of the Shia tradition, 'unnecessary if not downright useless'.

Maulvi Ulfat Hussain considered himself both a Shia *and* a Sunni. He wrote that 'this short truthful tale that I have recounted of my being a Shia and a Sunni, clearly shows that the Shia's deeds and actions, their behaviour, manners and customs, are such that someone who is not a follower would not like, and if someone had even a little bit of sense he should be wary, for he cannot accept those common beliefs'.¹²⁸

¹²⁶ Kenneth Jones, *Socio-religious Reform Movements in British India*, The New Cambridge History of India 3.1, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1987, p. 56.

¹²⁷ Master Ramchander had a diverse personality, and amongst his many accomplishments, was his founding of the Urdu newspaper *Fawaid-al-Nazerin*, the aim of which was to introduce 'modern, western' ideas and knowledge. His periodical was considered to be 'far ahead of its times', and is believed to have a 'radically modern outlook'. His paper did not fare well, for many people thought it to be full of atheistic ideas. See, Nadir Ali Khan, *A History of Urdu Journalism*, Idar-i-adabiyat-i-dilli, New Delhi, 1991, pp 145-60. Also see Margrit Pernau, *Delhi College*.

¹²⁸ Ibid p 24.

Nevertheless, despite claiming to be a Shia and a Sunni, Maulvi Ulfat Hussain wrote tracts on issues which were fundamentally in the Shia domain and sphere – like the *tabarra* – although he was very critical of common (popular) Shia practices, usually calling them ‘uncivilised’ (*jahilāna*). I now turn to the curious case of the two pamphlets, the *Risala Radd-e Tabarra* [hereinafter referred to as the *Risala*] and the *Radd-e Tabarra* [referred to as the *Radd* in the paragraphs below].

The *Radd-e Tabarra*, unlike the other four publications of the Maulvi which were printed in the Yousufi press, was published by the Delhi press of Nusratul Mutabeh probably in 1876 and certainly after the founding of the *madrasatul ulum*, as it was called, by Sayyid Ahmad Khan, in Aligarh. The opening page of the pamphlet begins with a couplet in praise of Allah followed by thanks to Allah and his Prophet, in Arabic, followed by the statement that this pamphlet was written by ‘Sayyid Ulfat Hussain, Shia Isna’Ashari, *mudarris aval*, *madrasa* Anglo-Arabi, Delhi, son of Sayyid Hidayat Ali Sahib’.¹²⁹ The *Risala*, written after the *Radd*, has exactly the same four opening lines (p 1) except that it does not give the author’s name. The next fourteen lines of both pamphlets were identical (p1-2), as is much of the rest of the text, although the pamphlet published later, the *Risala*, is 12 pages shorter. Both the *Risala* and the *Radd*, discussed the issue of the Shia *tabarra* in considerable detail, both citing (the identical) historical and religious sources.¹³⁰

The text of pages 1-10, with the exception of the two references cited above, are identical; on pages 10 and 11, there are two paragraphs which were not found in the shorter *Risala*. The Shia *tabarra* has been described as the cursing of Prophet Muhammad’s companions, and particularly of the first three caliphs who supposedly

¹²⁹ Maulvi Ulfat Hussain, *Radd e Tabarra*, Nusratul Mutabeh, Delhi, not dated, p. 1.

¹³⁰ In this Section I am not concerned with the issue of *tabarra* which has been discussed in another Section; Rizvi writes that ‘the public recital of *tabarra* was not part of the Muharram rituals. Only the extremist Shi’is insisted on it’, S A A Rizvi, *The Socio-intellectual History of the Isna ‘Ashari Shi’is in India*, Volume II, p. 307. My main interest here is to show the nature of complications that arose when publications were tampered with, particularly with regard to sensitive political and religious issues concerning and related to Muslim intellectuals.

usurped Ali's (the fourth caliph) right to become caliph earlier; Ali's status amongst the Shia's is next to that of the Prophet, but superior to all the Prophet's other companions. All of Maulvi Ulfat Hussain's publications condemn this tendency amongst Shias to curse the first three caliphs, and he believed that this trend was of the uncivilised, unsophisticated, Shia's behaviour. The paragraphs that are missing in the shorter version of the two documents remove some of the commentary (and examples) on this theme. For example, one of the paragraphs that is in *Radd* but not in the *Risala*, related to the controversial issue of the third caliph Usman being married to two daughters of the Prophet, Ruqqaiya and Zainab (p 11).

For the most part, with the exception of the very last four pages, all that is found in the shorter *Risala*, is taken from the *Radd*, verbatim. Here and there in the *Risala*, there are some additions, but it is mainly a copy of the longer version with some paragraphs and parts not included in it. One important addition to the *Risala* not found in the *Radd*, is a reference to the controversial Shia *Eid Ghadir* (p 14).¹³¹ The Shias and the Sunnis have many celebrations and festivities which are alike in both sects, such as fasting during the month of Ramazan, the celebration of the *Eid* and of the Prophet's birthday on 12 Rabi II. However, there are numerous occasions which are observed in one but not the other. Muharram and the ten (or forty) days of lamentation for those who were massacred in Karbala in 61/681, while perhaps observed by a small number of Sunnis, is primarily a Shia tradition. Another celebration for many Shias is the celebrations on the birthday of the fourth caliph, Ali, on 13 Rajab. Many Sunnis, however, consider this celebration equivalent to *bid'at* (innovation) and do look down upon it as a tradition outside the folds of even their tolerance of Shiism.

¹³¹ On the 18 Zulhijja 10 AH, the Prophet Muhammad camped at a pool called Ghadir Khumm, about five kilometres from al-Juhfa in Rabigh. According to some Shia beliefs, on that day Ali was nominated by the Prophet as his successor. Although this did not happen and Ali was eventually the fourth caliph of Islam, some Shias celebrate this day for this occasion. See S A A Rizvi, *The Socio-intellectual History of the Isna 'Ashari Shi'is in India*, Volume I, p 18, and Volume II, p. 284.

One reason why the *Risala* was much shorter than the *Radd*, was because the former excluded the eleven pages of fatwas and commentaries by other ulema, both Shia and Sunni, on the issue of *tabarra*. The pamphlet *Radd-e Tabarra*, before it came to the appendices, ended with a long list of books on the *munāzara* published by the press where the *Radd* itself was printed, the Nusratul Mutabeh, Delhi. This ending prior to the appendices, also gave the name of the author as follows: ‘Ulfat Hussain, *mudarris, madrasa Arabi, Delhi, Shia mazhab*’ (p 31). The ending of the main text of the shorter *Risala*, was identical to the *Radd*, and ended exactly where the former did and with the same words, except that the *Risala* did not give the name of the author at this point and nor did it list the books published by the Nusratul Mutabeh press, not surprisingly since this was a different publisher. However, while for the most part the main text of one replicated the other, it was the appendices in both which were the cause of considerable controversy.

In the first instance, the longer, earlier, *Radd* had a separate section which announced that the appendix followed; the *Risala* had no such bifurcation and, in fact, the appendix – the first two lines of which were identical in both pamphlets – merged into the text where it ended -- in fact, where both pamphlets ended. Not even a new line or paragraph advertised the fact that in the *Risala* one was reading the appendix.

This part of the appendix in both publications was based on a Question and Answer session, where questions were posed, such as: ‘How is it possible to have mutual understanding between Shias and Sunnis?’, and ‘They say that *hayye ali khair ul amal* is not obligatory [in the *azān* (the call to prayers)]; in such a case [isn’t our] *azān* just like that of the Sunnis?’. Such questions were followed by answers which, for the most part, were identical in both publications. After this point, both publications become different and take on their own particular directions.

It was quite common at that time for pamphlets and publications to have, at their very end, an advertisement or an announcement, regarding the same publication.

This was the case in the *Radd-e Tabarra* as well. On the penultimate page of this pamphlet, there was an announcement entitled: ‘The Statement by the Shia in the *Daru’l-Imamat* about the lack of validity/justification of the *tabarra*’. The Statement ran as follows:

These days in this city of Delhi, there are some Shias, who know an immense amount and are greatly civilised, cultured, gentle and mild mannered. Maulvi Sayyid Ulfat Hussain Sahib, Shia, *mudarris aval*, madrasa Anglo Arabic, Dehli, and Maulvi Sayyid Haider Ali Sahib, Shia, preacher against Christianity, regarding the noise and fracas about the reform of prejudice, have posted an advertisement about this topic, in every public place, stating that *tabarra bāzi* [the practice of *tabarra*] is in no way acceptable/valid in the Shia religion, and nor from any sacred text of the Shia, is its justification proven. However, because uneducated and uncivilised Shia follow this practise and tradition, they bring [the Shia name] in severe disrepute and cause strife and enmity.¹³²

They then invited all those who wanted to discuss this issue to the *Daru’l-Imamat*. Such a discussion was held where both Shia and Sunni came and the *Daru’l-Imamat* was said to have been ‘overflowing’ with the audience. Both Maulvi Ulfat Hussain and Maulvi Sayyid Haider Ali came; the former spoke at length and with great authority about the lack of justification and acceptability of *tabarra*, and the audience present heard him out with ‘concentration and with justice, and no one interrupted or stopped him from talking’. This part of the pamphlet ended by stating that the discussion – in which some other scholars also participated – which began at 10 am ended at two in the afternoon, and everyone liked the proceedings and all those there, ‘with the bottom of their hearts announced that they will never, ever, do *tabarra hāzi* again’.¹³³

However, it is the very end – just the last few lines -- of the *Radd-e Tabarra* published earlier than the *Risala Radd-e Tabarra*, which was the cause of much

¹³² *Radd-e Tabarra*, p. 35.

¹³³ *Ibid*, p. 36.

controversy and throws light on issues of authorship, plagiarism and on the authenticity of publication. It was not so much what the pamphlet said – for this was being said by numerous other ulema as well – but the fact that it caused such a stir that its authorship had to be refuted in the other, near-identical, pamphlet.

The entire pamphlet *Radd-e Tabarra* was precisely about what its title says. It even praised, in the very end, the Emperor of Iran for taking a stand against *tabarra bāzi*, and after doing so, talked about who the author called, the *nechri* Sayyid Ahmad Khan, who founded the *madrasatul ulum* in Aligarh. He criticised Sayyid Ahmad Khan for claiming to be a supporter of Islam because Sayyid Ahmad Khan had based his teachings of Islam on the basis of the *nechri*. The author also questioned the appointment of Maulvi Qari Jaffar Ali as *mudarris aval*, because the Maulvi was known to support the tradition of *tabarra bāzi*. He said that this action needed to be rethought because this was not good for Muslims. He said that if the Qari disputed this claim, then the Qari ought to write a pamphlet like *Radd-e Tabarra* which would be published by this same publishing house and put the matter to rest, and there would be no aspersions on the Qari's character regarding his stand towards the *tabarra* and the uncivilised and uneducated Shias' claims about him would have been proven to be false. The pamphlet ended here, but cited a reference to a newspaper -- suggesting that this (last) part of the pamphlet was taken from there -- called the *Umdahtul Akhbar*, Shahi [Special] Number 15, volume 14.

In the *Risala Radd-e Tabarra*, just like in the *Radd-e Tabarra*, the Question and Answer format is the same, except for the last question. In the *Risala*, the last question asked is as follows: 'Is the pamphlet *Radd-e Tabarra* published by the Nusratul Mutabeh press in its entirety your publication, or is part of it yours and part of it someone else's, since the Preface and end, etc., have a reference to the *Sadiq-ul Akhbar*, and it seems that this is not your writing/work?'. The answer to this was as follows: 'Whatever there is in *Radd-e Tabarra* is my own [speech and writing], as is the commentary on the *mutah*; the rest is from the people of the press and the people

of the newspaper'. He denied adding the *fatwas* because he considered them to be incorrect and asked, hence, why should he have added them, and wanted to know why he would have used derogatory language against the Shia. He stated that

it is clear from the beginning of the pamphlet, and it is obvious from the rest [of the text] that the *fatwas* were not published by my permission/knowledge. And likewise, on the last page the statement about Janab Maulana Qari Sayyid Jaffar Ali Sahib ... which is attributed to the *Sadiq-ul Akhbar* and published there, that has definitely not been published by my efforts or my will; God knows all and he is my witness. And obviously, along with him, why would I have condemned Maulvi Sayyid Ahmad Khan Sahib Bahadur? Ask him [yourself] whether I am such an opponent of his *madrasa* that I could wish such ill on his *madrasa*?¹³⁴

He then went on to refute all the allegations made in the earlier text where it was alleged that Maulvi Ulfat Hussain, criticised and opposed some of his teachers. He stated: 'I swear and say that I never [want to] compete, either in writing or in speech, with these teachers'.¹³⁵

He went on to argue in this line of defence, by saying that people did not have a reply to truthful things and anything to say in response, and only unjustly caused disputes amongst people; they created commotion and wanted people to fight. Returning to the authorship of the pamphlet *Radd-e Tabarra*, he wrote that 'in the appendix of the pamphlet some articles [parts] are mine but the composition and prose is not mine and is by the author [publisher?: '*musanif risale ki janib se hai*'] ... and the reference to Maulvi Sahib [Sayyid Ahmad Khan] the *mudarris* of the *madrasa* at Aligarh, obviously they are definitely, definitely, not included in the original pamphlet.¹³⁶ He went on to say that since people could not argue against the truth, they only created such scandal; but this was a strategy which would fail, for those who sought and spoke the truth, had no fear of such lies and slander.

¹³⁴ *Risala Radd-e Tabarra*, p. 22.

¹³⁵ *Ibid*, p. 23.

¹³⁶ *Ibid*, p. 23.

Print mattered, not just in helping to create numerous identities, but also in making reputations. The importance of this medium was underscored by the fact, that writers fought hard to clear their names because it mattered to discerning readers, that the writers had some integrity. For this reason, writers took seriously what was printed under their name, and we have the rather curious statement by Sayyid Imdadul Ali, who in his *Imdad-us Sunnain*, referred to his earlier publication, *Imdadul Muslimin*, and mentioned two particular points from the earlier publication, which were due to a misprint by the *kātib*. Sayyid Imdadul Ali attacks one of his critics, saying that the mistake was made by the *kātib*, yet he was arguing with the writer.¹³⁷

Print and Identity: Muslim, Islamic or Hindustani?

In Chapter Three of this thesis, I discuss the notion of identifying, counting, labelling and marking different types of Muslims. Issues of being counted as a certain ‘caste’ or ‘sect’ by others is contrasted with labels regarding how Muslims defined and categorised their own identities. A key notion in classifying and marking boundaries, revolved around an incomplete notion of the Muslim *qaum*. As much of this thesis and this chapter, in particular, argue, the role of print was important in the consolidation, if not the invention of identities. The overwhelming output in Urdu was what is described as ‘religious’ – in this case, Islamic – writing, which is not surprising given the many schools of thought emerged in this period, where each group was engaged with the others, scoring points and putting them down in every manner, with every epithet, they could invent. Clearly, through the medium of print, and quite aggressively and forcefully, the process of an Islamic identity was being forged by believers and the faithful who interpreted, as Chapter Three shows, Islamic identities very differently. What is interesting, however, is that while an Islamic identity was being constructed, so was a Muslim one, one in which cultural practices and symbols played an important role. At the same time, a ‘Hindustani’ cultural

¹³⁷ Sayyid Imdadul Ali, *Imdad-us Sunnain*, Naval Kishore Press, Kanpur, 7 December 1870, p. 17.

entity, importantly. both Hindu and Muslim, was also being created in northern India. The distinctions between an Islamic identity, a Muslim one. and a Hindustani identity, are important, and print played a role in creating and strengthening all three. The case of the *Oudh Punch* is instructive in our understanding of how print intervened in the formation of identities.

The *Oudh Punch* published from Lucknow in Urdu in the middle of the 19th century edited by Muhammad Sajjad Hussain, was one of the great periodicals of its era, widely read and never ignored – see Chapter Three. Perhaps the most striking feature of the *Oudh Punch* when one looks at it, is that it did not have an Islamic date on its front page, and only gave the Georgian calendar date. This was unusual, for while most Urdu publications gave the date of publication against the Islamic calendar, many gave both, Islamic and Georgian calendar dates. The use of only the Georgian calendar made the *Punch* stand out from most Urdu, particularly Muslim, publications, a fact which itself distinguished the Islamic from the Muslim and Hindustani.¹³⁸ The mast-head of the *Punch* stated, that it was an independent and witty paper (*azād o zarif hai Oudh Punch*), not tied down to any sect, school or following. Indeed, the *Oudh Punch* carried a most eclectic and diverse set of issues and themes, which would have been of interest to non-Muslims as well, articles and stories which emphasised *tahzib aur tumaddun* (culture and sophistication), rather than religious bigotry or proseylatisation. It represented the ‘New Light’ enlightenment movement, and by today’s definitions, would probably be called ‘secular’.

¹³⁸ Of the many hundreds of Urdu pamphlets, tracts and newspapers I have seen from the period 1860-90, I have seen none other than the *Oudh Punch* which used the Georgian calendar exclusively. In contrast, its rival, the *Oudh Ukhbar*, carried both the *Hijri* date and the Georgian one. This does not mean that others did not carry out the same practice, but if there were others, they must have been far and few between. However, Professor David Lelyveld informs me in a personal communication, that ‘Muhammad ‘Atiq Siddiqi’s *Suba-e shimali o maghribi ke akhbarat o matbu‘at (1848-1853)*, Aligarh, Anjuman-Taraqqi-i Urdu [Hind], 1962, has a number of first pages of early Urdu newspapers with only the CE dates, e.g., *Aftab-e Hind* and *Koh-i Nur* (of Lahore not NWP despite the book’s title)’.

The weekly *Oudh Punch* of 1878, as always, started with the new year with an article on the New Year in its 8 January issue, and in the spirit of the times published many ghazals in that week's issue. Throughout 1878, Russia and its war with Turkey featured in many issues of *Oudh Punch* that year, as they did in almost all 'native newspapers'.¹³⁹ The *Punch* carried articles on Bismarck, Disraeli and Gladstone in its 22 January issue and one on Ashura the same week.¹⁴⁰ Later issues carried an extensive review of the Urdu Dictionary and about the development and fineties of the Urdu language;¹⁴¹ there were numerous articles on Holi, about its celebration and enjoyment,¹⁴² and about Divali.¹⁴³ In its August and September issue of 1880, there were many articles bidding adieu to the month of Ramazān (*Alvida Ramazān*) and welcoming Divali.¹⁴⁴

The *Oudh Punch* made frequent mention of its competitor, the *Oudh Ukhbar*, always engaged in debates about social issues quoting the *Oudh Ukhbar*, responding, and so forth. A long article in the *Punch* of 26 March 1878, talked about an article of the 24th and 25th February 1878 in the *Oudh Ukhbar*, where the writer praised the latter's article which was on the administrative affairs of state of Great Britain. The writer in the *Punch*, stated that this was a very scholarly article and the original author must have read a great deal of English history in order to be able to write it so well, but this contributor disagreed with many of his facts and said that they ought to be rectified. This contributor to the *Punch* said that he originally thought of sending this article to *Oudh Ukhbar* but wasn't sure if the Editor would carry it. This writer found faults with some dates concerning some laws and Acts of Parliament stated by the

¹³⁹ *Selections from Vernacular Newspapers published in Punjab, North-Western Provinces, Oudh, Central Provinces, Central India and Rajputana, 1877.*

¹⁴⁰ *Oudh Punch*, Lucknow, 22 January 1878.

¹⁴¹ *Oudh Punch*, Lucknow, 29 January 1878.

¹⁴² *Oudh Punch*, Lucknow, 19 March 1878.

¹⁴³ *Oudh Punch*, Lucknow, 5 November 1878.

¹⁴⁴ *Oudh Punch*, Lucknow, August and September Issues, 1880.

original writer; he wrote about the British Constitution, the powers of the Queen on how to dismiss or nominate a Prime Minister, and so forth.¹⁴⁵

The *Oudh Punch* reproduced social articles from the *Benares Punch*, about excessive rain in Benares, and occasional weather reports from other towns in north India. It used to frequently have a section called ‘*Tār Barqi*’, the telegraph (lit. electric wire), about news from all over the world, from St. Petersburg,¹⁴⁶ Constantinople¹⁴⁷ and other international cities where news of interest for its readers may have been generated. It carried regular reports from its correspondent in Cyprus, including a long article entitled *Cyprus ki auratain*, the women of Cyprus, on how they drank wine, about their socioeconomic and religious conditions, the place of women in society, etc.¹⁴⁸ Clearly, the theme and contents of the *Oudh Punch*, reflected a broader Hindustani cosmopolitan and syncretic identity, not just for Muslims but also for Hindus, far removed from the more turgid prose and substance of religious scholars trying to define and contest the notion of a Muslim, Islamic, identity. This claim can be further supported by an examination of the contents of the *Oudh Punch* at a much later date, 1885, at a time when political issues began to creep into the lives of Muslims.

The January 1885 issue carried numerous poems and letters celebrating the new year, comments on educational issues such as an appeal to the Director of Education of the North-Western Provinces and Oudh about the state of education in the province and why no new director had been appointed after the retirement of the previous director; the newspaper proposed the name of Mr Nesfield for the post, who it said would be ‘most appropriate’.¹⁴⁹ There was praise for Lord Rippon and Lady Dufferin in one of the issues, and the full text of a short play; in the 29 January issue there was a long

¹⁴⁵ *Oudh Punch*, Lucknow, 26 March 1878.

¹⁴⁶ *Oudh Punch*, Lucknow, 16 April 1878.

¹⁴⁷ *Oudh Punch*, Lucknow, 4 June 1878.

¹⁴⁸ *Oudh Punch*, Lucknow, 10 September 1878.

¹⁴⁹ *Oudh Punch*, Lucknow, 8 January 1885.

article about reform of the judiciary in Oudh; another on girl's education in Hindustan with a large number of statistics comparing girl's education in Hindustan and England, mentioning women writers and poets.¹⁵⁰ Articles celebrating Holi and Spring continued in March.¹⁵¹ and with news on the English-Sudanese war.¹⁵² There were numerous articles entitled '*Rus aur Hindustan*' (Russia and Hindustan), many on Gladstone, Salisbury and on the British Parliament, including a letter published in the *Punch* addressed to Gladstone saying how sorry the writer was to see Gladstone lose his premiership,¹⁵³ while the 5 September issue carried a summary of Queen Victoria's speech to Parliament.

In its 10th October 1885 issue, the *Oudh Punch* published an advertisement about six books, entitled '*nai qisam ki dilchasp aur mufid kitabain*' (new types of interesting and useful books), and it is worth noting, that in an era when books were not very extensively read and nor did newspapers carry advertisements, this advertisement was repeated in the *Punch* for the rest of the year. The advertisement was placed by the publisher, Kashi Nath Khatri, from District Allahabad. Of the six books, one was a biography of Lord Clive, translated by the '*mash-hur zabardast alim*' (!) (famous, fantastic, scholar) Lord Macaulay; another titled: *Hindustan ki mash-hur shauhar parast o muntazim o shujah o fayyaz raniyon ke dilkush tazkare* (The enchanting accounts of Hindustan's famous, husband-worshipping, organised, brave, beautiful, queens); a translation of a book called *Self-Culture* by a Mr Lambeki, a book which was meant for one's self-growth and development; another translation of another self-help book; the fifth book was entitled *Teen Tarikhi Natak* (three historical plays) and was 'about those who do not control their desires and urges and so are destroyed in both *din aur duniya* [in a worldly sense as well as spiritually] and are disgraced':

¹⁵⁰ *Oudh Punch*, Lucknow, 12 February 1885.

¹⁵¹ *Oudh Punch*, Lucknow, 19 February 1885, 12 March 1885.

¹⁵² *Oudh Punch*, Lucknow, 19 March 1885.

¹⁵³ *Oudh Punch*, Lucknow, 9 July 1885.

and finally, a book which was about the ill-effects of girls getting married at an early age.¹⁵⁴

For the purposes of the discussion on the notion of the Muslim *qaum* and its meaning – see Chapter Three – it is interesting to note the coverage of reports and news items regarding the geographical coverage in the *Oudh Punch*. While there were numerous articles about Russia, Turkey, and many reports and news items from England about its politics, there were very few from ‘India’. In the entire collection of nearly one hundred issues in 1878 and 1885, there was no mention of Muslim Bengal (although there was some reference to the Legislative Council and Government in Bengal), Bombay was mentioned only once or twice, Sindh never, South India only once with regard to the Madras Council, and there were numerous articles about the Deccan and Hyderabad and especially about Salar Jung’s activities. In many ways, the *Oudh Punch*, was also creating a notion of a *qaum*, but given its very multi-religious readership, this was far closer to a notion of a *Hindustani qaum*, rather than a Muslim one.

Moreover, in the *Oudh Punch*, importantly, there was relatively little on religious ritual and there were few and infrequent, if any, debates on religion or Islam. However, the *Punch* was a vociferous critic of Sayyid Ahmad Khan and his *nechris*, and carried numerous articles against him, not on the basis of theological differences but, rather, on differences which were related to cultural practices. It was also a vehicle for the ideas of the modernist *Nai Roshni* (New Light) movement. It seems quite clear, that the *Oudh Punch* was creating a cultural identity, not exclusively a religious one, an enlightened, liberal, ‘modernist’ ‘secular’, one, but very different from, and in conflict with, the westernised modernism of Sayyid Ahmad Khan and his Aligarhists.

¹⁵⁴ *Oudh Punch*, Lucknow, 10 October 1885.

Spheres of Influence

A large part of the dispute and discussion in Muslim religious texts, was over ritual, such as whether the *āmin* could be said aloud,¹⁵⁵ whether the call for prayers (the *azān*) should be said inside or outside the mosque, how many *rak'ats* [parts] there were in a particular prayer.¹⁵⁶ This style of conversation, which was seldom polite nor considerate, and was openly confrontationist and accusatory, needs to be compared and contrasted with another equally intense exchange, but which, on the other hand, was powerfully sophisticated, sublime, and very cultured, with abundant wit and sarcasm. It is perhaps interesting to note, that this decorum, or *adab*, also had antecedents with the 'Abbasid epoch in the 9th and 10th century Baghdad. Joel L Kraemer argues, that *adab*

connotated the value of urbane, civil, courteous, refined and elegant conduct; the result of good breeding and education. On the intellectual level, *adab* was initially the kind of humanistic educational training in profane Arab culture that rendered a man urbane and refined. In due course, contact with alien cultures expanded the content of *adab* to include non-Arabic literature, thus expressive of a more universal humanism ... the literary production of this broadly humanistic *adab*, was, in the words of Gabrieli, 'the backbone of high 'Abbasid culture'.¹⁵⁷

Periodicals like the *Oudh Punch* and *Dilguzār*, exemplified this *adab*,¹⁵⁸ where, like earlier Arabic publications, 'wit, grace, eloquence and charm were highly apprized.

¹⁵⁵ There are numerous pamphlets dedicated to this issue; see for example, Muhammad Mansoor Ali, *Al Fatah-e Mubin*; Anonymous, *Jama-e ul shwahid fi ikhrāj al Wahabeen un al masjid*, 1305/1887, Jaunpur.

¹⁵⁶ Sayyid Imdadul Ali Sahib Bahadur Akbarabadi, Deputy Collector and Magistrate at Kanpur and later Aligarh, wrote at least two books in which this issue was debated. See his *Imdadul Sunnah*, 1868, and *Imdadul Ghavi*, Matba-e Shola Tur, Kanpur, 1286/1869. This was debate he was having with other ulema, in particular Maulana Abdur Rahman.

¹⁵⁷ Joel L Kraemer, 'Humanism in the Renaissance of Islam: A Preliminary Study', *J of the American Oriental Society*, 104, 1, 1984, p. 156.

¹⁵⁸ For *adab* in Indian society, see Barbara D Metcalf (ed), *Moral Conduct and Authority: The Place of Adab in South Asian Islam*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, [1984].

Elegance (*zarf*) was the epitome of this cultural refinement and its virtual synonym'.¹⁵⁹

While the styles of conversation for different groups of people varied on account of their education and upbringing, it seems that the range of which styles were acceptable, was very broad. The abuse and swearing which was common of much polemics, must have been an acceptable form of conversation for it to have been so widespread. To get an indication of the extent of space that existed, in terms of the 'freedom' of saying almost anything, including derogatory remarks and hurling abuse at others, we learn from the writings of Ahmad Raza Khan Sahib in the 1890s, that the *ghair muqallid* in five different places/publications, had abused the Prophet of Islam in extremely strong terms [*sakht*, *sakht*, *galian*].¹⁶⁰ Hence, it was not just abuse hurled at each other, but even the holy Prophet was not spared. It is interesting to contrast this, with the practice in early Islam in Arabia, where Hava Lazarus-Yafeh states, that 'it was, of course, strictly forbidden to criticise Muhammad, the Quran and Islam'.¹⁶¹ One of the most interesting aspects of nineteenth century polemical literature in India, is that it tolerated so much abuse, even of the sacred.

Some years earlier, Maulvi Ulfat Hussain in 1878 talked about the debates over *tabarra* in Lucknow's newspapers, using a question-answer format, by asking questions and then giving replies to each question asked. He said that there was *tabarra-bāzi* over almost every trivial issue, and that there were separate congregations [*majālis*] in order to curse and abuse one another adding, that there was a lot of abuse and taunts, and curses and *tabarras* all over Lucknow and said that this could be seen in the publication *Munn o Salva* on page 116.¹⁶² Talking about the

¹⁵⁹ Joel L Kraemer, 'Humanism in the Renaissance of Islam: A Preliminary Study', *J of the American Oriental Society*, 104, 1, 1984, p. 156.

¹⁶⁰ Ahmad Raza Khan, *Al 'ataya al nabooiya fil fatawa var razeeqa* p. 191.

¹⁶¹ Hava Lazarus-Yafeh, 'Preface', in, Hava Lazarus-Yafeh, et al. (eds), *The Majlis: Interreligious Encounters in Medieval Islam*, Harrassowitz, Wiesbaden, 1999, p. 8.

¹⁶² Maulvi Ulfat Hussain, *Muna-e Tabarra*, Matba-e Yousufi, Kucha Faulad Khan, Delhi, 1296 1878, p. 3-4.

differences between communities. Maulvi Ulfat Hussain said that it was surprising that the Jews, Christians and Hindus did not abuse anyone, like the Muslims did, who were always fighting between themselves.¹⁶³ He said that arguments between the Shia and Sunni were causing ‘heart-burn’ and extenuated the differences between them, causing enmity between both; he believed that in the current times, there was less fear of riots and disturbances [*dunga fasād*], but these ‘bad things’ would continue to fester in their hearts and grow, and would cause immense damage as people would want to take revenge. Despite the fact that the Christians denied the prophet hood of Muhammad, he argued, they did not make derogatory remarks about him or conduct *tabarra*, and neither did the Hindus. Maulvi Ulfat Hussain argued, that there was no congregation of Muslims where they did *tabarra* against their infidel opponents and it seemed that the Muslims (Shias in this case) only did *tabarra* against other Muslims.¹⁶⁴

Maulvi Ulfat Hussain argued that it was sad that this freedom of speech that currently existed, was the beginning of a long period of destruction and the cause of quarrels and mischief between Muslims.¹⁶⁵ Hakim Ajmal Khan exemplifying the extent of discord and differences amongst Muslims is said to have said in 1909, in Barbara Metcalf’s words, that ‘there had been more mutual denunciation of infidelity (*fatawa-yi takfir*) in India since 1857 than there had been previously in the whole history of Islam’.¹⁶⁶

It is possible that different styles of writing, and not just the content, were targeted towards different reading audiences, some separated and segregated – as Barbara Metcalf has shown with regard to what women were allowed to read¹⁶⁷ – some

¹⁶³ Ibid, p. 12.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid, p. 14.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid, p. 14.

¹⁶⁶ Barbara D Metcalf, ‘Nationalist Muslims in British India: The Case of Hakim Ajmal Khan’, *Modern Asian Studies*, 19, 1, 1985, p. 15.

¹⁶⁷ Barbara Daly Metcalf, *Perfecting Women: Maulana Ashraf `Ali Thanawi’s Bihishti Zewar*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2002 [1990].

overlapping. Perhaps a high and a low culture existed in the print public sphere, and questions of appropriateness, were defined differently and decided by a discerning readership. The fact that all categories of literature sold well – or at least, was printed – must imply that different audiences made their own appropriate choices about what to read. Just as there were multiple and diverse identities and communities amongst the broader category of the Muslim of north India, parallel to this, there were multiple and diverse styles and spheres of writing, and of influences, as well.

Chapter Five

Orality in Print:

The Creation of Myth and the Reinforcement of Identity

Well before the third quarter of the nineteenth century, as I show in the last chapter, the print form, or ‘print capitalism’ had become an important medium for the Muslims of north India, through which they would communicate and converse primarily with each other, but also to some extent with members of other religious groups across India. Not only did print become a source of propounding and contesting each others’ views, importantly, it also became an instrument through which reputations were made and demolished. Moreover, print capitalism also became a critical tool in forging identities and, as this thesis argues, a major vehicle in forming fractures and fissures within the many imagined communities that existed, particularly amongst the Muslims of north India.

Despite this unabated growth, and later dominance, of the print form across India in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, some forms of oral public discourse which predated print capitalism persisted and even flourished in the age of print and ran parallel with the print medium. Not only did print capitalism not do away with pre-print capitalism forms of expression of identity, in many important ways, they reinforced some forms of oral public discourse. In fact, both orality and print, through the interplay between them, appropriated and lived off each other. Posters and newspaper advertisements, for example, announced forthcoming events such as an oral public exchange between religious scholars – the *munāzara* – or a public lecture by an eminent scholar or *alim*, invited the lay public and scholars to attend. Subsequently, the publication of the event after the exchange – the *ru’edūd* – or of the debates, of which numerous versions were available in the print public sphere soon after the debates, fortified this link between orality and print having perhaps far greater repercussions than either – just the print form alone or the unpublished oral exchange – may have intended. The numerous written-up accounts and numerous

editions of these – the *ru'edād* and *lekcharoñ ka majmuā* – of well-known orators of their day bear testimony to the articulation of the reinforcement of the links between the oral and print mediums. My example below, using indigenous sources, expands and develops C A Bayly's observation that, 'the elites and populace both used written media in complex and creative ways to reinforce oral culture and debate'.¹ We will see the reverse of what A K Ramunajan has noted about Kanada literature and observe, in our case, that the oral traditions were surrounded by written ones and were even carried by written means.²

This chapter focuses primarily on a series of oral public exchanges between religious scholars representing Islam, Christianity and Hinduism, in north India in the last quarter of the nineteenth century and shows how the event was represented in print.³ This event became a most interesting arena or contest, where numerous issues were debated, contested and written about. By examining this one event, one gets an insight into the print world – with multiple versions of the same event printed – about identity, representation, language, the creation of myth and the propping up of reputations, and that of creating personalities. This performance of theatre, with its multiple representations about 'what actually transpired' at the site of exchange, is reminiscent, in some ways, of Shahid Amin's *Event, Metaphor, Memory*.⁴ In addition, it also shows that Muslims spoke to the learned men of other religions in very different tones, compared to when they contested the representation of their narrower (sectarian) identities *within* Islam, when they debated exclusively with

¹ C A Bayly, *Empire and Information: Intelligence Gathering and Social Communication in India, 1780-1870*, Cambridge University Press, 1999, p. 180.

² See the reference to A K Ramunajan who says that the written traditions are surrounded by the oral, in, Barbara D Metcalf, 'Living Hadith in the Tablighi Jama'at', *J of Asian Studies*, 52, 3, Aug 1993, p. 600

³ A fascinating aspect of the many printed documents from that era about the event is, that just a few months after the event, there is even disagreement as to *when* the debates were actually held! While amusing at first, this is a non-trivial point as it ought to caution us about the authenticity and datedness of publications.

⁴ Shahid Amin, *Event, Metaphor, Memory*, University of California Press, Berkley, 1995.

other Muslims, a contrast which as I show in an earlier chapter, had important ramifications for the formation of Muslim identities.

Furthermore, the modern presence of oral public discourse and its relationship with print, also questions the 'primitiveness' and irrationality of the oral form of public discourse and its meaning for notions of the 'public sphere'. As I show, that while the encounters may have been oral, they were governed by very strict and 'modern' rules regarding time management and discipline and in fact a day was wasted on bickering over time allocations;⁵ there was little that was 'primitive' or pre-modern about this form of the use of public space. Perhaps most importantly, however, this analysis of an oral tradition of a pre-print capitalism era, also helps us re-examine how communities were 'imagined', and how pre-print forms of communication may have given rise to identities of communities as well. In Bayly's words, 'print capitalism ... gave many existing communities of knowledge the capacity to operate on a wider scale. It was a midwife of intellectual change, not in itself the essence of that change'.⁶ As I argue, perhaps the essence of that change predated print capitalism.

Orality

Questions about the nature of orality have been raised by many writers looking at the transition from oral means of communication to the written word, and to print. Clearly, there is a difference between the transition from the oral to literacy (the written word), and from the oral to print via the written word, a distinction which is sometimes glossed over by some writers. The oral has been considered in some ways, to be 'primitive', where 'literacy and, in particular, print have been seen as

⁵ Benedict Anderson makes the interesting point that the clock and calendar played a major role 'for the birth of the imagined community of the nation'. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Verso, London, 1991, p. 24. As the accounts of both *munāzaras* show, the proceedings were regulated and interrupted, by strict time management.

⁶ C A Bayly, *Empire and Information*, p. 374.

bringing a whole host of effects – in fact in some views held responsible for just about all the ‘goods’ of modern western civilization [including] ... ‘rationality’, abstract thought, sophisticated literary expression, individual self-consciousness ...’.⁷ While this view is contested by Finnegan, the idea that the written word, has a sense of ‘permanence’ over the oral, seems to be the recognised norm, where unlike speech, the ‘written word can remain the same not only over days or months, but from one generation to the next, and even over centuries and millennia’.⁸ This view is shared by many others, including William A Graham and Jonathan Parry, who examine the oral and the written in non-western societies, where Parry argues, that literacy/orality is not the issue, and print is the real driver; moreover, ‘in terms of types of rationality, any antithesis between oral and literate cultures is false’.⁹ In contrast, ‘an oral – unlike a written – account can easily be bent to fit present political realities, and (failing an outside written record) there is no documentary evidence by which it could be proved to have changed’.¹⁰ As my example shows below, many of the assumed truths about orality and the fixity of the printed word, need to be reconsidered.

Agreeing with David Ong and others, Finnegan argues that despite the existence of writing in medieval Europe, ‘it was still in many respects an “oral culture”. It “retained massive oral-aural commitments”, the written word was read *aloud*, literary works were commonly composed for *oral* performances and thus circulated among the population by word of mouth and education in the universities was largely through *spoken* lectures and “disputations”’.¹¹ David Cressy, has also shown how the

⁷ Ruth Finnegan, *Literacy and Orality: Studies in the Technology of Communication*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford 1988, p. 5.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

⁹ Jonathan Parry, ‘The Brahmanical tradition and the technology of the intellect’, in Joanna Overing (ed), *Reason and Morality*, Tavistock, London, 1985, p. 211; William A Graham, *Beyond the Written Word: Orals Aspects of Scripture in the History of Religion*, Cambridge University Press, 1987.

¹⁰ Ruth Finnegan, *Literacy and Orality*, p. 20.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

oral persisted, and in fact competed, with the written in medieval England.¹² Roger Chartier adds that, ‘the opposition of oral and written fails to account for the situation that existed for the seventeenth to the eighteenth centuries when media and multiple practices still overlapped’.¹³

William A Graham has examined the relationship of the oral with the written, with regard to religion and examines the nature of the ‘oral dimensions of the written scriptural text’.¹⁴ He contrasts the oral Hindu Brahmanical tradition with the written text of scripture in Islam yet, he argues, ‘in Muslim piety, however, the written word of its scripture has always been secondary to a strong tradition of oral transmission and aural presence of scripture that far surpasses that of Judaic or Christian usage. In Islam, the functions of the holy book as an oral text have predominated over its functions as a written or printed one’.¹⁵ Graham’s emphasis is on the orally transmitted Quran, the most important instrument in Islam’s tenets, transmitted to an illiterate man and much later transcribed from memory, where the ‘the book of holy writ (*kitab*) in Islam is ultimately not a written or printed document, but a holy ‘reciting’, or ‘recitation’, which is precisely what the Arabic word *qur’an* means’, which allows us to see, ‘an excellent example in which to see vividly the oral dimensions of written scripture’.¹⁶

In the context of colonial India, and particularly north India and ‘Hindustani’ or Urdu and Hindi, David Lelyveld has shown that the print form had begun to take shape in Hindustan in the early 19th Century, where a Hindi and Urdu public sphere were

¹² David Cressy, *Literacy and the Social Order: Reading and Writing in Tudor and Stuart England*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1980.

¹³ Roger Chartier, ‘Texts, Printing, Readings’, in Lynn Hunt, (ed), *The New Cultural History*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1989, p. 170.

¹⁴ William A Graham, *Beyond the Written Word* p. 7.

¹⁵ Ibid, p. 79.

¹⁶ Ibid, p. 80.

emerging around the printed texts and how both languages were being constructed.¹⁷ Nevertheless, Lelyveld cautions us, despite the growth of print, 'it would be a mistake to look for the development of a public language only in the written word, especially in a society in which access to reading and writing was so limited and oral performance loomed so large. Manuscripts or printed texts were often aids to recitation'.¹⁸ Lelyveld emphasises the continued importance of oratory, of Sayyid Ahmad Barelvi in the 1820s, in the 1857 Revolt, and how 'from the 1870s Dayananda Saraswati and others established a Hindu oratorical counterpart in Hindi'.¹⁹ Frances Pritchett has written about the form of *dāstān-goi* that reigned in north India, 'as an enormously popular, highly sophisticated "art of extemporaneous speech"'.²⁰

C A Bayly using the term 'the Indian ecumene', for the notion of oral public culture,²¹ has argued elsewhere that,

in Indian society there were small circles of formalized debates which functioned as arenas in which rival men of learning contended to establish themselves as authorities and conduits of tradition. This authority moreover inhered in small numbers of teachers and expositors; texts were of secondary importance. Only in religious and ceremonial display, where elites and popular culture intermixed, could one see the beginnings of a sense of public as separate from the state and from state and community.²²

¹⁷ David Lelyveld, 'The Fate of Hindustani: Colonial Knowledge and the Project of a National Language', in Carol A Breckenridge and Peter van der Veer (eds), *Orientalism and the Postcolonial Predicament: Perspectives on South Asia*, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 1993.

¹⁸ Ibid, p. 203.

¹⁹ Ibid, p. 203.

²⁰ Frances W Pritchett, *Marvellous Encounters: Folk Romance in Urdu and Hindi*, Manohar, New Delhi, 1985, p. 4.

²¹ C A Bayly, *Empire and Information*, p 181 passim.

²² C A Bayly, 'Colonial Order and the "Informational Order" in South Asia', in Nigel Crook (ed) *The Transmission of Knowledge in South Asia*, Oxford University Press, 1996, Delhi, p. 288.

The *Munāzara*²³

The *munāzara* was an institution where learned scholars from different religions as well as from within the same religion, gathered with a public audience, to debate issues of theology and religious ritual. Since many of these public forums were held in small towns outside the larger urban conglomerations – the *qasba* – they attracted the non-literate ‘common people’ (*āmm loge, āmm makḥluq*) for whom, perhaps, this was an important arena to reaffirm their religious credentials and beliefs, and equally, to reinforce their sense of identity with a larger community. Although such gatherings were broadly ‘religious’, they were very different compared to the sermons which the lay public may have had exposure to when (if) they visited the mosque, and it might be more accurate to call the *munāzara* a cultural, or even political, event rather than a purely religious one.²⁴ In fact, if oral communication is more ‘communal’ and print more ‘individualistic’, as social anthropologists point out, then the impact of oral public communication and display, would probably reinforce the notion of community no less than that as a consequence of print capitalism. Clearly, the *munāzara* was an important marker of identity and the fact that it survived, in fact, thrived off print, as I show below, gives it a great sense of endurance and resistance. Moreover, ‘these debates (*munāzara*) were governed by

²³ There are numerous forms of oral public discourse and presentation which were rendered into print, but I will be looking at only one of them. The Shia *majlis*, the poetry *mushaira*, other *mehfils*, were all such forms of oral public representation, with the *majlis* in particular, playing a key role in (sectarian) identity strengthening. The *mushairas* were more cultural and multi-religious and would have formed more inclusive identities than did the *munāzara*. cf. J R I Cole, *Roots of North Indian Shi'ism in Iran and Iraq: Religion and State in Awadh, 1722-1859*, University of California Press, Berkley, 1988. ‘Asafud Daulah’s court attracted numerous poets and reciters of elegies (*marsiyyah-khvans*) who came to hold an important place in public life. ... Sawda, Mir Taqi Mir came from fading Delhi ... The poetry [read out at imambargahs] had both a literary and ritual purpose. As ritual, reciters read it at mourning sessions as a means of making present the eternal, sacred time of Ashura ... The rhythmic character of the poetry lent itself to this task better than prose. the mourners working the rhythms into their flagellations’. p. 97.

²⁴ The practice of giving religious public lectures by the Christian Padris and the Arya Samajists in the later decades of the nineteenth century in north India, was widespread. These ‘lectures’ (which are very different from the *munāzara*) would take place in public places, even at street corners and in bazaars, and would be attended by common Muslims. cf., Ahmad Raza Khan, *Al 'ataya al nabooiya fil fatawa var razeeqa, kitab ul tahirat ta baab ul tamaye-um*, (Vol 1 of 12), *Ahle Sunnat wa Jamā'at* Press, Bareilly, nd [probably 1905].

certain standards of conduct which implicitly acknowledged the existence of a critical public sphere'.²⁵

My account of the gatherings of the *munāzara* are based on the written word after the event, but the fact that it was important to write about, underscores the importance of the event itself. Moreover, in some cases, there is more than one published account available – half-a-dozen accounts of one celebrated *munāzara* discussed in detail in this chapter – which further emphasises the importance of the event and the different interpretations of those who were present. Each religious community present at such an exchange, had its own published record and interpretation of the event. These different interpretations, made at different times, sometimes many years after the event, were contested, contrasting and contradictory accounts of the same event. The fact that multiple accounts of an event existed in print, as I show in this chapter, also questions the notion of the 'fixity of print', a belief held by those who over-emphasise the power of print – see Chapter Four.

Bayly cites a number of instances of public debates in north India from the eighteenth century onwards between Muslim scholars and between Muslims and Christians, as well as formal debates 'between different schools of the Hindu learned about scripture and philosophy'. From amongst the earliest, he mentions a public debate in Lucknow in 1779 which 'attracted the attention of the whole city with huge throngs of people of all persuasions, numbering more than 1,500, clustering around the house where the contest took place', between learned physicians who had just arrived into town and resident savants.²⁶

The *munāzara* tradition in India, had many antecedents from an earlier Islamic culture. The tradition of dialogue and polemics between Muslims, Christians and

²⁵ C A Bayly, *Empire and Information*, p. 190.

²⁶ *Ibid*, p. 205

Jews – called a *majlis* in Arabic²⁷ – is said to have flourished as early as the third century AH (9 CE), in early 'Abbasid society. David Thomas shows that in early 'Abbasid society, frequent debates took place, 'in which representatives of theological groups and religious leaders argued a point in public under the supervision of the caliph or a noble ...', and citing the work of A Abel, states, that 'the court of al-Ma'mun (786-833; 'Abbasid caliph r 813-833) was such a well-known venue for debates that later writers used it as a conventional background for their accounts of exchanges'.²⁸ Thomas also demonstrates, that early Islamic society (2-3 AH/8-9 CE) was very vibrant, with a great deal of openness and tolerance for discussion and dialogue in Islam, a view shared by Hava Lazarus-Yafeh, who argues that early Islamic society stood out clearly because of

its pluralism and open mindedness to an extent rarely found in later Islam and totally absent from the medieval European scene. Muslim authors were always fascinated with religious issues, and even under the evolving Sunni orthodoxy their curiosity in this field was unabated. They asked questions, searched for variable written material, compared verses from the Quran with verses in the Bible, or words in Hebrew with words in Arabic, and held sessions in which members of various sects and religions took part and analysed rationally, in an intellectual atmosphere, different tenets of belief ... [T]hese discussions were very different from the later, court enforced disputations in medieval Europe.²⁹

For David Thomas, the discussions led by theological experts by 200 AH, 'established principles and methods of thought that continued to exert an influence for centuries, while the questions they habitually discussed, on such topics as the attributes of God, His justice, and the nature of revelation, would shape Islam for ever ... Theological speculation became a pursuit of men in all walks of life, from the

²⁷ 'Madjlis', *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Vol 5, EJ Brill, Leiden, 1986, p. 1031-82; a Shia *majlis* in an Indian setting, is a very different event, for which also see, *Ibid*, p. 1033.

²⁸ David Thomas, (ed, trans), *Anti-Christian Polemic in Early Islam: Abu 'Isa al-Warraaq's "Against the Trinity"*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1992, p. 3.

²⁹ Hava Lazarus-Yafeh, 'Preface', in Hava Lazarus-Yafeh, et al. (eds), *The Majlis: Interreligious Encounters in Medieval Islam*, Harrassowitz, Wiesbaden, 1999, p. 8. Also see the other articles in this collection, as well as Joel L. Kraemer, *Humanism in the Renaissance of Islam*, Second Edition, E. J. Brill, Leiden, 1992.

highest to the lowest, and it seems they followed their interests in an atmosphere of free enquiry and exploration'.³⁰ Hava Lazarus-Yafeh considers the *majlis* to be 'one of the most important social, religious and literary concepts of medieval Islam'.³¹

Sarah Stroumsa has shown that the 'the medieval *majlis* was closely linked to the court. A prince or a dignitary would gather his retinue scholars, poets, and men of learning. He would be their benefactor, and they would adorn his court with their art and entertain him with their scholarship. An organized debate between two or more people about some philosophical or religious issue was one of the most widespread ways to provide this entertainment'.³² L E Goodman clarifies, however, that such gatherings were *salons*, not '*séances*', and took 'take place at the home of the ruler, but not 'before him', and in the presence of various dignitaries, but hardly for their edification'.³³

Avril Powell has shown that while there had been 'sporadic encounters' between Muslims and Christians in different parts of the Islamic world for some centuries, one of the earliest encounters between a Protestant missionary and an 'Indian '*alim*' in the form of a public religious debate took place in 1833.³⁴ By the time of the late nineteenth century, there was an 'escalation of *munazara* activity',³⁵ by which time, the setting had moved 'from the royal *darbar* to the missionary compound and mosque, and finally into the city bazaar'.³⁶ The 'eruption' in *munāzara* confrontation

³⁰ David Thomas, *Anti-Christian Polemic*, p. 3.

³¹ Hava Lazarus-Yafeh, 'Preface', p. 11.

³² Sarah Stroumsa 'Ibn al-Rawandi's *su adab al-mujadala*: the Role of Bad Manners in Medieval Disputation', in Hava Lazarus-Yafeh, et al, (eds), *The Majlis: Interreligious Encounters in Medieval Islam*, Harrassowitz, Wiesbaden, 1999, p. 66.

³³ L E Goodman, 'Razi vs Razi – Philosophy in the *Majlis*', in Hava Lazarus-Yafeh, et al, (eds), *The Majlis: Interreligious Encounters in Medieval Islam*, Harrassowitz, Wiesbaden, 1999, p. 101.

³⁴ Avril A Powell, *Muslims and Missionaries in Pre-Mutiny India*, Curzon Press, 1992, p. 6.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

‘resulted from the escalation of Protestant missionary activity in the region’ from the mid nineteenth century onwards.³⁷

The first ‘full scale’ *munāzara* took place at the King of Awadh’s court in Lucknow in 1833, ‘under the joint auspices of the King and the British Resident at a *darbar* where both were present’.³⁸ Another well-known *munāzara* took place in Agra in 1848 between Maulvi Ali Hasan of Lucknow and Reverend Carl Pfander, in which, according to Pfander ‘a large company of Muslims, some of them being of the most respectable of the city’, were present.³⁹ Pfander participated in an even better-known ‘great *munāzara* or the ‘Great Debate of Agra’ in 1854 with Maulana Rahmat Allah Kairanawi who had chosen to adopt a ‘strongly rationalistic mode of refutation’ in his writings.⁴⁰

It is interesting to learn that as early as the 1840s, the tradition of the *munāzara* was being conducted even in Madras and was not limited only to northern India. In the biography of Hazrat Maulana Hafiz Shah Muhammad Abdul Razzaq *quddus-sara* Farangi Mahali (1818-89), we learn that the Maulana lived in Madras for five years when he went to work for his father in 1262/1844. He spent these years in the pursuit of knowledge. Often ulema from other religions [the *bud-mazhab*] and those who had erred or were misguided [the *ahle-azlāl*] and were involved in innovation [*bid’at*] also held *munāzaras* with the Maulana, ‘and God made him emerge the victor’.⁴¹ His biographer added that around this time some *ghair muqallidin* started having a big

³⁷ Ibid., p. 76.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 117.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 190. What is interesting and important from my perspective regarding any publications related to this particular *munāzara*, is that Powell has argued that the ‘only account of this meeting seems to be the record in Pfander’s own journal for 1848. No reference to it have been found in Muslim sources.’ (p. 190). This is surprising and needs to be considered when I discuss the publication-fest with regard to a later *munāzara* discussed in a section below.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 227.

⁴¹ Maulana Haji Shaikh Muhammad Altaf ur Rahman Sahib Qidwai, *Anvār-e-Razaqia*, 1347 1919, Lucknow, p. 17. The author claims that his subject Maulana Abdur Razzaq, was a very important person and made a contribution in terms of religious influence and teachings in Awadh and north west Hind.

impact on the common people of Madras and people came under their influence. but the Maulana's writings helped a great deal to clarify issues.

The 1854 Agra *munāzara* seems to serve as a template for later *munāzara* and has some parallels for the encounter described below which took place a quarter century later. The setting of the *munāzara* was a missionary compound in the heart of the Agra bazaar, a very public space, far removed from the darbars of an earlier era. Powell argues that this was a 'public debate' 'in a wider sense than the more cloistered, elitist and exclusive encounters of the medieval era', with newspapers and tracts reporting the (apparently exaggerated) figures of several hundred on the first day, with over a thousand the second day.⁴² The themes for debate in the *munāzara* that were agreed to in the letters, albeit after some hard negotiation, included discussion on five themes, in the following order: *naskh* (abrogation), *tahrif* (corruption), *taslis* (Trinity), *risalat-i Muhammad* (prophet hood of Muhammad), and the Quran.⁴³

The subsequently published Muslim accounts showed, perhaps not unsurprisingly, that the Christians were routed, with the audience too, completely behind the Muslim scholars, with Pfander having to concede some key points particularly regarding *tahrif*, or the corruption in the scriptures, as the Christian participants were to do in another celebrated debate a quarter century later, where in both instances, the Muslims had claimed a resounding victory in the two encounters. The Muslim ulema 'insisted on presenting a verbatim record of the proceedings, [while] Pfander made no attempt to do so, preferring instead to give a synopsis to which he added his own retrospective comments'.⁴⁴ Very soon after the *munāzara*, verbatim accounts of the debate – a 'blow-by-blow' account – were published in Persian and Urdu from both Agra and Delhi, as were commentaries and *fatwa* generated by the *munāzara* which

⁴² Avril A Powell, *Muslims and Missionaries*, p. 243.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 245. Almost all these themes were repeated at later *munāzaras*.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 255-6.

covered some of the themes discussed in the encounter, as were the letters exchanged between Rahmat Allah and Pfander before and after the *munāzara*.⁴⁵

It was not just publishing which was a vehicle for spreading views and ideas, but the older tradition of *munāzara* where leaders from different religious sects debated issues. There was also the increase in the platform for lectures. An infuriated Ahmad Raza Khan wrote that ‘these days our brothers’ severe ignorance [*jahalāt*] is such that if any Arya advertises that he is going to give a lecture in opposition to/against a particular topic of Islam, they all run [*daur̄ daur̄ kar*] to listen; if a priest announces that he is going to prove something from a Christian tenet, they all run to listen’.⁴⁶ Admonishing them for doing this, he asked that was there not ‘an [Islamic] order [*hukum*] that if the devil comes to you and creates doubts, then you should answer that he is a liar/false, rather than you run to listen to him, and that against the eminence/glory of your Lord, your Quran and your Prophet, you hear words that are blasphemous?’.⁴⁷

In the latter half of the 1870s, Maulvi Ulfat Hussain, originally of Shikarpur in district Muzaffarnagar near Meerut and then *mudarris aval*.⁴⁸ Normal School Delhi, wrote at least four pamphlets on religious issues related primarily to the Shia sect. One of them, the *Risala Munāzara* was a publication on the etiquette and falling standards of the *munāzara*.⁴⁹ In *Risala Munāzara*, he spoke about how one ought to conduct a *munāzara* and *mubahisa* (debate) and that people should participate after doing some research and these gathering should be undertaken with sympathy, and fair play, and consideration [*narmi*], and it should not be, that from the outset people reveal their prejudices in their speeches and where there is bigotry, and they are

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 259.

⁴⁶ Ahmad Raza Khan, *Al ‘ataya al nabooiya fil fatawa var razeeqa: kitab ul tahirat ta baab ul tamaye-um*, Volume 1 of 12, published at the *Ahle Sunnat wa Jamā‘at*, Bareilly, probably after 1905, p. 215.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ *Mudarris*: teacher; *aval*: first, head.

⁴⁹ Maulvi Sayyid Ulfat Hussain, *Risala Munāzara*, Matba-e Yousufi, Delhi, probably published in the 1870s.

biased towards their religion or *qaum*, not having an open mind. In such a situation, he argued,

there is absolutely no chance of a result. In each *qaum* those who are articulate [*aqlmand zabān*] write in such a way that prejudices increase; everyone considers their word to be truth and the other falsity, which causes resentment. This is why till now amongst the Hindus, Muslims and Christians, one has never heard or seen the resolution of a discussion; amongst the Sunni and Shias their discussion is never ending. One calls the other a heretic [*rafazi*] and the other calls the other *khārji*.⁵⁰

Sadly, he said, that the *munāzara* is only a *munāzara* in name and the correct manner of participating in a *mubahisa* and *munāzara* has been completely lost. The reason for the loss of this tradition according to Maulvi Ulfat Hussain, was because of the ignorance which came into Islam, and now ‘harsh tongues and taunts’ were heard, and the ‘stage had now come to one of mutual abuse [*gāli galoch*], all because of *jahalāt* and because people no longer listen to each other at all’. Now, he said, the stage had arrived when people abuse each other in writing and in books, trying to outdo each other in their abuse.⁵¹

While the institution of the *munāzara* grew, there were some who warned about its spread, arguing that it had many negative consequences. In 1891 Maulana Dipti Nazir Ahmad spoke in Lahore at the Anjuman Himayat Islam’s Seventh Annual congregation and said that people were calling the *munāzara* a ‘jihad’, and that this encounter would enflame all in its midst burning all those who participated.⁵² He warned that ‘those people who do religious *munāzara*, the *dushman aql*, do not even understand that through these *munāzara*, opposition and hatred grows or is

⁵⁰ Ibid, p. 2.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² *Risala Himayat Islam*, (yāni Janab Maulana Maulvi Hafiz Nazir Ahmad Khan Sahib ka lekhar), given at the Seventh Annual Ijlas of the Anjuman Himayat Islam, 1309 AH, Matba-e Gulzar Muhammadi, Lahore, p. 24. (800 copies printed).

rejuvenated against other *qaums*'.⁵³ At a time when Muslims had lost their dominance and were in decline, the Maulana warned, they could not resist the opposition against them. He argued, that many probably also thought that the *munāzara* was a means to reaffirm their own faith, and that they expected rewards for this, but, he argued, he did not accept the argument that people participated in a *munāzara* 'purely on account of Allah', and that they may have other worldly purposes as well. He argued, that 'it is very difficult to stop a *munāzara* from crossing the limits of the right to speak; during discussions/debates things do get out of hand'.⁵⁴ Questioning the purpose of the *munāzara*, Dipti Nazir warned, that 'if you are convinced that a *munāzara* can be successful, then give me the name of one, just one, religious sect which conquered a *munāzara*? The truth is that people do not have the thirst for truth and its search, for them to benefit from a *munāzara*'.⁵⁵

Assessing the consequences of the 1854 Agra *munāzara*, Powell argues that it had acquired a 'folk memory' and was remembered in the bazaars of north India 'as the occasion when the missionaries had been beaten at their own game. [Moreover] Detailed recording of the event seems only to have served to mythologize the outcome'.⁵⁶ A mass audience for such encounters seemed to have emerged at 'village *melas* and in *qasbah* bazaars', and by the 1890s, the *munāzara* had become a 'very common occurrence in many small towns of north India'.⁵⁷ I now turn to narrate and evaluate the proceedings of a 'celebrated' *munāzara* of the last quarter of the nineteenth century which, with its abundance of published material, gives many new and interesting insights into publicity, the print world and the reproduction and reinforcement of identity.

⁵³ Ibid., p. 29.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 30.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 31.

⁵⁶ Avril A Powell, *Muslims and Missionaries*, p. 271.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 286.

The ‘Celebrated’ *Munāzara* of Chandapur 1876

It is Barbara Daly Metcalf, in her *Islamic Revival in British India: Deoband 1860-1900*, who refers to this particular debate as a ‘celebrated debate, generally characteristic of the religious debates of the late nineteenth century’.⁵⁸ However, as I show below, there are some discrepancies in her dates for the encounter and in the content of the debates, compared to a number of other sources.⁵⁹ One of the key issues regarding the narrative about the *munāzara*, but more so about what it signifies in a broader context, is related to the multiple sources about the encounter. Metcalf, for example, refers to and relies almost exclusively on a report of the debate published under the name of Muhammad Qasim Nanautāwī, the protagonist in all Muslim Urdu sources related to the *munāzara*, entitled *Mubāhisah-yi Shahjahanpur*, an undated tract published from Deoband, where Qasim Nanautāwī set up the famous Deoband seminary in 1868 which gave rise to the Deobandi sect or *maslak* in Islam. She also refers to a 1955 publication of a three volume biography of Qasim Nanautāwī, in which a very long discussion of this ‘celebrated’ debate is based on the earlier undated *Mubahisah-yi Shahjahanpur*.

My discussion in this section is based on four other texts written about the same *munāzara*. The first is the *Guft-gū -e Mazhabi: Vaqiā Mela Khudāshanasi*, published by the Ziai Press in Meerut in 1293/1876, published very shortly after the first of the two encounters; the second, for some reason is entitled *Mubahisa Shahjahanpur 1299*, but the title page says that it is about the (second) encounter which took place in 1295/1877, and is published in 1300/1881; the third source is a short biography of Maulana Qasim Nanautāwī, written by his religious partner and contemporary, Maulvi Muhammad Yaqub Nanautāwī, entitled *Savaneh Umri*, written apparently in

⁵⁸ Barbara Daly Metcalf, *Islamic Revival in British India: Deoband 1860-1900*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1982 [reprinted Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2002], p. 221 (all citations here refer to the New Delhi publication).

⁵⁹ This is the first of the two *munāzaras* held in successive years. Barbara Metcalf has the years wrong and lists them as 1875 and 1876, see, Ibid. Moreover, Metcalf provides only half a page or so on this, the first of the two debates, while spends about eight pages on the second debate.

1300-01/1881, but published from the Mujtaba-i Press in Delhi in 1311/1894 – Metcalf also cites this biography but a different, undated, version published from Deoband and the page numbers of her quotes and references from this source differ from the one I use; and finally, there is an undated pamphlet written by Maulana Qasim Nanautāwī, which was written a day-and-a-half *before* the first of the two *munāzaras* at Chandapur in 1876 where it was intended to be read by him and other Muslims, entitled *Hujjat-ul Islam*, published by the Madrasa-i Islamia at Deoband.

Muhammad Hashim Ali, overseer of the Hashmi Press at Meerut, and Muhammad Hayat, overseer Ziai Press also at Meerut, both of whom were present at the *munāzara*, promised to give a ‘detailed and full’, ‘completely truthful and honest’, account for those who seek the truth. They began their detailed account of the encounter of the ulema of the Muslims, Hindus and Christians, by presenting the background of the events which lead to the *munāzara*.⁶⁰

Father Knowles, called an ‘*Angrez Padri*’ in the accounts, from Shahjahanpur, and, and Munshi Pyarelal,⁶¹ Kabirpanthi, resident of *mauza* Chandapur about five or six *kos* from Shahjahanpur, both together, in 1876 organised a *mela*, called the Mela *Khudashanasi*, in Chandapur, which was on the mouth of the river Garra. The date was 7 May and advertisements about this mela were sent far and wide. The purpose of the mela was evident from its name itself (the Festival of the Knowledge of God), but in order to make it further clear that its actual purpose was religious discourse (*tahqiq mazhabi*), the advertisements invited people from all religions to come and give arguments in support of their religion.

The authors of the account stated, that ‘from those who speak the truth’, they found out that Maulana Muhammad Qasim Nanautāwī, resident of Nanautāwa in district

⁶⁰ *Guft-gū-e- Mazhabi, jo maqām Shahjahanpur Hindu o Musalman aur Eisaiyon ke Ulema ne ki, yāni: Vaqia Mela Khudāshanāsi*, Matba-e Ziai, Meerut, 1293/1876 (henceforth *Guft-gū*).

⁶¹ Munshi Pyarelal, a *ra'is* of the area, was the real host of the *munāzara* and everyone was provided food and boarding and lodging by him.

Saharanpur, was informed of the mela in the following manner: Maulvi Ilahi Baksh, who was also known as Maulvi Rangeen Bareilvi, who was active 'day and night' in proselytising against the Christians, informed Maulvi Muhammad Muneer who was the *mudarris* of the Government school in Bareilly about the mela, who then wrote to his 'brother', Maulana Qasim Nanautāwī, and informed him about the advertisement and said that he must come and participate.⁶²

At that time Maulana Qasim Nanautāwī wrote back saying that he could not say whether he would attend or not, but he asked his brother to let him know about the nature of the *munāzara* and about the possibility of altercation or dispute taking place. There was no reply to this letter but another letter from Shahjahanpur arrived requesting Maulana Qasim's participation.⁶³ As soon as that letter arrived the Maulana left his home on foot and spent one night at Deoband and then moved on, spending another night each in Muzaffarnagar and Meerut, and then reached Delhi. Maulvi Muhammad Muneer's answer arrived there, and he wrote with reference to Maulvi Abdul Hai, Inspector Police Shahjahanpur, who had said that this is a useless unproductive exercise and that there is no need for the ulema to come. As a consequence of this letter, Maulana Qasim lost interest but as a precaution, wrote a letter to Shahjahanpur saying that although he had invited him, Maulvi Muhammad Muneer wrote thus, that is why he was concerned and was unclear, and so requested an answer in some detail. In reply to this, on 4 May first there was a telegraphic message which arrived, which stated that it was important that he attend, and after this a letter arrived which said that Maulvi Abdul Hai had made a mistake and that he must come and bring along Maulvi Sayyid Abu al Mansoor Sahib because Padri Knowles, who was a great linguist and orator, claimed that there was no real contest between the religion of Christ and the religion of Muhammad.

⁶² *Gufti-gū*, p. 2-3.

⁶³ It is not clear who this letter is from, but it must have come from the organizers.

Following this, Maulana Qasim decided to participate, and on 5 May after the (*isha*) prayers at night, Maulvi Fakhar ul Hasan of Gangoh, Maulvi Mahmood Hasan of Deoband, and Maulvi Rahimullah of Bijnor arrived by train. From there as promised, Maulvi Sayyid Abu al Mansoor Sahib Dehlavi '*imam fann munāzara ahle kitab*' along with Maulvi Sayyid Ahmad Ali Sahib Dehlavi and Mir Haider Ali sahib Dehlavi, went along, and all of them together boarded the 11 o'clock train which arrived in Shahjahanpur after mid afternoon (*asr*) on 6 May.

Maulana Qasim Nanautāwī decided to spend the night at a *sarai* in Shahjahanpur and to arrive next morning at the designated place for the *munāzara*: hence he left all his companions and along with Maulvi Mahmood Hasan quietly went into the town to find a *sarai*. However some people found out and around 2 o'clock at night came to the *sarai* and despite his polite protests, the Maulvi Sahib had to go to their house. Along with everyone else, Maulana Qasim Nanautāwī, after the morning prayer left on foot for Chandapur, where the tents had already been installed. Maulvi Muhammad Tahir better known as Moti Mian, a *ra'is* of Shahjahanpur, who was from the lineage of Maulvi Madan Sahib who was from the Mashaheer Ulema Hind and who was an honorary magistrate, was made the overseer by the government.⁶⁴

The discussion was to be held in a huge tent (*azim o vasih*), and it was designed in such a manner that there was a table kept in the middle, and in front on both sides it had chairs; on one side the Christian padris sat and on the other, the ulema from Islam, and on one side Moti Mian sat down with pen and paper and started writing the rules of the *munāzara*, and wrote some questions and answers and took some general notes as well.

The rules that were agreed to were as follows: each participant would stand up and say his sermon based on the truth of his religion: after that, participants from the

⁶⁴ Moti Mian, along with Naval Kishore and Deputy Collector Imdadul Ali and many others, played a supportive role in the development of the Agra College, cf., *Surguzasht Agra College*, Agra, 1886.

other side would raise their objections. The period of the *munāzara* had been decided earlier, as two days, but before the *munāzara* began, an hour or two earlier, due to the insistence of Maulana Qasim Nanautāwī, Father Knowles with the consent of Munshi Pyarelal, promised to have the *munāzara* for three days, and the time for the sermon was agreed to 15 minutes, and 10 minutes for questions and answers. Until someone had not finished their full speech and had sat down, no one was permitted to agree to, or disagree with, their speech. Maulana Qasim Nanautāwī tried his utmost to have the time for the sermon extended and said that in this time-frame the truth about one's religion could hardly be stated, but the Christians did not agree. And, although the participants were supposedly three groups, the Muslims, Hindus and the Christians, this Urdu tract written by two Muslim ulema tells us that 'actually, the real *guft-gū* took place between the Muslims and the Christians'.⁶⁵

After the introductions, Father Knowles (*barre padri sahib*) stood up and spoke about the truth of his religion and in favour of the Bible, saying that there was one God and hence there should be one religion, that its obligations, duties and laws should be well advertised, and because these were God's instructions, they should be made available in every language and plastered in every *gali, kucha, thana, chowki*. He then continued saying that 'we see that except for the Bible and other sacred books, no books [of other religions] are published on the same scale and are made available to everyone. It has been translated into 200-250 languages, and obviously, under such circumstances, everyone has the opportunity to understand it'.⁶⁶ Father Knowles continued, that 'unlike the Muhammadi religion, we do not include anyone in our religion by force (*bāzor-e shamsheer*), but instead through love and understanding, through softness, we draw them to our religion'.⁶⁷ The authors of the Urdu tract stated that his was a long speech, but give it only eight lines in their text.

⁶⁵ *Guft-gū*, p. 4

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p.5.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

The two authors of this 'truthful and detailed' account of this *munāzara* stated that Maulana Qasim Nanautāwī had come to the *munāzara* 'although he had no prior intention to say anything himself', and provided four-and-a-half pages on his (first of many) sermons, which was mainly about the unity of God, against the Trinity with God having no equal, and stating that one could only pray to God and no one can be equated with Him.⁶⁸ He said that only God was worthy of our devotion and no one else; especially Christ and Ram and Krishna could not be considered to be worthy of worship since they were dependent on food and drink, urinated and defecated, and were forced to face death and disease. God must be one who was free from all such things, and could not be dependent or constrained by such things as urinating and defecation, for such a being could not be God.⁶⁹ Maulana Qasim continued his speech saying that God could only be One and that one's reason (*aql*) allowed for only one God. Father Knowles, to the great disappointment of the ahle-Islam, interrupted the speech saying that the fifteen minutes were up.

Father Knowles stood up and complained that Maulana Qasim did not elaborate on the attributes of his own religion, but raised objections on his religion and avoided the specific topics under discussion. An exchange took place between Maulvi Ahmad Ali of Nagina, who was a lawyer at the Shahjahanpur courts and some Indian (*desi*) Padris who, according to the two authors, bored everyone present in the jalsa by incessant chatter (*sab ahle jalsa ke kān khae*). Allegations were made by one of these padris Mauladad Khan, who gave an 'obnoxious, meaningless' speech in which he insulted the Prophet Muhammad. The Muslims there felt that these were underhand

⁶⁸ The interesting thing to note is that Maulana Qasim Nanautāwī referred to God as the more general and 'secular' *Khuda*, rather than the specifically Muslim God, Allah.

⁶⁹ The reference to urinating and defecation occurs in numerous places in the speeches of Maulana Qasim Nanautāwī, not just in this text but in his other writings as well. Here, Father Knowles interrupted the speech and asked Maulana Qasim Nanautāwī to please not use the words 'urination and defecation' with regard to Christ. Maulana Qasim replied that if you felt that he was being insulting towards Christ, he informed him that as a prophet of Islam he was revered by Muslims. Maulvi Muhammad Tahir *wf* Moti Mian suggested that Maulana Qasim not use urination and defecation but use 'softer' more acceptable terms, to which Maulana Qasim Nanautāwī had no objection.

tactics for they could not make derogatory remarks about Christ who was also a Prophet of Islam. In this little exchange in which a Hindu, Ajodhya Prasad, also spoke for a long while, he said that no one should use derogatory remarks about anyone's prophets, after which Father Knowles apologised on Mauladad's behalf. The two authors of the report of the meeting said that there 'is not much to report what was said by people, except that it is worth writing that except for Padri Knowles, there was no one worthy of discussion amongst the Christians'.⁷⁰

The first day of the jalsa came to an end at 2 pm, and according to the Report, the Muslims spent the evening praising their own speakers recounting how well they had done. The two recorders of the 'truthful' account of the *munāzara* stated, that in the town and thereabouts, people started discussing the encounter saying that the Muslims had won. Because of this, the next day many more turned up to watch and listen. The Muslim ulema spent the evening conducting sermons amongst those who had come and stayed in the tents provided. Maulana Qasim also took notes along the way and said that 'we should write down our discussions so that if there is an opportunity the next day, then we should stand up and read my written words (*tahrir*) along with the speech'.⁷¹

The next day, although the meeting was to start at 9 am, long before the start, there was hardly a chair vacant in the tent where the meeting was to take place; people kept pouring in, in their *shauq-e guft-gū*; the tents were overflowing with people, and the police were required to prevent any more people from coming in. Despite the fact that it was very hot in early May, with the *lū* and the strong sun and with no shade, wherever the sound could travel and people could hear, there were just throngs of people. The authors wrote that had there been better conditions, 'who knows how many more would have turned up'.⁷²

⁷⁰ *Guft-gū*, p. 18.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 21.

After everyone had been accommodated in and around the tent. Father Knowles stood up, and as had been agreed to by all earlier, he said that that day from each party, five people would be nominated to speak, and unlike the day earlier, no one would be allowed to speak out of turn. From the Hindus, five people were also chosen, but some amongst them suggested that since they had different sects, they should have five speakers from each sect, and this was accepted. After presenting the changed laws and regulations/rules of the encounter, the *ahle Islam* reminded the padri that he still owed them an answer to yesterday's objections, and they needed their reply first. Despite numerous accusations from the Muslims, Father Knowles felt that one should move on and discuss new issues.

Maulana Qasim Nanautāwī spoke about *tauhid*. (the unity of God) although the writers of the report stated that they 'do not remember what he said, but we think the summary was similar to what he said the first day', but he also said that Muslims were united at that level where they consider Muhammad most venerable and after God, know him next.⁷³ After that he gave a speech which was similar to the one he made on the first day. Then there was a discussion on prophet-hood and miracles, on who was a prophet and whether miracles came before prophet-hood or after. The two authors write that

while this speech was going on, the audience was completely spell-bound and captivated, everyone was engrossed in what Maulvi Sahib was saying, some had tears in their eyes, others showed that they were completely dumbfounded and surprised by what was being said. Even the padris were engrossed. When everyone was informed that the time was up, people were very disappointed and Maulana Qasim said that he has to stop due to a time constraint, but would have spoken till the evening if allowed to, and said, "what I have said is only a drop in a huge ocean".⁷⁴

⁷³ Ibid, p. 22.

⁷⁴ Ibid, p. 25.

The discussion continued on *tauhid* and on Trinity, and the question of destiny was raised by Father Knowles. His thirty minute speech is summarised in one page, while Maulana Qasim`s replies to these issues take up four pages. It is only towards the end of the `truthful account` that one hears the voice of the Hindu pandits. However, they read from a text written in the nagri script and spoke in Sanskrit and few people, including the writers of the account, understood what had been said.⁷⁵

This reference to Sanskrit is important, as I show below, in the Second Chandapur *munāzara* as well, the pandits are said to have spoken in Sanskrit which, apparently `no one understood`. Yet, the account of another *munāzara*, one held in Mauza Kaseer near Danpur, as late as in 1898, when the Hindi-Urdu controversy had developed considerably, provides different reading.⁷⁶ This *munāzara* between Dayanandi Arya Samajists and Muslims, in which, we are told hundreds, if not thousands of Hindus and Muslims attended from near and far, from around Danpur and from Choti Kaseer and Barri Kaseer, included amongst the agreed to rules and regulations of the jalsa, that the `discussion will take place in the Urdu language`.⁷⁷ This clause in the rules is interesting because the author of the account of the *munāzara* stated that there were more Hindus present at the jalsa than there were Muslims. We might note that, the account of the *munāzara* stated that the Muslims won the debate `by a huge margin` and that there was no contest; the participants were said to have left the arena `singing the praises of the Muslims and were very happy`. Little had changed in the way Muslims reported the *munāzara* in a quarter of a century.

While the formal *munāzara* ended, it seems that many more informal exchanges took place between the Muslims, primarily Maulana Qasim Nanautāwī and Father Knowles, and the authors of the *Guft-gū-e Mazhabi* added this additional information

⁷⁵ Ibid, p. 37.

⁷⁶ Hameedullah Khan Ganori, *Mubahisa Mauza Kaseer*, 1316 1898.

⁷⁷ Ibid, p. 3.

about happenings after the *munāzara* was over to their account. According to them, Maulana Qasim Nanautāwī and Father Knowles met later, and the latter asked the Maulana who he was and where he was from. Maulana Qasim told Father Knowles that his (real) name (*tarikhi nām*) was Khursheed Hussain and he lived in District Saharanpur, and that he really liked his [Padri Knowles'] *akhlāq* [ethics/virtues]. A huge crowd had gathered around Maulana Qasim, Muslims as well as Hindus, and according to this account, they were all saying to each other, that the: '*nili lungi vale maulvi ne padriyon ko khub māt di*' – the Maulvi wearing the blue *lungi* has most certainly defeated the Christian fathers. The Hindu pandits and Maulana Qasim exchanged pleasantries with each other and both said that they should consider each others' points of view. Maulana Qasim suggested that they should meet every fifteen days and discuss each other's religion, a proposal to which the pandits agreed. Moti Mian also joined the group and said that the padris were saying that while the Maulana was opposed to them, the truth is that they had never heard such speeches or such discussion.

After the end of the jalsa Maulana Qasim Nanautāwī told Moti Mian that he wanted to meet Father Knowles alone to invite him to join the folds of Islam. He went to his tent and praised him about his morals and manners and asked him to repent from Christianity and accept the religion of Muhammad. Knowles did not say anything in reply. Maulana Qasim said he should pray to God to show him the true path. Father Knowles thanked him 'for thinking about me and taking the trouble ... I will think about what you have said' and both parted company.⁷⁸

The 'truthful' account ended by giving accounts of people who were there saying, amongst other things, that they had never heard such an *ālim* amongst the Muslims. A padri said that no one, including Father Knowles, was able to reply to Maulana Qasim, and that is why he kept quiet too. Another padri said that 'I have been to lots

⁷⁸ *Gufi-gū*, p. 40.

of such jalsas and participated in them with lots of ulema of Islam and have had discussions with them, but never have I heard such speeches or met an *ālim* such as this, a thin, emaciated, ordinary man, wearing dirty clothes, who doesn't even look like an *ālim*'.⁷⁹

The Second Chandapur *Munāzara* of 1877⁸⁰

The account of the second Mela Khudashanasi held in Chandapur, first tells us how the *munāzara* the year earlier, came to be held. Munshi Pyarelal Kabirpanthi and Padri Knowles, 'who was until last year the Master of the Mission School in Shahjahanpur and had now been transferred to Kanpur, decided to hold a *munāzara* where issues of faith could be discussed between Hindus, Christians and Muslims'.⁸¹ In fact, the writers of the account said, that the proposal to hold the Mela Khudashanasi, actually came from the well-wishers of Munshi Pyarelal, who, they found, 'was coming under the influence of Padri Knowles and was turning to Christianity'. They convinced him to organise such a *munāzara* of ulema from different religions and people from far and near ought to be gathered so that there could be some religious debate which was bound to benefit all. He took permission from the Collector Magistrate Shahjahanpur, and held the mela on 7 May in the prime of summer. The result of that jalsa had become obvious to everyone that Maulana Qasim Nanautāwī in his blue *lungi* had reigned supreme and the entire world knew that he was victorious in the encounter, and the account of the jalsa had been published in *Guft-gū e Mazhabi*.

⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 41.

⁸⁰ Although Barbara Metcalf has the wrong year for this second encounter and uses a different text compared to the one I use here, the contents of both seem to be identical, cf., Barbara Metcalf, *Islamic Revival*. Hence, I do not repeat the theological contents of this discussion, but provide other information pertinent to my own analysis which is not given in Metcalf's account.

⁸¹ *Mubahisa Shahjahanpur 1299*, (about the general gathering between Maulana Qasim Nanautāwī, Pandit Dayanand, Munshi Inderman, and Padri Scott expert of the Bible, and Padri Knowles sahib, etc, held at Shahjahanpur in 1295, is based on the thorough account of Maulvi Mahmood Hasan and Maulvi Fakhrul Hasan), Ahmadi Ahsankhan Ahmad Press, 26 Rabiul Awal 1300, pp 96. Henceforth, *Mubahisa*.

The success of the jalsa last year, whet the appetite of everyone and made everyone demand a *mela* 'every year'. Hence, this year, March 19 and 20 were suggested, and Munshi Pyarelal sent advertisements near and far and invited those ulema who had participated in the jalsa in the previous year as well; apart from them, he also sent advertisements and letters to famous scholars telling them about the event. He even printed advertisements in newspapers.⁸² Apart from this, it was rumoured that this time well known entities would be participating. According to this account, Maulana Qasim Nanautāwī and Maulvi Abu al Mansoor had decided not to attend because they thought that this would be a waste of time. However, when they realised that this gathering would be addressed by well-known and famous pandits who knew the vedas, they thought that if they did not attend, people would not think kindly of them.⁸³

The timings and format of the jalsa had been decided earlier, but when Maulana Qasim arrived in Chandapur on 18 March at the time of the *munāzara*, he found few tents standing and no sign of the padris. He was surprised that the time of the jalsa was upon them but no one there to debate; the *ahle Islam* gathered around their designated tent, and sat down in the shade of the trees. In the meanwhile, Moti Mian, honorary magistrate came along and after welcoming the Muslims, started preparations for the jalsa. It must have been around 9 am when the first couple of padris came along, and instead of 7.30 as originally intended, people gathered in the tents for discussion by around 10 o'clock.⁸⁴ It was first decided that from all three groups, a few people would be selected who would sit down and determine the rules of the discussion, after which the *guft-gū* would begin. From the Muslim side, Maulana Qasim Nanautāwī and Maulvi Abdul Majeed, from the padris Padri Knowles and Padri Walker, and from the Hindus Pandit Dayanand Saraswati and

⁸² Ibid, p. 4.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid, p. 5.

Munshi Inderman were selected, and Moti Mian was once again the main *mohtamim* (supervisor) jalsa.⁸⁵

Padri Knowles suggested that for everyone's sermon and for question and answers, five minutes should be allocated, a suggestion to which the Muslims objected to, saying that this was too short. There was a lot of debate on this issue, but no consensus. Maulana Qasim Nanautāwī stormed out of the meeting saying that they had wasted three hours on this issue and that they didn't listen to anyone. Moti Mian accused the Hindus and Christians of conspiring against the Muslims. After this Munshi Pyarelal went to Maulana Qasim Nanautāwī and apologised saying that he too was helpless and that Padri Knowles did not even listen to him, but he hoped that Maulana Qasim would listen to him. The Maulana accepted, reluctantly, but said that he had a complaint against him, that while being the host of the jalsa, he took the sides of the Christians when he should have considered everyone equally.⁸⁶

After discussions about the duration for each speaker, there was further discussion on which topic would be discussed first. All agreed that they would begin by talking about God's 'person' and being. Then Munshi Pyarelal wrote in Urdu on a paper and presented it to all, saying that these five questions were presented from his side for discussion and the answer to these should be given first. Those questions were 1) how, why, when and with what, did God (*panmashar*) make the world? 2) is the *panmashar*'s being complete? 3) *panmashar* is just and forgiving: how can he be both? 4) what is the proof that the Vaid, Quran and Bible are the word of God? 5) what is salvation and how can it be sought?⁸⁷

The participants of the jalsa accepted that they would reply to these questions, but the audience had swollen to so many, that there was neither place to stand nor sit in the

⁸⁵ Ibid, p. 6.

⁸⁶ Ibid, p. 6-7.

⁸⁷ Ibid, p. 8.

tent and that is why the jalsa had to be uprooted and they all went to the ground outside the tent.⁸⁸ If the discussions on how long each speaker would speak for went on for half the day, the other half was taken up by bickering over the order of speakers, with the Muslims saying that they should speak last since theirs was the youngest religion. Nevertheless, the written reports of both the *munāzaras* show, as always, that it was the Muslims who were the most agreeable of the three participants and so agreed to start first.

As many as 28 pages of the *Mubāhisa* reproduced Maulana Qasim Nanautāwī's speech which went on for one hour, which was primarily on the issue of the unity and oneness of God in contrast to the notion of Trinity. Another theme in this long speech was about the attributes and greatness of the Prophet Muhammad, and his superiority over the earlier prophets. Maulana Qasim also used the contemporary argument that since Lord Northbrook was replaced by Lord Lytton, and as one Collector is by another, the latter's injunctions and rules carry more weight, relevance and significance than the former's; hence, Muhammad prevailed over Moses and Christ.⁸⁹

After Maulana Qasim Nanautāwī was asked to sit down, the Christian Padri Muhiyuddin Peshawari stood up and had a short exchange (as per agreed to rules for the question and answer session) with the Maulana. After this exchange, Padri Muhiyuddin, who later that year converted to Islam, started a debate on what all was in the Quran and what in the Bible and the Torah. This intervention was to have a crucial bearing on the rest of the *munāzara* and on this one point alone, the Muslims could easily gloat and celebrate their victory. The Muslims were able to prove – by producing a copy of the Bible printed in Mirzapur in 1870 – that the Bible had been

⁸⁸ Barbara Metcalf writes that both the debates were held on the grounds of the mission school (Barbara Metcalf, *Islamic Revival*, p. 222). None of the sources I have seen state this.

⁸⁹ *Mubahisa*, p. 35.

corrupted. By this master swoop, the Muslims had proven that the Christian religion was untruthful, falsified.⁹⁰

The second day of the *munāzara* began at 7.30 am with all tents overflowing with the audience. The beginning of the day, once again, began with negotiations and renegotiations of how long each person would speak for, which questions would be raised first, and who was to begin answering questions first.⁹¹ Nevertheless, the sermons and questions and answers began, with Padri Scott, Maulana Qasim Nanautāwī and Pandit Dayanand Saraswati ('who used a lot of Sanskrit words which ... very few people would have understood' [*savae do chār admīyon ke ... un ka matlab koi na samjhta ho ga*]),⁹² all making arguments and raising objections on each other. Much of the rest of the *Mubahisa* contains the speeches of Maulana Qasim Nanautāwī and shows how he floored all his opponents in style and argument.⁹³ However, it is the account of events after the end of the *munāzara* which are described in the *Mubāhisa*, which are of particular interest in the construction of myth and identity, to which I now turn.

Reproduction: Print, Myth, Identity

As I argue in the previous chapter, Muslims surely knew the power of print and used it to their advantage in many ways. The numerous publications around the Mela Khudashanasi which emerged very soon after the event, only reinforce the use made of print and of print capitalism.⁹⁴ The veritable, blow-by-blow, account of the first

⁹⁰ Ibid, p. 46.

⁹¹ Ibid, p. 53.

⁹² Ibid, p. 64.

⁹³ Ibid, p. 66 ff..

⁹⁴ In a footnote above, I identify three texts on the Mela Khudashanasi which were published immediately after the two *munāzaras*, and two others which are likely to have been published soon after. Moreover, many later pamphlets on the *munāzaras* have also been published: Muhammad Azam Qasim, in his doctoral dissertation entitled *Maulana Muhammad Qasim Nanautāwī*, Islamic Studies, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh, 1988, has a reference to two tracts both entitled *Mubahisa Shahjahanpur*, with one published in Deoband in 1334/1916, and the other as recent as 1977.

Mela Khudashanasi was published within a few months of the encounter in 1293/1876, under the title *Guft-gū-e Mazhabi*, and is referred to on a number of occasions in the publication about the next year's *munāzara*, the *Mubāhisa Shahjahanpur 1299*.

Both the *Guft-gū* and the *Mubahisa* are supposed to be 'truthful' eyewitness accounts of a religious dialogue between scholars from Islam, Christianity and Hinduism, but there is little doubt that not only are both almost exclusively the account of the dispositions and sermons of the Muslims alone, but moreover, are almost exclusively the speeches and account of Maulana Qasim Nanautāwī. The fifteen minute or hour long speeches and sermons of Padri Knowles, for example, get a mere page, while Maulana Qasim gets extended, almost exclusive, space in both accounts. Clearly, both publications emerge as promoting Maulana Qasim and act as publicity stunts.

Written by Muslims who were present at the two encounters, the accounts always portray the Muslims as agreeable and accommodating, and the Christians as disruptive, conspiratorial, stubborn and time-wasters. The Hindus are a mere side-show in the accounts, but they too are seen to be in cahoots with the Christians. Christians are usually dismissed at an intellectual level where it was shown that they were not able to respond to the points raised by Maulana Qasim. For example, while the Muslim interventions are supposed to be scholarly and perceptive with the whole audience listening, the padris were shown to be people who had little of substance to say, where in one context they were said to have merely wasted time – *sab ahle jalse ke kān khae*⁹⁵ -- the Muslims, however, only made pertinent interventions. The padris were supposed to have used under-hand tactics, such as raising the issue of fate, which Muslims were unable to answer. Moreover, in both accounts, the Christians were shown as running scared, hiding from the Muslim ulema '*khuda jane kahan jān churaiye baithe thay*', and were said to have dispersed from both

⁹⁵ *Guft-gū*, p. 17.

encounters leaving their books behind ‘*maidān mein kitabain chore kar bhāg gaye*’. In every sense, in the accounts written by the Muslims, not surprisingly, the Muslims were seen in a far better light than were the Christians or the Hindus, humiliating them.

If the actual dates of the Mela Khudashanasi remain a matter of confusion, the fact that many of the ‘truthful’ accounts from the first *munāzara* reproduced in *Guft-gū* were reproduced almost verbatim in the published account of the second *munāzara*, only adds to our greater confusion of when fact becomes fiction. While it very well could be that it was a coincidence, or that it was actual thought-through strategy, that the Muslims (Maulana Qasim Nanautāwī, in particular) had decided to say similar things in the second year to what he had in the first, the similarity in the published text certainly does raise eyebrows.⁹⁶ The notion of the ‘fixity of print’, gets a new meaning in this regard. Moreover, this problem is aggravated when we consider the third published text on the Mela Khudashanasi.

The Preface of the *Hujjat-ul Islam*, written by Maulana Qasim Nanautāwī, was important because it tells us why this tract was written.⁹⁷ It gave an account of the first *munāzara* of 1876, and stated that Maulana Qasim had no idea about how the discussion would take place and how arguments would be presented. Hence, as a precaution, it dawned upon him, that each and every argument which related to the principle of Islam, and especially those related to the debate, ought to be written down according to reasonable and logical principles (*qavāid aqliya*) and the arguments should be strong so that any sensible person (*āqil munsaf*) would not have

⁹⁶ Just one example of many would suffice to bring out the point. In the account of the 1876 *munāzara*, *Guft-gū*, he is said to have said, that it is nonsensical to call Christ, Ram or Krishna deities because they were dependent on food and drink, and had to urinate and defecate, and fall ill and die (p. 13). In the *munāzara* a year later, as recorded in *Mubahisa*, Maulana Qasim stated that neither Christ nor Ram nor Krishna were worthy of being deities because they were dependent on food and drink, and had to urinate and defecate, and fell ill and died (p. 16).

⁹⁷ *Hujjatul Islam*, Matba-e Ahmadi, Aligarh, nd, pp 74. Henceforth, *Hujjat*.

a problem in understanding the arguments and would have no reason to dispute them.⁹⁸

The Preface stated, that there was very limited time, under extreme duress, probably in one full day and that too at night [or part of an evening]. Maulana Qasim wrote this substantial document (*jāmē tehrir*). In the jalsa he spoke about the topics which he had written down, and he said that he had written about the truth of Islam, which had to be stated verbally since he did not have the opportunity to read out the written text.⁹⁹ But, when the Maulana returned triumphantly from that mela, he thought it would be a good idea to publish this text, and that it would be very important and useful to distribute it. The text was addressed to the participants of the jalsa and opened with: ‘*aye hazrin jalsa ...*’.¹⁰⁰

This written text is extremely dense in places and one wonders how any of the *āmm log* present at Chandapur could have understood the Maulana’s language. It is very different – complex and complicated – compared to the two more popular texts written (by others) as accounts of the two *munāzarsa*. To comprehend *Hujjat* requires a fair deal of understanding, intelligence and learning, to follow and appreciate the arguments made in the text.¹⁰¹ However, the themes of *Hujjat* were more or less the same as those that were actually raised at the two *munāzaras*, but perhaps, suspiciously identical at times.¹⁰²

⁹⁸ Ibid, p. 1.

⁹⁹ Ibid, p. 1.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, p. 1.

¹⁰¹ This difference in the written text and the spoken, is in some ways similar to that of writing in Latin and speaking in the vernaculars in the Middle Ages in Europe, where both forms required a different language altogether. cf Walter Ong, ‘Orality, Literacy and Medieval Textualization’, *New Literary History*, Vol 16, No 1, Autumn 1984.

¹⁰² The fact that *Hujjat* was published and available may also suggest that the different *types* of publications were meant for different audiences having different impacts. For example, the two eyewitness accounts are similar in writing style and easier to comprehend than is *Hujjat*; the easiest and most simple of all is Maulana Qasim Nanautāwī’s biography, his *Savahn-e Umri*, which seems to be written for a far wider and *ām loge* audience.

The importance of the Mela Khudashanasi in the broader chronology of a particular Muslim narrative, a few years after the two encounters, and particularly with regard to Maulana Qasim Nanautāwī, one of the founders of the Deoband school, is underscored by its mention in one of the Maulana's earliest (but short) biographies. Much of the Maulana's *Savahn-e Umri* is about the activities and events in his life, but the Mela Khudashanasi must have been an important event to get sufficient mention.¹⁰³ This 32 page biography contains two full pages on the Mela Khudashanasi. The biography spoke in the same victorious tone ridiculing the opposition, stating that Maulana Qasim spoke about the unity of God 'in such a way that the audience was floored completely': after discussions on *tahrif*, 'the padris ran from the jalsa in such a manner that they were nowhere to be found ... and even left some of their books behind'.¹⁰⁴ The biography continued, that the Maulana 'returned triumphantly from the jalsa' and as a consequence of the two encounters, 'common people (*āmm makhlūq*) came to know what a person of stature this was'.¹⁰⁵

The biography of Maulana Qasim presents a very different picture of the man who took part in the *munāzaras*. His biographer shows him largely as an introverted, reserved, withdrawn, reticent man, a scholar and an *alim*, and certainly not a public speaker. His performance at the two *munāzaras* as accounted by eyewitnesses, seems to give a somewhat different picture, of a man who was a mesmerising speaker and who, at times, got angry and was forceful, as we see him in discussions over time-allocation issues. Moreover, as I argue, Maulana Qasim's communicating styles seems to differ widely when he wrote compared to when he was speaking.

The two eyewitness accounts seemed to suggest that there were hundreds of people who were present at each *munāzara*. At the second encounter, we are told that the

¹⁰³ *Savan-eh Umri*, of Maulana Qasim Nanautāwī, by Maulvi Muhammad Yaqoob sahib Nanautāwī, *hasb ul irshad*, Hazrat Maulana Maulvi Hafiz Muhammad Abdul Ahad sahib, Ziqād 1311, Matba-e Mujtabai, Delhi, 1894.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

audience came from Shahjahanpur, Deoband, Meerut, Delhi, Khorjah, Sabnehal, Muradabad, Rampur, Bareilly and Talhar. Both accounts tell of how space was also limited and the tents were bursting at the seams. This was Bayly's Indian ecumene where

it was not only men of power who participated in the literary activities of the ecumene. The egalitarian traditions of the Islamic lands and the community sensibilities of Indian cities encouraged ordinary artisans and people of the bazaars to aspire to eminence as poets or commentators. The form of the language was inclusive; it mirrored and even helped to stimulate the rapid social mobility which was characteristic of post-Mughal north India.¹⁰⁶

It is also worth exploring the idea of 'spoken writing' with regard to reproducing lectures and *munāzara* into the printed form, where although someone spoke, another person, either who was present at the *munāzara* or lecture, or someone much later, transcribed the talk for posterity. The question of authorial authority, and who-actually-said-what, becomes important in this regard – an issue which is also raised in the previous chapter – especially since so many oral presentations were transcribed into print. This may also have given rise to the issue of a 'copyright of ideas', as when given creative license, perhaps more was added to the text than was actually originally stated, especially when multiple texts of a single event, as the case of the Chandapur *munāzara* shows, were produced by different authors.

There is a huge corpus of *Lekcharoñ ka majmua* (collection of lectures) as well as other talks and *munazara* in the archive, much of which was written by someone other than the speakers themselves. For example, one of Sayyid Ahmad Khan's most famous lectures, the one against the Indian National Congress, was transcribed by someone else. The transcriber said that this lecture was delivered orally and then was written down by him.¹⁰⁷ Munshi Sirajuddin, who compiled 38 lectures of Sayyid

¹⁰⁶ C A Bayly, *Empire and Information*, p. 196.

¹⁰⁷ *Indian National Congress pur Syed Ahmad Khan ka Lecture: Hamari qaum ko nisbat political amur saltanat ke kya tariqa ikhtiar karna chahiye?*, published as a pamphlet in numerous places, including Kanpur (not dated), Amritsar 30 April 1888.

Ahmad Khan stated, that he always used to speak without notes, continuously without breaks, and did not write down his speeches to read them out. Munshi Sirajuddin told us that he requested Sayyid Ahmad to write his lectures so that they would not be wasted, but this limited the Sayyid's ability to speak extempore and in an oratorical style.¹⁰⁸ Similarly, Sayyid Ahmad's tour of the Punjab in 1884, was recorded by Sayyid Iqbal Ali, who stated that all the lectures were given orally, 'but I tried to transcribe, word-by-word, everything that he said. I believe that I have accomplished this task', and he wanted all to learn what the Sayyid had said.¹⁰⁹ Writing about the older tradition of *qissas* (story-telling), Muhammad Yamin Parvez has informed us about how the oral and written, often had different content. He argues, that 'although written *qissas* are composed of the same traditional narrative elements used in oral tales, there is no reason to believe that any written *qissa* exactly resembles any actual oral performance'.¹¹⁰

Before one concludes this chapter, it is important to bring to the fore, printed representations of the same events, by the non-Muslim participants to the *munāzaras*. This difference in representation of the same event, on very clearly partisan lines, is important for a couple of reasons. Firstly, it shows how the printed versions were addressing specific, fractured, audiences, with particular intentions and motivations. Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, it questions the whole event (or events) itself: how could two sets of eyewitness reports differ so markedly from each other? The difference between fact and fiction must surely be a very slim one.

The Arya Samajists, who were seen to be completely peripheral in the Muslim narrative, also produced at least four tracts about the same event. One called

¹⁰⁸ *Lekcharon ka majmua*, with a Preface by Munshi Sirajuddin Ahmad Sahib, Bilal Press, Sadhora, end December 1892. There is also an earlier version of the same, with fewer lectures, published by the same press, in 1890. All the lectures in the 1890 edition are included in the 1892 one.

¹⁰⁹ Sayyid Iqbal Ali, *Sayyid Ahmad Khan ka safarnama-e Punjab*, Aligarh Institute Press, Aligarh, 1884, p. 2.

¹¹⁰ Muhammad Yamin Parvez, 'Urdu Chapekhane', *Ajkal*, 31, No. 8, March 1973, p. 155.

*Satdharmvichar*¹¹¹ (A Triumph of Truth), was written by Bakhtawar Singh in Urdu;¹¹² a second bilingual Hindi and Urdu version was also written by the same Bakhtawar Singh and had the same title, although was written in the Urdu script of *naskh*, rather than the other standard *nastaliq*;¹¹³ a third English translation by Durga Prasad is called *A Triumph of Truth*, and included the autobiography and travels of Swami Dayanand;¹¹⁴ Barbara Metcalf cites a fourth, but it is not clear when this was first written, whether this was written in Hindi or Sanskrit originally, or in what language it was translated into.¹¹⁵

The Arya Samajists did exactly what the Muslims did in their reproductions, by promoting their own representatives. For example, in *Satdharmvichar*, there is just a ten-line summary of Maulana Qasim's long speech, which contained some of the points which were to be found in the Muslim accounts. There is also a short account of the exchange between Padri Scott and the Maulana, but a huge majority of the tract is about what Swami Dayanand said, and about how well he spoke and how he triumphed in the mela. He emerges as a sober, knowledgeable, speaker, very much like the caricature of Maulana Qasim in the Muslim versions. In this version, the Christians turn to Maulana Qasim and said to him that, 'the pandit can answer this question a thousand ways, and you and us, and thousands like us, even if we debate with him, he can still give a thousand replies. Hence, it is best not to persist with your point'.¹¹⁶ Moreover, the tract stated that people said that while they had heard of

¹¹¹ Bakhtawar Singh, *Satdharmvichar* (yāni Mubahisa mela Khudashanasi Chandapur jo 1877 main Swami Dayanand Sarasvati Sahib, Maulvi Maulana Qasim Sahib, o Padri Scott Sahib ke darmian huwa tha), Hazbe farmaish manager Vedic Press Ajmer ke Matba-e Gulshan Faiz Lucknow Maula Ganj main Chapa, Lucknow, 1897 [This could be a misprint], 1200 copies, 33 pp.

¹¹² He is supposed to have edited *Aryadarpana*, 'a monthly religious publication of the Brahmist Arya Samaj of Shahjahanpur in 1878', James Fuller Blumhardt, *Catalogue of Urdu books in the India Office Library, 1800-1920*, p. 282.

¹¹³ Bakhtawar Singh, *Satdharmvichar*, Benares 1880, pp 38.

¹¹⁴ Durga Prasad, *A Triumph of Truth*, Lahore 1889, pp. 331.

¹¹⁵ Metcalf cites the reference of 'Bawa Arjan Singh, translator, *Mela Chandapur*, edition revised by Bawa Chhajju Singh (Lahore, n.d., ca. 1903)', Metcalf, *Islamic Revival*, p. 223.

¹¹⁶ Bakhtawar Singh, *Satdharmvichar*, p. 19.

Dayanand's speaking prowess, 'he was a thousand times better' in real life.¹¹⁷ The art of hagiography, it seems, was not restricted to the Muslims, and nor was the purpose of using the printed text to create myths and to build up reputations. A final point worth noting is, that while the Muslim tracts accused Dayanand of speaking in Sanskrit, the Urdu tracts by the Arya Samajists, reproduced his speeches in a very easy-to-follow Urdu, with just a few Sanskrit words included.

In many ways, it is interesting to learn, that the 1876 and 1877 *munāzaras*, were similar to the *majlis* of the 3/9 centuries in Baghdad. For one, many of the identical themes – about the Trinity, *tahrif*, etc – were being discussed between Christians and Muslims even after ten centuries. For another, as both Sidney Griffiths and A Talmon show, *majlis/munāzara*, i.e., religious debates, could easily turn into some form of entertainment.¹¹⁸ Sara Strousma, dealing with the same earlier period has also shown that the 'code of polite behaviour was often violated during discussions and many participants behaved rudely to their opponents and intimidated them',¹¹⁹ something which seems to have occurred in nineteenth century north India as well. Griffiths states, that 'memories of many such events became the subject of literary compositions ... which appeared as reports of the debates, and which served not only as apologetic, and even polemical tracts, presumably aimed at dissuading conversions to Islam among Christians, but which seem to have been appreciated as much for their entertainment value, as for their didactic potential'.¹²⁰ Moreover, it seems, that even in the 3/9 centuries, different versions of accounts were published by different religious communities, meant primarily for the consumption of their own co-religionists, with Muslims, Jews and Christians publishing their own accounts designed specifically for their own religious communities.¹²¹ And finally, even in the

¹¹⁷ Ibid, p. 20.

¹¹⁸ See the papers in Hava Lazarus-Yafeh, et al. (eds), *The Majlis: Interreligious Encounters in Medieval Islam*, Harrassowitz, Wiesbaden, 1999.

¹¹⁹ Hava Lazarus-Yafeh, 'Preface', in Ibid, p. 11.

¹²⁰ Sidney H. Griffiths, 'The Monk in the Emir's Majlis: Reflections on a Popular Genre of Christian Literary Apologetics in Arabic in the Early Period', in Ibid, p. 13.

¹²¹ Ibid.

4/10 century, it emerges that many of the texts were creating an 'historical fiction' to adapt 'what is realistic and acceptable in the society for which the text is produced', 'for the purposes of religious polemic, and ... of hagiography'.¹²²

No matter how many people turned up for any of the *munāzaras* or the lectures, the quick and wide dissemination of the printed accounts must have reached many times the audience present. In my example of the *munāzara* of Chandapur, except for *Guft-gū* which was published first, the other three publications refer to all the other publications, creating an interlocking web of interest and curiosity, perhaps whetting the readers' appetite to read all four texts.¹²³ Not surprisingly, their own texts show the Muslims as victors who, compared to the other religions, came across as far superior, intelligent and eloquent, lenient and accommodating, messages which were carried far and wide to other Muslims through the medium of print, strengthening their own collective sense of identity and being.

It is more than likely, that the main, if not the sole, readership of these texts would have been other Muslims. It is worth examining this medium/trope as a means to further consolidate and strengthen Muslim identity. For one thing, all four tracts differ sharply from the numerous other tracts which debate issues of belief with other Muslims. The sectarian nature of accusations and the 'pamphlet wars' that were a central feature of Muslim writing, as I show elsewhere in this thesis, is absent from this collection, and Muslims in general, rather than of a particular sect, were being addressed. This is not surprising, for in 1875/6, the forging of sects within Islam had not taken place which was a late-nineteenth century phenomenon. Moreover, the *ahle Islam* collectively addressed in these tracts were seen as counter to Hindus and Christians and hence, there seemed to be a single, undifferentiated, united, Muslim

¹²² David J Wasserstein, 'The "Majlis of al-Rida": A Religious Debate in the Court of the Caliph al-Ma'mun as Represented in a Shi'i Hagiographical Work about the Eighth Imam 'Ali ibn Musa al-Rida', in *Ibid*, p. 110.

¹²³ In the main text, *Mubahisa* not only gives the title of *Guft-gū*, but it also gives its price – 'three annas apart from postage'.

category which may have emerged at that time – see the other chapters of this thesis, where Muslims are shown to be divisive, fractured, warring. Also, importantly, the term *qaum* was not used in these publications here and nor was the idea of *ummah*. The category *ahle Islam* would largely be replaced in the late nineteenth century, by *qaum*, and in the twentieth century, by *ummah*.

While the printed accounts of both the *munāzara* do this, they also play a major role in building up personalities and in creating myths. The last few pages of both *Guft-gū* and *Mubahisa* gave an account of the after-hours happenings around the site of the Mela Khudashanasi in both the years. In each story, Maulana Qasim Nanautāwī appeared as the hero of the mela and this narrative was given further sustenance by showing what others were saying about him. He had made his mark through his speeches, and now it was for others to give him additional qualities.

Both accounts narrate how he was mobbed by Hindus, Muslims and Christians after the *munāzaras* were formally declared over, how even padris and pandits came up to him singing his praises acknowledging that he had completely triumphed over them. It was not only the participants of the jalsa who came away with such sentiments, but it seemed that people near and far also sang his praises. In *Mubahisa*, for example, it is stated that when Maulana Qasim Nanautāwī and his colleagues walked through the bazaars of Shahjahanpur, the shop owners all pointed their fingers at them suggesting that it was these people who had been triumphant.¹²⁴ He was called a ‘sufi maulana’, ‘*nili lungi wale maulana*’, ‘a thin lanky man in dirty clothes who didn’t even look like an *alim*’; Swami Dayanand, according to the *Mubahisa* said that ‘in the Maulana’s heart, it was the *saraswati* of knowledge which was speaking’, explaining that ‘*saraswati*’ in Sanskrit meant the Goddess of Knowledge. Others said that they had never seen such an *alim* amongst the Muslims before; a Hindu jogi called Janaki Das is said to have met Maulana Qasim after the

¹²⁴ *Mubahisa*, op. cit., p. 95.

first *munāzara* and said that he was present in the jalsa and told the Maulana that you had accomplished a great deed (*'tum ne barā kām kiya'*).¹²⁵

Whether all this actually happened at the Mela Khudashanasi is of secondary importance: the many accounts now published, rewrote the truths about what actually happened in the theatre of the *munāzara*. The oral exchanges now transformed through the medium of print, created the persona of an *alim* which had moved far beyond the bulging but limited audience present at Chandapur, and had now made that larger-than-life image available to a wider Urdu-reading Muslim public. Orality in print had created or reinforced identity, myth, representation, and difference, far more than either a *munāzara* or print could have done alone. Importantly, it was not merely print capitalism which was responsible for creating opportunities in which communities could be imagined, but public expressions and performances of a pre-print capitalism era, also helped create and fortify multiple identities.

¹²⁵ *Guft-gū*, p. 41.

Chapter Six

Conclusions

This thesis has attempted to engage with and take further, previous scholarship on issues related to community, identity formation, separatism and the nature of pan-Islamism in the second half of the nineteenth century. By de-emphasising both the colonial archive and its particular narrative, as well as that of the dominant voices in the dominant narrative – both in terms of great men, as well as in terms of a handful of dominant institutions – it positions counter-narratives about perceptions about the self and about community amongst Muslims in north India in the second half of the nineteenth century. By using previously unheard voices from an insufficiently accessed archive in Urdu, this thesis brings forth new perspectives on old, perhaps settled, interpretations. By using varied and diverse voices with regard to north Indian Muslim I emphasise the extent of difference and differentiation, a theme discussed by some historians on Muslim South Asia in the past, in what some others may have perceived to be a more homogenous *qaum* or a community.

The main focus of this thesis is on the nature of identity formation amongst Muslims in north India in the second half of the nineteenth century. One view suggests, that there was a sense of collective identity amongst the Muslims of north India in this period, which gave rise to a sense of community. This may have led later to a strengthening of communitarian sentiment manifest in the politics of a separatism along with territorial nationalism, leading to the formation of a distinct ‘nation’ and the eventual Partition of India. Along with this strand of logic, there are other parallel schema as well, which point to the sense of identity of an *ummah*, an ‘Islamic universalism’ and a pan-Islamism, of which evidence is found as early as the 1870s and 1880s. By using different sources in the archive, my thesis finds far less evidence of these trends and argues that some strands of previous scholarship, using particular archival material, may have tended to exaggerate the extent of these developments, and also to place them some decades prior to when they actually

existed. There is also the concern that some scholarship may be anachronistic and teleological, having had an impact in explaining particular versions of the Partition of 1947.

Recognition, Identity and Community

While my thesis argues against the notion that a Muslim community, which recognised itself as such, existed in the middle of the nineteenth century, there is an underlying tension in the thesis which needs to be addressed. I distinguish between the sense of identity and community formation, from that of the recognition of shared symbols, and argue that while there may have been some connectivity between Muslims, there was little collectivity. At one level, Muslims recognised each other as some form of 'a Muslim' based on shared symbols and shared traditions and perhaps even some shared practices. One could argue, that even though Muslims were arguing over issues of practice and ritual, as well as about interpretation, they did have a sense of 'identity', precisely because they were contesting shared symbols and traditions. Furthermore, one could argue, that there was a shared space around these debates, and a 'Muslim way of thinking' – all subscribing to a similar religious literature, much of which was in Arabic – must have existed. Hence, there was an 'inwardness' and perhaps even exclusivity about the debates which required knowledge and understanding about shared norms, practices and Islamic history. The fact that it was almost exclusively Muslims who contested definitions of who a Muslim was, must imply, to some, that this was a community with a sense of identity, and all that the debates were doing, were sorting out contested notions of that one, single, identity. And therefore, clearly, there must have been a sense of collective consciousness of being Muslim.

Of course, one cannot but recognise the fact, that an entity called the north Indian Muslim, existed. However, even this simple fact of recognition was fraught with numerous problems which this thesis highlights, to the extent that even something as

simple as identifying and recognising a ‘Muslim’, was thrown into contention. My thesis has emphasised, over and over again, that who a Muslim was, was a highly controversial, complicated and contested issue, which was determined by numerous individuals and groups and that there was no consensus, at all, about this issue. Who a Muslim was, depended on who defined the term, and who was excluded, and was based on highly selective criteria. While there were huge and significant differences in rituals and practices, as well as in beliefs and in the interpretation of various traditions, there were even questions about something so foundational as the end of the prophet-hood with Prophet Muhammad.

All my evidence, as well as that from other scholars, shows that Muslims were a highly fractured entity, with multiple spheres of identification, and not represented in any *qaum* or community. My argument is that the feature which was most prominent amongst the groups and individuals who constituted some vaguely recognisable entity called the ‘Muslim’, was based on denial, dismissiveness and divisiveness of any common features to constitute a Muslim identity or community. The presence of a Muslim identity or community, would require far more inclusiveness, and far greater recognition and acceptance of similarity, than existed amongst Muslims in the nineteenth century. It was primarily the politics of the main actors in colonial India in the twentieth century, which gave rise to a sense of identity amongst the Muslims and allowed them to see themselves as a community. Religion merely made them recognisable as Muslims, and that too, not always.

Print and Identity

The most important medium, or instrument, through which I have examined the nature of Muslim identity, especially as perceived by Muslims themselves, is through what they wrote, through an examination of the printed word in Urdu. While specific issues regarding the print industry in India in the late nineteenth century were discussed in Chapter Four, here I examine the more general debates around the

nature and consequences of print, and how the medium of print played a role in determining identity. Moreover, linked to both print and to identity, is the notion of the public sphere, where both supposedly interact and play out their parts and enhance each other.

For Benedict Anderson, a nation is an 'imagined political community', and in the minds of each of its members, lives the image of that community.¹ Although he rejects as 'short-sighted',² the idea that imagined communities of nations simply grow out of and replace religious communities and dynastic realms, he does admit that following the decline of sacred communities due to 'fundamental changes' that were taking place on how one saw the world, the ability of being able to 'think the nation' emerged. Perhaps the most important medium for Anderson to make these numerous changes possible, was 'print-capitalism' (or Ulrike Stark's 'print commercialization'),³ 'which made it possible for rapidly growing numbers of people to think about themselves, and to relate themselves to others, in profoundly new ways',⁴ especially as print and capitalism (in Western Europe) created mass reading publics.

For Anderson, these print-languages laid the bases for national consciousness by creating 'unified fields of exchange and communication', so that millions of people of a particular language, and no other, belonged to that community. 'These fellow-readers, to whom they were connected through print, formed, in their secular, particular, visible invisibility, the embryo of the nationally imagined community'.⁵ Print-capitalism also gave a 'fixity to language', taking away the individualising and visceral influences of pre-print communication, and for Anderson, print-capitalism

¹ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Second Revised Edition, Verso, London, 1991, p.6.

² *Ibid.*, p.22.

³ Ulrike Stark, *An Empire of Books: The Naval Kishore Press and the Diffusion of the Printed Word in Colonial India*, Permanent Black, New Delhi, 2007, p. 4.

⁴ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p. 36.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

created 'languages of power'. It was the convergence of capitalism and print technology which created the 'possibility of a new form of imagined community, which in its basic morphology set the stage for the modern nation'.⁶ It was the print world that helped create a shared readership which allowed the community to imagine itself.

Anderson's influential ideas have been critiqued and reformulated since they were presented over two decades ago. Clearly, as we can see from his formulation, we encounter problems when moulding his analysis to nineteenth century north India, especially when we look at the 'nation' or community of Muslims. The notion of what a 'nation' was and when exactly it constituted, and when it came into being, as we know, has had major consequences for the politics of South Asia. However, I do accept the central idea from Anderson, that print helped create and nurture identities. Nevertheless, as my thesis shows, these were *many* imagined communities, and rather than unify different groups into a single imagined community, print was actually *divisive*, creating multiple and diverse, contesting and confrontational, identities, even within one apparently recognisable entity, the north Indian Muslim. Moreover, amongst north Indians in general – the Hindustanis – print's ability to unify and create a community, was further challenged.

It is clear from the evidence presented in this thesis, that the proliferation of print all across Hindustan, largely in Urdu, did help to make people who read, see themselves as one of many imagined communities 'among a specific assemblage of fellow-readers'. But the demography and the politics of power undergoing transition in nineteenth century India was very different to what it was in Western Europe in earlier centuries. While Persian and later Urdu became the dominant print languages in the North-Western Provinces and Oudh, in the 'Hindustan' of the Indian sub-continent, the sacred languages and the spoken word of the majority of the

⁶ Ibid, p. 46.

population, were different and had different roots than from the written, printed, form.⁷ While not completely alien, Urdu was seen to be the script of the Muslims, and hence Hindi contested the public space in which languages were written and spoken. As Orsini writes, the 'nineteenth century Hindi writers envisaged the public as a cultural community whose contours and essential features had to be extricated from the many layers and splinters of social reality with its diverse cultural and religious traditions. Linguistic divides added special nuances to the importance of language and literature in this discourse'.⁸ What this means for Anderson's imagined communities, was that while the Urdu printed word dominated the written public space and despite the fact that it created a 'community' of fellow-readers, it could not have created an imagined community anywhere near that of a 'nation' in the sense implied by Anderson.

Print could not have imagined a single community for the readers of Urdu newspapers, since the diversity amongst the Urdu-reading public in north India was marked, and vast. A Hindu majority had been subservient under a Muslim rule for some centuries, and may not have wanted to imagine itself as part of that community or nation. As we know, that as the process of Hindu revivalism took place and as Hindi replaced Urdu as the dominant language in north India, the Hindi speaking north Indian began to imagine a different nation.⁹ Even within the Muslim community of north India, as this thesis shows again and again, print, rather than ending up unifying the Urdu-reading Muslims into one identity or one community, actually bifurcated any idea of community and created numerous, contesting and conflicted, communities and identities, each trying to influence the other. The use of

⁷ David Lelyveld, 'The Fate of Hindustani: Colonial Knowledge and the Project of a National Language', in Carol A Breckenridge and Peter van der Veer (eds), *Orientalism and the Postcolonial Predicament: Perspectives on South Asia*, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 1993.

⁸ Francesca Orsini, *The Hindi Public Sphere 1920-1940*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2002, p. 5.

⁹ See, Amrit Rai, *A House Divided: The Origin and Development of Hindi Hindavi*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1984; and, Christopher R King, *One Language, Two Scripts: The Hindi Movement in Nineteenth Century North India*, Oxford University Press, Bombay, 1994.

print in the search and claim to identity in the latter half of the nineteenth century amongst Urdu-speaking and Urdu-reading Muslims in north India, created a divisive and violent bitter war of words, in which accusations dominated. Not one, but numerous identities were formed within the larger category of the Muslims.

The evidence from the nineteenth century presented in this thesis shows, that print capitalism did indeed influence and create identities, but perhaps not in the manner that Anderson had formulated with regard to Western Europe. It is also crucial to point out, that in the case of Muslims in north India, without the simultaneous shift into Urdu as the main medium of written and oral communication, Anderson's notion of 'print-capitalism', would have become dysfunctional. Hence, if Persian and/or Arabic had remained the languages through which ideas were carried through in print, print would not have had the influence on identity formation as it did, and a shift was required towards what became the main language for Muslims, as is also demonstrated by the rise of Hindi some years later.¹⁰ This emphasis on Urdu as the main medium for north Indian Muslims cannot be overstated, especially when in this thesis I discuss notions of the Muslim *qaum*, and argue that while north Indian Muslim leaders began to speak for the Muslim *qaum* in India, due to the fact that they and the people they were speaking to were limited to Urdu, the boundaries of the 'Indian' Muslim and his *qaum*, were narrowly defined by language, in this case, Urdu. Hence, as I show, Bengali Muslims and Muslims from Bombay, who belonged to a very different historico-cultural pattern, and spoke different languages, were never part of this identity of the 'Muslim *qaum*'.¹¹

Moreover it also needs to be emphasised, that in the case of colonial India, the print medium was directly supported financially and through other means – such as

¹⁰ David Lelyveld, 'The Fate of Hindustani'.

¹¹ On Bengali Muslims, see Rafiuddin Ahmed, *The Bengal Muslims*; and on the Muslims in Bombay, see, Sandria B Freitag, 'The Roots of Muslim Separatism in South Asia: Personal Practice and Public Structures in Kanpur and Bombay', in Edmund Burke III and Ira Lapidus (eds), *Islam, Politics and Social Movements*, University of California Press, Berkley, 1988.

through prizes and other forms of recognition – by the colonial power itself, such that its evolution in nature and form, and its eventual consequences, were bound to have been very different compared to experiences elsewhere.¹² Moreover, in societies which were not very literate, far less so than Europe, and where the oral tradition was still strong, particularly with regard to the public spaces created by the oral tradition of Islam and of Muslims – the mosque, the sermon, the lamentation of the Muharram *majlis*, the *mushaira*, and such like – the print medium would have engaged with the community and with the ‘nation’ perhaps differently. Bayly’s observation that, ‘print in itself did not create an information revolution. Rather, it speeded up the velocity and range of communication among existing communities of knowledge’, may carry some weight.¹³

Nevertheless, identities were indeed formed, shaped and sharpened through print. Print also opened up spaces which were earlier monopolised by the (oral) preachers and allowed ordinary/lay educated Muslims entry into a domain which was earlier the prerogative of a select few, of a certain kind of person; print destroyed the ‘specialised role of interpretation’¹⁴ and eroded ‘the authority of the ulama as interpreters of Islam’ while the ‘monopoly of the transmission of knowledge was broken’.¹⁵ Again, it needs to be pointed out, that it was Urdu, and not the print forms of specialised knowledge of Arabic or Persian, which resulted in this ‘democratization of knowledge’.¹⁶ On the other hand, print also played a dual role: it allowed the ulema to use the medium to further enhance their position vis a vis others

¹² Graham Shaw, cited in Stuart Blackburn and Vasudha Dalmia (eds), *India’s Literary History: Essays on the Nineteenth Century*, Permanent Black, New Delhi, 2004, p. 20, shows the extent of direct and indirect government support for the growth of printing in Delhi and the North-Western Provinces in general, showing the significance of government patronage for the emergence of literary culture in the period and how, ‘government purchases often kept these experiments in public print afloat’.

¹³ C A Bayly, *Empire and Information*, p. 243.

¹⁴ Faisal Devji, *Landscapes of Landscapes of the Jihad: Militancy, Morality, Modernity*, Foundation Books, New Delhi, 2005, p. 6.

¹⁵ Francis Robinson, ‘Technology and Religious Change: Islam and the Impact of Print’, *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol 27 No 1, Feb 1993, p. 244.

¹⁶ Barbara D Metcalf, ‘Living Hadith in the Tablighi Jama’at’, *J of Asian Studies*, 52, 3, Aug 1993, p. 606.

as it gave them a far greater canvas, landscape and audience. The ‘pamphlet wars’ in Urdu that Barbara Metcalf talks about in the last quarter of the nineteenth century in north India, were testimony to the power of print, a fact recognised by writers, publishers as well as by readers.¹⁷

Which Public Sphere?

The notion of the ‘public sphere’, a concept that plays a part in linking print with identity in this thesis, first articulated by Jurgen Habermas with regard to Europe,¹⁸ has been reformulated and recrafted, as well as critiqued, by many, but especially by Nancy Fraser, Geoff Ely and many others in a collection on the Public Sphere,¹⁹ and with regard to a nineteenth and twentieth century British India, by Freitag,²⁰ Bayly,²¹ Orsini,²² and most recently by Reetz.²³

Habermas’ notion of the public sphere, is based on his analysis of the development of bourgeois society in seventeenth and eighteenth century Europe, in which ‘private citizens [came] together as a public’ to discuss matters of ‘public concern’ or ‘common interest’ and to criticize and put pressure on the absolutist state.²⁴ In the context of Europe, the transition to an impersonal state, the growth of a bourgeois economy and the emergence of the private realm of the bourgeois family, led private citizens to come together as a ‘public’ in an intermediary sphere of social institutions like clubs, journals and periodicals. These citizens, in the free and rational exchange of ideas (especially with the lifting of censorship laws), formed public opinion and

¹⁷ Barbara D Metcalf, *Islamic Revivalism*.

¹⁸ Jurgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, MIT Press, Cambridge, 1991.

¹⁹ Craig Calhoun, (ed), *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, MIT Press, Cambridge, 1992.

²⁰ Sandria Freitag, *Collective Action and Community: Public Arenas and the Emergence of Communalism in North India*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1988.

²¹ C A Bayly, ‘Colonial Order and the “Informational Order” in South Asia’, in Nigel Crook (ed) *The Transmission of Knowledge in South Asia*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1996.

²² Francesca Orsini, *The Hindi Public Sphere*.

²³ Dietrich Reetz, *Islam in the Public Sphere*

²⁴ Francesca Orsini, *The Hindi Public Sphere*, p. 14.

created a language, codes and practices to express it. The spread of literacy in the previous centuries led to an 'accumulation of socio-cultural change' with the growth of urban culture, the press and commercial publishing. The 'general public' these citizens spoke of was actually quite limited and consisted mainly of the bourgeoisie and the titled gentry, yet in its self-understanding this literacy sphere was the 'public' and was accessible to all. Also, despite exclusive claims on the practice of reason by the bourgeoisie, 'the virtue of publicness' and 'the liberal desideratum of reasoned exchange also became available for nonbourgeois, subaltern groups, ... [such as] wide sections of social classes like the peasantry or the working class ... [T]he positive values of the liberal public sphere quickly acquired broader democratic resonance, with the resulting emergence of impressive popular movements, each with its own distinctive movement cultures (i.e. form of public sphere)'.²⁵ Public opinion becomes the result of such discussions, a consensus about the common good.

Habermas' formulation of the concept of the public sphere emerged from Europe's particular historical development and transition, and where, for him, the idea of the public sphere was linked to reason, enlightenment, and rationality. His idea was based on that of bourgeois society, where his portrayal of the different dimensions of which the public sphere comprised, included: 'i) a reasoned critical discourse on public affairs, (ii) the reasoning section of the public conducting this discourse, and (iii) a 'network of public communication', embodied in the 'associational life' of bourgeois society'.²⁶ Given Europe's development, for Habermas, the public sphere was restricted to the participation to a set of bourgeois, middle class and literate male participants.

This somewhat limiting description of the public sphere has been contested and debated, and along with others, Habermas has accepted the possibility of there being

²⁵ See Ibid; and, Geoff Ely, 'Nations, Publics, and Political Culture: placing Habermas in the Nineteenth Century', in Craig Calhoun, (ed), *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, p. 304.

²⁶ Dietrich Reetz, *Islam in the Public Sphere*, p. 12.

'many publics' some of which competed with each other. many of them represented by the non-bourgeois, and the idea of the public sphere has been widened considerably since. This broadening of its definition also implied that what (and who) constituted the public sphere has also changed. These changes, as Reetz argues, emphasise 'the publicness of the public sphere, unrestricted access to it, and the potential of all citizens to participate'.²⁷ This public sphere became a less restricted 'arena' for the 'location of public identities' in which political and cultural identities were contested and negotiated, as Sandria Freitag has argued.²⁸

Hence, a more specific European public sphere became a (or a set of) much broader public arena/s where local and particular developments, showing diversity and fragmentation rather than uniformity, began to be accommodated. However one wants to define it, as this thesis shows, the public spaces that were contested by north Indian Muslims, in terms of their ideas, notions of themselves, their social backgrounds, etc, were sharply fragmented, fractured and diverse. Perhaps the only element of 'uniformity' amongst this Muslim public who wrote for and to each other, was the language they used, and that their participation in debates was very public.

This acknowledged diversity within the public sphere and this drift in a specific meaning and concept of what the public sphere currently is, has made some scholars talk about an 'Islamic Sphere' where, 'Islamic groups contest the public sphere and carve out for themselves an Islamic sphere of their own'.²⁹ From Reetz's formulation, it seems that for him, this 'religious' or Islamic sphere is somehow outside of the public sphere, perhaps separate, though probably not independent of it. He develops this idea by stating that the Islamic sphere was constituted by the

²⁷ Ibid, p. 16.

²⁸ Sandria Freitag, *Collective Action and Community*.

²⁹ Dietrich Reetz, *Islam in the Public Sphere*, p. 2.

activities of the Islamic groups active, who helped create a sub-sector of the Public Sphere, a distinctly Islamic sphere in colonial India'.³⁰ He continues:

The Islamic sector was constituted by institutional activity, formalized public discourses, and booming associational life ... Their debates, activism, and institutional life became increasingly self-referential or directed at Islamic rivals ... These groups acted not only as religious groups but also simultaneously as self-conscious public actors, as agents in the public sphere. ... It constituted their role as public actors, contributing to the formation of the public sphere and helping shape an Islamic sphere as a sub-sector of it.³¹

Qasim Zaman, some years earlier used the term, 'a religious sphere', with regard to the ulema using the print medium, which, for him, 'reaffirm[ed] the existence of a religious sphere in society, a sphere set apart from all the rest. It is this sphere in society, and their activity in it, which helps guard the identity of the ulama, it is here – whether by writing commentaries or memorizing 'keys to success' – that they became ulama'.³² And, again: 'the corpus of the ulama's more specialized writings is a demonstration of the persistence, autonomy, and authority of their own distinct 'religious' sphere.'³³

In some ways, Reetz's privileging of an independent 'Islamic' public sphere, as something outside of a larger public sphere, follows on from Barbara Metcalf's earlier work on the *Dāru'l-Ulūm* at Deoband, where she talks of a turning within, and a disassociation and disengagement with the larger process.³⁴ This thesis also shows, that most Islamic scholars were talking to themselves, within their own narrow spheres, often unconcerned with grand narratives. They were communicating with each other on local, parochial and mundane ritualistic issues, cocooned in their

³⁰ Ibid, p. 308.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Muhammad Qasim Zaman, 'Commentaries, Print and Patronage: "Hadith" and the Madrasas in Modern South Asia', *Bulletin of the SOAS*, 62, 1, 1999, p 79; and, Muhammad Qasim Zaman 'Religious Education and the Rhetoric of Reform: The Madrasah in British India and Pakistan', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol 41, No 2, Apr 1999.

³³ Muhammad Qasim Zaman, 'Commentaries, Print and Patronage', p. 81.

³⁴ Barbara D Metcalf, *Islamic Revivalism*, p. 11-14.

own debates. But perhaps, this form and nature of dialogue does not warrant the constitution of a separate, Islamic, sphere as Reetz suggests, for it forecloses the 'Islamic' public sphere only to Islamic revivalist movements and leaves out other Muslims. In particular, it leaves out the large category of the 'modernising, westernising' 'enlightened' Muslims, such as Sayyid Ahmad and other Aligarhists. Perhaps by excluding such 'moderate' Muslims, Reetz makes the mistake of suggesting that 'among Islamic elites, it was often those educated in Western institutions who participated in local public discourse on the state of politics, society and religion',³⁵ when as I argue, this was not the case. A 'Muslim' public sphere, in some ways, would be a better, more inclusive, choice of term, than the 'Islamic' public sphere selected by Reetz. In fact, this broad distinction between what is 'Muslim' and what 'Islamic' is a nontrivial one. Many writers writing on either Muslims or on Islam in the Indian context, often assume one to be the other. However, my treatment of the two distinguishes between Islam as culture, pertaining to how Muslims in north India lived their lives, and Islam as religion, about beliefs and practices. Perhaps, some decades later, in the early twentieth century, Islam as religion and as culture would find its fruition in Islam as politics. Hence, 'Muslim' would include both, Islam as culture, and as belief and practice, while 'Islamic' would be limited to religious beliefs and practices.

Clearly, the discussion here shows the extent of increasing vagueness and ambivalence about the use of the original meaning of public sphere in a very different context from the one in which it was originally formulated – Seema Alavi even talks about a 'medical public sphere'.³⁶ Nevertheless, however one defines the mutated notion of the original public sphere and of public arena, the presence of print and its publicness, played a critical role in determining what the public sphere in India was. It may not have had the enlightened, reasoned and rational argumentative

³⁵ Dietrich Reetz, *Islam in the Public Sphere*, p. 23.

³⁶ Seema Alavi, *Islam and Healing: Loss and Recovery of an Indo-Muslim Tradition 1600-1900*, Permanent Black, New Delhi, 2007, p. 8.

quality to it that Habermas assumed, but it did develop its own particular legitimate language and rules for public discourse and participation. As Orsini argues, the public sphere did ‘involve discursive and institutional spaces, a common language, a set of procedural principles (e.g. respect for reasoned argument and open debate), some activism, and the awareness of a public “out there”’,³⁷ and as it developed, this space acquired a public voice, which was understood by all who participated in it. On some definitions of ‘rationality’ and ‘enlightenment’ perhaps the Islamic debates failed to achieve certain standards, nevertheless, ‘printed texts democratize[d] knowledge and enhance[d] voluntary, horizontal ties that change[d] the status of the historic leadership. The printed texts encourage[d] individuals to make what seem autonomous choices’.³⁸ Hence, the printed word created a space for ‘critical deliberation’.³⁹ Peter Hardy, in fact, argued that it was the newspapers and journals, ‘which brought into being, rather than were bought into being by, a Muslim reading public ... and helped to make possible a Muslim public opinion ...’.⁴⁰

One must perhaps, temper this over-emphasis of the medium of print as being fundamental in forming and defining a public sphere, with Bayly’s observations of there being a public which existed prior to print.⁴¹ Small circles of formalized debates existed, ‘which functioned as arenas in which rival men of learning contended to establish themselves as authorities and conduits of tradition ... [where] texts were of secondary importance’.⁴²

The argument that Bayly makes, is that the modern public sphere may have had ‘a more ancient lineage than one had assumed. The British presence may well have

³⁷ Francesca Orsini, *The Hindi Public Sphere*, p. 50.

³⁸ Barbara D Metcalf, ‘Living Hadith in the Tablighi Jama’at’, *J of Asian Studies*, 52, 3, Aug 1993, p. 606

³⁹ Dietrich Reetz, *Islam in the Public Sphere*, p. 123.

⁴⁰ Peter Hardy, *The Muslims of British India*, p. 126.

⁴¹ C A Bayly, ‘Colonial Order and the “Informational Order” in South Asia’, in Nigel Crook (ed) *The Transmission of Knowledge in South Asia*, Oxford University Press, 1996, Delhi.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 288.

served to suppress or distort the operation of an older public sphere before it created a new one'.⁴³ Even if there was a continuity in the pre-print to the print-capitalistic form of the later nineteenth century, the mere scale, not to mention the broad scope, of the new medium became far more influential than it had been in the past. Robert Darnton, too, warns us against relying exclusively on the printed word in helping form public opinion and hence, political action, as he says, 'the making of meaning occurs at street level as well as in books. The shaping of public opinion takes place in markets and taverns as well as in societies *de pensee*. To understand how publics made sense of events, one must extend the inquiry beyond the works of philosophers and into the communication networks of everyday life'.⁴⁴

Finally, C A Bayly develops the notion of oral public culture, where he uses the term 'the Indian ecumene', to 'describe the form of cultural and political debate which was typical of north India before the emergence of the newspaper and public association, yet persisted in conjunction with the press and new forms of publicity into the age of nationalism'.⁴⁵ Moreover, by acknowledging the fact that there was a vibrant public culture which was played out in public spaces where public and political issues were debated and contested, Bayly questions Jurgen Habermas' formulation of his 'public sphere'. While not falling into Habermas' European notion of public sphere, Bayly argues that 'in some ways the Indo-Islamic world had a clearer sense of "public". The ulema and other learned acted as public "juriconsults" and "censors" giving a sense of public beyond the medieval Christian priesthood which was more "corporate" and introverted in character'.⁴⁶ Moreover, he finds that the essential elements which make up Habermas' 'influential discussion of the "public sphere" ... had analogues within the north Indian *ecumene*'. However, Habermas' public sphere 'is more sharply separated from the world of intimate social

⁴³ Ibid, p. 299.

⁴⁴ Robert Darnton, *The Forbidden Best-sellers*, p. 179.

⁴⁵ C A Bayly, *Empire and Information: Intelligence Gathering and Social Communication in India, 1780-1870*, Cambridge University Press, 1999, p. 182.

⁴⁶ Ibid, p. 181.

relations: people's judgement is represented through marketed print in an almost mechanical way. The Indian ecumene, however, does bear comparison to the modern European public in the sense that its leaders were able to mount a critical surveillance of government and society'.⁴⁷

My description and analysis of the relationship between print and orality, builds on Bayly's and Habermas' constructions, and as both Chapters Four and Five show, the nineteenth century north Indian Muslim publicists were building on numerous medieval, pre-modern, notions of discourse, deliberation, as well as different forms of the 'public sphere'. Moreover, looking at both, the role of print in forming communities, and the notion of the public sphere discussed here, in the context of nineteenth century India, both contrast sharply from the original ideas based on the experience of Europe. These examples here, perhaps also reemphasise and highlight the limits of European experience and contemporary theory being applied piecemeal to colonial India.

Islamic Universalism, Pan-Islamism

Looking at the Urdu writings of Muslim publicists, I have argued, that not only was there an absence of the idea of a territorial nationalism, with identities much more local and fragmented but, a conspicuous absence in these writings, for the most part, is also that of an *ummah*, or a universalism or pan-Islamism. I will argue, that the absence of such a concept was precisely because north Indian Muslims did not see beyond very narrow fractured and fragmented 'identities'. Again, there was clearly a recognition in terms of the *ummah* of the Prophet Muhammad, but this was a religious category, not a political one. While there was a recognition that there were many Muslims in the world in different countries, the concerns of most publicists overlooked or ignored issues of what can be called 'universalism', and dealt with

⁴⁷ Ibid, p. 182.

matters which were parochial, local and ritualistic. Besides, most publicists identified and emphasised differences far more than universal attributes.

While the term '*qaum*' may be a proxy for some Muslims to account for a 'territorial nationalism' – Muslims of the nineteenth century used the term themselves, as do some scholars today – the absence of a term for pan-Islamism in the Urdu writings, highlights the problems of the conceptualisation of this key idea. Although '*ummah*' and '*Islami biraderi*', may be the terms which come closest to any notion of pan-Islamism, both perhaps recognise a larger entity of Muslims, but do not seem to emphasise the sense of identity or community which is implicit in the category 'pan-Islamism'. Moreover, it seems that some modern scholars have limited their sense of 'pan-Islamism' to the extensive newspaper coverage that the Russo-Turkic war and the Balkan campaigns received in the Urdu newspapers, particularly in the mid-1870s. There is evidence from newspapers that Muslims did mobilise financial resources for the Caliphate as well,⁴⁸ but the claim for the existence of pan-Islamism seems to be based on very little else and perhaps, is over-stated precisely because the term is never adequately defined.

Further work emanating from this thesis

Based on ideas and issues raised in my thesis, there are a few important areas which emerge, which require further research. The first, is related to the idea of pan-Islamism, and how it was seen by Muslims in the nineteenth century, themselves. Just as the term '*qaum*', on which there has been some scholarly work recently, continues to be troublesome, even more so is the term pan-Islamism. Despite the extensive use of the term, there has been insufficient work of it in the setting of colonial India. Furthermore, when scholars play with the challenge of linking a late

⁴⁸ There are numerous references to Urdu newspapers in 1876 and 1877, such as the *Nurul Anwar*, *Nasirul Akhbar*, *Panjabi Akhbar*, *Anwarul Akhbar*, etc, which carried reports about Muslim collecting money for such purposes. See *Selections from Vernacular Newspapers published in Punjab, North-Western Provinces, Oudh, Central Provinces, Central India and Rajputana*, 1876, and for 1877.

nineteenth century notion of Jamaluddin Afghani's notion of pan-Islamism, with that of the Khilafat Movement and Gandhi's politics of the 1920s, with the 21st century ideas of Osama bin Laden, there is far greater need to conceptualise and historicise the notion of pan-Islamism.⁴⁹ Perhaps, for our purposes, the best place to start would be in the nineteenth century Urdu archive itself.

The question raised by Ulrike Stark and others, about readership, continues to plague our understanding of how people were responding to what they read, and importantly, who was reading what. In this thesis, I have tried to show in some cases, who was reading what, how, and why they were responding to certain texts, and the impact that these texts were having on some of those who read them. Analysing books in pairs, or a series of pairs, as I have done here briefly, is one such possibility. Moreover, the archive does give us more information than we think exists, and there is need to begin to examine these Urdu tracts afresh. Based on primary published sources, much more can be said about the Urdu readership than has been the case in the past. A simple example of a comparison between the *Oudh Punch* and the *Oudh Ukhbar*, can be a beginning, since material on both is easily available.

Along with the general question of readership, there is also the question of the readership by women. Although Gail Minault⁵⁰ has looked at material from the end of the nineteenth century onwards, I have found Urdu sources from the 1860s which are specifically addressed to, and are for, women. These primers and manuals suggest the existence of some form of a women's readership, an area that still needs to be explored. C M Naim's find of Bibi Ashraf's diary, is just one beginning.⁵¹

⁴⁹ Faisal Devji, 'The Language of Pan-Islamism', Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association of Asian Studies, Atlanta, 3-6 April, 2008.

⁵⁰ Gail Minault, *Secluded Scholars: Women's Education and Muslim Social Reform in Colonial India*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1998.

⁵¹ C M Naim, 'How Bibi Ashraf Learned to Read and Write', in, C M Naim, *Urdu Texts and Contexts: The Selected Essays of C M Naim*, Permanent Black, New Delhi, 2004

Another perennial issue looking through the nineteenth century archive, is the relationship between colonialism and modernity, raised afresh by Seema Alavi in her work on Unani medicine,⁵² which counterpoises the idea of western or modern medicine with a more indigenous tradition. I have tried to look at the notion of *ilm* vs. *talim* – education and knowledge – very briefly, in my thesis, arguing that binaries of tradition and the modern, collapse at many junctures, and hence need to be rethought. The evidence that many of the traditional ulema were emphasising ideas about acquiring knowledge, while some modernist Muslims were merely interested in degrees for jobs, raises political and philosophical questions about education, and about the relationship between traditional groups and modernising tendencies under colonialism.

Another possible area of enquiry which emerges from this thesis, given the development of historical sociology, is the attempt to identify the processes which leads to the moment when the recognition of similarity amongst groups gives rise to an identity or to a community. As identity formation has been an important category of research and of real politics in South Asia, it might be challenging for historians to identify the juncture when communities and identities actually emerge.

One of the key points that this thesis makes, is that a return to the Urdu archive and to a large stack of unexplored published material, is essential to reformulate and rethink our views about north Indian Muslims in the nineteenth century, and subsequently. And, perhaps, more ambitiously, about colonialism and its consequences, as well.

⁵² Seema Alavi, *Islam and Healing: Loss and Recovery of an Indo-Muslim Tradition 1600-1900*, Permanent Black, New Delhi, 2007.

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[The Urdu sources referred to in this thesis, are listed in alphabetical order, listed in order of the forename. Moreover, honorific titles, while listed here, are ignored for the purpose of the alphabetical sequencing. Hence, Viqar ud Daulah Viqar ul Mulk Nawab Mushtaq Hussain Khan Bahadur Intisār Jang Amrohvi, the full name listed on a tract, is listed alphabetically under Mushtaq. Moreover, the honorific titles given on the title, such as ‘Honourable Haji Khan Sahib’ etc, are also listed in this Bibliography, as they were written on the title of a tract.

Since many of these tracts are used here for the very first time as source material, I am also giving the names of the libraries where they are housed, as well as multiple names of libraries if I have seen the tracts in more than one library, for other interested scholars. The library list is as follows: 1) AMU Urdu Stacks, is the closed stack collection in the Maulana Azad Library at the Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh; 2) KBOPL is the Khuda Baksh Oriental Public Library, Patna; 3) ATU-P is the Anjuman Taraqqiye Urdu Pakistan, library in Karachi; 4) ATU-I is the Anjuman Taraqqiye Urdu India, library in New Delhi; 5) NMML, is the Nehru Memorial and Museum Library, New Delhi; 6) NU, is the Nadvatul Ulema library in Lucknow; and 7) OIOC, is the Oriental and India Office Collections, in the British Library, London.]

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