

A  
CRITIQUE  
OF  
HUSAM AL-HARAMAYN

(HOW A FATWA SPLIT THE UMMA)

~AN ABRIDGED & EDITED TRANSLATION OF  
IBARAT-E-AKABIR~



IMAM  
SARFRAZ KHAN SAFDAR

*A*  
*Critique*  
*of*  
*Husam al-Haramayn*  
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Imam Sarfraz Khan Safdar

Obey Allah and His Messenger, and do not quarrel with each other, lest you should lose courage, and your strength depart from you; and be patient. Surely, Allah is with the patient.

Holy Qur'an Surah al-Anfaal:46

Hold fast, all of you, to the cord of Allah, and be not divided. Remember the blessing of Allah upon you: When you were enemies to each other, and He brought your hearts together, so that, you became brothers through His blessing. You were at the brink of a pit of Fire, then He saved you from it. This is how Allah makes His signs clear to you, so that you may take the right path.

Holy Qur'an Surah Ale Imran:103

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## بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

الحمد لله رب العالمين والصلاة والسلام على أشرف الأنبياء والمرسلين ، نبينا محمد وعلى آله وصحبه أجمعين وبعد

### Translators'<sup>1</sup> Introduction

The widespread disunity amongst the Umma today is something that needs to be urgently remedied. One of the most rewarding acts in this age is to unify Muslims, not least because it would also be a means of bringing happiness to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. In a hadith whose chain is declared good by Hafiz al-Iraqi, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: *My life is good for you and my death is good for you. As for my life, I counsel you (by revelation). As for my death (being good for you), your deeds are presented before me on the evening of Monday and Thursday. What I see that is good I praise Allah for it and whatever evil I see I ask Allah for your forgiveness.*<sup>2</sup>

What has viciously split the Muslims of India, since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, was a *fatwa* issued by Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan (1856-1921). It unequivocally declared several prominent Indian scholars to be disbelievers for committing blasphemy against Allah Almighty and His Messenger ﷺ. This *fatwa*, published in 1906 under the name *Husam al-Haramayn* (The Sword of the Two Sanctuaries), is one of the most debilitating obstacles to the unity of Muslims in the Indian sub-continent today. It not only causes Muslims to have mistrust of their fellow brothers and sisters, it literally enables individuals to excommunicate millions of Muslims merely by association. We will let Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan tell the reader in his own words the far-reaching implications of his *fatwa*:

Rashid Ahmad [Gangohi] and his followers, Khalil Ahmad Saharanpuri, Ashraf Ali etc. there is no doubt, or room for suspicion, in their disbelief. In fact, any person who has any kind of doubt about their *kufir*, rather in any way hesitates in calling them *kafir*, there is no doubt in his disbelief [also].<sup>3</sup>

In another work he says:

Whether they are Wahhabis, Qadianis, Deobandis, Secularists (*nichari*), Chakarawalis; all are apostates, be he a man or woman, that individual's nikah anywhere in the world, be it with a Muslim or a disbeliever or another apostate, be the person he is marrying a human or an animal, that nikah will be utterly void and pure fornication. Any children born thereof will be illegitimate.<sup>4</sup>

To give the impression that this unprecedented declaration of disbelief was watertight, Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan pursued the leading Muftis and Imams of Mecca and Madina – which also explains the choice of his title – to counter-sign it. Not being aware of the accuracy of the contents, belatedly these luminaries signed their names. On returning to India, this *fatwa* lit the flames of sectarianism that have now been raging for over a hundred years. The tragic reality, however, is that not only was the basis of this so called *fatwa* bogus as one could imagine, the scholars who initially signed it, upon discovering that they had been deceived, immediately revoked their endorsements.

These scholars were aggrieved that a man they had trusted used them to carry out a personal vendetta. It is also telling that at the same time that Mawlana Ahmad Raza went to Arabia –for the purpose of garnering attestations, why is it he only collected a fraction of the signatures of the scholars. There were numerous other well-known scholars of Mecca and Madina who refused to sign *Husam al-Haramayn* discerning the dubiousness that surrounded its petitioner.

<sup>1</sup> This translation was undertaken by a group of Ulama based in the UK.

<sup>2</sup> Imam Nur al-Din al-Haythami also rates the hadith Sahih in *Majma' al-Zawaid*, vol. 8, p. 427, Hadith number 14250.

<sup>3</sup> Khan, Ahmad Raza, *Fatawa Africa*, p. 109.

<sup>4</sup> *Malfoozat Ahmad Raza Khan*, part 2, p. 100.

Shaykh Husayn Ahmad Madani states that the fact that so many of the names of these prominent scholars are missing from *Husam al-Haramayn* is itself a proof of its falsity.<sup>5</sup> He records some of their names:

- [1] Shaykh Yasin al-Misri who would teach Fiqh and Tasawwuf near the Gate of Mercy in Masjid al-Nabawi in the morning.
- [2] Shaykh Abdullah al-Nablusi who taught Hanbali Fiqh in Masjid Nabwi.
- [3] Shaykh Abd al-Hakeem al-Bukhari who would teach in the Haram of Makka.
- [4] Sayyid Mulla Sanqar al-Bukhari.
- [5] Shaykh Sayyid Amin Ridwan al-Shafi. He would authorise students in *Dalail al-Khayrat* and teach Shafi fiqh.
- [6] Shaykh Alafandi Mamoon Baree. He taught Hanafi fiqh in Masjid Nabwi.
- [7] Shaykh Falih al-Zahiri who due to his failing health, taught students in his home.
- [8] Qazi Daam `Azza.
- [9] Shaykh Isma`il Afandi.
- [10] Shaykh Sayyid Abdullah As`ad.
- [11] Shaykh Musa al-Azhari.
- [12] Shaykh Muhammad Mahdi.
- [13] Mawlana Hammad Afandi.
- [14] Shaykh Abu Bakr Afandi.
- [15] Shaykh Umar Afandi.
- [16] Shaykh Umar al-Kurdi.
- [17] Shaykh Yaseen al-Shafi.
- [18] Shaykh Ahmad al-Sanadi.
- [19] Shaykh Ahmad Afandi.
- [20] Shaykh Ahmad al-Khayali and many others.

As for the scholars who did initially sign the *fatwa*, many of them explicitly made their attestations conditional. They had the foresight to write, *if what you are saying is true then this is so*. The mark of a reputable scholar is that he never relies on the mere ascription of beliefs of the opposing party hence the use of such qualifications. Unfortunately, the masses fail to appreciate these finer details. And it is in the interest of the inveterate opponent to gloss over them. Nevertheless, the fact that this condition exists in the attestation of the most prominent attester, Shaykh Ahmad al-Barzanji<sup>6</sup>, clearly suggests that they signed the *fatwa* based not on their own research, but on trust. These are the actual words of Shaykh al-Barzanji as they still appear in *Husam al-Haramayn*: “*This is the ruling regarding these sects and individuals on the condition that these statements are established from them*”<sup>7</sup>.

هذا حكم هؤلاء الفرق و الاشخاص ان ثبتت عنهم هذه المقالات الشنيعة.

Eventually, the facts did come out and the scholars, who had previously attested to *Husam al-Haramayn*, signed a later treatise that validated the beliefs of the scholars of Deoband.<sup>8</sup> This treatise called *Al-Muhannad `ala al-Mufannad* was authored by Shaykh Khalil Ahmad Saharanpuri, a former teacher in al-Masjid al-Nabwi who was also the student of Hazrat Mawlana Rashid Ahmad Gangohi – one of those excommunicated by the *fatwa*. This work sets out the beliefs of the Ulama of Deoband in their own words and thus leaves no room for doubt the blasphemies ascribed to them were false. Unfortunately, there are some elements amongst the Muslims today who insist on upholding this erroneous *fatwa*, even though a hundred years have now passed. This is what has made the publishing of this work so important.

<sup>5</sup> Madani, Husain Ahmad, *Al-Shihab al-Thaqib*, p.176, Idara-e-Tahqiqat al-Sunna, 2009.

<sup>6</sup> The Mufti of the Shafi scholars in Madina.

<sup>7</sup> Khan, Ahmad Raza, *Husam al-Haramayn*, p. 129 [Arabic version available from [www.alahazratnetwork.org](http://www.alahazratnetwork.org)]. Often, for obvious reasons, the urdu translations of *Husam al-Haramayn* fail to translate this sentence.

<sup>8</sup> Deoband is actually a town in India. A seminary teaching orthodox Islamic teachings was established there at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This *madrasa*, which still operates, is called *Dar al-Ulum Deoband*. Those who graduate from it or promote its way and ethos are given the locative Deobandis. Neither the school, nor the scholars linked to it, have carved out a new Islam. This has never been proven to be so. Thus it cannot be said to be a sect is not a sect. Its call is to the practice of Sunni Islam. Thus if individuals go by the description of Deobandi, it is not too dissimilar to how a graduate from Oxford University is called an Oxfordian.

The case of Shaykh Ahmad al-Barzanji is particularly interesting. Of all the signatories, his was amongst the most important attestations and is much vaunted by Bareilvis. The details of how this attestation was obtained and the subsequent unambiguous rejection of Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan is less well known. Shaykh Husain Ahmad<sup>9</sup> relates that during a meeting with Shaykh Ahmad al-Barzanji, the latter personally told him of how his signature was virtually prised from him. He told how, at a friend's home, Ahmad Raza Khan arrived to discuss the subject of '*Ilm al-Ghayb* [Knowledge of the Unseen] with him. This discussion occurred after Shaykh Ahmad al-Barzanji had signed Ahmad Raza Khan's *fatwa*. On this night, it became clear to Ahmad Shaykh al-Barzanji that Ahmad Raza Khan's own belief in relation to the Prophet's ﷺ knowledge of the Unseen did not concur with that of the *Ahl al-Sunna*. Shaykh al-Barzanji concluded straight away that the *fatwa* was dubious. He immediately decided to have his endorsement withdrawn. He requested for his stamp and signature to be erased. This would have been a significant blow to Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan's ultimate plan. The latter, however, begged Shaykh al-Barzanji not to withdraw his name at this late stage.<sup>10</sup> Shaykh al-Barzanji relented because he still did not know the reality on the ground and, secondly, as he himself said to Mawlana Ahmad Raza, "My attestation will help you naught as it is a conditional statement."<sup>11</sup>

In addition to this, there are other historical documents also that corroborate the underhand way in which this *fatwa* was written. When the full picture came to light, Shaykh al-Barzanji wrote a work on '*Ilm al-Ghayb* making clear the position of the *Ahl al-Sunna*. This Arabic treatise is called *Ghayat al-Mamool Fi Tatimmat Manhaj al-Wusool Fi Tahqiq `ilm al-Rasool*.<sup>12</sup> This historical document written in response to Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan's views contains a clear rejection of Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan himself. Among the attesters to Shaykh al-Barzanji's treatise was Shaykh Abd al-Qadir al-Shilbi, a teacher in al-Masjid al-Nabvi. He was also one of the scholars misled by Ahmad Raza Khan. The unambiguous words of Shaykh Abd al-Qadir al-Shilbi's attestation (printed at the end of *Ghayat al-Mamool*) are an incontrovertible proof that these leading Imams came to view Mawlana Ahmad Raza negatively and regretted their trust of him:

When the venerable and ingenious Shaykh Ahmad Raza Khan Breilvi rode upon the head of disputation and wore inside his armour of intellectual discussion the sword of obstinate wrangling in order to prove his patently false claims and the prattle of his baseless views....

Clearly, one does not use words like "prattle" and "patently false claims" to describe the writing of the reformer of the age and polymath (*mujaddid `allamah*). It, rather, reflects the resentment they felt towards Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan for betraying their trust. Here is the original Arabic from *Ghayat al-Mamool*:

و لما كان الشيخ الفاضل الامعي احمد رضا خان البريلوي قد امتطى هامة المناضلة و لبس في رهان المباحثة لامة المجادلة في اثبات دعاويه الواضحة البطلان و خرفات اقاويله السافلة البرهان... .

#### *Muslim Scholars Authorities Reject Husam al-Haramayn*

It is a fact that all the Sunni non-Deobandi religious authorities present in India at the time of this controversy rejected Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan's *fatwa*. For example, one of the centres of traditional learning in India was Farangi Mahall, Lucknow. To shore up support for his *fatwa*, Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan sent a letter to Imam Abd al-Bari al-Farangi Mahalli. The latter wrote back:

Our major scholars [of Farangi Mahall] did not declare the scholars of Deoband to be disbelievers. For this reason they have never been deprived of the rights that belong to the people of Islam.<sup>13</sup>

The case was the same for the other centres of Islamic learning in India. Perhaps the most historically reputed place for Islamic learning was Delhi. The legendary Madrasa Rahimiyya was based in Delhi. The city had become a hub for Islamic learning. Great Imams like Shah Abd al-

<sup>9</sup> A long time teacher in al-Masjid al-Nabvi who later served as the President of the Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind until 1957.

<sup>10</sup> Madani, Husayn Ahmad, *Al-Shihab al-Thaqib*, p.173, Idara-e-Tahqiqat al-Sunna, 2009.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Repeatedly published by Arab Publishing Houses, Dar al-Masharee's edition is available here:

<http://www.neelwafurat.com/itempage.aspx?id=lbb197654-169093&search=books> .

<sup>13</sup> Raza Khan, Ahmad, *Al-Taari al-Daari Li-Hafawaat Abd al-Bari*, p. 16.

Aziz Dhelavi, Mawlana Shah Muhammad Ishaq (*Muhaddith-e-Dhelvi*), Mawlana Rashid al-Din Khan and Mawlana Mamluk Ali all taught here. The issue was presented to the scholars of Delhi of that time in the Madrasa Aminiyya, the Madrasa Abd al-Rab and the Madrasa Husain Baksh. They also declared the scholars of Deoband to be innocent of the calumnies ascribed to them.<sup>14</sup> In every major city in the Indian sub-continent, scholars signed similar *fatwas* absolving the scholars of Deoband. Dr. Khalid Mahmood has recorded the names of these signatories in his masterwork on the Bareilwi movement.<sup>15</sup> A non-Deobandi scholar worthy of special mention is Mawlana Fazlur Rahman Ganjmuradabadi. His case is very interesting because Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan considered him to be a leading Islamic saint. But he too continued to hold the scholars of Deoband in the highest esteem.<sup>16</sup>

#### *Bareilvi Scholars Testify Against Ahmad Raza Khan*

One actually finds several leading Bareilvi scholars also rejected this infamous *fatwa*. Take the example of arguably the most gifted scholar from this fraternity in recent years: Pir Karam Shah al-Azhari (1918-1998). Mawlana Karam Shah hailed from a religious family of much prestige. Both his father and grandfather were religious authorities in their time. Pir Karam Shah studied under Bareilwi scholars and excelled in his studies. He later studied abroad in one of the oldest Islamic universities in the Muslim World, Al-Azhar University in Egypt. He also served as a judge in Pakistan's Supreme Court. To the displeasure of Bareilvis, on the issue of the *fatwa*, he parted ways with the supporters of Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan, causing many to declare him an apostate per Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan's advice, *whoever doubts their disbelief and their final punishment is also a disbeliever*. A Bareilvi, Syed Zuber Tabassum, once tried to intimidate Mawlana Pir Karam Shah to cave into endorsing the *fatwa*. Despite not having the academic credentials or the rank of Pir Karam Shah, he insisted that the latter declare Mawlana Qasim Nanotwi (the founder of Dar al-Ulum Deoband) a disbeliever. The terse unwavering response of Mawlana Pir Karam Shah was: *ma kisi musulman ko kafir nahi kahta*, which means: "I do not do not call any Muslim a disbeliever."<sup>17</sup>

Another Bareilvi scholar who dared to speak the truth was Khawaja Qamr al-Din Siyalvi (1906–1981). He writes:

I have seen *Tahzir al-Nas*. I consider Mawlana Qasim Nanotwi to be upon the highest level of Islam. I feel pride that his name is in my chain of hadith narration. In elaborating the meaning of the Finality of Prophethood, the minds of the objectors did not understand the depth to which his mind reached. They misunderstood a supposition to be a factual statement.<sup>18</sup>

Another towering figure for all Muslims of India was the saint Pir Mehr Ali Shah (1859-1937). Some of the issues that were raised by Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan were presented to Pir Mehr Ali Shah. Like the other Sunni guides and leaders, he refrained from making negative inferences, rather he said:

In my view the opposing sides are both from the noble scholars of *Ahl al-Sunna wal-Jama'at*. And both consider mentioning the Messenger of Allah ﷺ with reverential titles to be obligatory and necessary.<sup>19</sup>

#### *Acclaim For Deobandi Scholars In The Arab World*

The modern Arab scholars have roundly acknowledged the profound legacy of the senior scholars of Deoband. They were not unaware of the *takfiri*-politics that so ferociously ravaged Muslim unity in India. Had the disbelief been an open and shut case, as it was purported to be by Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan, they would never have lauded the scholars of Deoband so emphatically. These include authorities like Shaykh Abd al-Fattah Abu Ghudda, Shaykh Wahba al-Zuhayli, Shaykh Zahid al-Kawthari, Habib Umar.

<sup>14</sup> Mahmood, Khalid, *Mutaala-e-Bareilwiat*, vol. 4, pp. 74-75.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid, vol.1, pp. 121-122.

<sup>17</sup> These words are related by Syed Zuber Tabasum himself here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vuUgiBswRI4> .

<sup>18</sup> Atukalvi, Kamil al-Din, *Dhol Ki Awaaz*, p. 116.

<sup>19</sup> Ahmad, Fayz, *Mehr-e-Muneer Sawanih-e-Hayat Pir Mehr Ali Shah*, p. 454, 1997.

*The Person of Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan*

The aforementioned details help put this controversy into perspective. They also inevitably show the architect of the *fatwa* in very different light to the one presented by Bareilvis. So let us pause briefly to look at the historical detail of the life of Ahmad Raza Khan. The first thing that stands out is his abnormal desire for argumentation and discord. Few people are aware that it was not just the Deobandi scholars that he denounced. There were many other Sunni scholars, accepted as Sunni by Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan himself, who received the full force of his ire.

[1] One of the greatest scholars produced by the Indian sub-continent was the hadith master Imam Abd al-Hayy al-Lucknowi. In recent years the Syrian Hadith Master Shaykh Abd al-Fattah Abu Ghudda, has published many of his works in order for the scholars of the Arab world to benefit from the Imam's knowledge. Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan, however, spoke ill of him too and wrote a treatise against him after his death.<sup>20</sup>

[2] Sayyid 'Ayn al-Qudaat (1858-1925) was the foremost student of Imam al-Lucknowi. Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan devoted a whole treatise in denouncing him. It was called, "The Inclining Of The Perfect Guides To The False 'Ayn al-Qudaat", (*mayl al-hudaat al-kamil li-'ayn al-Qudaat al-baatil*).

[3] Another towering figure amongst the Indian scholars was Imam 'Abd al-Shakur Lucknowi (1876-1962). He was the student of the aforementioned 'Ayn al-Qudaat. His incredible services to the Din, include countering the spread of Shiaism, producing excellent works in the Urdu language and refuting non-Madhabism. Islamic circles of all Sunni persuasions recognise his immense religious contribution. Ahmad Raza Khan however mined his books to find something by which he could excoriate him. The most he could find was a single passage in volume two of his famous work on jurisprudence called '*Ilm al-Fiqh*'. The Imam, a Hanafi jurist, opined on p. 91, that if a prayer leader (*Imam*) followed the rules of his own school in offering the prayer, then even if the prayer became technically invalid<sup>21</sup> according to the school of those who followed this Imam, a prayer offered in this manner would be valid as the difference is minor. Normally, if scholars differ in their views, they discuss the issue academically and leave it at that. Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan, on the other hand considered this so heinous that he berated this scholar by referring to him as a "*wahhabi*" and "*ghayr muqallid*"<sup>22</sup> both of which are degrading terms used for a person who does not adhere to one of the four Islamic schools of law.

[4] Another recognised religious Sunni authority in India was Mawlana 'Abd al-Muqtadir Badayuni (1866-1916). He also was not a Deobandi, but was declared a disbeliever by Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan. In a treatise devoted to refuting him, he writes: "Without any doubt and by consensus there are a minimum of five rulings of *kufr* established against him."<sup>23</sup>

[5] Another non-Deobandi scholar was Imam 'Abd al-Bari Farangi Mahalli (1878-1926). He was a highly respected scholar with many specialist works to his name. He was also the founder of Jami'at al-'Ulama. Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan issued a *fatwa* of *kufr* against the Imam in a book called, *Al-Taari al-Daari li-Hafawaat 'Abd al-Baari*.<sup>24</sup>

[6] As Dar al-Ulum Deoband came in to existence, another group of scholars laid the foundation of a madrasa in the city of Lucknow by the name of *Nadwat al-'Ulama* (The Assembly of Theologians).<sup>25</sup> It was also a solid authority for traditional Sunni learning. Its scholars adhered to

<sup>20</sup> *Imam Ahl-e-Sunnat*, p. 418.

<sup>21</sup> For example, if an Imam's papercut began to bleed during the prayer, then if he is following the Shafi' school the prayer is not affected. But according to the Hanafi school bleeding nullifies the ablution which is a condition of the validity of prayer.

<sup>22</sup> Al-Farooqi, Abd al-Alee, *Imam Ale-Sunnat Hazrat Allamah Abd al-Shakoor Farooqi*, p. 418, Dar al-Kitab.

<sup>23</sup> Khan, Ahmad Raza, *Sad al-Firar*, p. 1.

<sup>24</sup> Al-Farooqi, Abd al-Alee, *Imam Ale-Sunnat Hazrat Allamah Abd al-Shakoor Farooqi*, p. 418, Dar al-Kitab

<sup>25</sup> It is for this reason that the word "sect" is an inaccurate description for Deobandis or Nadwis. The scholars who graduate from an institute take its name in the same manner as a graduate of Al-Azhar University is known as an *Azhari* and a graduate of Oxford University is known as an *Oxfordian*. These appellations have no more significance than that. These names are not designed to carve out a new sect separate to Orthodox/Sunni Islam.

the Hanafi and Maturidi traditions of Sunni Islam. The founder, Mawlana Muhammad Ali Mongeri, was also authorised in Tasawwuf (Islamic spirituality) by the undisputed Sufi Imam of the age Mawlana Fazlur Rahman Ganjmuradabadi. Though mutual respect and love has always existed between Nadwa and Deoband, the Nadwis are considered an independent religious endeavour that focuses more on the promotion of Arabic language and literature. What is revealing is that, before the *fatwa* of disbelief against the Deoband scholars was issued, Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan and his followers were already calling some of the scholars of *Nadwat al-Ulama* disbelievers around 1896.<sup>26</sup> Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan and his followers railed against this new madrasa, calling it *Nadwat al-Juhalaa* (The Assembly of Ignoramuses).<sup>27</sup> Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan, losing all sense of proportion, expended over forty treatises on condemning Nadwa.<sup>28</sup> Sayyid Muhammad al-Hasni records that in the impoverished India of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, a fund of 70,000 rupees was set up by his cohorts to oppose Nadwa.

The above examples are only a small part of the wide-ranging hate campaign launched by Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan. Its aim was to savage the unity of the Muslims. Those Muslim religious leaders who take these pronouncements seriously continue to spread the poison amongst the Muslim masses. Take for example the later Bareilvi scholar Mawlana Mahbub Ali Khan. In a *fatwa* he writes:

To socialise with the apostates, to maintain friendships, to attend their marriages, to eat with them, to pray with them, to pray their funeral prayer is forbidden. Whoever of you unites and makes friends with these apostates, he will be counted of them.<sup>29</sup>

The following incident is just the latest evil consequence of not tackling the *fatwa* of Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan. A Muslim man passed away in India. His loved ones performed the funeral prayer and burial. Some days after the burial it emerged that the Imam who led the prayer had graduated from a Deobandi seminary. A Bareilwi Mufti considered this sufficient to warrant a *fatwa* that declared all two hundred attendees at the funeral prayer to be disbelievers. And now that “they had lost their faith”, their marriages (*nikah*) simultaneously also became void. Thus each person was required to repeat the Testification of Faith and remarry his former wife. The Times of India reported this incident with the headline: “200 marriages redone in UP after a fatwa”<sup>30</sup>. This today is what Muslims have reduced Islam to. This is the ‘service’ they are undertaking on behalf of their Messenger ﷺ. Islam deserves more than this. Islam is a monumental gift to mankind. This religion came to elevate mankind – to raise it above hate, superstition and inhumanity. May Allah Ta‘ala guide the Umma to true brotherhood and protect it from those who sow seeds of hate and division. Ameen.

<sup>26</sup> Al-Hasni, Sayyid Muhammad, *Sirat Mawlana Muhammad Ali Mongeri*, p. 172, Majlis Nashriyat-e-Islam, Karachi.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid, p. 175.

<sup>29</sup> Cited in Dr. Khalid Mahmood’s eight volume encyclopaedic analysis of Breilvism, *Mutaala-e-Breilviet*, vol. 1, p.89.

<sup>30</sup> Website: <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/200-weddings-redone-in-UP-after-a-fatwa/articleshow/1960258.cms> .

## Author's Introduction

All praise is for Allah, the Lord of the Worlds, and peace and blessings upon he after whom there is no prophet and regarding whom Allah Most High said, *“And We raised high your name,”* (94:4) and on his family, companions, wives and all of his followers till the Day of Reckoning. Thereafter, we say that there is no deity save Allah and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah ﷺ.

### *The Love of The Messenger ﷺ is The Basis of Faith (Iman)*

In the pure heart of the believer, love for the Creator of the worlds – the real Benefactor and the Master of Great Magnificence – is more important than anything else. Allah Most High says, *But those who believe are most firm in their love for Allah* (2:165). Those who believe, their greatest love is for Allah Most High. After this, the love of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ strikes the heart of a believer like the waves of a deep ocean. In comparison to this love, the love and confidence that may exist for any other individual, has no significance. Nor will the believer consider it worthy of attention. This love is not just on the level of passion, rather it reaches the furthest limit of confirming the truth and submission and firm belief. This is the pivot of faith and the means of salvation. The outward manifestation of this love is through properly obeying the Prophet ﷺ. The level of love that is raging in the heart will determine the level of obedience that will be demonstrated by the lover.

Anas ﷺ narrates that the Prophet ﷺ said, “None of you will be a believer until I become more beloved to him than his parents, his children and all of the people.”<sup>31</sup> The noble Prophet ﷺ has mentioned in this authentic hadith that a fundamental condition and clearest sign of a believer is that a person has more love for the Prophet ﷺ than his father, mother, wife, children and all of mankind. If this, however, is not the case, then a person cannot consider himself a believer (We seek Allah’s Ta‘ala refuge from that).

It is also mentioned in the narration of Abu Hurairah ﷺ that the Prophet ﷺ said, “I swear by He in Whose hand is my life, none of you can be a believer until I become more beloved to him than his parents and children.”<sup>32</sup> The saying of the Prophet ﷺ is totally true without him having to take an oath; he ﷺ has, however, mentioned the oath to stress the injunction.

There is also in the narration of Umar ﷺ as mentioned by ‘Abdullah ibn Hisham ﷺ, “We were with the Prophet ﷺ and he was holding the hand of ‘Umar ibn al-Khattab ﷺ. ‘Umar then said to him ﷺ, ‘You are more beloved to me than everything except myself.’ The Prophet ﷺ said, ‘No—I swear by He in Whose hand is my soul—until I become more to you than yourself.’ ‘Umar said to him, ‘I swear by Allah, you are now more beloved to me than myself.’ So the Prophet ﷺ said, ‘Now it is, O ‘Umar.’”<sup>33</sup>

Imam al-Nawawi comments on Anas’ ﷺ hadith quoting the hadith scholar Ibn Battal, “Surely, he who has perfected faith knows that the right of the Prophet ﷺ is greater than the right of his father, son and all people because he ﷺ has rescued us from the fire and guided us away from deviance.”<sup>34</sup>

In the eyes of the believer, what greater pleasure and success is there than to be saved from the anger and displeasure of Allah Most High and the fire of Hell, and to come out from the abyss of deviance on to the path of guidance?

It is without doubt that great benefits and advantages can at times be gained through parents and children. However, to be pulled out of the bottomless well of misguidance and brought to the

<sup>31</sup> *Sahih al-Bukhari*, vol. 1, p. 7; *Sahih Muslim*, vol. 1, p. 49.

<sup>32</sup> *Sahih al-Bukhari*, vol. 1, p. 7.

<sup>33</sup> *Sahih al-Bukhari*, vol. 2, p. 981.

<sup>34</sup> Commentary of *Sahih Muslim* by Imam Nawawi, vol. 1, p. 49.

garden of guidance and thus forever saved from the fire of Hell and an array of punishments is the ultimate felicity and success. The Muslim Umma received this through the Prophet's ﷺ hard work and struggling. When the Umma has gained such a great treasure by means of him ﷺ then to have love for the Prophet ﷺ is not just a requisite of the Shariah, it is also, necessarily, the most natural feeling. It is inevitable that one would have greater love for the Prophet ﷺ than all other friends and relations. This love thus is also the most elementary component of having real faith.

Imam al-Nawawi quotes these words of Qadi 'Ayyad, "When that which we have mentioned is clear, it becomes obvious that the reality of faith will not be complete except through that. Faith cannot be sound except by raising the worth and station of the Prophet ﷺ above every parent, child, do-gooder and benefactor. He who does not believe that and believes something different is not a believer."

To explain, the love one has for parents, friends and relatives is connected – either through a means or without means – to the body and self-interest. However, love and connection to the Prophet ﷺ is at once connected through both the body and the soul. The effect of this love and commitment is that a person perfects this life and the life hereafter. The reality is that the zeal and excellent states of the heart that are awoken through the love of the Prophet ﷺ, can never be experienced by those whose love is of a superficial nature. Their hearts are immersed in the love of other animate and inanimate objects – in flowing rivers, blooming meadows, singing birds, blossoming and half closed flowers, the lower and higher parts of valleys, the expanding heights of mountains and the slopes of low-lying lands. The enemies of Islam wish to delete the ecstasy-creating state of this love from the memories of the believers. However, instead of obliterating it, with every breath, it surges forth even more full of vitality.

#### *Reason for publication*

The reason for writing this book is that when this sinful writer's books refuting *shirk* and *bid'ah* reached various shores, places and areas, the people of truth greatly praised them on account of the solid proofs, sound objections and clear language [therein]. This is only the kindness and grace of Allah Most High, otherwise, I know who I am. Many letters from erudite and righteous noble scholars and students of sacred knowledge were received saying that in the same way that you have written about various issues, you should write something to clarify those passages of the senior Deobandi scholars (may Allah increase their numbers) on account of which the foremost saint of the Bareilvi group, Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan, his students and followers declared them to be disbelievers. This so that the reality of what the scholars of Deoband said and what Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan and his followers inferred from those statements becomes clear for those who fear Allah Almighty and seek the truth.

In addition to being afflicted by certain ailments, the writer is preoccupied with teaching duties. However, after much insistence of some elders and friends, I felt compelled to undertake the task. Thus to fulfil the request of my elders I am writing this book. In writing this book, we have tried not to employ harsh language and a hot-tempered tone such as that adopted by the Ahmad Raza Khan and those who follow his way because a harsh language, apart from being very reprehensible, it leads a person to the fire and is a means of punishment in the grave.

The companion Mu'ad ibn Jabal ﷺ once asked the Prophet ﷺ, would we be held responsible for what we utter with the tongue? The Prophet ﷺ replied, "People will be cast into the fire on their faces or nostrils because of the speech of their tongues".<sup>35</sup>

There is also another hadith in which a man was being punished in the grave. The Prophet ﷺ explained that it was because he would trouble people by his tongue and would backbite them.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>35</sup> *Al-Mustadrak 'ala al-Sahihayn*, vol. 4, p. 287—al-Hakim and al-Dhahabi said this hadith is *sahih*. It is also mentioned as such in *Al-Mishkat*, vol. 1, p. 14.

<sup>36</sup> *Mawarid al-Zam'an*, p. 64 and p. 199.

It should be borne in mind that in order to fully expose the lies of Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan, the senior scholars of Deoband have actually written many books, treatises and articles. There are powerful refutations like: [1] *Sayf-i-Imani bar Maka'id-i-Firqa-i-Rada Khani*, [2] *Sayf-i-'Ali bar Gardan-i-Ghawi*, [3] *Faysala Khusumat az Mehkamah Dar al-Qudat*, [4] *Al-Muhannad 'ala al-Mufannad*, [5] *Al-Shihab al-Thaqib*, [6] *Al-Sihab al-Midrar*, [7] *Tawdih al-Bayan*, [8] *Tazkiyat al-Khawtir*, [9] *al-Kawkab al-Yamani*, [10] *Aina-i-Rada Khaniyyat*, [11] *Al-Jannah li Ahl al-Sunnah*, [12] *Maqami' al-Hadid*, [13] *Naye Mujaddid ka Naya Iman*, [14] *Fath-i-Bareli ka Dilkash Nazzara*, [15] *Qat' al-Watin*, [16] *Faysla Kun Munazrah*, [17] *Ma'rikat al-Qalam*, [18] *Sa'iqah Asmani bar Firqa-i-Rada Khani*, [19] *Al-Barahin al-Qati'ah*, [20] *Al-Khatm 'ala Lisan al-Khasm*, [21] *Al-Burhan fi Radd al-Buhtan* etc.

Some of the books of Mufti Kifayatullah, such as *Dalil al-Khayrat* and *Nafa'is-i-Marghubah*, would also be of immense benefit for students. However, many have ceased to be available in Pakistan, and the owners of private copies do not part with them easily. There is also the fact that these works are difficult to read due to their length and scholarly language and use of logic – all of which makes benefiting from them beyond the reach of the average person.

The Bareilvis generally make these statements of the senior scholars of Deoband the basis for considering them *kafir*. No discussion is free of these statements. They see no other implement of war more effective for inciting the masses and playing with their religious sentiments than these statements.

For example, to indulge the uneducated masses, the Qadiyanis keep to the forefront the lengthy academic issue of whether our master 'Isa ﷺ is alive, even though they have to eat their own words on this subject. But it is a ruse to avoid the real issue which is whether Mirza Ghulam Qadiyani is a true prophet or not. This is the same ploy being used by the Bareilvis. They churn out these statements of the scholars of Deoband like water to shield them from the valid criticism of their innovations and false practices. In light of this, we will explain the reality of these main statements in the rest of this introduction. Then the other controversial statements will be taken in the rest of the book. Once the noble readers have understood the meanings and inferences of the main statements causing objection, it will not at all be difficult to understand the reality behind the other issues raised.

#### *Unlawful Extremism & Nonsensical Takfir*

The temperament of Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan was characterised by immense zeal and bigotry. There are clear proofs of this in his passages. No noble individual let alone a scholar would embark on the path he adopted in carrying out the *takfir* (declaring someone a disbeliever) of his opposition, particularly the scholars of Deoband. His method was to misrepresent their passages by showing them to be contrary to what they actually meant and what the context plainly suggested. This was done to enable him to issue his infamous *fatwa* of disbelief against them. This *fatwa* then helped him to cast his net of *kufir* even wider and he declared those who refrained from doing their *takfir* or doubting it, to also be disbelievers. This took place even though the senior scholars of Deoband shouted at the top of their voices and wrote that the meanings that you explain and have understood are not our intended meanings nor do we consider them correct, in fact we consider them to be heresy.

Justice and integrity demands that Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan should have stopped from his *takfir* and sought pardon from the scholars of Deoband. He should have publicly stated that, *I misunderstood you and now I retract my previous mistaken fatwa*. Instead, he remained upon his stubbornness and went on declaring them disbelievers until his last breath. He writes:

Ghulam Ahmad Qadiyani, Rashid Ahmad and whoever follows them, such as Khalil Ahmad Saharanpuri and Ashraf 'Ali etc, there is no doubt in their *kufir* and no scope for doubt. Rather, there is also no doubt in the *kufir* of he who doubts their *kufir* or stops from calling them *kafir* in any way whatsoever.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>37</sup> *Husam al-Haramayn*, p. 131; *Fatawa Africa* p. 109.

The meaning of this is that, apart from some Bareilvis who follow Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan in this *takfir*, the rest of the Bareilvis – in light of this *fatwa* – are also *kafir*. This is because there are many Bareilvis who do not carry out the *takfir* of these senior scholars of Deoband and there are many others who abstain from calling them *kafir*.

He writes at another place:

Nadhir Hasan Dehlavi, Amir Ahmad Sehaswani, Amir Hasan Sehaswani, Qasim Nanotwi, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad Qadiani, Rashid Ahmad Gangohi, Ashraf Ali Thanawi and all of their adherents, followers, devotees and those who praise them are through the consensus of the notable scholars *kafir*. And those who do not consider them to be *kafir* and doubt their *kufir* are also, without doubt, *kafir*.<sup>38</sup>

It is a well-known reality that the intellectual, spiritual, socio-political services undertaken by the senior Deobandi scholars have been, are being, and will continue to be *insha-Allah*, lauded and honoured all over the Muslim world. In India, Afghanistan, Turkey, Egypt, Pakistan, Iran etc. In both the Arab and non-Arab lands, one will hardly find a Muslim country where the academic services of these scholars have not been commended. However, in light of Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan's oppressive *fatwa*, all of these people are *kafir* for choosing not to follow his *fatwa*.

Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan even emphasises this point in a subheading in his *Fatawa Africa*; namely: *A Final Appeal To The Muslims In Regards To The Deobandis*. He then continues:

Those who do not call them *kafir*, those who pay respect to them, those who bear in mind any teacher-student, family or friendship ties are also from among them and are *kafir* like them. They shall be tied together with one rope on the Day of Reckoning.<sup>39</sup>

At the present time, in Pakistan, India and other places – where there are people of the Bareilvi mindset – you cannot mention a family or community that does not have some kind of relationship or friendship with a person who follows the Deobandi school (*maslak*). In some cases there will even exist a teacher-student kind of relationship. Nevertheless, on account of this magnanimous *fatwa* all of these people would have to be considered *kafir*. Give thought to whether anyone could be saved from this sweeping *fatwa*. Can any lay Muslim who is connected to any group be safe from the effects of this royal decree? What greater proof is needed to show Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan's bias and obstinacy? Any fair-minded and God-fearing individual cannot but be repelled by such an unjust *fatwa*. If Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan would have restricted his oppression to this *fatwa* then it would have been only one injustice, but he has not yet finished:

Whether they are Wahhabis, Qadianis, Deobandis, Secularists (*nichari*), Chakarawalis; all are apostates, be he a man or woman, that individual's nikah anywhere in the world, be it with a Muslim or a disbeliever or another apostate, be the person he is marrying a human or an animal, that nikah will be utterly void and pure fornication (*zina khalis*). Any children born thereof will be illegitimate (*wald al-zina*).<sup>40</sup>

The above text is another *fatwa* issued by Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan. Here, having bid farewell to integrity and honesty, he now bids farewell to basic decency. If the purpose was to only issue a *fatwa* then it would have been enough to say that these people are *kafir* and apostates and marrying them is wrong. However, how could the resentment that was pounding in his heart be quenched by so few words? Would he have felt peace without explicitly mentioning the words fornication and illegitimate children? What is worse is that he crossed the boundary of humanity and included *nikah* with animals, which include dogs, donkeys and even pigs. Let the Bareilvis themselves now ponder that whoever is married to a Wahhabi or Deobandi woman, or whose sister, daughter, granddaughter, paternal aunt, maternal aunt, close relative is married to a Deobandi or Wahhabi, then in light of this oppressive *fatwa* such matrimonies are absolute adultery and the offspring illegitimate.

<sup>38</sup> *Irfan-i-Shariat*, part 2, p. 29; also see *Malfuzat*, part 1, p. 115.

<sup>39</sup> *Fatawa Africa*, p. 115.

<sup>40</sup> *Malfuzat*, part 2, P. 105 of the Lucknow print and p. 100 of the Lead Press, Karachi.

If the Bareilvis truly believe in and love Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan and consider him a scholar who stands for the truth, then they would need to forego their own Islam and the Islam of their children, friends and relatives. Are they really apostates and adulterers and their children illegitimate? This or cast away this vile *fatwa* once and for all. It is left now to the Bareilvis to choose between the two options. For if we were to recommend, then there would be objections.

The great scholar Mawlana Manzur Numani has aptly stated:

Let it be known that the day when the pen for issuing *fatwas* (*ifta*) came into the hands' of Ahmad Raza Khan, *kufir* became very cheap – we seek refuge with Allah Most High. [He declared] the scholars of Nadwat al-Ulama are *kafir* and those who do not call them such are *kafir*, the scholars of Deoband are *kafir* and those who do not call them such are *kafir*, the non-Madhabi Ahl-e-Hadith are *kafir* and those who do not call them such are *kafir*, Mawlana Abd al-Bari Farangi Mahalli and those involved in the Khilafat movement (against colonial rule) for the sin of participation (this included his own fellow in Tariqah Mawlana Abd al-Majid Badayuni) are *kafir*. That Mawlana Abd al-Qadir Badayuni is a *kafir*. He was quick to label people *kafir* and no one was safe. O Lord we seek repentance. Aside from a small number of people from the city of Bareilly, no Muslims were spared.

The senior scholars of Deoband did not commit any crime except that they were infatuated with monotheism and the Sunna and they detested polytheism and innovation in religion (*bid'ah*). Here is another passage belonging to Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan:

Among the apostates, the worst apostate is the hypocrite (*munafiq*). This is the one whose company is more harmful than a thousand disbelievers in that he acts as a Muslim and teaches *kufir*. These are especially the Wahhabis and Deobandis in that they call themselves the special Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah. They behave as Hanafis and as Chishtis and Naqshbandis. They pray and fast like us, read our books and swear at Allah and the Prophet ﷺ. This is the most lethal poison. Oh wise and informed Muslim! Save your religion and faith and [recite]: *For Allah is the best protector and the most merciful*. And Allah Most High is most knowledgeable. Written by His sinful slave Ahmad Raza...<sup>41</sup>

The dirt that he has expelled from his heart in this abhorrent passage, and the accusation that Deobandis swear at Allah and His Prophet ﷺ, can only be the lot of Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan. All praise is for Allah Most High, the scholars of Deoband have not even in the smallest measure disparaged and belittled the Prophet ﷺ. Rather, they consider a little disparaging of the Prophet ﷺ to be *kufir*. Yet see the injustice of Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan that he would slander them so carelessly. In another passage, he writes:

And from among the apostates (*murtad*) the most disgusting is the hypocrite (*munafiq*), the Rafidi, the Wahhabi, the Qadiyani, the Humanist, the Chakralwis – in that they read the testimony of faith (*kalimah*), call themselves Muslim, offer Salah and other Islamic rites. In fact the Wahhabis etc. hold lessons on the Quran and hadith and the Deobandis are also participant in believing in the books of *fiqh*, rather they indulge in *pir-muridi*<sup>42</sup> while being Chishtis, Naqashbandis etc. They copy the Islamic scholars and saints while at the same time disparaging Muhammad the Messenger of Allah ﷺ or denying an incumbent aspect of the religion. These words of theirs, their claim to Islam, their copying of the actions and words of Muslims, have made them the most disgusting and harmful and far worse than each category of original *kafir* – Jew, Christian, idol worshipper and Zoroastrian...<sup>43</sup>

It is the kindness and grace of Allah Most High that the Deobandis have not denied anything from the incumbent aspects of the faith, or allegorically explained anything, or disparaged in the slightest the pious character of the Prophet ﷺ. This is the baseless enmity and hatred of Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan. The Deobandis seem worse to him than each original rejecter of faith; Jew, Christian, idol worshipper and Zoroastrian. Animals slaughtered by the Deobandis are deemed absolutely

<sup>41</sup> *Ahkam-i-Shari'ah*, part 1, p. 61, Barqi Press, Muradabad.

<sup>42</sup> Refers to the institution of Tasawwuf, where spiritual guides (*mashaikh*) take a pledge from novices (*murids*) for their spiritual rectification.

<sup>43</sup> *Ahkam-i-Shari'at*, part 1, p. 69.

impure (*najis*), carrion and completely *haram*. In answering a question on the issue of slaughter, he writes:

Answer: The slaughtered animal of a woman is permissible when she is able to carry out the slaughter properly. The slaughtered animal of a Jew is *halal* when slaughter is done with the name of the Most High, likewise [this is the case] if someone is truly a Christian and not an atheist Humanist like the general Christians of nowadays in that the slaughtered animal of a Humanist who claims Islam is carrion and not *halal*. The one who claims Christianity, the Rafidi, the Tabra'i, the Wahhabi Deobandi, the Wahhabi Ghayr Muqallid, the Qadiani, the Chakralwi and the Humanist, all of their slaughtered animals are absolutely impure and firmly counted as carrion and *haram* even if they recite the name of Allah a hundred thousand times and behave in a god-fearing and pious way because they are all apostates....<sup>44</sup>

The Bareilvis, somewhere or the other, definitely eat the animals slaughtered by Deobandi butchers. If not, they would certainly consume the meat of Deobandis at *walimahs*, *'aqiqahs* and during 'Id al-Adha as members of the same communities (*bradari*). In relation to those animals that the Deobandis slaughter, the decision is now in their hands whether they consider Deobandis to be Muslim and be pleased with indulging in *halal* or whether they subscribe to the *fatwa* and remain in mental anguish over eating totally impure carrion and something that is absolutely *haram*.<sup>45</sup>

#### *A Natural Illness*

Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan had this incurable illness that he would forge and prune the statements of others, especially his adversaries, and suggest meanings that would astonish their authors, such that they would say: "What motivates him to contrive heretical passages and inferences that we could not even imagine, and then force them upon us. And then demand *takfir* be done?" These unjust dealings of Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan have a great resemblance to the following oft-told tale. An individual (whose temperament must have been like that of Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan) asked a man: 'Brother, what is your name?' He replied: 'Haji.' So the questioner began explaining: 'Haji is on the phonetic pattern of *chaji* and *chaji* means *kaman* (bow). *Kaman* is on the pattern of *ghuman* and *ghuman* means *shak* (doubt). *Shak* is on the phonetic pattern of *sag* and *sag* means *kutta* (dog). Therefore, it is established that you are a dog.

This is exactly the same style of arguing preferred by Mawlana Ahmad Raza in relation to the statements of the scholars of the Waliyullah family, as well as the senior scholars of Deoband. He has, without any reason, accused others – we seek refuge with Allah – of disparaging Allah Most High and the noble Messenger Muhammad ﷺ. Yet, he has himself said such disparaging words regarding Allah Most High and His Prophet ﷺ that would bring into question not just one's iman, but one's sense of shame. What is more astonishing is that he utters all this but tells the people, *now look at what the Wahhabis have said*. Though the poor souls he is referring to, were utterly oblivious of the heretical meanings (*kufriyat*) he ascribes to them.

#### *Accusations against Mawlana Isma'il Dehlavi*

Mawlana Ahmad Raza has attributed such blasphemous beliefs to Mawlana Shah Isma'il Dehlavi that, in light of Islamic rulings, any one of them is deserving of being declared *kufir* a hundred times over. These ghastly ideas most likely never even crossed the mind of Mawlana Isma'il. Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan's habit of inventing accusations from thin air is however well-documented. These are the words ascribed to Mawlana Isma'il Dehlavi by Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan:

He [Mawlana Isma'il Dehlavi] calls such [a being] God (*khuda*) regarding whom if it is said He is free of place (*makan*), time (*zaman*), quiddity (*mahiyyah*) and mental composition (*tarkib-i-'aqli*), it would be the quintessence of innovation and explicit disbelief. It is not at all necessary for Him [God] to be Truthful; He could also be a liar. A divine being whose speech is meaningless and whose book is unreliable and His religion deserving to be relied upon. [He is] such that there is room for each fault and defect to exist in Him. To maintain His appearance of greatness He purposely

<sup>44</sup> *Ahkam-i-Shariat*, part 1, p. 68.

<sup>45</sup> This is because according to Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan it is sufficient for a Jew to take the name of the Lord once for a slaughtered animal to be *halal*, whereas if a Deobandi were he to say the name of the Lord a hundred thousand times the animal would always remain carrion.

refrains from [such] defects, otherwise if He had wished He could pollute Himself with every type of dirt. He is such that His knowledge is gained through acquisition and His knowledge is His choice. If he wishes He could remain ignorant. [His] being deceived, forgetting, falling asleep, dozing off, being heedless, being oppressive and even dying is all possible. Eating and drinking, and carrying out shameful acts such as urinating, excreting, dancing, strutting, carrying out acrobats like the Nat,<sup>46</sup> mating with women, homosexuality, even being the object [of lust] like a hermaphrodite, any type of dirtiness and vice is not contrary to His status. He has the actual mouth to eat, stomach to fill and the signs of [both] the male and female.<sup>47</sup> He is not the Eternal (*al-Samad*), He is hollow and empty; he is not of the loftiest purity (*Subbuh*) and the most Holy (*Quddus*), He is an epicene (*khuntha mushkil*) or in the least is able to make Himself like that. Not only that, He is able to burn Himself and drown Himself. He is able to commit suicide by consuming poison, pressing his throat or shooting himself. His mother and father are pairs. Having a son is possible – rather, He was born of a mother and father. He expands and contracts like rubber. Like Brahma<sup>48</sup> He has four faces. [He is] such that His words can be annihilated. He avoids saying lies for fear that people would consider Him a liar. He is able to speak lies to his stomach's fill while hiding from people.<sup>49</sup>

Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan has basically said the first thing that has come to his own mind, and maliciously ascribed all this to the works of Mawlana Isma' il Dhelavi such as *Yak Rozi*. He also provides references to the books of other individuals, though none of the words from the above impure passage is present in the books he mentions. This has all come from the temperament and mind of Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan. It is he alone who has written these polluted words. He has himself sworn at the lofty pure being of Allah Most High just so that he could say, 'look at what these people are saying!' Neither these pious authors nor their books have even remotely stated these impure beliefs and views. One can deduce from this passage the total absence of the fear of Allah Almighty and how very unfit he is to issue any kind of religious verdict against someone. Without the slightest justification he is able to attribute heretical beliefs to others and on that basis issue fatwas. It is as if he is the questioner and *mufti* at once.

This then is one of the ways by which Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan accuses others. There is another way too. We have given quotations from Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan showing that he has in particular gone after the senior scholars of Deoband in the above blasphemous passages. These scholars were Mawlana Muhammad Qasim Nanotwi, Mawlana Rashid Ahmad Gangohi, Mawlana Khalil Ahmad Saharanpuri and Mawlana Ashraf 'Ali Thanawi. There will be full discussion regarding each of them shortly.

He claimed that *Hujjat al-Islam* Mawlana Nanotwi denied that the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ is the Final prophet and that he is therefore a *kafir*; that Mawlana Gangohi said that Allah Most High and His words can be false; that Mawlana Saharanpuri has accepted that the knowledge of Satan is greater than the knowledge of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ; and that Mawlana Thanawi considered the knowledge of the Prophet ﷺ equal to the knowledge of the mentally ill and four-legged beasts. He claims that it is because of this that these individuals are *kafir* and that those who doubt their *kufr* are also *kafirs* even though these seniors shouted out aloud that these beliefs you mention were not what we intended, nor do they conform to our Creed. Rather, we ourselves consider them *kufr*. It is as if he was saying, whatever you say will not prevent me from calling you *kafir*.

#### *The Legality of Declaring Someone a Disbeliever in Islam*

The *fugaha* refers to that careful fraternity of scholars whom Allah Most High granted a deep insight into the religion. These Islamic jurists understood well – with all praise to Allah – the limits and conditions of each issue. They would exercise extreme caution and diligence in declaring someone outside the fold of Islam. The principles that these reliable Islamic authorities outlined

<sup>46</sup> The Nat are a vagrant Hindu caste found in North India. The word *nata* in Sanskrit means a dancer and the Nat were traditionally entertainers and jugglers (translator).

<sup>47</sup> Male and female organs (translator).

<sup>48</sup> Brahma is a Hindu deity worshipped as the god of creation. He is often depicted with four heads, four faces and four arms (translator).

<sup>49</sup> *Al- 'Ataaya al-Nabawiyah fil-Fatawa al-Rizwiyyah*, vol.1, p. 745, Lahore print.

should be kept in mind by every Muslim. For instance, the second Abu Hanifa, Imam Zayn al-‘Abidin Ibn Nuwaym al-Misri al-Hanafi (d. 970 AH) writes:

It is written in *Khulasah al-Fatawa* and other books that when in an issue there are several reasons that necessitate *takfir* (*fatwa* of *kufr*) and one reason forbidding the *takfir*, then the *mufti* should turn to the reason that forbids *takfir* because good thoughts should be entertained regarding the Muslim. This matter has been discussed in further detail in *al-Bazzaziyyah* that if the person concerned explicitly states what he meant and it was the heretical possibility, then no favourable interpretation (*tawil*) will benefit him.<sup>50</sup>

It can be understood from this that if a person were to say a word or sentence that contained multiple meanings that could be interpreted as *kufr* and only one meaning reflecting a person’s Islam then the person will not be considered a *kafir*. This is because it is possible that his intention may be that which is Islamic. Yes, however, if he were to determine his meaning himself, and he chooses the *kufr* meaning, then it is incorrect to consider him a Muslim by any kind of interpretation. That is because another’s good opinion is of no consequence when faced by the speaker’s own explanation. Mulla Ali al-Qari writes:

The author of *Al-Mudmirat* has narrated from *Al-Dhakirah* that if in an issue there are several meanings that necessitate *takfir* and one that forbids *takfir*, then the *mufti* should turn to that which prevents *takfir* because good thoughts should be entertained regarding the Muslim. So, if the intention of the speaker is that meaning that forbids *takfir*, then he is a Muslim. However, if his meaning is that which necessitates *takfir* then the *fatwa* of the *mufti* will not benefit him. He shall be ordered to repent, retract from that and renew the *nikah* between himself and his wife.<sup>51</sup>

What is interesting is that the Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan is also in total agreement with this rule outlined by the noble jurists. For he states:

It is in *Sharh al-Fiqh al-Akbar*: ‘They have mentioned in relation to disbelief that when there are ninety-nine possibilities of *kufr* and one possibility negating this, then it is superior for the *mufti* and *qadi* to go with the negative possibility.’ It is mentioned in *Khulasah al-Fatawa*, *Jami‘ al-Fusulayn*, *Muhit*, *Fatawa-i-‘Alamghir* etc. that: ‘When there is in an issue and it has multiple reasons necessitating *takfir* and only one reason that forbids *takfir*, then it is the responsibility of the *mufti* and *qadi* that he inclines to that one meaning and not issue a *fatwa* of his *kufr* while entertaining pious thoughts regarding the Muslim. Then, if the intention of the speaker was that one meaning that forbids *takfir*, then he is a Muslim, and if it is not, then the *mufti*’s carrying of his words on the reason that does not necessitate *kufr* will not benefit him.’ It is likewise mentioned in *al-Fatawa al-Bazzaziyyah*, *Al-Bahr al-Ra‘iq*, *Majma‘ al-Anhar*, *Hadiqah al-Nadiyyah* etc. It is also in *Tatarkhaniyyah*, *Bahr*, *Sill al-Husam*, *Tanbih al-Wulat* etc.: ‘*Takfir* shall not be done where there is a chance of a correct meaning, because *kufr* is considered the ultimate punishment, therefore it requires the ultimate offence. And when there are multiple possibilities, it cannot be said that the ultimate offence has been reached. It is in *Al-Bahr al-Ra‘iq*, *Tanwir al-Absar*, *Hadiqah al-Nadiyyah*, *Tanbih al-Wulat*, *Sill al-Husam* etc.: ‘The soundest view is that a declaration of *kufr* will not be given if it is possible to give it a good [alternative] interpretation.’<sup>52</sup>

In this passage, after quoting *Al-Fiqh al-Akbar*, Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan states that if an issue there are ninety possibilities of *kufr* and only one possibility of Islam, then the person will still not be considered a *kafir*. At the end, using references from several books, he clarifies that because calling someone a *kafir* is the severest penalty, an extreme crime needs to have been established. But as long as another possibility exists it will not be possible to establish this severest of penalties. Then, right at the end, he writes that according to the jurists that which is agreed upon is that the *takfir* of a Muslim will not be carried out when there is a positive meaning for the person’s words. Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan has reiterated this point in his other works too:

<sup>50</sup> *Al-Bahr al-Ra‘iq*, part 5, p. 125, Egyptian print.

<sup>51</sup> *Sharh al-Fiqh al-Akbar*, p. 237, Kanpur print.

<sup>52</sup> *Husam al-Haramayn*, p. 35-36, Ashrafi Kutub Khana, Lahore.

The noble scholars say that if there are ninety nine meanings of *kufr* in the words of the speaker and one allegoric meaning of Islam, then it is incumbent that this allegoric meaning is selected and that the person is considered a Muslim....<sup>53</sup>

However, how unjust and regrettable it is that when it comes to the passages of the scholars of Deoband, Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan immediately forgets and overlooks this golden rule. Moreover, he takes his own carved-out meanings, that clearly contradict the words of their authors, and insists that he can only declare them to be *kafir*.

#### *The Rule Regarding The Messenger ﷺ*

The Islamic jurists have written with great clarity in their books that to denigrate, ridicule, swear at, slander, or disparage the Prophet ﷺ is explicit *kufr*. It was for this reason that Imam Abu Yusuf Ya‘qub wrote:

Whichever Muslim man swears at the Prophet of Allah ﷺ or falsifies him, or disparages him, or denigrates him, then he has disbelieved in Allah Most High and his woman is divorced from him.<sup>54</sup>

It can be known from this clearly that swearing at the lofty rank of the Prophet of Allah ﷺ or falsifying him or denigrating him, or disparaging him is absolute disbelief on account of which the marriage of the individual is automatically nullified. The famous Maliki, Imam Qadi Ayyad writes:

Muhammad ibn Sahnun said that the scholars are agreed that the one who swears at the Prophet ﷺ, or the one who denigrates him, is an apostate. The warning of the punishment of Allah falls upon him.<sup>55</sup>

Mulla Ali al-Qari writes:

Muhammad ibn Sahnun said that the scholars are agreed that the one who swears at the Prophet ﷺ the one who denigrates him, is an apostate. He who doubts his *kufr* and his punishment has also committed *kufr*.<sup>56</sup>

All of these texts are absolutely clear and do not require further clarification and explanation.

#### *Fair-minded Bareilvi Scholars Do Not Agree With The Fatwa*

The scholars of Deoband, with all praise to Allah Most High, were and are Muslims. To call them *kafir* is absolutely baseless. It is because of this that the Bareilvi scholars themselves did not attach any weight to Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan’s oppressive *fatwa* and continued to view Deobandi scholars to be Muslim. At this juncture, we present some texts of well-known Bareilvi scholars who also saw through the lies of Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan:

[1] The Polymath of the Era Mawlana Ghulam Muhammad Ghutawi (d. 22 Rabi‘ al-Thani, 1367 AH), the *shaykh* of Jami‘ah ‘Abbasiyyah, Bahawalpur. The following is an excerpt from his letters:

I was not present in the time of Mawlana Muhammad Qasim and Mawlana Rashid Ahmad. I once saw Mawlana Khalil Ahmad and Mawlana Mahmud al-Hasan; I did not have the opportunity to remain in their company. I once saw Mawlana Ashraf ‘Ali (may Allah make perpetual his blessings) and I once heard him lecture. I did not have the opportunity to spend time with these individuals more than this. However, my belief (*i‘tiqad*) regarding these pious individuals is that they are all God-fearing scholars (*‘ulama rabbaniyyin*) and *walis* from among the Ummah of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. This lowly one also has differences with them in certain issues of *fiqh*. However, my beliefs are this and the reason behind my choosing this belief is the reading and benefitting from their books and their widespread acceptance. When one especially looks at the services rendered in

<sup>53</sup> *Barakat al-Imdad*, p. 28.

<sup>54</sup> *Kitab al-Kharaj*, p. 182, Egyptian print.

<sup>55</sup> *Al-Shifa*, part 2, p. 190, Egyptian print.

<sup>56</sup> *Sharh Al-Fiqh al-Akbar*, p. 393.

Tasawwuf by Mawlana Ashraf ‘Ali (may Allah make perpetual his blessings) it occurs that perhaps he is the reviver of this century. That is all. Dated: 12 Jumada al-Thani, 1355 AH

[2] The famous Bareilvi saint and Sufi Mawlana Muhammad Mushtaq Ahmad Hanafi Chishti Ambhethawi wrote:

This incapable one benefitted from the noble company of Hadrat Mawlana Muhammad Qasim and Mawlana Rashid Ahmad (may Allah have mercy on them). I found both of them to be ‘*alims* who acted on their knowledge (‘*alim ba ‘amal*), followers of the Shari‘ah and God-fearing. We seek refuge with Allah. I consider calling them *kafir* an extreme major sin. Even though I do have severe differences (*ikhtilaf*) with some of the writings of Mawlana Khalil Ahmad, but even him I will do not declare *kafir*. I consider them better than myself. I was impressed by Mawlana Mahmud al-Hasan (may Allah have mercy upon him) from the very beginning. During my student days I spent some time with him and always found him of pious temperament. The amount of Islamic service rendered by Hadrat Mawlana Ashraf ‘Ali is worthy of praise a thousands of times over. It is as if he is, in the writing of Islamic books, the Imam Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti of his era. As to those individuals who consider them *kafir*, I consider them to be wrong. That is all. Dated: 11 Rajab al-Murajjab, 1355 AH.

Both of these excerpts are from *Al-Burhan fi Radd al-Buhtan*<sup>57</sup> compiled by Mawlana ‘Ali Muhammad Madahpuri.

[3] A person asked Pir Mehr Ali Shah regarding Mawlana Muhammad Qasim Nanotwi. He replied:

You ask regarding Hadrat Mawlana Muhammad Qasim Nanotwi (may Allah have mercy on him)? The questioner responded: ‘Yes, regarding him.’ Hadrat Pir *sahib* said: ‘He was the complete manifestation of the Most High’s attribute of knowledge.’<sup>58</sup>

[4] Khawaja Sayyid Ghulam Muhy al-Din Golrawi, the son of Pir Mehr Ali Shah, was asked regarding the scholars of Deoband. He wrote to Mawlana Ghulam Muhammad Ghutawri, the *shaykh al-hadith* at Jami‘ah Abbasiyyah, Bahawalpur (the main *khalifah* of Pir Mehr Ali Shah):

It is my way (*madhhab*) that the scholars of Deoband are Muslims and are doing the work of the *Din*. Whichever man speaks ill of them, his faith is in danger. This is also the way of my guide (*qiblah*), Hadrat Pir *sahib* (Pir Mehr Ali Shah).<sup>59</sup>

[5] Mawlana Abu al-Hasanat Muhammad Ahmad Qadri’s respected father Mawlana Didar Ali Shah, the former *khatib* at Masjid Wazir Khan, Lahore, writes:

I possess a handwritten copy, done during the student days of this lowly one, of Mawlana, our teacher, the leader of the hadith scholars Mawlana Muhammad Qasim and the Hadith master Ahmad Ali Saharanpuri’s *Fatawa Ajwiba Suwalaat-i-Khamsa*.<sup>60</sup>

[6] In the biography of Pir-i-Kamil Hadrat Mawlana Miya Sher Muhammad Sharaquri, his main attendant Muhammad Ibrahim Qusuri writes:

Mawlana Anwar Ali Shah, the main lecturer at the Madrasa of Deoband, along with Mawlana Ahmad Ali Muhajir Lahori visited Sharaqpur and with great sincerity met Hadrat Miya *sahib*. He spoke to them about some issues, whilst Mawlana Anwar Ali Shah listened silently. He then bid them farewell with great respect. Hadrat Miya *sahib* went himself to the motor station to see them off. Mawlana Anwar ‘Ali Shah said to Hadrat Miya *sahib* (may Allah have mercy on him), ‘Wipe your hand on my back.’ He did the same and having seen them off returned home. Afterwards, he

<sup>57</sup> pp. 56-57.

<sup>58</sup> *Uswa-i-Akabar*, p. 27, by Mawlana Muhammad Baha al-Haq Qasmi, quoted in *Al-Rashid*, p. 778, Dar al-Ulum Number.

<sup>59</sup> *Dhol ki Awaz*, p. 99, compiled by Mawlana Kamil al-Din Tokalwi, printed by Thana’i Press, Sarghoda, and taken from *Al-Rashid*, p. 775.

<sup>60</sup> *Risala Tahqiq al-Masail*, p. 31, printed by Lahore Printing Press, second print, 1345 AH, quoted in *Al-Rashid*, p. 778.

said to this slave: ‘Mawlana Anwar Ali Shah is a great scholar and yet he asked this lowly one to place his hand on his back.’ Hadrat Miya *sahib* also said that, ‘there are four illumined ones (*nuri*) in Deoband, and one of them is Mawlana Anwar Ali Shah.’<sup>61</sup>

It is so regretful that all of this passage has been removed from later editions, which as an example of dishonesty speaks for itself. The following saintly figures were also present in Deoband in the era of Mawlana Anwar Ali Shah, Habib al-Rahman, the rector of Dar al-Ulum Deoband; Mawlana Sayyid Murtada Hasan; Shaykh al-Hind Mawlana Mahmud al-Hasan and others. Perhaps these were the illumined individuals Hadrat Miya *sahib* was referring to. The meaning of illumined (*nuri*) is not that they were not human or were angels, rather the meaning is that through the existence of these individuals truth, justice, knowledge, Tasawwuf and good manners spread among people. And there is no doubt in that.

[7] Khawaja Pir Qamr al-Din of Siyal Sharif said:

I have seen *Tahzir al-Nas*, I consider Mawlana Muhammad Qasim a Muslim of the highest rank. I am proud that his name is included in my hadith chain (*sanad*). The depth reached by *mawlana*’s mind in explaining the last and final of the Prophets (*khatim al-nabiyyin*), was not reached by the minds of his objectors. The assumed proposition (*qadiyyah fardiyyah*) has been understood to be a real proposition (*qadiyyah haqiqiyyah*).<sup>62</sup>

[8] The famous Bareilvi scholar Mawlana Hafiz Ghulam Mahmud Piplanwali writes in the footnotes of *Tuhfah Sulaymani*<sup>63</sup>, a commentary on *Takmilah Hashiyah ‘Abdul Ghafur* by Mawlana Abdul Hakim Siyalkoti:

The *Imam* of many sciences, the teacher of normative subjects, the greatest master (*al-nihrir al-azam*), the vast surging ocean, the wisest from among the experts, the leader of the erudite, he who was proficient in [explaining] concealed pearls, the head of the hadith scholars, the crown of the exegetes, Mawlana Mahmud Hasan Deobandi, may Allah make perpetual his kindnesses over our heads, said in explaining the author’s words, ‘*Wa kalim al-mujazat...*

[9] The famous contemporary Bareilvi scholar Mawlana Qadi ‘Abdul Nabi Kawkab writes regarding Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan Bareilvi:

The uttermost that could be said against Mawlana [Ahmad Raza Khan] is that he, in expressing his differences with the scholars of Deoband, adopted an extremely harsh tone. He considered some of the passages of the excellent stalwarts of knowledge of the Deoband seminary to be *kufr* and in this *fatwa* he did not at all uphold the level of caution that was required by the Shariah on such occasions.<sup>64&65</sup>

The above open-minded scholar from the Bareilvi group is just confirming what the scholars of Deoband have been saying all along. Namely, that Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan crossed the limits of the Shariah and trampled all over the rules of issuing *fatwa*, to carry out his unjust *takfir* of the senior Deobandi Imams. Motivated by bias and rage, he took such a wholly detestable and uncivil tone in expressing his difference of opinion with them. The same scholar also wrote:

It is without doubt that in the personality of Mawlana [Ahmad Rada Khan] and in his mission there was one aspect, and it is a very major aspect, and that was his fervour. However, this aspect was restricted when it related to his connection and disconnection to the Prophet ﷺ. In the other aspects of his work and responsibilities, he kept the facet of seeking the truth in mind.<sup>66</sup>

<sup>61</sup> *Khazina-i-Marifat*, chapter 13, p. 384, also known as *Tadhkirah ‘Ashiq-i-Rabbani Sher Yazdani*, printed in Rabi‘ al-Awwal, 1350 AH, printed by Firoz Printing Works, 119 Circular Road, Lahore.

<sup>62</sup> *Dhol ki Awaz*, p. 116, from *Al-Rashid Dar al-Ulum Number*, p. 775-776.

<sup>63</sup> p. 115.

<sup>64</sup> *Muqaddimah Maqalat-i-Yawm Raza*, p. 20, printed by Dar al-Musannifin, Lahore.

<sup>65</sup> Take note of the respected Mawlana Kawkab’s explicit text; the people of knowledge should also have a look at the interpretation, rather distortion, that he was made to do to this passage at the insistence of the proprietors of the monthly publication *Risala Raza-i-Mustafa*, on pp. 9-11 of the Jumada al-Ula, 1396 AH edition.

<sup>66</sup> *Muqaddimah Maqalat-i-Yawm Raza*, p. 24, printed by Dar al-Musannifin, Lahore.

Let us not take into consideration whether it was the activation of love for the Prophet ﷺ that motivated Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan and did not others in India also possess this quality? And thus not ask the question why these individuals did not also use a detestable tone in opposing the scholars of Deoband? Let us also not consider whether the outcome and result of having love for the Prophet ﷺ automatically has to lead a person to carry out *takfir* and oppose those who are callers to monotheism and the Sunnah or should they be congratulated for their great service? Leave all this, what become abundantly clear from Mawlana Kawkab's above passage is that Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan's declaration of disbelief was not at all based on reality. Whatever he said was the outcome of becoming swept up by an abominable rage. Therefore, his objectionable and baseless *fatwas* do not make the scholars of Deoband *kafir*, and nor do the Muslims consider them such.

The entire lives of these individuals were and are spent in propagating the true religion of Allah Most High and the enlightened Shariah of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. In this era, it is they who have carried out immeasurable and excellent efforts in protecting the Islamic sciences. They have kept this flame burning through implementing secure practises and establishing numerous madrasas. This intellectual achievement of theirs has gained international recognition. To make this a reality, for the sake of Allah Almighty, they even gave up their physical comforts and pleasures.

The point is that these seniors of Deoband, may Allah Most High increase their group, protected the sacred monotheism and the Sunnah. They performed the hardest of duties in the toughest of times by guiding the Umma. In this way they were exiled, experienced the harshness of imprisonment. They jumped into the fires that the tyrannical power of the time had ignited, played with the fire of canons and guns, clashed with violent storms, and bravely opposed the mightiest of imperial powers. These sacrifices would have sufficed but they also enriched us with the correct understanding of religion; pure monotheism, unadulterated Sunnah, true love for the noble Prophets ﷺ and the pious predecessors, the passion to learn Deen and practise it ('ilm and 'amal), as well as the great gift of freedom. Their lives are minarets of lights and their deeds will remain alive until the Day of Judgment – *Inshallah*.

#### *Deception*

Helped by the same lack of God-fearingness, just as Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan was bold enough to pass the baseless *fatwa* of disbelief upon the true servants of Islam, he likewise proved himself an expert in misleading the scholars of the Two Noble Sanctuaries to endorse the *takfir* of the scholars of Deoband. He copied and pasted texts and separated sentences – which had a beneficial meaning – from their contexts in order that he could provide another meaning from himself, moulding the Urdu text into an Arabic one. This spectacle of *kufir-manufacturing* is on display in his book *Husam al-Haramayn 'ala Manhar al-Kufr wa al-Mayn*. What came after that? He began activities of spreading and publishing it in all of India's cities, towns and even villages; he gained great recommendations from the misguided. His making the common Muslims to hold enmity for the scholars of Deoband only strengthened the hold of the imperial powers. This was because the senior scholars of Deoband and their followers were the ones at the forefront of challenging imperial transgression. The oppressive imperial forces were not unaware of their efforts in the realms of politics and religion. Thus they looked favourably towards and encouraged anyone who became an obstacle in their way.

However, the famous names of the Deobandi scholars and their works were not hidden that no one had knowledge of them. So when the scholars of the Two Noble Sanctuaries came to know of the fabrication and deception of Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan they sent twenty-four questions to the scholars of Deoband asking them what their *fatwas* and opinions regarding these doctrinal matters were. As a result, Mawlana Khalil Ahmad Saharanpuri wrote the answers to these questions and named it *Al-Muhannad 'ala al-Mufannad*. These answers were published in 1907 (1325 Hijri). This booklet is available today in both English<sup>67</sup> and Urdu. It contains the endorsements of twenty five Deobandi scholars.

<sup>67</sup> One can access the English translation here: <https://archive.org/details/AlMuhannadalaAlMufannadTranslation>.

Especially worthy of mention are Shaykh al-Hind Mawlana Mahmud al-Hasan, Hakim al-Umma Mawlana Ashraf Ali Thanawi, Mawlana Habib al-Rahman (rector at Dar al-Ulum Deoband), Mawlana Ghulam Rasul, and Mawlana Mufti Kifayatullah. When the scholars of the Two Noble Sanctuaries saw that all of these answers were in perfect conformity to the Holy Qur'an, Sunna and the way of Ahl al-Sunna, they were left extremely astonished and rather remorseful at having become complicit in Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan's plot. Aside from the scholars of the Two Noble Sanctuaries, the noble scholars of other Arab countries also came to their support. *Al-Muhannad* records their individual endorsements. The following is an excerpt from the introduction of that book:

The scholars of the Two Noble Sanctuaries and the scholars of Egypt, Aleppo, the Levant (al-Sham) and Damascus have considered these beliefs to be correct and no one can call another person holding these beliefs a *kafir* or an innovator or outside the Ahl al-Sunna.<sup>68</sup>

However, in spite of all this detail and explanation, Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan remained firm on his bigotry. If anything, it increased his obstinance. Anyhow, that is for him and his work. We consider it necessary to make apparent the truth for those who are fair-minded so that they may prevent the general Muslims from holding hatred for these pious saints and thus earn the displeasure of the Almighty.

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<sup>68</sup> *Al-Muhannad 'ala al-Mufannad*, p. 4.

## Chapter 1

### Mawlana Muhammad Qasim Nanotwi (1832-1880)

#### *Brief Biography*

He is Muhammad Qasim, the son of Asad ‘Ali bin Ghulam Shah bin Muhammad Bakhsh who was the son of ‘Ala ud-Din, the son of Muhammad Fatah, the son of Muhammad Mufti, the son of ‘Abd al-Sami‘, the son of Muhammad Hashim, all of whom were [the] offspring from the House of Abu Bakr, the famous companion of the Prophet ﷺ. He was born in the month of Sha‘ban or Ramadan in 1832 (1248 Hijri). He was born in the town of Nanota (district Sharanpur), which is located twenty four miles west of Deoband. He studied the elementary texts under Mawlana Mehtab Ali at a school in Deoband. Thereafter, he studied some Arabic and Persian works in Sharanpur under Mawlana Muhammad Nawaz Saharanpuri. Then he departed for Delhi where he started studying the grammar text *Kafiyah* with Mawlana Mamluk Ali. Here, he also studied the following texts in philosophy and logic: *Sadra*, *Shams Bazigha*, *Mir Zahid*, *Qazi* etc. He studied Hadith at the same time as Mawlana Rashid Ahmad Gangohi with the scholar Mawlana Shah Abd al-Ghani. It was at this time, that both of them took the pledge of Tasawwuf and walked the path of inner purification with the Saint Haji Imdadullah Muhajir Makki.

When Mawlana Mamluk Ali passed away, Mawlana Nanotwi took on work as a proofreader at Ahmadi Printers. It was during this time that the Hadith expert Mawlana Ahmad Ali Saharanpuri began writing his *marginalia* upon *Sahih al-Bukhari* which exists in all the currently available editions of *Sahih al-Bukhari* printed in the sub-continent. The *marginalia* of the last five or six parts, also considered the most difficult, was authored by Mawlana Nanotwi. Once when he was a student he saw a dream that he was standing on the roof of the Ka‘bah and thousands of springs were issuing from him. Mawlana Mamluk Ali interpreted it to mean that he would be the source of a great effluence of the Deen’s sacred sciences. Mawlana Qasim memorised the whole of the Holy Qur’an in two years; half in one year and the second half in the following year. When he recited it, it was as clear as that of a well-seasoned reciter. Allah Almighty enabled him to perform three pilgrimages in 1861, 1868, and the third in 1877.

#### *Efforts against Anti-Muslim Movements in India*

There were two tribulations that had spread throughout India at this time. One was created by the Christian missionaries and the other by Pandit Dayanand Saraswati, founder of the Hindu missionary movement Arya Samaj. This latter personality was acclaimed by his followers for being a great philosopher and an expert logician. He, however, was so thoroughly routed by Mawlana Qasim in a famous debate that his group was never again bold enough to publicly propagate their false beliefs. The works *Intisar al-Islam*, *Qibla Numa*, *Turki be Turki*, amongst others by Mawlana Qasim, were all part of this effort. The Mawlana went after the Christian missionaries in a similar manner and in a public gathering at Chandpur, district of Shahjahanpur, 1876, they were so conclusively refuted that they fled during the proceedings. In their rush to leave they even forgot to pick up some of their books they had brought with them. Allah, most High, through Mawlana Qasim bestowed victory upon Islam. In this debate with the Christians, the only person helping Mawlana Qasim was the public debater Mawlana Mansur Ali. Mawlana Qasim also had a major role in the revolt against the reigning colonial powers. It is an undisputable historical fact that he took up arms against the colonial powers with great valour at Shamli and various other locations.

#### *The Founding of Dar al-‘Ulum Deoband*

He laid the foundation of Dar al-Ulum Deoband in 1866 (Muharram 1283 Hijri). The luminaries of the time, such as Mawlana Fadl al-Rahman, Mawlana Dhul-Fiqar and Al-Haj Muhammad Abid all helped and participated in this noble project. The monthly wages could only be set at 15 rupees for its teachers. As donations increased, so too did the number of teachers employed at the seminary. Instructors in Persian and expert Qur’an teachers were enlisted and a library was inaugurated.

### *Family*

Mawlana Qasim also married and was blessed with three girls, Ikraman Bibi, Ruqaya Bibi and Aisha Bibi (may Allah have mercy upon them). He also had two sons, Muhammad Hashim and Mawlana Muhammad Ahmad. His grandsons went on to become important figures in the history of Dar al-Ulum Deoband as its principals. They were Mawlana Muhammad Tahir and the current principal Mawlana Qari Muhammad Tayyib. On Thursday Jumadi al-Ula 1297, after the midday prayer, Mawlana Qasim began to experience difficulty in breathing. This eventually led to his death. He departed from this earthly World and went to reside in the limitless mercy of Allah, the Most High. His body was buried at a graveyard near to Dar al-Ulum Deoband, may Allah's countless blessings shower him.

### *Works*

From his enduring good deeds, apart from his pious off-spring and close students, is the rich store of priceless scholastic treatises that he left behind, the well-known books of which are: *Aab-e-Hayat*, *Hadiya al-Shiah*, *Ajwibba-e-Arbaeen*, *Intibah al-Mumineen*, *Taqrir Dilpazeer*, *Hujjat al-Islam*, *Mubaahatha Shahjahanpur*, *Meila Khuda-Shanaasi*, *Intisar al-Islam*, *Qibla-Numa*, *Tasfiyat al-Aqaid*, *Tawthiq al-Kalam*, *Daleel Muhkam*, *Tuhfa-e-Lahmiyya*, *Qasaid Qasimi*, *Jamal-e-Qasimi*, *Lataif-e-Qasimi*, *Munazarah Ajeebah*, *Tahzir al-Nas*, *Asrar Qurani* and *Turki bi Turki*.

## The First Objection: Denying The Finality of the Messenger's ﷺ Prophethood

**Translators' Note:** What follows is a discussion on the linguistic dimensions of the term *khatam al-nabiyyin*. As the reader delves deeper into the complex discussion, he may naturally wonder, what was the need to microscopically analyse these terms, and thereby provide the unscrupulous the chance to create confusion? Firstly, the scholars of the Ahl al-Sunna have always analysed the matters of the Deen with such precision, for the simple reason that the Deen of Allah Almighty is perfect guidance, and as such, it is more worthy than any other subject to be studied in depth. Secondly, this discussion was actually an answer to an objection raised by the existence of a narration from Ibn Abbas ؓ. This authentic narration<sup>69</sup> tells us that there are multiple parallel universes. They are inhabited by human beings like us and they also have Prophets and Messengers ﷺ. This naturally raises the question whether the pre-eminence of the Messenger Muhammad ﷺ, is in any way undermined by the existence of these other prophets. This is the background for why Mawlana Qasim wrote his book, *Tahzir al-Nas*, that is to prove the absolute greatness of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. Basically, the term *Khatam* (Final/Seal of Prophets ﷺ) is more a profound and intrinsic quality that subsumes all kinds of Finality.

The very first accusation made by Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan in *Husam al-Haramayn* is that Mawlana Qasim Nanotwi denies the chronological Finality of Prophethood. This means he denies that the Messenger ﷺ is the final Prophet in respect to time. These are the exact words of *Husam* in which he makes this slanderous accusation:

The *Qasimiyya* (N.b. a name concocted by Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan to suggest that the people he is condemning belong to their own exclusive sect), is ascribed to Qasim Nanotwi, the author of *Tahzir al-Nas*. He writes in this treatise:<sup>70</sup> [A] *If it were supposed that there was also to be a prophet in his (peace and blessing upon him) time somewhere else, nevertheless, his being the Seal (Khatam) would remain as it was.* [B] *Even if, supposing, a prophet were to be born after the Prophet's time, still it would not affect the Muhammadi Khatamiyyah (Sealship).* [C] *The general public believe the Messenger of Allah being the Seal [of the prophets] means that he is the very last prophet. However the people of understanding know that there is no intrinsic virtue in being first or last....*

Commenting on this, Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan goes on to write:

However the verdicts of the jurists conclude and books such as *Al-Ashbaah wal-Nazaair* clearly state: If a person does not believe Muhammad ﷺ to be the very last Prophet, he is not a Muslim, because Muhammad ﷺ being the last of all prophets in time is from those things known in the Religion by necessity. This is that same Nanotwi who was given the title of the Sage of the Muhammadi Nation (*Hakim-e-Ummat-e-Muhammadi*) by Muhammad Ali Kawnpuri, the head teacher of the Nadwa Seminary....<sup>71</sup>

On p.67 of the same book, he expresses Mawlana Qasim Nanotwi's position in the following words:

The Prophet ﷺ is not the very last of the prophets, if other prophets came after him it would not be a problem.

### *The Reponse*

As an example of how to employ deception and deceit, Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan's reproduction of the passage of Mawlana Nanotwi's *Tahzir al-Nas*, is unparalleled. The accusation of Mawlana Nanotwi denying the Finality of Prophethood in relation to time and falsely ascribing to him the belief of the continuation of Prophethood, that too could only be the handiwork of Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan and his disciples. The oppressed person of Mawlana Nanotwi is completely innocent of this. It is a clear lie and a serious slander against him. It seems appropriate that we cite

<sup>69</sup> Imam Abu Abdullah al-Hakim narrates it in his *Al-Mustadrak* and declares it to be sound. See *Al-Mustadrak*, vol. 2, p. 535, Hadith no. 3822.

<sup>70</sup> Hereafter, Mawlana Ahmad Raza is quoting the text (italicised) of *Tahzir al-Nas*. It is an ensemble of several different passages stitched together in order to indicate a particular meaning. They have been distinguished by A, B and C by the translators of this work.

<sup>71</sup> *Husam al-Haramayn*, p.101.

the quotation as it was reproduced by Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan with its references and then cite Mawlana's Qasim's passages on this issue, so that the real facts become crystal clear for all Muslims, and at the same time reveal Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan's dishonesty. Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan cites this passage of Mawlana Nanotwi in his book with such continuity and without the slightest indication that he is actually reproducing bits from three different places in *Tahzir al-Nas*. They were never linked in this manner in the original work. It is unimaginable that a truly scholastic work would be taking such a liberty with its references.

The Three Different Pages Of Tahzir al-Nas From Where The Texts Were Lifted

Readers Can See Clearly How Three Texts, From Different Pages, Were Stitched Together To Misdlead The Scholars Of Arabia. This Is The Text As It Appears In *Husam al-Haramayn*:

.....بلکہ اگر بالفرض آپ کے زمانے میں کبھی اور کوئی نبی ہو جب بھی آپ کا خاتم ہونا بدستور باقی رہتا ہے۔ بلکہ اگر بالفرض بعد زمانہ نبوی ﷺ بھی کوئی نبی پیدا ہو تو پھر بھی خاتمیت محمدی میں کچھ فرق نہ آئے گا۔ عوام کے خیال میں تو رسول اللہ ﷺ کا خاتم ہونا بایں معنی ہے کہ آپ سب میں آخر نبی ہیں مگر اہل فہم پر روش ہو گا کہ تقدم یا تاخر میں بالذات کچھ فضیلت نہیں۔

.....بلکہ اس صورت میں نظراہلیہ کی ضرورت ختم ہو چکی ہے۔ کیا خاتمیت ثابت نہ ہو جو نبی راہدردہ پر بھی آپ کی خاتمیت ثابت ہو جائیگی بلکہ اگر بالفرض بعد زمانہ نبوی ﷺ بھی کوئی نبی پیدا ہو تو پھر بھی خاتمیت محمدی میں کچھ فرق نہ آئے گا۔ عوام کے مناصر کی اور زمین میں یا فرض کیجئے اسی زمین میں کوئی اور نبی محمد پر کیا جائے یا بعد ختم کر دو روایت ثابت خاتمیت ہے۔ معارض و مخالف تمام زمینیں نہیں جو یوں کہا جائے کہ یہ راہدردہ کوئی مخالف روایت ثابت ہے۔ ....

.....بلکہ اس سلسلے میں ہر طور پر یہ مکتوم ہو گا اور کہیں نہ نہ عمل کا سلسلہ علم پر مکتوم ہو جائے جب تک علم منہدی ہی علم ہو تو پھر سلسلہ مکتوم عمل کا سلسلہ۔ فرض نظام کہیں مکتوم نہیں کیا جائے جو علم سے کیا تو آپ کا نام ہونا نااہلیہ کی وضاحت ہی نسبت ناس نہ ہو بلکہ اگر بالفرض آپ کے زمانے میں بھی کسی اور کوئی نبی ہو جسے آپ کا خاتم ہونا بدستور باقی رہتا ہے۔ مگر صحیحہ اللہ ﷺ زمینیں اس بات کا حتمی ہے کہ اس لفظ میں کچھ فرق نہ کیجئے اور علم عام پر ایمان قائم کیجئے۔ ....

.....بلکہ اس صورت میں نظراہلیہ کی ضرورت ختم ہو چکی ہے۔ کیا خاتمیت ثابت نہ ہو جو نبی راہدردہ پر بھی آپ کی خاتمیت ثابت ہو جائیگی بلکہ اگر بالفرض بعد زمانہ نبوی ﷺ بھی کوئی نبی پیدا ہو تو پھر بھی خاتمیت محمدی میں کچھ فرق نہ آئے گا۔ عوام کے مناصر کی اور زمین میں یا فرض کیجئے اسی زمین میں کوئی اور نبی محمد پر کیا جائے یا بعد ختم کر دو روایت ثابت خاتمیت ہے۔ معارض و مخالف تمام زمینیں نہیں جو یوں کہا جائے کہ یہ راہدردہ کوئی مخالف روایت ثابت ہے۔ ....

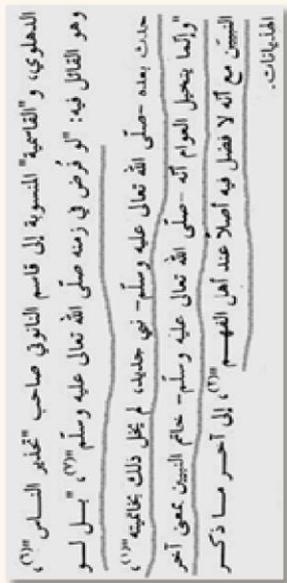
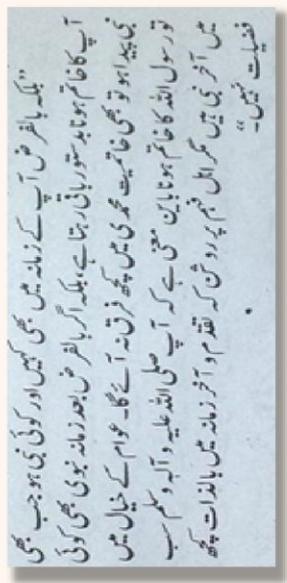
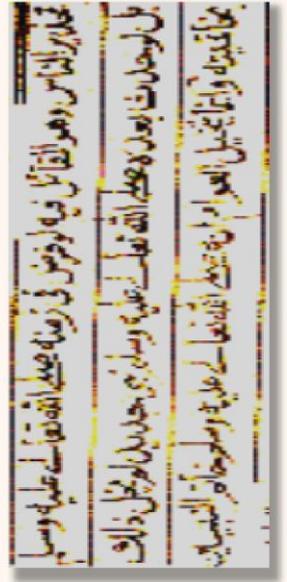
.....بلکہ اس سلسلے میں ہر طور پر یہ مکتوم ہو گا اور کہیں نہ نہ عمل کا سلسلہ علم پر مکتوم ہو جائے جب تک علم منہدی ہی علم ہو تو پھر سلسلہ مکتوم عمل کا سلسلہ۔ فرض نظام کہیں مکتوم نہیں کیا جائے جو علم سے کیا تو آپ کا نام ہونا نااہلیہ کی وضاحت ہی نسبت ناس نہ ہو بلکہ اگر بالفرض آپ کے زمانے میں بھی کسی اور کوئی نبی ہو جسے آپ کا خاتم ہونا بدستور باقی رہتا ہے۔ مگر صحیحہ اللہ ﷺ زمینیں اس بات کا حتمی ہے کہ اس لفظ میں کچھ فرق نہ کیجئے اور علم عام پر ایمان قائم کیجئے۔ ....

From p.18 of *Tahzir al-Nas*

From p. 34 of *Tahzir al-Nas*

From p. 4-5 of *Tahzir al-Nas*

Below Are Scans From Three Different Editions Of *Husam al-Haramayn*, Confirming The Dishonesty Involved In Securing The Signatures Of The Arab Scholars. Not Even A Sign Exists Indicating The Passage Is Being Taken From Different Pages.



From the 1906 early edition of *Husam*, Full scan is available online, p. 100. The Urdu, transcribed above, is found on its p.101.

From Pir Zadah Iqbal Ahmad's 2009 translation of *Husam* p. 20

This is from the 2006 Arabic reprint of *Husam*, pp. 56-57. <http://www.fikreraza.org/books/of-ahmad-raza/husaam-ul-ghayabat>

*Contextualising the Original Passages*

**Section A**

Mawlana Qasim Nanotwi writes in his sophisticated research, *Tahzir al-Nas*, p. 18<sup>72</sup>, after a lengthy discussion:

I humbly submit that the use of the word ‘Seal’ (*khatam*) demands that the chain of Prophethood of all the prophets ﷺ comes to an end with him ﷺ just as, based on the foregoing explanation, the attribute of *prophetness* of the past prophets being in need of the Prophet ﷺ is established by this word, whilst his possession of this attribute is not in need of anyone, be they past prophets or other than them. Similarly, if one supposes, that there were, somewhere on this earth or on some other earth, or in the Heavens another prophet, then he too would be in need of the Prophet ﷺ for this attribute of prophetness as well as that prophet’s chain of prophethood would, in every respect, come to an end with the Prophet ﷺ. Why would this not be the case, for the chain of physical acts comes to an end with knowledge and when all possible knowledge available to humans itself is ended, how could the chain of knowledge and deeds continue. Therefore, if Finality were to be taken for the meaning I have explained, then the Prophet’s ﷺ being the Seal (*khatam*) is not exclusive to past prophets only. Rather, **if it were supposed that there was also to be a prophet in his ﷺ time somewhere else, nevertheless, his being the Seal (khatam) would remain intact.** However, just as the unrestrictedness of the term *Seal of the Prophets* demands that it not be made open to interpretation and he be said to be the Seal of all prophets in general, likewise the unrestrictedness found in the word *mithlahunna* (and their like) in the verse, “Allah is the One who has created seven skies, and their like from earth. The Command descends among them” (Holy Qur’an 65:12), demands that....

Section A of the text presented by Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan in his translation is in italics in the above passage and belongs to page 18 of *Tahzir al-Nas*.

**Section B**

Then some pages later, Mawlana Qasim Nanotwi writes:

Certainly, if you take “Sealship” in the sense of an intrinsic attribute inclusive of the attribute of Prophethood, as this unlearned one has suggested, no one can be said to be the Prophet’s ﷺ equal from those individuals intended for creation. Rather it would be more correct to say that the Prophet’s virtuosity is not only established over those real individuals who were prophets, but it will also be established over any conceivable individuals. **Furthermore, even if one were to suppose, a prophet were to be born after the Prophet’s time, it would still not affect the Muhammadi Sealship (Khatamiyyah),** let alone if a prophet were to be suggested as the Prophet’s contemporary on some other earth or let us suppose on this very earth....

The italicised section is section B of Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan’s text. This who passage is on page 34 of *Tahzir al-Nas*.

**Section C**

Mawlana Qasim Nanotwi begins a very subtle and logical discussion on the issue of the Sealship of Prophethood at the start of *Tahzir al-Nas*:

After offering of praise to Allah and invoking Allah’s blessings upon the Messenger ﷺ, before the reply is presented we request that the first thing that must be done is that the meaning of *Khatam al-nabiyyyn* be understood so that there not be any trouble in grasping the reply. Thus, **the general public believe the Messenger of Allah ﷺ being the Seal [of the prophets] means that he is the very last prophet. However the people of understanding know that there is no intrinsic virtue in being first or last.** The question thus arises, that when: ‘But he is the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and the Seal of the Prophets’ (Qur’an 33:40) is announced by way of a merit and praise, how can it soundly be said to be so in light of the aforementioned reality?

The last part of Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan’s reproduction has again been italicised. It belongs to pp. 4-5 of *Tahzir al-Nas*.

Note the masterly display of jugglery; he has taken a sentence from page 18 of *Tahzir al-Nas*, another sentence from page 34 and a third sentence from pages 4-5 and then, moved by bias, composed them into a particular sequence. This was then set within a blasphemous theme he had himself contrived. This was then used to compile a *fatwa* of disbelief and for which he then

<sup>72</sup> The recent Dar al-Ishaat Edition.

obtained the endorsements of the scholars of the Two Holy Sanctuaries. He then tried to get the general public to believe that this passage is ordered and joined in this very way. If this is the way meanings are to be taken from passages, then may Allah Almighty preserve us. The Holy Qur'an itself then could be used by people to prove that instead of it teaching "Verily the pious will be in bliss and the wicked will be in Hell," that it actually says "Verily the pious will be in Hell and the wicked will be in bliss" (we seek Allah's refuge from that). But why not? If it is allowed to take passages from different places and paste them together, then it should be allowed here too. Of course it is impermissible because what greater kind of dishonesty could one commit? This enormity, however, seemed not to have occurred to Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan. He has departed from this world, and we do not expect his ardent followers, who insist on his every word, to make the correction. Certainly, the fair minded reader will easily be able to grasp the true picture from this book. And our real purpose in writing it is the well-being of the general Muslims.

*The Issue of The Finality of Prophethood and Mawlana Qasim Nanotwi*

In discussing the issue of the Sealship of Prophethood, in the style of the Hadith masters, jurists, theologians, and in some aspects the logicians, Mawlana Qasim Nanotwi establishes the Seal of Prophethood for the leader of the Prophets, Muhammad ﷺ. He states that the Sealship of Prophethood (*Khatm al-Nabuwwa*) has three levels:

- 1) The Sealship of Prophethood in relation to spiritual rank (*Khatm-e-Nabuwwat Martabi*).<sup>73</sup>
- 2) The Sealship of Prophethood in relation to physical place (*Khatm-e-Nabuwwat Makani*).<sup>74</sup>
- 3) The Sealship of Prophethood in relation to chronological timing (*Khatm-e-Nabuwwat Zamani*).<sup>75</sup>

Whilst acknowledging 2 & 3 for the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, Mawlana Qasim states that the highest of these statuses is the first kind, the Sealship of Prophethood in relation to spiritual rank. In fact this is the basic cause behind the Finality of Prophethood in relation to time, and it is in this greater sense that the Messenger ﷺ is called "the Seal of the Prophets." In other words all ranks, statuses, virtues of Prophethood end with the Prophet ﷺ and no one in the entire universe has a status above his ﷺ. Only the Creator of the Universe is above him in rank and nothing else.

Mawlana Qasim states that all three statuses are established through the fullest possible indication of a word or phrase (*Daleel Mutabiqi*), namely the title *Khatam al-nabiyyin* (Seal of the Prophets). It is not the case that only Sealship of Prophethood in relation to time is established through this title, as the general masses hold. That is, they think the Sealship of his Prophethood is restricted to time only, even though the Prophet's total superiority cannot be established by this. Though certainly, it is necessarily established by the establishment of the more significant Sealship of Prophethood in relation to spiritual rank.

Based on this sophisticated explanation, Mawlana Qasim is saying that if, though it is not at all possible, and it is only supposed, another Prophet were to come in his time or suppose one were to be born after his time and he were to receive Prophethood, this would nevertheless not harm the Finality/Sealship of the Prophet's ﷺ Prophethood because every status of Prophethood comes to an end with him. Hence whether someone comes before or after him, it cannot in any way detract from his ﷺ Finality/Sealship of Prophethood. This, however, was merely a method of explaining and was resorted to in order to emphasise the status of the Sealship of Prophethood in relation to rank, and a person who denies the Sealship of Prophethood in relation to time is as much of a disbeliever as someone would be had he denied the number of units of the five obligatory prayers, the Witr Prayer

<sup>73</sup> This level of sealship indicates his prophethood is intrinsic to him while the prophethood of the remaining prophets on this earth or any other earth is derived from him. Mawlana Qasim proves this from verse 3:81 of the Qur'an and a number of hadiths.

<sup>74</sup> This level of sealship indicates his prophethood manifested in the highest earth from the seven earths created by Allah. Mawlana Qasim also adduces a number of hadiths in proof of this.

<sup>75</sup> This level of sealship indicates that he is the last prophet and no prophet will receive prophethood after him. Mawlana Qasim shows the evidence for this is incontrovertible as it is based on the consensus of the umma and *mutawatir* hadiths.

etc. To reiterate, there is no question of someone receiving Prophethood after the Prophet ﷺ. In fact, for someone to doubt this is itself disbelief.

That was a summary of several pages from different books, including *Tahzir al-Nas*, written by Mawlana Qasim. We will now present a few of these important passages for the readers' consideration.

*Other Passages Authored By Mawlana Qasim Outlining His Belief*

[1] "Sealship of Prophethood in relation to time is part of our Religion and Faith. However there is no cure for false accusations. Had such things been permissible, we also have a tongue; we could have in response to this accusation, made a thousand accusations against you and your followers...."<sup>76</sup>

In this passage Mawlana Qasim has stated that Sealship of Prophethood in relation to time is part of his Religion and Faith and ascribing to him a belief counter to this is a baseless accusation. What could this mean except that those who said Mawlana Qasim denies Finality of Prophethood in relation to time are, without any basis, making a false accusation against him and slandering him of a thing that he is completely innocent. It is altogether another thing that there is no cure for those who make false accusations in this temporal world.

[2] "Sealship of Prophethood in relation to time for the Messenger ﷺ is accepted by everyone. Furthermore it is also accepted by everyone that he ﷺ was the first to be created whether one says so with or without a qualification ...."<sup>77</sup>

[3] "It is true that it is incontestable that Sealship of Prophethood in relation to time is a belief supported by the Umma's Consensus."<sup>78</sup>

The above two texts are absolutely clear and there is no need for further comment.

[4] "Moreover, read *Tahzir al-Nas* p.9 line 10 to p.11 line 7, where I wrote an explanation by which all three Sealships, of Rank, Time and Place, become established through the fullest indication of the term (*Khatam*) and then stated that this is my preferred explanation."<sup>79</sup>

In this text, where Mawlana Qasim establishes, basing it on the fullest indication of the text, the Sealship of Prophethood in relation to place and rank for the Prophet ﷺ he also proves Sealship of Prophethood in relation to time by the very same evidence, stating that this is his preferred view and an article of faith.

[5] "Sealship in time is agreed upon by everyone."<sup>80</sup>

This text is also absolutely clear in terms of its meaning.

[6] "In the end, it means that I do not at all deny the Sealship of Prophethood in relation to time. Rather, it would be more correct to say I blocked off any leeway the deniers could use to deny the Chronological Sealship of Prophethood. I affirm the Prophet's ﷺ superiority, rather, I have strengthened the foothold of those who believe in this. Also I believe in the Prophethood of other Prophets, but I do not consider anyone equal to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ."<sup>81</sup>

This text is also clear. It is free of any intricacies or possible objections.

[7] Mawlana Qasim, elaborates the passage of *Tahzir al-Nas* for a Mawlana Abd al-Aziz Omrawhi, who wrote to him concerning the controversy:

Dear Mawlana, I have but explained and further supported the Sealship of Prophethood in relation to time for the Prophet ﷺ and it is not that I have declared it to be a mistake. Though, certainly, you

<sup>76</sup> *Munazara-e-Ajeebah*, p. 39.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 69.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 50.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 50.

refuse to look with a look of kindness and reflection, so what am I to do? Asserting what is the cause of a thing does not lead to negation of its effect, rather it only further confirms and supports it. If other scholars only explained Chronological Finality, then what I did was point out its cause, namely Finality in the sense of Rank. Furthermore, at the very start of *Tahzir al-Nas* the necessary relationship between Rank and Time was also mentioned. That is based on taking the term “Khatam” to mean Finality in relation to rank which is the absolute sense of this word, and then all three levels, finality of rank, time and place will become established just as we see in the verse: “Verily wine, gambling, alters and divining arrows are filth from the handiwork of satan,” (Sura al-Maidah). The word “filth” establishes both filth that is apparent and that which is imperceptible, with the indication of this word for several different kinds being obvious.<sup>82</sup>

This text also clarifies that Mawlana Qasim does not deny the Sealship of Prophethood for the Messenger of Allah ﷺ in relation to time, rather he affirms and strengthens it. In fact he does not just prove Sealship of Prophethood in relation to time from the word *Khatam*, rather he aims to establish all three Sealships (Of Rank, Time and Place) and he is not prepared to leave any one of these statuses out from the implication of *Khatam*. Through powerful arguments and the strength of his evidences, he is adamant that every kind of Sealship of Prophethood be acknowledged for the Messenger of Allah ﷺ.

[8] “Thus if there is generalness in the word, then Sealship in relation to time is obvious. If this is not the case, then one would still be forced to accept its being established through the necessary indication of the word. This is apart from the many Prophetic statements stating this, such as the hadith, “You are in relation to me as Haroon was to Musa except there is no prophet after me” (Bukhari). The purport of the hadith would seem to be taken from this very term *Khatam al-Nabiyyin* in the more general way we have mentioned. This would be sufficient as an evidence for this point of belief because this meaning has reached the level of mass-transmission (*tawatur*). Moreover, consensus (*Ijma*) was then also established upon this, even if the aforementioned words themselves are not narrated by mass-transmission. So the absence of this level of transmission, with the existence of the mass-transmission of the essential meaning (*Tawatur Ma`nawi*), is similar to the way the number of units (*Rakaa`h*) of the Five Daily Prayers or the Witr Salah etc. are established. That is though the Hadith do not suggest by way of mass-transmission, the number of units of each prayer, nevertheless just as a person who were to deny them would become a disbeliever, so too would a person who denies this.”<sup>83</sup>

In this text, Mawlana Qasim does not merely acknowledge Sealship of Prophethood in relation to time by some logical evidence, rather he states that Chronological Sealship of Prophethood is also established by the title *Khatam al-nabiyyin* recorded in the Holy Qur’an, as well as by the Hadith and the consensus of the community and just as a denier of the number of units fixed in the five prayers becomes a disbeliever, so too does a person who denies the Sealship of Prophethood in relation to time become a disbeliever.

[9] “It is my Religion and Faith that after the Messenger of Allah ﷺ it is not possible for any other prophet to come and whoever doubts this I deem a disbeliever.”<sup>84</sup>

All of these were texts belonging to the Founder of Dar al-Ulum Deoband Mawlana Qasim Nanotwi. If despite the presence of these clear statements, Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan and his followers falsely accuse Mawlana Qasim of denying the Sealship of Prophethood in relation to time and without justification declare him a disbeliever, and insist on it, then can the world show a more dire example of dishonesty, obstinacy and bias than this?

Finally, if Qadianis seek to justify the homemade Prophethood of the deceiver Mirza Ghulam Ahmad Qadiani by similarly misquoting the words of Mawlana Qasim, then that is only to be expected and likewise easily refutable. Mawlana Qasim has emphatically stated that the possibility of a prophet coming after the Messenger of Allah ﷺ is utterly non-existent. Leave aside the

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., p. 37.

<sup>83</sup> *Tahzir al-Nas*, p. 9.

<sup>84</sup> *Munazara-e-Ajeebah*, p.103.

accepting of someone as a prophet after the Messenger ﷺ, according to Mawlana Qasim anyone who even contemplates this much is a disbeliever.

In conclusion, Mawlana Qasim has the same belief concerning Sealship of Prophethood as is held unanimously by the global Islamic community. Having said this, there is no cure in this world for the concoction of slanders and allegations that emanate from malice and bias. A just cure for such slanders can only take place in the Nextlife, Inshallah.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> In the original work by Imam Sarfraz Khan Safdar the discussion continues and includes a refutation of another Breilvi scholar. For readers who wish, they can find this section in Appendix I.

## The Second Objection: Saying The Deeds Of The Followers Are Superior to Those of The Prophets ﷺ

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The second accusation made against Mawlana Qasim was that he states that the good deeds of general believers (*ummati*) makes them, if not greater than the honourable Prophets ﷺ, then on par with them, which is nothing but unadulterated blasphemy. This is, he says, a further reason for declaring the great Imam a disbeliever; rather “without repeal” he will be thrown into the furthest reaches of the Hellfire (Allah Forbid). After quoting the verse, “The Prophet is closer to the believers than their selves,” (33:6), Mawlana Muhammad Umar writes:

Allah declares the Prophet ﷺ more important than the lives of all intelligent beings and yet you [i.e. Mawlana Qasim Nanotwi] consider the deeds of your lives better than the Prophet ﷺ. Is this the effect of the Qur’an’s teachings upon the Deobandis and this how they show their servitude to the Prophet ﷺ? That is they believe the deeds of the slave better than the master ﷺ.... You are oblivious of the impending doom that awaits you and those who follow you, when you are flung into some pit of Hell without appeal, for saying that you are greater than the Master of the Prophets, the Origin of everyone, the Pride of creation and the omnipresent (*fil-kul*).<sup>86</sup>

### Response

The profound message Mawlana Qasim was actually outlining can be understood from the following passages. These are the same passages said to be so blasphemous:

[1] “The perfections (*kamaalaat*) of intelligent beings are of two kinds. One kind comes from knowledge and the second is by virtue of deeds. Praise is attained due to one of these two reasons. It is for this reason that we see that there are four categories of people who have been praised [in the verse in Sura al-Nisa:69]: the Prophets, the truthful, the martyrs and the pious. Of these four categories, the Prophets ﷺ and the truthful have perfection in knowledge (*kamal-e-`ilmi*) and the other two have perfection in action (*kamal-e-`amali*). Consider *the Prophets* ﷺ as the spring of knowledge and active in deeds (*fai`l*). *The truthful* are as repositories of knowledge and able (*qabil*). As for *the martyrs*, they are the spring of action and active in deeds and *the pious* are repositories of action and able.

The proof of what I have stated we must bear in mind that what distinguishes the Prophets ﷺ from their community is their vast knowledge. As for actions, it would seem that a follower sometimes becomes an equal, or even surpasses, them in this regard. And if the Prophets ﷺ surpass their followers in relation to the inner strength of their actions and aspiration, then this means that they have also obtained the station and quality of martyrdom [i.e. they are better than them in action too]. However, things are named by what qualities are most dominant. For instance, the saints Mirza Jaane-Jaana, Shah Ghulam Ali, Shah Waliullah and Shah Abd al-Aziz, all merged asceticism (*faqiri*) and knowledge (*ilm*) together. Despite this, Mirza Jaane-Jaana and Ghulam Ali became famous for their asceticism, whereas Shah Waliullah and Shah Abd al-Aziz became famous for their knowledge. The reason for this was that the asceticism of the first two was more dominant. Whereas, in the case of the latter two, knowledge was the predominant attribute. This was the case, even though the level of each’s knowledge and asceticism was the same. Similarly, the knowledge of the Prophets ﷺ is dominant over their own deeds, though even their deeds, aspirations and inner strength will be dominant over the actions, aspirations and inner strength of others [only this is not always perceptible]. Nevertheless, in respect to knowledge, they are always distinguished from all others.”<sup>87</sup>

[2] “Look at the honourable Prophets ﷺ themselves. One notes that sometimes, the followers are ahead of them in striving and spiritual exercises, but they cannot be equal to the Prophets ﷺ in terms of their rank. What could be the reason for this except their being honoured with knowledge and the office of teaching? In other words, it is but due to their immense knowledge and the office

<sup>86</sup> *Miqyas-e-Hanafiyah*, p.210. Omnipresent (*fil-kul*) is an unorthodox belief of some Breilvis. It states that the Prophet ﷺ is everywhere (*hazir-o-nazir*).

<sup>87</sup> *Tahzir al-Nas*, pp. 4-5.

of teaching that the Prophets ﷺ are distinguished from their followers, and it is not on the basis of worship and spiritual practices. When this is the case it must be said that knowledge must be more virtuous than deeds. It is for this reason that incredible feats in knowledge (*M'ujizat-e- 'Ilmiyyah*) are better than incredible feats in relation to actions (*M'ujizat-e- 'Amaliyyah*) achieved by people.”<sup>88</sup>

To further elucidate, it must be said that the refined speech of the Holy Qur'an and the Prophetic descriptions of the unseen – which are incredible feats in knowledge – must be superior and more virtuous than physical feats like Moses' white hand and a staff that turned into a snake. For there is no doubt, that knowledge holds supremacy over action.

[3] “However, just as, in the matter of the deeds of the children of Adam there is a difference of the heavens and the earth (a particular individual may gain ten times the reward whilst someone else receives seven hundred times the reward, and for some even more than that), likewise, there is a difference between the performers of these deeds. The difference between them is by virtue of the deeds. However great will be that difference, likewise will be the difference between them.”<sup>89</sup>

[4] “In addition to this, what distinguishes the honourable Prophets ﷺ from their communities is knowledge, and it is not deeds or their absence. According to the apparent actions, many followers become equal to the Prophets ﷺ, many even surpass them. This is illustrated clearly by comparing the worship of the Prophets ﷺ with the striving undertaken by the ascetics of the community. As for the inner difference between them, by which I mean the difference in sincerity, that is solely a by-product of the cognition of the One, His attributes and the fruits or otherwise of performing worship or sins – all of which is the result of that same perfection in knowledge....”<sup>90</sup>

[5] “In conclusion, perfection in deeds is such an exquisite quality of the Messenger Muhammad ﷺ that, apart from bigots and the weak of understanding, no one could deny it. And when the Messenger ﷺ emerges unique, having merged both perfection of action and perfection in knowledge, then if he ﷺ is not the Seal (*Khatam*) who is?”<sup>91</sup>

To summarise, a difference in actions is produced by sincerity; the rank of a person's deed will accord with the extent of his sincerity. The companion Abu Saeed al-Khudri narrates that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ addressed his community saying: “Do not abuse my companions, for if one of you were to spend as much as the Mount of Uhud in gold in the way of Allah, you would not reach their spending of a small cup thereof.” (Bukhari and Muslim).

And what could be the reason for this other than the companions had attained the purity of intention for Allah Almighty and a special internal condition by which the weight of deeds increased. Who of the community has such a state? When there is such a difference between the deeds of one follower and another follower, one can only imagine the kind of difference there will be between a follower and a prophet? If you add to this that the Prophet ﷺ is not only a prophet, but the Prophet of the prophets, the Leader of the Messengers ﷺ. And apart from the Creator of the Universe, can anyone appreciate the extent of this difference? Hence, when there is a difference between deeds in this way then why would there not be a difference between the performers of those deeds. The excerpts taken from the works of Mawlana Qasim Nanotwi themselves bring out this difference. Thus, in one place discussing the issue of the permissibility of multiple marriages for the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, elucidating certain rational proofs, he writes, “Then to hope that there could be equal-footing between the Leader of the universe and the male and female believers is merely from false dreams and baseless ideas.”<sup>92</sup>

<sup>88</sup> *Hujjat al-Islam*, p. 28.

<sup>89</sup> *Ab-e-Hayat*, p. 182.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid*, p.152.

<sup>91</sup> *Qibla Numa*, p. 67.

<sup>92</sup> *Ab-e-Hayat*, p.184.

It is true the Proof of Islam Mawlana Qasim Nanotwi's erudite discourse explains that outwardly, in relation to deeds, most followers become equal with the Prophets ﷺ. In fact many of these followers go even further in their striving. If someone has a problem accepting this, then let them read the following necessary clarification:

[1] It is established by mass-transmitted traditions that the Five Obligatory Prayers were instituted on the night of the Ascension. According to the soundest view the Ascension occurred in the eleventh year of prophethood. In consideration of this, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ offered and lead the obligatory prayers for approximately thirteen years. Yet even in this sorrowful age one can find such people who have been offering the obligatory prayers punctually for the last fifty or sixty years. On the face of it, it would seem this follower has done more than the Messenger ﷺ. But is anyone willing to compare even all the prayers of all the Umma, with the inner and outer state that they are performed in, with just one prayer of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ? Can anyone attain the spiritual station of witnessing and sincerity that the Messenger ﷺ had and by which, in reality, the weight of actions increases?

[2] The Juma' prayer on Friday was, according to the soundest view, made obligatory one year after the migration to Madina. With this consideration, the Messenger ﷺ offered this prayer for approximately 10 years. And at the moment, there must be, not thousands, but millions of such Muslims, who if they have not offered the other prayers, they have certainly (Allah willing) offered the Friday prayer diligently for the last fifty or sixty years. Of course on the face of it, the numbers of sixty years of Friday prayers is greater than ten years of such prayers, however in terms of spiritual affect and weight, just one prayer of the Messenger ﷺ is greater than all the Friday prayers of all the Umma."

[3] The fasts of the Holy month of Ramadan were made obligatory in the second year after the migration. In this same year the order to establish the Eid Salah was also revealed. Thus this would mean the Messenger ﷺ only offered the fasts of Ramadan and offered the Eid prayers for 9 years. Presently we have countless Muslims who have diligently fasted and witnessed the Eid prayers for the last forty or fifty years. However, what comparison can there be between their fasts and Eid prayers with those of the Messenger ﷺ? It would seem the followers have gone ahead in their deeds, but in reality there is no comparison between them.

[4] After the Pilgrimage became obligatory, the Messenger ﷺ only did one pilgrimage, as is explicitly recorded in the hadith. And yet at the present time one can find countless Muslims around the world who have performed thirty and even forty pilgrimages. Now should we deny them their pilgrimages above one, merely because they are surpassing their beloved Prophet ﷺ? Only a fool would deny them, for in reality just as it would seem that, as in other deeds, the followers have done more, nevertheless in terms of inner sincerity, what relationship is there between their righteous deeds and the golden deeds of the Messenger ﷺ?

The same exercise can be done with so many other deeds, like Zakah – which became obligatory due to the revelation of the Holy Qur'an or its being mentioned in a Hadith – and thereafter the Messenger ﷺ acted upon it. But he ﷺ would have acted upon this order for only a few years, whereas amongst his followers there have been many such individuals who would have acted upon it for half a century or even more than that and are still doing so. How much more details need to be given? Any sensible person can judge for themselves that apparently it would seem this follower is, in terms of his deeds, ahead of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, but, in terms of the inner condition and sincerity, what comparison can there be?<sup>93</sup>

The upshot is that the false meaning these Breilvis carve out from Mawlana Qasim Nanotwi's passages, upon which they denounce other Muslims, is entirely a product of their corrupt minds. It

<sup>93</sup> I have discussed this issue at some length in my treatise "The Founder of Dar al-Ulum Deoband," it can also be referred to.

is merely done to incite the masses for their personal gratification. The lowly desire it is that has torn mankind into pieces.

The Messenger ﷺ was amazingly pure, fearful of the Almighty, refined, well-mannered, earnest, serious, generous, compassionate, just and trustworthy. His ﷺ intellect and understanding was exceptional and his tolerance was astonishing. His ﷺ resolution and steadfastness were immovable. His ﷺ pure self was the best example that can be given of obedience to Allah Almighty and standing up for the truth. His ﷺ noble person was the most complete example of noble manners and good works. In terms of noble characteristics he ﷺ was loftier than all the people. He ﷺ possessed the highest level possible in the qualities of patience, solemnity, asceticism, modesty, contentedness and reliance upon Allah Almighty, generosity and bravery. Thus if the age of one of his followers happens to exceed his life, due to which it would on the face of it seem that he has performed more deeds and strove more than him ﷺ, this does not take away from the great rank of the Messenger ﷺ and nor can a follower in reality surpass him. If Mawlana Qasim is a criminal because he says that *on the face of it* followers are equal and even ahead, in some deeds, to the Messenger ﷺ, then this was a crime also committed by Imam Fakhr al-Din Al-Razi, the famous commentator of the Holy Qur'an. He writes:

We do indeed find in the community (*Umma*) those who have a longer life and strive more rigorously than the Prophet ﷺ.<sup>94</sup>

Obviously, when someone's life is longer, his prayers, fasts etc. will also be more. Now, should Imam Razi be declared a disbeliever due to this crime? (Allah Forbid!) If he is not a disbeliever, then the question is why not?

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<sup>94</sup> *Al-Tafsir al-Kabir* under the commentary of Surah 2:34.

## Chapter 2

### Mawlana Rashid Ahmad Gangohi (1829-1905)

#### *Brief Biography*

Mawlana Rashid Ahmad Gangohi was born in the village of Gangoh (in the district of Saharanpur) on a Monday morning in 1829 (1244 Hijri). His father, Mawlana Hidayat Ahmad was a thirty fifth generation descendant of the noble companion Abu Ayyub Khalid ibn Zayd al-Ansari al-Khazraji. His father died at the age of thirty five in 1836. *Qutb al-'Alam* Mawlana Rashid Ahmad Gangohi was just seven years of age at the time. He had two brothers. The eldest, Mawlana 'Inayet Ahmad, was his teacher of elementary Persian. The youngest, Sa'id Ahmad, died at the age of nine. He also had two sisters, Fasihan and Amat al-Haqq. The latter was his half-sister.

Amongst his children, one of his sons died a few days after birth. The second, Mawlana Hakim Mas'ud Ahmad, was born in 1862 (1278 Hijri). A daughter by the name of Umm Hani died at the age of three or four years. The second daughter by the name of Safiyyah Khatun was the mother of Hafiz Muhammad Ya'qub. Mawlana Rashid Ahmad Gangohi had studied various Persian works at a very young age under his maternal uncle Mawlana Muhammad Taqi, who was an expert in the language. Upon completion of his Persian studies, Mawlana Rashid Ahmad Gangohi desired to study Arabic. After having studying primers in *sarf* and *nahw* under Mawlana Muhammad Bakhsh Rampuri, at the age of seventeen, upon the advice of his teacher, he travelled to Delhi to study under Mawlana Qadi Ahmad al-Din Jehlumi. In 1846, a year after his arrival, Mawlana Muhammad Qasim Nanotwi came to Delhi to study under Mawlana Mamluk 'Ali. Within a short period of time both met up and completed their studies together. It was after the completion of his studies that he committed the Holy Qur'an to memory.

Mawlana Rashid Ahmad Gangohi married the daughter of his eldest maternal uncle, Khadijah Khatun. He took the *bay'ah* (pledge) of Tasawwuf at the hands of the Sufi master of the age, Haji Imdadullah Muhajir Makki (1817-1899) in all Four orders of Tasawwuf. In 1857, Haji Imdadullah, Mawlana Nanotwi, Mawlana Gangohi and Hafiz Muhammad Zamin, all participated in the struggle for independence. Hafiz Zamin was also martyred the battle of Shamli. There were a number of reasons that this campaign came to a premature end and its participants went into hiding. The colonial powers had issued arrest warrants, publicising grand rewards for the capture of those involved in the uprising. Consequently, the unscrupulous began to search high and low for these fugitives. Haji Imdadullah went in to hiding in a barn belonging to one his followers in Panchlasah.<sup>95</sup> A wretched informant told the authorities and officers were despatched to search the barn. It was a *karama* (miracle) of Haji Imdadullah that they though they thoroughly examined the premises they failed to see Haji Imdadullah and left empty-handed.

The fire of vengeance remained burning in the hearts of the colonial powers. Their search for Mawlana Gangohi remained active. He escaped the oppressors and arrived at Hakim Ziya al-Din's home at Rampur. He was arrested there at the beginning of 1860 and was incarcerated in the prison of Saharanpur with a round-the-clock guard. Before being moved to a regular cell he was placed in solitary confinement in the dark for 3-4 days. He was then transferred on foot to the prison of Muzaffarnagar via Deoband, where he remained for approximately six months. Finally, by the grace of Allah Most Majestic, he was released with dignity. The reason behind his release was that the colonial powers had become firmly established and there remained no immediate threat. With a view to appease the masses, and as a goodwill gesture, they released this leading Muslim figure.

After returning to Gangoh, he spent the next forty nine years, until 1896, satiating the thirst of students of sacred Knowledge, who flocked to there from as far away as Burma, Sindh, Bengal, Punjab, Madras, Deccan, Barar and Afghanistan. Mawlana Gangohi performed the pilgrimage three times; in 1863, 1877 and 1882. The last two were performed on behalf of another person.

<sup>95</sup> See: *Tadhkirat al-Rashid*, p.77.

Numerous important services were undertaken by Mawlana Gangohi in this time. Apart from his countless students, deputies in Islamic spirituality (*khulafa'*) and learned children, his achievements include works such as *Fatawa Rashidiyyah*, *Awthaq al-'Ura*, *Hidayat al-Shi'ah*, *Sabil al-Rashad*, *Imdad al-Suluk*, *Al-Qutuf al-Daniyah*, *Zubdat al-Manasik*, *Lata'if-e-Rashidiyyah*, *Risalah-e-Tarawih*, *Risalah-e-Waqf*, *Fatwa Zuhr-e-Ihtiyati*, *Fatwa-e-Milad*, *Hidayat al-Mu'tadi*, *Risalah-e-Khutut*. He passed away in 1905s.

Mawlana Rashid Ahmad Gangohi was not only a well-known personality in intellectual circles of India, in religious and political affairs, he was also considered highly reliable and popular. He had spent his entire life in the teaching and propagation of the Holy Qur'an, Hadith and other sciences of Islam. Thousands of gifted 'ulama and masters of Tasawwuf were trained by him. They too went on to reform the lives of many others through their lectures, writings, teaching and guidance.

Despite his lofty status and services to Islam and the Muslims, Mawlana Rashid Ahmad Gangohi was not been spared by Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan in his infamous *fatwa*. He has made every effort to show Mawlana Gangohi to be a disbeliever. The beliefs with regard to which he has been unfoundedly declared a disbeliever are such that they would not have even crossed the mind of Mawlana Gangohi. Rather, he himself believed to hold these beliefs was an act of disbelief.

## Objection: The Issue of *Imkan al-Kadhib* (The Possibility of Lying)

**Translators' Note:** The controversial issue this scholar has been accused of is that he considers lying possible for Allah Almighty. This too has been taken out of its context. It is a basic belief of Islam that Allah Almighty is All-Powerful. He has absolute power. To establish the absolute power for Allah Ta'ala, and that He is not bound by anything, it must be conceded that He has the power to lie, only that being the Most Truthful and Pure He will not do so. This is the whole issue in a nutshell. But the unscrupulous have leapt on a part of Mawlana Rashid Ahmad Gangohi's explanation, and said, look, he said, *Allah can lie!*

The basis for Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan's declaring this great scholar outside the pale of Islam is found in the following passage of *Husam al-Haramayn*:

The third sect of Wahhabi liars is that of the followers of Rashid Ahmad Gangohi. Firstly, in following the mentor of his sect, Isma'il Dehlavi, [Mawlana Rashid Ahmad Gangohi] has made the allegation against Allah Almighty that it is possible for Him to lie. I have rebutted this nonsense of his in a book that I have entitled *Subhan al-Subbuh 'an 'aybi Kadhib Maqbuḥ*. I sent a copy of this book to him by registered mail and had received confirmation of receipt from him. It has now been eleven years since I sent him the book. Opponents kept spreading the rumour for three years that a response was being written, had been written, would be published, and has been sent for publishing. Was Allah Almighty not there to expose the deception of these deceptive liars in such a way that they could not stand up to respond nor could they seek help from anyone? Now that Allah Almighty has blinded his eyes, what hope is there of receiving a response from him; will the dead emerge from under the earth to dispute? He then went so far in his oppression [of the truth] and misguidance that I have seen with my own eyes a *fatwa* that has been repeatedly published from Bombay with his signature and seal, clearly state that one should believe Allah Almighty to be a liar and to explicitly say – Allah forbid – that He has lied. When such a grave wrong has been committed by him, I am told to not call this disbelief, not even misguidance, and not even call him a wrongdoer (*fasiq*) because there are many Imams who have said what he has said. The most that I should say is that he has erred in his interpretation. See how holding the belief that Allah Almighty *can* lie has dragged them to the belief that He *has* lied. This is the way of Allah Almighty that those He has made deaf, He also makes them blind. *There is no power or might except in Allah Most High and Great.*<sup>96</sup>

Elsewhere, Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan writes:

For Allah's sake, justice! He who said, "When have I said that I do not believe in the possibility of Allah Almighty lying?" That is, he believes Allah *can* lie, He *has* lied and He *does* lie. He who issues a *fatwa* regarding such an individual that even though he has erred in interpreting Qur'anic verses, he should not be called a disbeliever or a misguided heretic, and he who says that no harsh word should be used for such an individual. He who said that doing so is, in effect, declaring the 'ulama of the *Salaf* (pious predecessors) disbelievers. Hanafis and Shafi'is should not be abused or declared misguided. That is, to declare Allah a liar – Allah forbid – was the school of many 'ulama of the *Salaf*. This difference of opinion is like the difference of opinion between Hanafis and Shafi'is when one group (the Shafi'is) hold their hands [in prayer] above their navels and the other group (the Hanafis) hold theirs below their navels. Thus should you understand this issue. Some have called Allah truthful while others have called Him a liar. Therefore, such an individual should be protected from being declared misguided or wicked. That person did all this, that is he attributed lying to God all from himself. It is of no consequence that he stated: "The power to lie, whilst its occurrence being impossible is an agreed upon doctrine." As he has admitted explicitly here that the idea of *lying occurring* is correct.<sup>97</sup> In other words, it is correct that Allah *has* lied. Can such a person [who holds such a belief] be considered a Muslim? Can one who believes such a person to be a Muslim be himself considered a Muslim? By Allah! What is Iman? It is to endorse and attest the truth of Allah. What is the opposite and negation of this? It is to belie. This means to attribute to an individual the trait of lying. If Iman remains intact even after clearly declaring Allah a liar, then only Allah knows what animal is Iman. Only Allah knows, why the fire-worshippers, Hindus, Christians

<sup>96</sup> *Husam al-Haramayn*, pp.101-103.

<sup>97</sup> It is as if, according to Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan Allah's capability to lie while being impossible for Him to do so means actual clear occurrence of lying by Allah - *There is no power or might except in Allah*. This is the comprehension and justice of the man.

and Jews should be considered disbelievers? None of them has said so openly that their gods lie. Their denial of the words of the true God is because they do not consider these to be words from God. You may never find the gravest disbeliever in the world who whilst believing in a god, and accepting His words to be His, so recklessly say *God has lied*; that the idea of *lying occurring* is correct in relation to Him....<sup>98</sup>

### Response

Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan's unfounded accusation against Mawlana Rashid Ahmad Gangohi – that he believes Allah Almighty to be a liar, that He *has* lied and *does* lie – are pure slander and deception. There is not an iota of truth in it; it is a slick fabrication of his sick heart. Let us present Mawlana Gangohi's own statements, using as reference his famous, reliable and widely available collection of rulings (*fatawa*) to expose these lies, so each person can see the deceit. Here is the actual *fatwa* of Mawlana Gangohi that was the source of this controversy:

*To proceed after the Sunnah greeting of Salam:* You have sought clarification about the issue of the possibility of Allah lying. If we mean by Allah Almighty having the capability of lying that Allah Almighty is capable of doing contrary to what He has said He would do, only by His choice and power He will not do so, then this is the belief of this servant. This belief is enjoined by the Holy Qur'an, authentic Hadith and this has been the belief of the scholars of this Umma. For example, Allah has declared that Fir'awn will be entered into the Fire, but He is fully capable of entering him to Paradise, albeit He will not do so. This is the issue currently being discussed. All the friends of this servant hold the same belief. Enemies may have presented this differently. This capability and non-execution is known as *imkan dhati* and *mumtani' bil-ghayr*. End. With Peace. [Signed:] Rashid Gangohi.<sup>99</sup>

The above passage clarifies what exactly is Mawlana Gangohi's belief regarding this issue. On the same issue, here is another *fatwa*:

#### Question:

What do the religious scholars say regarding whether Allah Almighty can possess the trait of lying? Does He lie or not? What is the ruling regarding a person who believes Allah Almighty lies?

#### Answer:

The Glorious Essence of Allāh is beyond being ascribed the trait of lying – we seek refuge in Allāh Most High [from such a belief]. There is absolutely no trace of falsehood in his speech. He says:

ولو شئنا لآتينا كل نفس هداها ولكن حق القول مبي لأملأ جهنم من الجنة والناس أجمعين. - *'And who is more truthful than Allāh in His word?'*

(Al-Nisā':122). He who holds such a belief regarding Allāh Almighty or utters such words with his tongue cannot be a believer (*mu'min*); he is undoubtedly an accursed disbeliever (*kafir*) who opposes the Holy Qur'an, Hadith and the consensus (*ijma'*) of the Umma. He can never be a believer. However, it is the belief of all the people of *Iman* that Allah Almighty has declared the likes of Fir'awn, Haman and Abu Lahab inhabitants of Hell. This is an absolutely definitive ruling of Allah Most High; He will never do contrary to this. He is, nevertheless, capable of granting [such disbelievers] entry to Paradise, albeit He will not choose to do so. He says:

ولو شئنا لآتينا كل نفس هداها ولكن حق القول مبي لأملأ جهنم من الجنة والناس أجمعين.

*'And if We had willed, We would have led every soul to its right path (by force), but the word from Me had come to pass: "I will certainly fill Jahannam with jinn and human beings together."'*<sup>100</sup>

It is clear from this verse that had Allah Almighty wished, He could have made everyone a believer, but He will not do anything contrary to what He has already declared. All this is of His choosing and not due to any form of compulsion, for He is the absolutely independent Doer, the Absolute Executer of whatever He wishes (*Fa'aalulima yurid*). This is the creed of all the scholars of this Umma. Qadi Baydāwī, in his *tafsir* of the words of Allāh Almighty (الآية) (Al-Mā'idah: 118) writes: *The non-forgiveness of associating [partners with Allāh Most High] is the demand of His warning. Otherwise, forgiveness is not impossible in itself.* Written by the lowly servant Rashid Ahmad.<sup>101</sup>

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., p.15-16.

<sup>99</sup> *Fatawa Rashidiyyah*, 1:11-12.

<sup>100</sup> Al-Sajdah:13.

<sup>101</sup> *Fatāwā Rashīdiyyah*, 1:18.

In the same *Fatawa Rashidiyyah* there is a reply from the great saint Mawlana Haji Imdadullah on the same issue:

*Answer:*

Let it be clear that the meaning that you have understood of Allah's capability to lie is, by consensus, unacceptable and rejected. To attribute actual lying to Allah Almighty is false and contrary to unambiguous and clear sacred texts such as:

ومن أصدق من الله حديثاً.

'Who is more truthful in his word than Allāh?' (Al-Nisā': 87)

إنّ الله لا يخلف الميعاد.

'Surely, Allāh does not go back upon His promise.' (Al-Ra'd: 31)

The sanctified and perfect essence of Allāh is pure of imperfections and shortcomings such as lying. As for the difference of opinion amongst the scholars regarding the occurrence of something contrary to God's promise or its not occurring, which the author of *Barahin-e-Qati'ah* wrote about, then that is not really lying; it outwardly resembles lying. The explanation of this would be a lengthy affair. The essence of it is that the possibility of lying comes under the power of Allah Almighty. That is, He is fully capable of doing contrary to the punishments that He has warned of, though He will not do so. Something being possible does not mean it will necessarily occur, for, a thing could be possible in itself but due to an external factor it could become impossible. This fact is not hidden to those who possess an intellect. On this issue, the stance of all the major scholars of Islam and the noble Sufi masters is that lying falls within the absolute power of Allah Almighty. Thus, the doubts that you had deduced regarding the actual occurrence of lying have been disproved and invalidated. No one is of the opinion of the actual occurrence of lying. This issue is very subtle. Therefore, it ought not to be explained to the masses. Most people of our age are incapable of grasping its reality. This issue is proven by countless Qur'anic verses and Prophetic Hadith.<sup>102</sup>

The first two passages of text quoted above belong to Mawlana Rashid Ahmad Gangohi. Read every letter thereof and one can only marvel at how someone could fail to understand what Mawlana is saying. His belief on this issue is clear. Compare this with what Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan apparently understood from these same words. There is no need for us to say anything more.

The third passage belongs to the spiritual mentor of Mawlana Gangohi, Haji Imdadullah. It is also very clear. If despite so much clear texts, some narrow-minded biased individual says that Mawlana Gangohi – Allah forbid – believes Allah to be a liar and that He has actually lied, then this is pure falsehood and undoubtedly rejected. Mawlana Gangohi himself declares the holder of this belief a disbeliever and accursed. Despite all this, Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan and his followers declare Mawlana Rashid Ahmad Gangohi a disbeliever based on the false allegation that he calls Allah a liar – *refuge and protection is only with Allah*. The truth, however, is that he is absolutely absolved of this monstrous slander. As for Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan's allegation:

I have seen with my own eyes a *fatwa* that has been repeatedly published from Bombay with his signature and seal, clearly state that one should believe Allah Almighty to be a liar and to explicitly say – Allah forbid – that He has lied.

This is just another unfounded and false allegation, and regarding which Mawlana Khalil Ahmad Saharanpuri wrote:

As for Ahmad Raza Khan's claim that he has a photocopy of Mawlana Rashid Ahmad Gangohi's *fatwa*, this is nothing but a fabrication. To forge such lies and fabrications is easy for him, as he is the master of masters in the art. Compared to him, others are but novices. It is his habit to distort, deceive, mislead and cheat. He is in the habit of forging seals. He is no less than Mirza Qadiani, only he openly claimed prophethood and he secretly harbours the claim to being a *mujaddid* (Reviver of the Faith). He is in the habit of branding the true scholars of Islam disbelievers, just as the Wahhabi followers of Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab used to brand the Umma disbelievers. May Allah humiliate him just as He humiliated them.<sup>103</sup>

<sup>102</sup> *Fatawa Rashidiyyah*, 1:20.

<sup>103</sup> *Al-Muhannad 'ala al-Mufannad*, p.37.

In explaining the invalidity of written correspondence as a means to transmit the sighting of the moon, Mawlana Ahmad Raza himself writes: “It is clearly stated in all the books [of *fiqh*] that, *A writing can resemble another writing*. Thus writings cannot be relied upon”.<sup>104</sup> So if a writing cannot be relied upon in minor issues related to moon sighting, how, then, can it be relied upon in such a grave matter as declaring a person a disbeliever? This is particularly so when it is all fabricated and the one regarding whom such a thing is being said is totally unaware of it.

In conclusion, their declaration of *kufir* against Mawlana Rashid Ahmad Gangohi was on an utterly false premise [that is he believes Allah Almighty to be a liar, He has actually lied and continues to do so]. Mawlana Gangohi’s belief on this issue is the same as that of all the scholars of the Ahl al-Sunna, as was made clear through the only published words from him that are known to exist. Thus the declaration is wholly false. Leading Islamic authorities have always established the *Imkan al-Kadhib* for Allah Almighty in the way Mawlana Rashid Ahmad did. Appendix 2 at the end of this book can be consulted for the original Arabic passages from their books with their translations.

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<sup>104</sup> *Malfuzat*, 2:50.

## Chapter 3

### Mawlana Khalil Ahmad Saharanpuri (1852-1927)

#### *Brief Biography*

The lineage of Mawlana Khalil Ahmad Saharanpuri the son of Majid Ali, after thirty-four generations, reaches the noble companion Abu Ayyub. He was born in the town of Nanota in the district of Saharanpur. His noble mother, Bibi Mubarak al-Nisa was the sister of Mawlana Muhammad Ya‘qub, the head lecturer at Dar al-Ulum Deoband, and the daughter of Mawlana Mamluk Ali, the famous scholar.

Mawlana Khalil Ahmad was born as a twin. His handsome and stout brother, who was born before him, died. The thin, feeble, weak and frail-bodied Khalil survived. When he was approximately three years old, his maternal grandfather Mawlana Mamluk Ali made him, for *barakah*, recite *bismillah* himself and thus begin the *Qa‘idah*. Because he was, through the grace of Allah Almighty, intelligent, he quickly completed learning to read the Noble Qur’an and after that began learning Urdu. He studied the Noble Qur’an, and the elementary books of Urdu and Persian in Anbetha and Nanota under various teachers. After this, at the age of eleven, he went to live with his paternal uncle, Ansar Ali, who had attained the rank of *sadr al-sudur*<sup>105</sup> in the princely state of Gwalior, and studied various books up to *Mizan al-Sarf* and *Panj Ganj* with him. When his noble father, Shah Majid Ali, who spent most of his years working for princely states away from home, returned having resigned, he called his son, Khalil Ahmad, to live with him and handed him into the care of Mawlana Sakhawat Ali, a famous teacher and respected ‘*alim* of Anbetha. He studied books such as *Kafiyah* under him. At the suggestion of some friends and in view of his intelligence Mawlana Khalil Saharanpuri was enrolled into an English school. Within a short time he showed his exceptional academic capabilities to his teachers. After this, when the foundation of Dar al-Ulum Deoband was laid in 1866, with his maternal uncle Mawlana Muhammad Ya‘qub being designated as head lecturer, Mawlana Khalil joined his class to study *Kafiyah* at Dar al-Ulum Deoband now.

Six-months after the establishment of Dar al-Ulum Deoband, the Madrasa of Mazahir al-Ulum Saharanpur was established. His close relative, Mawlana Muhammad Mazhar Nanotwi, was appointed its most senior lecturer. Mawlana Khalil thus began his studies at Mazahir al-Ulum and completed the *Dars-e-Nizami* in 1871 at the age of twenty-three. After graduation he was sent to a madrasa in Manglore in the district of Saharanpur. After that he was appointed an assistant lecturer at Mazahir al-Ulum. He, however, remained eager to gain complete proficiency in Arabic literature, and at this time presented himself in the service of the professor at the Oriental College Lahore and great master of the eastern sciences, Mawlana Fayd al-Hasan Saharanpuri. After mastering the subject, he returned to carry on with his other activities — memorised the Noble Quran within a year and undertook the role of Imam in his local Masjid. Due to the colonial injustices, he declared India to be *Dar al-Harb* and that Muslims should migrate. In order to undermine the efforts of these respected scholars and strengthen the hand of the colonialists, Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan wrote books such as *I‘laam al-A‘alam bi anna Hindastan Dar al-Islam*.<sup>106</sup> As a result of his speaking the truth, Mawlana Khalil Ahmad Saharanpuri was arrested in Bombay in 1916 and sent to Nainital Prison.

The judge asked whether he considered India *Dar al-Harb* and whether he said it is necessary to migrate. He replied: “Yes, I have said so as news has come with frequency from Delhi that the government forces the Muslims to pass judgements against our faith, Islam.” The government then realised such policies were wrong, and to win the trust of the Muslim populace it improved its treatment of the Muslim community and renewed its pledge to uphold religious freedom. Mawlana Khalil Ahmad and other activists were subsequently released.

<sup>105</sup> *Sadr al-sudur* was the title of the person with the highest government authority in disputes relating to religious law in Mughal India and subsequent Mughal-influenced north-Indian states (translator).

<sup>106</sup> Translated as: *Informing Eminent Personalities that India is Dar al-Islam*.

### *Marriage and Children*

At the age of twenty-four in 1872, Mawlana Khalil married the daughter of Shah Abd al-Rahman Gangohi in Gangoh. The marriage was conducted by Mawlana Rashid Ahmad Gangohi. A son was born the following year and named Muhammad Ibrahim. A daughter was then born in 1876 and was named Munir al-Nisa. Then in 1878 He had another daughter. Three or four days later both mother and daughter returned to their Maker. After this, he married a widow who remained with him until his last days and from whom he had another son, who was named Abd al-Rashid.

### *Lecturing*

Mawlana Khalil worked as a teacher in Mangalore, Bhopal, Bhawalpur, Bareili, Deoband and several other places. In 1896, at the age of 45, he was appointed senior lecturer at Mazahir al-Ulum, Saharanpur. He took the pledge of Tasawwuf at the hand of Mawlana Rashid Ahmad Gangohi in 1872. For many years – in addition to writing works and issuing *fatwas* – he remained preoccupied in teaching the various Islamic sciences. His books — apart from *Hidayah al-Rashid*, *Mitraqah al-Karamah*, *Itmam al-Ni'am*, *Tanshit al-Adh'han*, *Al-Muhannad 'ala 'l-Mufannad*, *Al-Barahin al-Qati'ah* and four thick volumes of *fatwas* (unpublished in the library at Mazahir al-Ulum) — include *Badhl al-Majhud*, an excellent commentary on *Sunan Abu Dawud*. This work was started in 1917 and completed over ten years later in 1927. Apart from being a highly erudite and well-researched masterpiece, it is a means of *al-sadaqah al-jariyah* for him and the raising of his station; students are still greatly benefiting from it.

He took up residence in Madina on account of his desire and eagerness to die and be buried in its sacred precinct. He died in 1927 (1346 Hijri) and had the fortune of being buried in the graveyard of Jannah al-Baqi close to the resting places of the family of the noble Messenger ﷺ.

## The First Objection: Saying Satan Possesses More Knowledge Than The Messenger ﷺ

**Translators' Note:** A Mawlana Abd al-Sami' wrote a book called *Anwar al-Satia'h* to prove the omnipresence of the Prophet ﷺ. He used the analogy of the Sun's rays reaching far and wide as his primary proof. This heretical book was refuted by Mawlana Khalil Ahmad Saharanpuri in his book *Al-Barahin al-Qati'ah*. Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan to certain passages from this refutation and presented them out of context. In particular, the accusation that Mawlana Khalil had said that Satan has more knowledge than the Prophet ﷺ. Allah forbid!

Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan was left very much stunned by Mawlana Khalil Ahmad Saharanpuri's irrefutable book *Al-Barahin al-Qati'ah* (The Definitive Proofs) and he did not have the ability to muster an answer. However, to create distrust for this book and its author among simple Muslims, he contrived a plan. This involved passing a *fatwa* of *kufur* on Mawlana Saharanpuri by quoting a text out of its context and presenting a toxic meaning never intended by the learned Imam. He was in this way accused of denigrating the noble Messenger ﷺ and then the masses were incited by him crying, 'look at this blasphemy of your Prophet ﷺ!' It seems apt to quote Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan's text ad verbatim to ensure there remains no difficulty in understanding the reality. He wrote in *Husam al-Haramayn*:

The fourth group are the satanic Wahhabis, it is a sect like the Rafidhi's satanic sect. They (the Rafidhi's) are followers of Satan Al-Taqa and these (the satanic Wahhabis) are the followers of the Roaming Satan, Iblis the accursed. They too are the followers of the one who denied Allah, [Mawlana] Gangohi. For indeed he has written in his book *Al-Barahin al-Qati'ah* – by Allah the proofs only sever that which Allah has ordered [the believers] to join – that their shaykh, Satan (*Iblis*), is more knowledgeable than the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and this is his repulsive text in his horrid words, on page 47: "This vastness of knowledge for Satan and the Angel of Death is established through clear scripture (*nass*). What definitive scripture (*nass qat'i*) is there that establishes the vastness of the Messenger's ﷺ knowledge that would refute all the clear texts [establishing otherwise] and thereby affirming a kind of polytheism (*shirk*)?" He writes prior to this, "If this is not *shirk* then what part of Iman is it?" Help, oh Muslims! Help! Those who believe in the leader of the Messengers ﷺ....<sup>107</sup>

Other people of innovation have avidly repeated this objection to cause unnecessary aversion among the masses. Mawlana Muhammad 'Umar has made much of this objection in his book *Miqyas-e-Hanafiyyat*.<sup>108</sup>

### Response

Instead of presenting half the story and an incomplete text, it seems appropriate that we look at the entire complete passage from *Al-Barahin al-Qati'ah* as well as the text in answer to which it was written. The background to the book is that that Mawlana Abd al-Sami'<sup>109</sup> wrote a book in support and propagation of *bid'ah* and in refutation of Mawlana Rashid Ahmad Gangohi. This book, which should really be called a pamphlet of *bid'ah*, was named *Anwar al-Sati'ah*. It was in refutation of this book that Mawlana Khalil Ahmed Saharanpuri wrote *Al-Barahin al-Qati'ah*. Mawlana Abd al-Sami', writing about the omnipresence (*hazir-o-nazir*) of the Prophet ﷺ in the gatherings of *milad*<sup>110</sup>:

I say, the belief (*'aqidah*) of the Ahl al-Sunnah wal-Jama'ah is that the quality (*sifah*) of Allah Most High — in that same way and in that same reality — is particular to Allah Most High and cannot be found in another. The meaning of being particular (*khususiyyah*) is that it is found in Him and not in another, and being present on every place on the face of the earth is not something particular or special with God. It is inside *Ma'alim al-Tanzil, Risalah Barzakh*<sup>111</sup> of Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti and

<sup>107</sup> *Husam al-Haramayn*, p. 103.

<sup>108</sup> *Miqyas-e-Hanafiyyat*, pp. 212-213.

<sup>109</sup> He resided in Rampur which is a district of Saharanpur.

<sup>110</sup> *Milad* or *Mawlid* refers to the celebration of the Prophet's ﷺ birth.

<sup>111</sup> I assume the book Mawlana 'Abd al-Sami' is referring to is *Sharh al-Sudur bi Sharh Hal al-Mawta wa 'l-Qubur* (translator).

*Sharh al-Mawahib al-Ladunniyyah* of Zurqani that the Angel of Death is on the verge of taking possession of all of the souls of the jinn, mankind, animals and all of creation; and that Allah has transformed the world in front of him like a small tray. It has come in one narration that it (earth) is like a large basin and so he takes from here and there. Meaning that he takes lives from here and there. Now, think how many ants, mosquitoes, insects, beasts, birds and men die at one time between the east and the west; at every place the Angel of Death is present. It is in *Mishkat al-Masabih* that at the time of death, the Angel of Death stands next to the believer and disbeliever. It is a lengthy narration.

Qadi Thana ullah has narrated in *Tadhkirah al-Mawta* a hadith from *al-Tabrani* and *Ibn Mundah*; it is also mentioned in this [*hadith*] that the Angel of Death told the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, “There is no such house of good or bad men which I am not watching them. Night and day I keep watch over them and know every young and old one in a way that they do not know themselves.”

It is understood from these Hadith that the Angel of Death is present in all places. The Angel of Death is one of the elect angels who are brought close. Even Satan is present at every place. In *Durr al-Mukhtar* it is written that Satan remains with the children of Adam during the day and his son accompanies them during the night. Commenting on this in his commentary, Imam Ibn Abidin says that Satan remains with all of the children of Adam, except those who have been saved by Allah. He then says, “And He (Allah) has given him the ability for this in the same way that He has given the Angel of Death power to do similar to that.” In other words Allah Most High has given Satan the ability for this, in the same way that He has given the Angel of Death the ability to be present in every place.

Now, understand its parallel in the realm of physical bodies (*ajsam-e-mahsusah*). If a person was to travel across the earth’s population from east to west, then, wherever he goes, he will find the moon present and as well as the sun. Then, if he says that the moon and sun are omnipresent then, according to your own rule, he should be declared a *kafir*, for he has said *the moon is present in every place*. However, the reality is that the person is not a *mushrik* or a *kafir*, he is a genuine Muslim.

In the same way understand that while the sun is present in every place whilst being in one place, the soul of the Messenger ﷺ is likewise in the seventh heaven in *‘illiyyin*. From there, if his blessed sight can fall on the entire earth, or on some places it, like beams of the encompassing sun, the Ahmadi spiritual effluence (*faydan*) diffuses upon all the pure gatherings, is that beyond possibility and far-fetched?

Allamah al-Zurqani has mentioned the poem of Abu al-Tib in *Sharh al-Mawahib al-Ladunniyyah* in the chapter regarding visiting of the noble grave [of the Prophet ﷺ]:

*Like the sun in the centre of the sky, and its light,  
Envelops countries, from the east and the west,*

*Like the full moon, from whence you turn, you see it,  
It guides to your eyes piercing light.*

In other words, in the same way that the sun is in the middle of the sky, and its light spreads from east to west. And from whichever angle you look at the moon, from that place will your eyes behold its light. Hence, the difference is that Allah Almighty has kept open the eye to see the sun and the moon, from which a person who can see says that the moon is present in all places. A person born blind would say that the moon is nowhere. Hence, in the same way, the seeing of the soul is dependent on the bounty of Allah Most High. If He opens the eye within and raises the veil then he is able to see the Ahmadi lustre.

Imam al-Sha‘rani has written in *Mizan*, ‘Surely, it has reached us from Abu al-Hasan al-Shadhili and his student, Abu al-Abbas al-Mursi, and others, that they used to say, “If seeing the Messenger of Allah ﷺ was to vanish [from us] for the blinking of an eyelid, then we would not count ourselves from the body of the Muslims.”

Look at condition of Abu al-Hasan al-Shadhili and the other friends of Allah. They say that if the Messenger of Allah ﷺ were to vanish from our sight for even the duration of the blinking of an eye then they would not consider themselves from the Muslims.

Now, what ruling and *fatwa* would apply to these friends of Allah according to these respected muftis of pure belief? As for the presence of the souls of the Prophets ﷺ in the ‘*illiyyin* in the seventh heaven, please refer to *Tafsir-e-‘Azizi* in the section regarding ‘*illiyyin*. However, in spite of being in the ‘*illiyyin*, his ﷺ soul has a strong connection to the noble grave in Madina, he ﷺ knows every visitor, who has come for *ziyarah*, he ﷺ replies to all of their salutations. The noble body is alive in the grave.

Al-Zurqani has written, “Indeed the Prophet ﷺ is at the *Rafiq al-A‘la* and his body is in his grave replying to those who give him *salams*.” More research on this will be mentioned in the section affirming the noble *mawlid*.

Now, it should be considered that when the moon and the sun are present in all places, and that Satan is present at every place on earth, and that the Angel of Death is present in every place, then how can this attribute be particular to God? Here is the amusing thing, the people of the gatherings of *milad* do not claim that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ is present in all of the world’s places, [regardless of whether they are] pure and impure, and [regardless of whether they are] religious or irreligious gatherings. The presence of the Angel of Death and Satan in even more places — pure and impure and of *kufr* and non-*kufr* — is found [to an extent] that according to your line of argumentation, it should result in all the *Hadith* scholars and jurists – on account of their belief in the presence of the Angel of Death and Satan in even more places – being more polytheist (*mushrik*) than those who celebrate *mawlid*. Allah forbid! Let it be clear to the people of truth that it is not our claim that the blessed soul ﷺ comes to every gathering. But, it is our claim that if this is someone’s belief then he is not a *mushrik*.<sup>112</sup>

It becomes clear from this passage of *Anwar al-Sati‘ah* that the one making the analogy of the Messenger of Allah’s ﷺ omnipresence with the omnipresence of the Angel of Death and Satan (*hazir* and *nazir*) is Mawlana ‘Abd al-Sami‘. This satanic analogy is the creation of his mind. At the same time, he also accepts that he does not claim that the noble Messenger blessed soul ﷺ comes in each gathering and that, yes, if someone claims this then we do not call him a *mushrik*. It is also immensely regretful that the total of all those places that Mawlana ‘Abd al-Sami‘ believes the Messenger ﷺ to be present is less than the number in which the Angel of Death or Satan are present. So it is he who is saying that the Messenger’s ﷺ knowledge of places is far less than the knowledge of the Angel of Death and Satan (as those were his words). How then can Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan and his followers direct their vile accusation at Mawlana Khalil Ahmad Saharanpuri? They say it is he who believes that the knowledge of Satan is more and thus he is a *kafir* and an apostate. Keep in mind the above points and now we shall present the complete passage from Mawlana Saharanpuri’s book that was alleged to be blasphemous:

Regarding his [Mawlana Abd al-Sami‘] saying, “*I say, the belief (‘aqidah) of the Ahl al-Sunnah wal-Jama‘ah is...*,” I [Mawlana Khalil Ahmad] say, the belief of the Ahl al-Sunnah is that an attribute from the attributes of the Almighty cannot be in the slave, and whatever hint of His attributes is given to someone, it is impossible for it to be greater than it is with Allah Almighty. The attributes of hearing (*sam‘*), seeing (*basr*), knowledge and the right of disposal (*tasarruf*) are the literally (*haqiqi*) established for the Almighty and metaphorically (*majazi*) for the creation. [The holy Qur’an states:] “There is none like him....” Whatever amount of knowledge and power etc. any being has been given can never be increased even by an iota. Likewise, the powers and qualities given to Satan and the Angel of Death, or the manner in which the sun and the moon have been created, all these things do not have the ability to do more than what has been allotted to them. No one can seek more from them than that. Nor is the extent of their virtue, less or great, dependent on how great or little ability they have.

<sup>112</sup> *Anwar al-Sati‘ah ma‘al-Barahin al-Qati‘ah*, pp. 50-53.

Musa ﷺ possesses more virtue than Khidr ﷺ. In spite of this, his possession of *kashf* (divine disclosure/knowledge) was less than that of Khidr ﷺ. And Khidr ﷺ himself did not have the power to acquire more knowledge than the precise amount given to him. In spite of Musa ﷺ being superior [to Khidr ﷺ] he could not acquire the same amount of knowledge of *kashf* possessed by Khidr.

Hence, the manifestation of vastness, in the form of light, that is found in the sun and the moon, and the vastness of knowledge possessed by the Angel of Death and Satan, were only known through observation [in relation to the sun and the moon] and definite texts (*qat'i nusūs*) [in relation to the Angel of Death and Satan]. Therefore to analogise something that possesses [undisputedly] greater virtue with these things to establish a quality that they possess, in equal or greater measure, is bereft of intelligence.

Firstly, tenets of faith are not analogical (*qiyasi*) that they may be established through analogy. Rather they are decisive (*qat'i*), they are established through decisive scriptural texts [to such an extent] that solitary narrations [*khābar wahid*] are of no benefit in this regard. Hence, its (*qiyas*) use as proof will only be worthy of attention when the author (Mawlana 'Abd al-Sami') supports the analogy with definitive scriptures. And, in opposition to the entire Umma, if the creation's belief is being corrupted through such invalid analogies, then when will this issue become worthy of attention?

Secondly, the Qur'an and Hadith establishes contrary to this, so how can it be accepted? Rather, all of the author's statement is rejected. The Messenger ﷺ himself says, "By Allah, I do not know what will be done with me or with you."<sup>113</sup> Shaykh 'Abd al-Haqq<sup>114</sup> relates, 'I do not even know what is behind this wall.' The issue of the marriage session<sup>115</sup> has also been written in *Al-Bahr al-Ra'iq* and other works.

Thirdly, if greater virtuosity is to be established on the basis of knowledge, it follows that if something is of greater virtue then it must also be said to have greater knowledge. Yet, it is well-known that all Muslims (even if they are sinners (*fasiq*) and the author of *Anwar* himself) are more virtuous than Satan. So if it is established that the author is of greater virtue he must have as much knowledge of the unseen as Satan, if not more. According to the author himself, he has a high level of faith, thus on account of being more virtuous than Satan he will be of greater knowledge than Satan. We seek refuge in Allah. One can only be astonished and grieved by such ignorance from the author; how demeaning to the intelligence is the articulating of such nonsense.

In sum, it should be noted that having seen the state of Satan and the Angel of Death, if the affirmation that the Messenger ﷺ possesses all knowledge on earth (*'ilm-e-muḥit-e-zamin*) (irrespective of this contradicting definitive texts and its not being at all evidenced, on the mere basis of an invalid analogy) is not *shirk* then what part of the faith (*iman*) is it? This vastness of knowledge was established for Satan and the Angel of Death through clear scripture (*nass*). What definitive scripture (*nass qat'i*) is there that establishes the vastness of the Messenger's ﷺ knowledge, that would refute all the clear texts [establishing otherwise] and thereby affirming a kind of polytheism (*shirk*)?

The only section quoted by Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan

Having studied logic, and despite knowing the definition of property (*khaasah*) from *Tahdhib al-Mantiq*, it did not prevent the author from adopting his heretical doctrine. He clearly still does not understand it. The *khaasah* of the Almighty's knowledge is that it is an innate (*dhati*) and actual (*haqiqi*) attribute, which necessitates that it encompasses everything. And the entire creation's

<sup>113</sup> Surat al-Ahqaf:8.

<sup>114</sup> See *Ashi'at al-Lama'at*, vol. 1, p. 351.

<sup>115</sup> There is a famous *fiqh* issue mentioned in *Al-Bahr al-Ra'iq*, *Alamghiriyya*, *Durr al-Mukhtar* etc. If a person marries making witness the Almighty and the Prophet ﷺ then one becomes *kafir* for holding the belief that the Prophet ﷺ has knowledge of the unseen (*ghayb*). Hence, *kafir* has only been mentioned in relation to the belief of knowing of a marriage session (in other words this is unconditional). No one has written [with the stipulation] that the person will become a *kafir* if his belief is that [the Prophet's ﷺ knowledge] is equal to that of Allah's in amount and manner (in other words conditional) and otherwise not" (*Al-Barahin al-Qati'ah*, p. 49).

knowledge is a metaphorical reflection (*majazi dhilli*), in that a modicum of this knowledge was received from the Almighty. So though the Messenger's ﷺ blessed soul is in the uppermost heaven (*a'la 'illiyyin*), and is superior to the Angel of Death, it does not in any way necessitate that his knowledge in those issues is equal to that of the Angel of Death, let alone more. The reason for this has been explained. Thus to affirm it through an analogy is ignorance, in that even a little knowledge cannot be established in this way. The purpose of stating all this is that the author's nonsensical research is nothing more than ignorance. It may not be polytheism (*shirk*) itself but it has opened the way for the world to be involved in *shirk*.

After this, [regarding] the stories of the saints of Allah that the author has mentioned. Firstly, these stories are not considered proofs in the Shari'ah that they could affirm a ruling, especially in respect to beliefs (*'aqidah*). So, accepting these stories, while rejecting scriptural texts, is something not expected from the ignorant let alone a scholar. The answer [to them], if one was to assume them to be true, is that the Almighty made a special disclosure to these friends of Allah due to which they obtained that particular piece of information. If Allah Almighty discloses a thousand times more knowledge upon His Messenger ﷺ then this is possible. However, what scriptural text is there that affirms such vast knowledge has indeed been given in reality, legitimising making it a belief and permitting the address in *mawlid*s to be in the second person?

This issue cannot be proved through the possibility that it could happen; it needs to have actually happened and for that to be established it is necessary (*wajib*) for it to be [proved] by a scriptural text. The author's poor understanding is a spectacle, in that he does not understand anything. And this discussion [of it being *shirk*] is when someone believes this by establishing '*ilm-e-zati* (inherent knowledge) for the Messenger ﷺ, as is the belief of the ignorant. If, however, one believes that it is Allah Almighty who gives the Messenger ﷺ awareness, and in this way makes the Messenger ﷺ present [in the gatherings of *mawlid*], then this is not *shirk*. However, believing in this without a Shari'ah proof is not correct and to make this one's belief without proof is sinful. Now, it is obvious that no Hadith scholar, jurist and God-fearing Sufi is a polytheist. [As they will appreciate these subtleties.] However, whoever's belief is according to what the author has written, then such a person is a polytheist (*mushrik*). And to bring these texts and narrations as proof for his bizarre claim is only [an indication of] the author's poor understanding, for there is no proof that could substantiate the claim of the author, as is apparent.<sup>116</sup>

Dear readers, read this unedited text of Mawlana Khalil Ahmad's *Al-Barahin al-Qati'ah* several times and, with fairness, outline which element of it is against the Qur'an, *hadith* and the consensus of the Umma, and in which text has the writer disrespected the Messenger ﷺ? Where has he analogised the knowledge and omnipresence (*hazir-o-nazir*) of the Messenger ﷺ with the knowledge of the Angel of Death and Satan? Actually, it was Mawlana 'Abd al-Sami' who compares the Messenger's ﷺ omnipresence (*hadir-o-nazir*) with how the moon, the sun, the Angel of Death and Satan are present in every place. To establish the Angel of Death and Satan's presence in every place, he has – according to his understanding – presented some Hadith, which he considers to be textual proofs (*nass*); it is on the basis of these texts that he manufactures a false analogy. This he considers sufficient to establish the belief that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ is present in every place. He then also unwittingly refutes it explicitly by saying that the Messenger ﷺ does not present himself in every gathering, whereas the Angel of Death and Satan present themselves in places [regardless of whether they are] pure and impure. In other words, due to them being in such places, the author is accepting of the Angel of Death's and Satan's superiority over the Messenger ﷺ. Since they are in more places, they have more knowledge. And since this information is (according to the author) virtue-bestowing, they are superior. He even warns the people of truth, "that it is not our claim that the blessed soul of the Messenger ﷺ comes to every gathering. Yes, it is our claim that if this is someone's belief then he is not a *mushrik*." Consider the following passage from *Anwar al-Sati'ah* for a moment:

Here is the amusing thing, the people of the gatherings of *milad* do not claim that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ is present in all of the world's places, [regardless of whether they are] pure and impure, and [regardless of whether they are] religious or irreligious gatherings.

<sup>116</sup> *Al-Barahin al-Qati'ah*, pp. 50-53, Kutubkhana Imdadiyyah, Deoband.

Having said this, the author who is the greatest advocate of the Breilvis, then explicitly mentions that he does not consider the Messenger ﷺ omnipresent, in every *mawlid* gathering:

And the strange thing is that those who hold the gathering of *milad* do not generally hold the belief that the blessed soul presents itself in every place — this is regardless of whether the person reciting the *mawlid* is a great lover of the Messenger ﷺ or some other regular individual; [and regardless of] the outward and spiritual condition of the listeners; [and regardless of whether] the Hadith narrated there are authentic or whether they are fabricated stories invented by poets; [and regardless of whether] the shared food, sweets and perfumes come from pure wealth, earned from hard work, or earned through usury and injustice; [and regardless of whether] the hearts are made to yearn for the Messenger ﷺ in their thoughts or not; [and regardless of whether] those present in the gathering are of proper belief or not. We have even seen in numerous gatherings that people of bad disposition or belief also turn up. Their attendance though does create an ill-feeling in the gatherings.... The attendance of the Messenger's ﷺ blessed Soul is something of great merit. So, who claims that he ﷺ comes to every gathering regardless of the manner of how it is held?<sup>117</sup>

It becomes abundantly clear from the foregoing that according to the author of *Anwar al-Sati'ah*, Satan is present in all such gathering, whereas the Messenger of Allah ﷺ is not. Yet, bizarrely, the Deobandis are the ones who are condemned for them holding that Satan is the more knowledgeable. One can only weep over this lack of intelligence.

Mawlana Khalil Ahmad Sahranpuri has taken exception to Mawlana 'Abd al-Sami''s method of adducing proof. That his concluding, via an analogy, that since the Angel of Death and Satan are present in every place – [a claim] for which he has, according to his own understanding, presented some Hadith as textual proofs – the Messenger ﷺ must also be. A summary of Mawlana Khalil Ahmad's refutation is as follows:

[1] Establishing the omnipresence (*hadir-o-nazir*) of the Messenger ﷺ is a matter related to belief ('*aqidah*) as such it cannot be established through analogy (*qiyas*) and nor through a solitary narration,<sup>118</sup> it requires a definitive scriptural proof (*qat'i*) (such as a Qur'anic text, a *mutawatir*<sup>119</sup> *hadith* and consensus (*ijma'*)) and as the author of *Anwar al-Sati'ah* has not done this, then how can his claim be worthy of attention?

[2] Establishing that the Messenger ﷺ is in every place is against the Qur'an and Hadith (read the complete discussion on this in my book, *Tabrid al-Nawazir*<sup>120</sup>). Mawlana Khalil Ahmad has concisely mentioned three references – two Hadith and a text from Hanafi jurisprudence, *Al-Bahr al-Ra'iq*. It follows that, a belief that is contrary to the Qur'an and Hadith and Hanafi *fiqh* is rejected and can never be entertained.

[3] Even a sinful Muslim is superior to Satan. Likewise the author of *Anwar al-Sati'ah*, by virtue of being a human, is superior to Satan. Therefore, by analogy the author should also accept that he is more knowledgeable in regards to the unseen than Satan as well as being omnipresent. When this is not the case, then what value is there for such an analogy which negates the scriptural texts and leads to a corrupt belief? Then after this Mawlana Khalil Ahmad Saharanpuri takes the author to task for his elaborate sophistry in these words:

<sup>117</sup> *Anwar al-Sati'ah ma'al-Barahin al-Qati'ah*, pp. 207-208.

<sup>118</sup> A hadith whose narrators have been less than three in all three generations i.e. the generation of the Companions (*Sahaba*), the Followers (*Tabi'in*) and the Followers of the Followers (*Taba' Tabi'in*). The authenticity of this kind of hadith depends on the veracity of its narrators. If the narrator is trustworthy in all respects, the report given by him can be accepted, but if a single reporter is believed to be doubtful, the entire report subsequently remains doubtful.

<sup>119</sup> A hadith narrated through *tawatur* i.e. in each era, from the days of the Messenger ﷺ for the subsequent generations, the hadith was narrated by such a large number of narrators that it is impossible to reasonably accept that all of them have colluded to tell a lie. This kind of hadith provides utmost conviction and is thus definitive in its affirmation and reliability (*qati' al-thubut*).

<sup>120</sup> A book by Imam Sarfraz Khan Safdar.

To summarise, it should be noted that having seen the state of Satan and the Angel of Death, if the affirmation that the Messenger ﷺ possesses all knowledge on earth (*'ilm-e-muhit-e-zamin*) – irrespective of this contradicting definitive texts, and being devoid of textual proof and relying solely upon a dubious analogy – is not *shirk* then what part of the faith (*iman*) is it? This “vastness of knowledge” was established for Satan and the Angel of Death through scriptural texts (*nass*). [Leaving aside the validity of that conclusion], what is that definitive scriptural text (*nass qat'i*) that, whilst so flagrantly negating multiple clear scriptures, will establish a polytheistic belief (*shirk*) by proving the vastness of knowledge for the Messenger ﷺ?

What is interesting is that in his passage Mawlana Khalil wrote, “all knowledge on earth” (*'ilm-e-muhit-e-zamin*),” and writes further on, “his knowledge in such issues...,” which clearly shows that the discussion only pertains to knowledge of the world. He is not talking about absolute knowledge, nor is he talking about special higher knowledge (*'ulum 'aliyyah kamaliyya*), upon which greater virtuosity in humans is suspended.

The dubious character of Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan and his followers can be appreciated from this example. They do not ask the actual offender (the author of *Al-Anwar al-Sati'ah*): *Why have you carried out such a Satanic analogy in a discussion on sacred belief? Why have you (we seek refuge with Allah) insulted the Messenger ﷺ by accepting that Satan is present in more places, and thus believe in the vastness of his knowledge? Rather, you have turned viciously upon Mawlana Khalil saying that he considers Satan's knowledge to be greater than the Messenger's ﷺ and that he is guilty of blasphemy.*

What is most regretful is that they digest the entire context of Mawlana Khalil Ahmad's passage, or even just the controversial part, as a baby consumes its mother's milk and only regurgitate a highly inflammatory aspect of it and then cry out in outrage. This is the way Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan reproduced Mawlana Khalil's passage in *Husam al-Haramayn*:

...They too are the followers of the one who denied Allah, [Mawlana] Gangohi. For indeed he has written in his book *Al-Barahin al-Qati'ah* – by Allah the proofs only sever that which Allah has ordered [the believers] to join – that their shaykh, Satan (*Iblis*), is more knowledgeable than the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and this is his repulsive text in his horrid words, on page 47: “This vastness of knowledge for Satan and the Angel of Death is established through clear scripture (*nass*). What definitive scripture (*nass qat'i*) is there that establishes the vastness of the Messenger's ﷺ knowledge that would refute all the clear texts [establishing otherwise] and thereby affirming a kind of polytheism (*shirk*)?” He writes prior to this, “If this is not *shirk* then what part of Iman is it?” Help, oh Muslims! Help! Those who believe in the leader of the Messengers ﷺ....

It beggars belief that someone could attempt such a regrettable exhibition of prejudice. If a man had an iota of shame, he would see his mistake, and be sorrowful; he would bow his neck in shame. Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan and his followers, however, are cut from a different cloth. The fear of Allah Almighty does not cause a tremor in their heart. Nor are they overcome by shame. On the contrary they undertake a short course on Deobandi passages and thereafter spend their lives rousing the masses to hate by exploiting their lack of knowledge.

So to reiterate, Mawlana Khalil Ahmad Saharanpuri has not in *Al-Barahin al-Qati'ah* insulted the lofty being of the Messenger ﷺ and nor has he declared Satan more knowledgeable. This is the fabrication and invention of Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan and his followers in that, driven by bias, they project their defective thought upon others and proceed to issue *fatwas* of *kufir* on them. Moreover, if someone hesitates in making *takfir* on them, he too is openly declared a disbeliever. When Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan deceived the scholars of the Two Noble Sanctuaries, he mentioned that Mawlana Khalil Ahmad Saharanpuri considers and writes that Satan is more knowledgeable than the Messenger ﷺ. The scholars of the Two Noble Sanctuaries subsequently sent a series of questions to India.

It was this same Mawlana Khalil Saharanpuri who was instructed to respond on behalf of the scholars of Deoband. One of the questions and answers is as follows:

*The Nineteenth Question:* Is it your view that the knowledge of the accursed Satan is greater than the knowledge of the Messenger ﷺ and has more expansive knowledge than him ﷺ in absolutist terms? Have you written this in one of your books? And what is the ruling of the person who holds this belief?

*Answer:* We have written about this issue in what has passed, namely, that the Messenger's ﷺ knowledge, wisdom, secrets etc. are unconditionally greater than the whole of creation. It is our belief that the person who says that such and such person is more knowledgeable than the noble Messenger ﷺ has disbelieved; our scholars have already issued a *fatwa* of *kufr* against a person who says that the accursed Satan's knowledge is greater than the Messenger ﷺ. So how could it be possible for this belief to be found in one of our books? As for the Messenger ﷺ not knowing of some insignificant thing, because he did not give it attention, that does bring any kind of defect to his being the most knowledgeable. For it has already been established that he has been endowed with such special noble sciences, befitting of his lofty station, that are not possessed by any of the rest of creation. The reverse of this is the case of Satan. He has been endowed, by virtue of the intensity of his giving attention, notification of a huge number of insignificant occurrences, but this does not bestow any virtue or perfection in knowledge upon him. As virtue and superiority do not depend on these things.

From this we learn that it is completely wrong to assert that Satan's knowledge is more than the Messenger's ﷺ. This is similar to how it would be incorrect to say regarding a child who has learned some particular detail of knowledge, that he is more knowledgeable than an erudite research scholar (who is a specialist in all the sciences and disciplines), simply because the scholar does not know that detail. We have already mentioned the story of the hoopoe (*hudhud*) and Sulayman ﷺ and his saying, "I have discovered what you did not" (27:22), and the books of Hadith and *tafsir* are full of many such examples of this, which are well known among people. The sages are agreed that Plato and Galen and their likes were the most knowledgeable of physicians with regards to knowing the properties and conditions of medicines, while appreciating that a dung beetle is intimately more knowledgeable about the conditions of dung and its taste. Hence, Plato and Galen not knowing these lowly conditions does not harm their being more knowledgeable. Indeed, not even a fool, let alone someone intelligent, would be willing to say that the knowledge of a dung beetle is greater than Plato's – even though the dung beetle's being more knowledgeable than Plato with regards to the condition of dung is beyond doubt.

The innovators of our lands establish all superior and inferior, and lofty and lowly knowledge for the Messenger ﷺ. They affirm that since the Messenger ﷺ is the most noble of all creation, he must know all things, big or small. Without an authentic scripture, we have denied this as it was based merely on an invalid analogy. If you would reflect on the following; every believer is more honoured and virtuous than Satan. Therefore, based on this analogy, it becomes necessary for every believer to be fully knowledgeable of Satan's handiworks, and it becomes necessary that Sulayman ﷺ have known what the hoopoe knew, and that Plato and Galen have known all things which insects know. All these logical consequences are absurd and false as is obvious.

This is the summary of what we have narrated in *Al-Barahin al-Qati'ah*, which has severed the arteries of the obtuse irreligious ones, and broken the necks of the party of deceivers and fabricators. Our discussion in there was restricted to a temporal particular (*hadis-e-juzi*) and it was for that reason we used a demonstrative pronoun.<sup>121</sup> The passage ran like this:

"This vastness of knowledge was established for Satan and the Angel of Death through scriptural texts (*nass*)."

"This" was employed to make clear we are not talking about absolute vastness of knowledge. We wrote it to indicate that the objective behind our affirming and negating is only in relation to the mentioned particulars and nothing else. Not fearing accountability before the King of Kings, corrupt people have distorted the wording. It is our firm belief that whoever says that such and such a person is more knowledgeable than the Messenger ﷺ is a *kafir*, as has been explicitly mentioned by more

<sup>121</sup> Mawlana Safraz writes that the text of *Al-Barahin* (page 51) is thus: "This vastness of knowledge is established for Satan and the Angel of Death through scriptural texts (*nass*)..." The word "this" is the pronoun, and there is no claim for unconditional encompassing of knowledge.

than one of our noble scholars. And whoever falsely attributes to us something that we have not said then it is necessary for him to present proof, fearing the interrogation of the King in the Hereafter. And Allah Almighty is Guardian over what we say.<sup>122</sup>

Mawlana Khalil Ahmad also writes in *Al-Barahin al-Qati'ah*: “Not one humble Muslim recognises anyone equal to the Pride of the World ﷺ in proximity to Allah Almighty and in terms of being honoured with the loftiest attributes.”<sup>123</sup> Look attentively to all of these clear passages and see the fabrication in these words of Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan: “He has written in his book, *Al-Barahin al-Qati'ah* ... that their *shaykh*, Iblis, is more knowledgeable than the Messenger of Allah ﷺ....” There is no power and might except with Allah.

If after all this, Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan and his followers insist on calling Mawlana Khalil Ahmad a disbeliever, then what can this mean except that (as in their decalaring of other Deobandi scholars outside Islam) this was not motivated by the principle of the faith. It was them wanting to declare them disbelievers come what may. Though their beliefs did not even in the slightest transgress the Qur'an, Hadith and the belief ('*aqidah*) of the Ahl al-Sunna, they are, nevertheless, *kafir* because they are *kafir*, and they are *kafir* because they are *kafir*. There is no power and might except with Allah. What a remarkable method for excommunication Muslims. No matter how much faith a person may have, and no matter his pious actions, morals and nobility, he is not safe from being hunted down by this deplorable invention of Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan.

Noble readers, you can yourself understand that the *takfir* of the scholars of Deoband is not because they are really and truly *kafir*, or because they have beliefs contrary to the family of Islam and the Ahl al-Sunnah, or because they have derided Allah Almighty and the Master of the Two Worlds Muhammad ﷺ. Rather, they were declared *kafir* because their knowledge, fear of god (*taqwa*), political insight and feats of great sacrifice were widely acclaimed throughout India at that time. They fearlessly sought to end the oppressive colonial rule so the Muslims of India could live according to a pure Islamic way of life. There was no way to remove the respect and trust the masses had for these scholars without defaming their character. It is because of this that the career *pirs* and homemade *muftis* took on the job of unjustly declaring *kafir* these scholars and entangling them in such baseless lies that they were forced to expend precious time and wealth in defending themselves. They even had to leave more praiseworthy Islamic activities to debate these non-issues. No conscientious Muslim is unaware of the critical work they were involved in. These issues were promoted to divert them and thereby deprive the desperate people of India of their profound services. It is possible that the late 'Allamah Iqbal wrote this poem for conditions such as this:

*Until when will your ship remain in the Ravi, Nile and Euphrates?  
Your ship is meant for that vast ocean which knows no bounds  
Those who used to show the stars the way  
Are now yearning for a man that will show them the way*

<sup>122</sup> *Al-Muhannad 'alal-Mufannad*, pp. 25-28).

<sup>123</sup> *Al-Barahin al-Qati'ah*, p. 3.

## The Second Objection: A Dream in Which The Messenger ﷺ “Learnt” Urdu From The Deobandi Scholars

The second accusation relates to the Messenger ﷺ “learning” Urdu from the scholars of Deoband. This objection is especially widespread among the Bareilwi group and is deemed serious. It seems apt to present the original quote and then provide some necessary explanation. Ignoring all rules of intellectual integrity, Mawlana Abd al-Sami’ wrote the following in *Anwar al-Sati’ah*:

Let it be clear that this answer has the stamp of three people from Delhi: Ilahi Bakhsh, Hafiz Allah and Sharif Husayn — these are three well-known Delhi *ghayr muqallids*<sup>124</sup>. There is nothing surprising in them writing this answer. However, to see the Deobandis following them in this is noteworthy. There are five stamps and some signatures of students and teachers from the Madrasa of Deoband. They are such muftis that one even wrote (incorrectly in Arabic), *hadha mas’alah jawab sahihah*, Hasan ‘Ali. Glory be to Allah, the words penned by this mufti are worth beholding. The sentence is worthy of being recorded in the works of eloquence and rhetoric. The word *hadha* is masculine and definite; the word *mas’alah* is feminine and an indefinite noun; the word *jawab* is masculine and its adjective *sahihah* is feminine. Then [the word] *mas’alah* is in the meaning of a question and *mubtada* (subject of a nominal clause), and *jawab sahihah* is its *khobar* (predicate of a nominal sentence); the *khobar* of the question is *jawab*. What a spectacle....<sup>125</sup>

In answer to this, Mawlana Khalil Ahmad Sahranpuri wrote:

I say that there is no teacher at Deoband by the name of Hasan ‘Ali, the reports [of the Madrasa] from the beginning to the present day are available. Have a look. If the author seeks to discredit the Madrasa of Deoband, then this shoddy attempt is only shameful. Allah Most High says, “Some suspicions are sins” [49:12] How far from this command of the Almighty is it to deliberately present this fictitious figure of Hasan ‘Ali to be a teacher or student of the Madrasa. As for author’s objective of discrediting the Madrasa, then such infantile attacks achieve nothing. If the author has any God-given understanding then let him come to the Madrasa himself to see what knowledge is there. In my view, it is because there is esteem for the Madrasa of Deoband in the Pure Court of Allah Almighty, that it has been responsible for producing hundreds of scholars and guiding multitudes from the darkness of misguidance. It was on account of this that a certain pious man saw the Messenger ﷺ in a dream and saw him speaking in Urdu. He asked the Messenger ﷺ, “How do you know this language, you are Arab?” He ﷺ replied, “We learned this language since we began dealing with the scholars of Deoband.”

This informs us of the lofty station of this Madrasa, and the more honoured a thing is with Allah Almighty the more active Satan is in bringing about its ruin. The author of *Sati’ah* has never been harmed in any way by the Madrasa of Deoband, nor has it caused him any financial loss. Certainly, it does expose the religious innovations promulgated by such people and it is for that the author has enmity for it. However, nothing can harm those whose Helper is Allah Most High.

To repeat, there is no teacher by the name of Hasan ‘Ali. Furthermore, to needlessly rebuke the signatory for his writing is far from virtue – because it could simply have been a mistake at the printers and there are many other errors in this *fatwa* that suggest this. Hence, it would have been more reasonable to have attributed these mistakes to the transcriber. That could only happen if one wishes to act upon the principle of having a good opinion [of others as taught by the faith] and there existed fear for the Nextlife. And because the author has nothing to criticise in respect to the meaning of the *fatwa*, he resorts to criticising the grammar. In any case, to launch an attack due to grammar mistakes is easy, but the author should be careful not to be so rash. The mistakes of the transcribers found in the Delhi editions of *Mishkat al-Masabih* and Noble Qur’an are well known. Take this into consideration, or he may find himself rebuking (Allah forbid) Allah Almighty and His Messenger ﷺ. For, according to the author, you must accuse the original author of any mistake and never attribute it to its transcriber. *Astaghfirullah! Astaghfirullah!*<sup>126</sup>

<sup>124</sup> That is they do not adhere to a school from the four legal schools.

<sup>125</sup> *Anwar al-Sati’ah ma-Al-Barahin al-Qati’ah*, p. 26.

<sup>126</sup> *Al-Barahin al-Qati’ah*, p. 26-27.

We have quoted the entire text here so that it can be seen together with its context. Look closely at the text that has been underlined in which the dream has been mentioned. Dreams need to be interpreted because a dream has an outer appearance and also an inner reality that is referred to as its interpretation. Sometimes the link between the two is obvious and sometimes it is obscure and only someone well-versed in the art of interpretation will appreciate it. Secondly, the dream does not actually mention (Allah Almighty forbid) that the scholars of Deoband are teachers and the Messenger ﷺ is their student. The passage clearly states that it was through the act of *dealing with them* that the Messenger ﷺ learned Urdu. It does not say he ﷺ studied it nor does it say they taught him. It is our belief that no man has been born who is more intelligent than the Messenger ﷺ. It is not at all surprising for such an intelligent person to become conversant in a language due to mere contact with a group of people. The *sahih hadiths* establish that when the *muhajirs* returned from Ethiopia to Madinah, the Messenger ﷺ spoke to them with some Ethiopian words such as *suna suna* which means good, good<sup>127</sup> yet the Messenger ﷺ was completely unacquainted with the Ethiopian language. Anas bin Malik ؓ states:

Certainly, the Ethiopians would gambol in front of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and speak in a language he could not understand, so the Messenger ﷺ said, ‘What are they saying?’ A person answered: They are saying, ‘Muhammad is a pious man.’<sup>128</sup>

It can be learned from this that the Messenger ﷺ did not understand Ethiopian fully and it is because of this that he felt the need to ask, and likewise he did not know other languages and nor is it part of Prophetic qualification to know all languages and tongues. Shah ‘Abd al-‘Aziz al-Muhaddith al-Dehlavi writes:

...and firstly, that individual on whom the Noble Qur’an was revealed, in other words the pure being of the Messenger ﷺ, did not know the meanings, lexicon, even the manner of pronouncing the letters, of other peoples.<sup>129</sup>

Before this, he writes that even though the Messenger ﷺ was sent to rectify and guide the creation of all of the world’s different areas, cities, islands and mountains, his primary mission was for the humans and jinns of the Arabian lands, and through the Arabs to other people, such as the Persians and the Romans, and through them the rectification of the inhabitants of Sindh and India, and likewise all others who may be living on islands or mountains. It is because of this that the Noble Qur’an was primarily revealed in the language, diction, method of speech and [literary] marvels of the Arabs.<sup>130</sup> Allah Almighty states, “We did not send any messenger but (speaking) in the language of his people, so that he might clearly convey the message to them” (14:4). Shaykh al-Islam Shabbir Ahmad ‘Usmani wrote in his concise but rich commentary of the Holy Qur’an:

Because, in conformance with the natural way of providing instruction, the primary audience of every messenger is the people of that community in which the messenger was raised and it is because of this that the revelation is sent in the language of that people so there remains complete ease in understanding and explaining the commands of Allah. Although all of the jinn and mankind are included in the Umma of D‘awah (the community the Messenger ﷺ is addressing his ﷺ call to), nevertheless the language of that community in which he ﷺ was raised, was Arabic and, in accordance with the natural way of providing instruction, it was destined that this would become the mode for the dissemination of guidance. This would enable his primary audience and very first students to properly understand and remember Qur’anic teachings and their finer realities. It would be through them that all the peoples of the world and coming generations, would slowly take on the Qur’anic hue. And this actually happened. The Arabs, who had a deep fondness of their language, remained in the company of the Messenger ﷺ for a prolonged time. Having gained significant expertise in the Qur’anic sciences, via their own language, they spread east and west, in Persian and Byzantine lands. At that time, there was such a massive zeal and desire to master the word of Allah

<sup>127</sup> *Sahih al-Bukhari*, part 1, p. 432; part 2, p. 866. *Sunan Abi Dawud*, p. 202.

<sup>128</sup> *Mawarid al-Dham’an*, p. 393. *Musnad Ahmad*, part 3, p.152.

<sup>129</sup> *Fatawa ‘Azizi*, part 1, p. 132, Mujatabati Publishers, Delhi

<sup>130</sup> Summarised from *Fatawa ‘Azizi*, part 1, pp. 131-132.

and the Arabic language that in a very brief time, these non-Arabs surpassed even the original Arabs of their time in the spreading of the Qur'anic sciences. In fact so ahead did they go that the same non-Arabs, whose fondest occupation used to be the constellation of Pleiades now became the highest authorities in both the Qur'anic sciences and Arabic literature? In this way Almighty Allah's proof continued to become established against his servants and the means to benefit from the Qur'anic guidance was renewed, time again. All praise is to Allah Most High for that. Now, if there are any reasons for why the Final Prophet ﷺ was raised amongst the Arabs, and there indeed are, then that is also the answer to why the Holy Qur'an was revealed in the Arabic language?<sup>131</sup>

Noble readers, the most obvious interpretation of this dream is that the Messenger ﷺ is informing this pious man: *At this time, due to the establishment of Dar al-Ulum Deoband – that is my Hadith – my speech has been fully transmitted into the Urdu language. It was through the speeches, writings and lectures in Urdu of these scholars that this became a reality.*

Before this time, the Islamic sciences were never so widespread, and whatever circulation these sciences had experienced during Mughal rule, it was restricted to the Persian language. Islamic books and their commentaries would only be written in Persian during those centuries. When Dar al-Ulum Deoband was established then all of the oratory, written and lecturing services of the Islamic sciences began to be carried out in Urdu. Those who yearned to learn the religious sciences came from across the world to this cradle of knowledge to extinguish their thirst with [its] sweet waters. If it is the rule and principle of the Barelwis to pass judgment on the exoteric aspect of every dream then let them calmly read the following dream related by Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan about himself and then issue another *fatwa*:

On the day of the death of Mawlana Barakat Ahmad<sup>132</sup> death, the late Mawlana Sayyid Amir Ahmad saw the Holy Messenger ﷺ in a dream. He saw that he ﷺ was going somewhere on a horse. He asked, 'Oh Messenger of Allah ﷺ, where are you going?' He ﷺ replied, 'To perform the Funeral prayer of Barakat Ahmad.' All praise to Allah, this blessed funeral was led by me and these blessings of the Messenger ﷺ were received on account of his love for his Shaykh. "It is Allah's bounty. He gives it to whomsoever He wills and Allah is the Lord of the great bounty" (62:4).<sup>133</sup>

Everything that was mentioned in *Al-Barahin al-Qati'ah* was just a dream. And the Prophet's ﷺ visit (*ziyarah*) here also happened in a dream. Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan led the funeral prayer in wakefulness and in this prayer he made the Messenger ﷺ his follower (*muqtadi*) and — without explaining whether he was standing in the first row or in the second or third behind the other members of the congregation — he, I seek refuge with Allah Most High, prides himself and expresses so much joy that [he says], "All praise to Allah, this blessed funeral was led by me." If this dream is left on its external meaning then is it not disrespectful that Mawlana Raza Khan was the *imam* and the Pride of the World ﷺ was his follower in prayer? He is only immensely proud and thrilled at this. Is it not the case that according to Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan's own rule – we seek refuge with Allah Most High – it becomes established that he is making the Messenger ﷺ his follower in prayer?

In the same way that it is disrespectful to make the Messenger ﷺ someone's student, so is it disrespectful to be an imam in the presence of the Messenger ﷺ without his ﷺ permission, making him ﷺ the follower. However, since this relates to Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan it will not be deemed reprehensible. But, if it relates to the Deobandis, then the rage of Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan and his followers knows no bounds.

<sup>131</sup> *Tafsir-e-Uthmani*, p. 330.

<sup>132</sup> He had the same Shaykh in Tasawwuf as Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan.

<sup>133</sup> *Malfuzat*, part 2, p. 23, United India Press, Lucknow.

*Mawlana Muhammad ‘Umar’s Bizarre Discussion*

After presenting an incomplete and partial text of *Al-Barahin al-Qati‘ah*, Mawlana Muhammad ‘Umar, the author of *Miqyas-e-Hanafiyyat*, mentions three verses of the Qur’an:

“We did not send any messenger but (speaking) in the language of his people, so that he might clearly convey the message to them. So, Allah lets go astray whom He wills and lets find guidance whom He wills. And He is the Mighty, the Wise”<sup>134</sup>

“We did not send you (O prophet,) but to the entire mankind, as a bearer of good news and as a warner”<sup>135</sup>

“Glorious is the One who has revealed the Criterion to His servant, so that he may be a warner to all the worlds.”<sup>136</sup>

He then writes:

When he ﷺ has been sent as a warner and messenger to the entire world, then according to the above mentioned rule of Allah Most High, the Messenger ﷺ was sent having learned all the languages of all worlds. The Deobandis say that the Messenger ﷺ gained Urdu from their scholars, then this is clearly against the Noble Qur’an. They deny the Qur’an in pursuit of taking pride in being teachers. Instead of making him the Messenger of Allah ﷺ they make him the Messenger of Deoband; Allah Most High attributes His Messengers’ knowledge to Himself and he (the author of *Al-Barahin al-Qati‘ah*) attributes it to Deoband. This is the faith of the Deobandi sect; they conceive of the maker of teachers and the sage of all of the worlds ﷺ as a student of their’s. This proves that the senior scholars of Deoband claim to be God (*khudai da’wa*).<sup>137</sup>

*Response*

Whatever Mawlana Muhammad ‘Umar has written is only a reflection of the ugliness of his inner condition and a dark example of his bigotry. The elders of Deoband have never claimed to be God, nor have they ever rejected the Noble Qur’an. Nor have they ever (Allah forbid) made the Messenger of Allah ﷺ their student. His claim that the Messenger ﷺ was sent having learned the languages of the entire world is absolutely wrong. There is no legal (*Shari‘*) proof for this. We just mentioned a few Hadith as well as the reference from Shah ‘Abd al-‘Aziz that the Messenger ﷺ did not know all languages.

With regards to the three verses he has mentioned, the first is totally contrary to his claim. As was mentioned, a prophet only knows the language of his community. It is not a Prophetic qualification to know other languages, and nor is he obliged to know them. The second and third verses are also unrelated to his claim because all that which is established from these verses is that his ﷺ prophethood and mission is for the entirety of creation and there is no doubt in this and no Muslim can doubt this. Finally, the claim that he was taught the languages of all peoples, is no more than a claim. It has no proof – rational or scriptural.

He ﷺ was primarily sent directly to the people of Arabia and he imparted the religious sciences to his companions in the best way. Thereafter the companions taught their followers and they those who came after them until Islam spread throughout the world. The non-Arabs at that time learnt the Arabic language at an advanced level to understand the divine law. This point was elaborated in the reference I cited from the commentary of Shaykh al-Islam Shabbir Ahmad ‘Uthmani. It is also a worldwide custom that the masses are required and obliged to learn the official language of government. The opposite does not happen. That is the rulers and governments are not obliged to do send telegrams according to the language of different speakers. When Arabic is the government language of Islam (because the Noble Qur’an, the Hadith, Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*) and other sciences are in Arabic), it becomes incumbent for all non-Arab people that they learn this language and gain proficiency in it so that they may properly understand their faith.

<sup>134</sup> Qur’an 14:4

<sup>135</sup> Ibid 34:28

<sup>136</sup> Ibid 25:1

<sup>137</sup> *Miqyas-e-Hanafiyyat*, p. 209.

Remember that in the matter of the Prophetic sciences all of the Noble Prophets ﷺ become connected, via revelation, to Allah Almighty. This means in respect to this knowledge they are nobody's students from among the creation. So in this way they are all unlettered (*ummi*).<sup>138</sup> It is because of this that Anas says that the Messenger ﷺ said that every prophet will have a pulpit of light on the Day of Judgment and that the Prophet's ﷺ pulpit will be the tallest and most illumined. The Prophet ﷺ adds, "Then a caller will call out where is the Unlettered Prophet (*al-nabi al-ummi*)?" The Prophet ﷺ continued, that: "The Prophets ﷺ will say, 'All of us are unlettered prophets (*nabi ummi*), which one of has been called for?' So the caller will return a second time and say, 'Where is the Unlettered Arab Prophet?'"<sup>139</sup>

This establishes that all of the Noble Prophets ﷺ were unlettered; they did not sit as students under anyone. It is the way of false prophets such as Mirza Ghulam Ahmad Qadiani to study under secular teachers, and rather unsuccessfully at that, and then still claim prophethood.

We are not denying here the learning of those subjects and sciences that have no relationship to the Knowledge of prophethood and divine message (*risalah*). Such things can be learnt by the Prophets ﷺ from humans. Even Musa ﷺ gained some knowledge of the creation from Khidr ﷺ as has been mentioned in the Noble Qur'an and in authentic narrations and the Prophet Isma'il ﷺ learned Arabic from the tribe of Jurham. It is mentioned, in a long hadith of *Sahih al-Bukhari*, that the tribe of Jurham, with the permission of Hajra ﷺ, set up camp close to the well of Zam Zam, next to the place where the Ka'bah is and "the boy became a young man and learned Arabic from them."<sup>140</sup> It cannot be asserted with total certainty what was the language Isma'il and his noble mother spoke before then, but this hadith makes it clear that he learned Arabic from the tribe of Jurham.

<sup>138</sup> It is another issue that in terms of the title of *ummi*, that was bestowed only upon the Prophet ﷺ.

<sup>139</sup> *Mawarid al-Dham'an*, p. 643.

<sup>140</sup> *Sahih al-Bukhari*, part 1, p. 475.

## Chapter 4

### Mawlana Ashraf Ali Thanavi (1863-1943)

#### *Brief Biography*

In Muzaffarnagar there is a small town called Rajah Bheem. It was previously known as Thana Bheem, and later became famous as Thana Bhavan. The Muslims named it Muhammadpura, but that name never became official. During the Jihad of 1857, this town was used as a base by the Muslim fighters. They fought tirelessly with the means at their disposal. Under the leadership of Mawlana Rahmatullah Kairanvi, they managed to take control of the area of Kairana, whilst the other fighters took Shamili. Qazi `Inayat Ali Khan, whose brother was executed by colonial forces, was providing them with financial support. This town and the connected towns produced many inspirational figures and great centres for sacred learning.

It was in this same town of Thana Bhavan, during the twilight hours of Monday the 5<sup>th</sup> of November 1856 (1280 Hijri) that Mawlana Ashraf Ali Thanavi was born. His father's name was Munshi Abd al-Haq whose lineage, through many ancestors, joins up with Umar Ibn al-Khattab ؓ. On his mother's side, his lineage reaches to Ali. Mawlana Ashraf Ali Thanavi's maternal grandfather's name was Mir Najabat Ali. He was a saintly man who was an expert in Persian and known for being quick-witted. Fourteen months after Mawlana Ashraf Ali Thanavi was born, another son was born. He was named Akbar Ali and later became an authority in the English language. At five years of age the mother of Mawlana Thanavi passed away, leaving his father to provide the love of both a father and a mother. His basic education took place in Meerut. It was here he studied primers in Persian and memorised the Holy Qur'an under Hafiz Hussain Ali. Then after returning to Thana Bhavan, he studied primers in the Arabic language and advanced texts in Persian. In 1878 he was enrolled at Dar al-Ulum Deoband and completed the remainder of the *Dars-e-Nizami* curriculum with teachers like Mawlana Muhammad Yaqub Nanotwi and Shaykh al-Hind Mahmud al-Hassan. In 1884 he became a teacher at the Cawnpore Madrasa *Fayd-e-'Am* for a monthly wage of 25 rupees. He taught the classical texts to advanced classes. His teaching was so impressive that he was widely recognised for his teaching abilities. His first Hajj pilgrimage was undertaken in the company of his father in this same year. The next Hajj was to be after the passing away of his father in 1892. On this occasion he spent six months in the service of his spiritual mentor Hajji Imdadullah Muhajir Makki and benefited immeasurably. After returning to India, he taught at another Cawnpore Madrasa, *Jami` al-Ulum* for four years until 1897 when he resolved to settle down in Thana Bhavan. It was here in Thana Bhavan that he spent the rest of his life propagating both the exoteric (*zahiri*) and esoteric (*batini*) sciences, writing hundreds of works, which led to him to be hailed as *Hakim al-Ummat* (the Physician of the Umma).<sup>141</sup> It was from here that he quenched the spiritual and scholastic thirst of Allah's creation. His books gained a popularity that was not achieved by any of his contemporaries. It is narrated that a saint by the name of Sharif Ahmad Siqqa Ganjपुरi of the District of Karnal saw a dream in which he saw the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and the four rightly-guided Khalifs. The Messenger ﷺ addressed Abu Bakr ؓ: "Let him come close, he (Sharif Ahmad) is the helper of Ashraf Ali." In the dream the Messenger ﷺ also speaks to Sharif Ahmad saying: "Keep acting upon the books of Ashraf Ali and listen not to those who tell you otherwise."<sup>142</sup>

Mawlana Ashraf Ali Thanavi married twice but had no children from either marriage. Though he had no physical offspring, his spiritual offspring are so many that it would be impossible to give a number. Munshi Abd al-Haq's (the father of Mawlana) selecting the path of religious studies for one son and English for the other was the result of a deep insight of each son's natural gifts. Once, Mawlana Ashraf Ali Thanavi's aunt questioned her brother about this: "You have dedicated one to learning English; so his bound to find work and make a livelihood. As for the other one, how will he earn a livelihood by dedicating himself to religion?" How was she to know the manner in which Allah Almighty would bestow upon the Physician of the Umma and how felicitous his life was to be?

At the end of a life of 82 years, 3 months and 11 days, on Monday 19<sup>th</sup> of July 1943 (1362 Hijri) his soul departed from this world. Those present would often remark that before Mawlana passed away, a flash of light could be seen emanating from the back of his hand, between the middle and index fingers which would fade out the lamps in the room. This was the result of his huge services to Islam in the form of books that people will continue to benefit from as long as the world exists.

<sup>141</sup> The title was first used by Mawlana Mirza Muhammad Beg, the proprietor of the printing press Mahbub al-Mataabi, Delhi. Its wide-acceptance was similar to how Mawlana Abd al-Hakim Siyalkoti suggested the title of "The Renovator of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Millennium" (*Mujaddid Alf Thani*) for Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi and after which it became commonly used which is a sign of the validity his reformatory works.

<sup>142</sup> *Bawadir al-Nawadir*, p. 50.

Any list of the masters of both the esoteric and exoteric sciences of that time will be incomplete without the Physician of the Umma, Mawlana Ashraf Ali Thanavi. His entire life was spent in the propagation of Islam and the reform and betterment of Allah's creation. In total, his major and minor works (from a detailed commentary of the Holy Qur'an to a short treatise on a single complex legal issue), reach in excess of a thousand. Some have estimated the number exceeds thirteen hundred. Then there are the many brilliant scholars, who in their numbers are not just dozens but thousands, who became spiritually enriched by the Shaykh and those among them who have the honour of being counted amongst his spiritual deputies (*khulafa*). They, in their respective circles, went on to quench the spiritual thirst of the masses and even now there are by Allah Almighty's grace innumerable such men of Allah authorised by Mawlana Ashraf Ali Thanavi who, even in stormy conditions keep the candle-light of guidance burning. It seems appropriate to cite Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan fully to understand his objection.

## The First Objection: Saying The Messenger's ﷺ Knowledge Is Equal to That of Children and Animals

**Translators' Note:** The aim of the controversial passage was to refute the erroneous belief that because the Messenger ﷺ has knowledge of the Unseen, this somehow permits calling him ﷺ Knower of the Unseen (*`Alim al-Ghayb*). Mawlana Ashraf Ali Thanavi states that this is unlawful because this is a name Allah Almighty used to describe Himself exclusively, thus it does not befit any human being. The perfection of knowledge it represents cannot be applied to the creation. Allah Almighty says: "He [Allah] is the Knower of the Unseen (*`Alim al-Ghayb*) and the manifest. He is the Great, the High" (Sura al-Rad: 9). There are other verses where this title and perfection in knowledge is established for Allah Almighty: Sura al-An`aam: 59; Sura al-Tawbah: 105; Sura Saba: 3; Sura al-A`araaf: 188; Sura Hud: 31. The phenomenon of deifying prophets is as old as religion itself and our noble Messenger ﷺ continuously warned his followers of ever falling into this satanic trap. It is what made the Christian's raise the rank of Jesus ﷺ to that of Allah Almighty Himself. The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said: "(*laa tutrooni*) Do not praise me extravagantly as the Christians did to the son of Mary. I am only Allah's slave and His messenger."<sup>143</sup>

Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan wrote in *Husam al-Haramayn*:

From the elders of this Wahabite Satanic Sect (*firqa-e-wahhabiyya shaytaniyya*) is one of the followers of this same Gangohi, by the name of Ashraf Ali Thanavi. He wrote a small tiny book that is not even four pages. He explicitly stated in it that the knowledge of the things of the Unseen possessed by the Messenger of Allah ﷺ its like is possessed by every child, insane person and even every animal and four legged animal. His accursed text is this: "Then if it is true as held by Zayd that the ruling of knowledge of the Unseen is established for the pure person of the Messenger ﷺ, then it needs to be discovered what is meant by this knowledge of the *Unseen*? Is it some or all of the knowledge of the Unseen? If it is some of the knowledge of the Unseen that is meant, then what is the specification of the Messenger ﷺ in this? The like of this knowledge of the Unseen (*aysa `ilm-e-ghayb*) is also found with Zayd, Umar, moreover every child, insane person and even all animals and beasts... And if Zayd intends that all the knowledge of the Unseen is meant such that not a single point (*fard*) is excluded, then its falseness is established by both scripture and rational proof."<sup>144</sup>

That was the passage of *Hifz al-Iman* as quoted by Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan in *Husam al-Haramayn*. Now look at the actual text of *Hifz al-Iman*. Note how Mawlana Ahmad Raza has omitted the middle part of the passage in bold.<sup>145</sup> This section, of ninety words, alludes to a succinct proof. To deflect any future criticism for this blatant distorting of the passage, he employs ellipsis (...), as if to suggest it is being done for purely scholastic reasons.

Here is the full passage of the passage from *Hifz al-Iman* with the omitted section in bold:

Then if it is true as held by Zayd that the ruling of knowledge of the Unseen is established for the pure person of the Messenger ﷺ, then it needs to be discovered what is meant by this knowledge of the *Unseen*? Is it some or all of the knowledge of the Unseen? If it is some of the knowledge of the Unseen that is meant, then what is the specification of the Messenger ﷺ in this? The like of this knowledge of the Unseen (*aysa `ilm-e-ghayb*) is also found with Zayd, Umar, moreover every child,

<sup>143</sup> *Sahih al-Bukhari, Kitab al-Anbiya*, Hadith no. 3261. If past prophets could be raised to a God-like status, there was a greater fear that this could happen with the greatest of Prophets ﷺ. It is a testament to the continued purity of Islam and how alert its scholars are that this problem has always been checked and such groups have never been able to arise in any significant form.

<sup>144</sup> *Husam al-Haramayn*, p. 109.

<sup>145</sup> This major discrepancy is not just found in the original Arabic, it is found in all the available editions including the English Breilvi-translation of *Husam al-Haramayn*. These editions are listed below:

[1] A newly composed Arabic edition (2006) available online here: <http://www.fikreraza.org/books/of-ahmad-raza/husaam-ul-haramain-arabic.pdf>, also does away with the ellipsis making it read as one continuous passage., see p. 63.

[2] The Urdu translation of *Husam al-Haramayn*, published by Maktaba-e-Nabbawiyya Lahore, 2009, translated by Pir Zadah Iqbal Ahmad Farooqi, see p. 26.

[3] The actual original Arabic and Urdu is also available online here: <http://www.al-muallim.net/downloads/husamulharamain.pdf>. It also does away with the ellipsis.

[4] A poor translation of the book was done by a Al-Haj Bashir Hussain [found ubiquitously online, eg.: [www.alahazratnetwork.org](http://www.alahazratnetwork.org)]. It too misses the middle section, p. 56.

insane person and even all animals and beasts.<sup>146</sup> **The reason for this is that every person will have knowledge of something or other that is hidden from another person, this will then require one to call everyone *Knower of the Unseen* (*Alim al-Ghayb*). If then Zayd upholds this that is [he says], yes, I will call every one *Alim al-Ghayb* (Knower of the Unseen) then why do you list knowledge of the Unseen from the exclusive characteristics (*Kamalaat*) of prophethood? How can a thing that is not exclusive to a believer, or even a regular human being for that matter, be from prophethood's characteristics of perfection? And if Zayd does not believe that [ie. that everyone is *Alim al-Ghayb*] he will have to explain what then is the difference between a prophet and a non-prophet. And if Zayd intends that all the knowledge of the Unseen is meant such that not a single point (*fard*) is excluded, then its falseness is established by both scripture and rational proof.<sup>147</sup>**

#### How The Passage Appears In Husam al-Haramayn

آپ کی ذات مقدسہ پر علم غیب کا حکم کیا جانا اگر بقول زید صحیح ہو تو دریافت طلب یہ امر ہے کہ اس غیب سے مراد بعض غیب ہے یا کل غیب؟ اگر بعض علوم غیبیہ مراد ہیں تو اس میں حضور ﷺ کی کیا تخصیص ہے ایسا علم غیب تو زید و عمر و بلکہ ہر صبی و مجنون بلکہ جمیع حیوانات و بہائم کے لئے بھی حاصل ہے۔ کیونکہ ہر شخص کو کسی نہ کسی ایسی بات کا علم ہوتا ہے جو دوسرے شخص سے مخفی ہے تو چاہئے کہ سب کو عالم الغیب کہا جاوے۔ پھر اگر زید اس کا التزام کر لے کہ ہاں میں سب کو عالم الغیب کہوں گا تو پھر علم غیب کو منجملہ کمالات نبویہ شمار کیوں کیا جاتا ہے۔ جس امر میں مؤمن بلکہ انسان کی بھی خصوصیت نہ ہو وہ کمالات نبوت سے کب ہو سکتا ہے۔ اور اگر (سب کو عالم الغیب کہنے کا) التزام نہ کیا جاوے تو نبی غیر نبی میں وجہ فرق بیان کرنا ضروری ہے۔ اور اگر تمام علوم غیب مراد ہیں اس طرح کہ اس کا ایک فرد بھی خارج نہ رہے تو اس کا بطلان دلیل نقلی و عقلی سے ثابت ہے۔

#### Actual Passage As It Appears In Hifz al-Iman

آپ کی ذات مقدسہ پر علم غیب کا حکم کیا جانا اگر بقول زید صحیح ہو تو دریافت طلب یہ امر ہے کہ اس غیب سے مراد بعض غیب ہے یا کل غیب؟ اگر بعض علوم غیبیہ مراد ہیں تو اس میں حضور ﷺ کی کیا تخصیص ہے ایسا علم غیب تو زید و عمر و بلکہ ہر صبی و مجنون بلکہ جمیع حیوانات و بہائم کے لئے بھی حاصل ہے۔ کیونکہ ہر شخص کو کسی نہ کسی ایسی بات کا علم ہوتا ہے جو دوسرے شخص سے مخفی ہے تو چاہئے کہ سب کو عالم الغیب کہا جاوے۔ پھر اگر زید اس کا التزام کر لے کہ ہاں میں سب کو عالم الغیب کہوں گا تو پھر علم غیب کو منجملہ کمالات نبویہ شمار کیوں کیا جاتا ہے۔ جس امر میں مؤمن بلکہ انسان کی بھی خصوصیت نہ ہو وہ کمالات نبوت سے کب ہو سکتا ہے۔ اور اگر (سب کو عالم الغیب کہنے کا) التزام نہ کیا جاوے تو نبی غیر نبی میں وجہ فرق بیان کرنا ضروری ہے۔ اور اگر تمام علوم غیب مراد ہیں اس طرح کہ اس کا ایک فرد بھی خارج نہ رہے تو اس کا بطلان دلیل نقلی و عقلی سے ثابت ہے۔

Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan then comments upon the doctored passage, "I state, look at the effects of the seal Allah Almighty [has set on their hearts]. See the parity he is creating between the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and any insignificant being."<sup>148</sup>

#### Response

Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan and his followers have from Mawlana Thanavi's expression, "...like of this Knowledge of the Unseen..." leapt upon the word *like* and, against what the speaker himself intended, mandated it to mean *parity* or *similarity*. Subsequently, on this basis an unceasing vicious campaign was started against Mawlana Ashraf Ali Thanavi. Yet in the Urdu language the word *aysa* (like) has several meanings. The poet Ameer Minai in his famous Urdu lexicon *Ameer al-Lughaat*, explaining the word *aysa*, writes<sup>149</sup>:

1. **Of this kind;** used in a phrase such as, *to make a pen-case like this is difficult for any person*, (Aatish). Also, *there is no beloved like her in the garden of the world – neither is there a rose that emits her fragrance nor is there a fruit with the like of her pleasure.*
2. **This amount or extent;** *like (this) he struck him (aysa maara) such that he was left lifeless.*

Also,

*This wine-presser's body is so (aysa) supple and clean  
that the religious believe it tantamount to a wave of wine*

Clearly it is possible to take either the meaning of *like this kind* or *of this amount/extent*. Keeping this in view the passage of Mawlana Ashraf Ali Thanavi becomes completely faultless and under no circumstances can it be said he was guilty of blasphemy against the Messenger ﷺ (Allah forbid), the very thought never crossed his mind. Despite all this, Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan, without the

<sup>146</sup> For example all animals and many from mankind have the Unseen knowledge that God exists.

<sup>147</sup> *Hifz al-Iman*, p. 9. Printed by Imdadiyya Printers, Deoband and p. 96 the annotated edition with appendices published by Anjum Irshad al-Muslimin, Lahore Pakistan, 1980.

<sup>148</sup> *Husam al-Haramayn*, p. 109.

<sup>149</sup> *Ameer al-Lughaat*, vol.2 p.302.

slightest justification, adamantly declares him a disbeliever. What Mawlana Ashraf Ali Thanavi meant was that if when Zayd says ‘*Alim al-Ghayb* (Knower of Unseen knowledge) only some of that knowledge of the Unseen is meant then what is the specification of the Messenger ﷺ in that; for the like of that (*i.e. some*), and as a result of which Zayd is calling the Messenger ﷺ ‘Knower of the Unseen knowledge’,<sup>150</sup> is found with Zayd and Amar, in fact with every child, insane person, and even animal and beast. Therefore it would demand Zayd to call all of them (Allah Almighty forbid) ‘Knowers of the Unseen’. This has to be so as according to Zayd to be called Knower of the Unseen it is enough to have any piece of knowledge of the Unseen, and it is certain that all these beings have some knowledge of the Unseen. If they do not then at the very least they have knowledge of their Creator and that too comes under Unseen knowledge.

Mawlana Ashraf Ali Thanavi never meant the kind of Unseen knowledge possessed by the Messenger of God ﷺ is also possessed by the things he lists. Nor did he mean (Allah Almighty forbid) that the knowledge possessed by the Messenger ﷺ is of the same level and equal to that which is possessed by every child, insane person, animals and beasts as has been portrayed by Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan, as signified by his words: “See the parity he is creating between the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and any insignificant being.”

It was Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan’s foremost duty, before embarking on such a serious task as issuing a declaration of disbelief (*takfir*), that he ask Mawlana Ashraf Ali Thanavi what did he mean? [Even though, as I have shown the meaning is painfully clear]. Then if in that clarification of the meaning there was the least sign of blasphemy, without any doubt, *takfir* is done. Indeed he would be entitled to then say the accused is doubly guilty. Having failed to fulfil this requirement, it behoved him – after Mawlana Ashraf Ali Thanavi himself explained what he meant and he never even intended the other meaning – that he immediately retract his unjust *fatwa*. The retraction should have then been published in newspapers and leaflets, stating: *The meaning I understood from Mawlana Thanvi’s passage is clearly believed to be disbelief (kufr) by Mawlana Thanavi himself thus I retract my fatwa and seek forgiveness from Mawlana Thanvi and his followers for the pain caused by my fatwa.*

Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan, however, never did this, for his only objective was to somehow make Mawlana Thanavi a disbeliever. How could it then be imagined that he would take back this mistaken *fatwa*? The most remarkable thing is that the disrespectful sense taken by Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan from Mawlana Ashraf Ali Thanavi’s passage of *Hifz al-Imam* is one that Mawlana Thanavi never meant. Rather, he too considers that meaning to be pure disbelief (*kufr*) just as it is according to Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan. Nevertheless, the latter insists on declaring Mawlana Ashraf Ali Thanavi a disbeliever because he has committed the crime of disrespecting the Messenger ﷺ. Every sensible person can easily grasp from these points that Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan was bent on declaring Mawlana Thanavi a disbeliever no matter what.

In relation to the controversial passage, the scholar and saint Sayyid Murtaza Hasan wrote a letter (reproduced hereunder) which demonstrates what the correct approach in investigating this matter should have been:

In the name of God the Most High, Praising Him and Sending Blessings and Peace on His Messenger:

To Mawlana al-Hafiz al-Haaj Ashraf Ali Thanavi, may God spread your lofty spiritual benefit; Mawlvi Ahmad Raza Khan states concerning yourself in *Husam al-Haramayn* that you have you have explicitly stated in *Hifz al-Iman* that the knowledge of Unseen of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ its like is possessed by every child, insane person and even animals and four-legged beasts. Hence, we request you to elaborate on the following:

- [1] Have you stated this in *Hifz al-Iman* or any other book?
- [2] If you have not explicitly stated this, then can this meaning be implied by any of your words?
- [3] Or have you intended this meaning (by any of your words)?

<sup>150</sup> For the amount Zayd considers necessary for the application of the phrase of ‘*Alim al-Ghayb* is some unseen knowledge in general terms (*mutlaq b`ad-e-mughibaat*).

[4] If indeed you have not explicitly stated this meaning, nor is it indicated by a passage, nor did you mean it, then do you consider a person Muslim or disbeliever who holds this belief or says this, whether explicitly or implicitly?

Please clarify and may God reward you for it.

Yours,

Murtaza Hasan

Below is the complete reply Mawlana Thanavi gave to this letter:

As salaam alaykum,

Regarding your letter, [Mawlana Thanavi answers the points in order:]

[1] I have not written this repulsive meaning in any book (i.e. pertaining to the knowledge of the Unseen etc.). Never mind writing it, the mere thought of it has never crossed my mind.

[2] This meaning is not implied by any of my passages. I shall explain further under the last point.

[3] When I consider this meaning as repulsive and, as stated above, I have never had the mere thought of it cross my mind, then how can I have ever meant it?

[4] A person who holds this belief (i.e. pertaining to the knowledge of the Unseen etc.), or indeed does not believe it but explicitly or implicitly says this, I consider him to be outside the pale of Islam. For he is contradicting definitive texts and disparaging the Messenger of Allah ﷺ.

Those were the answers to your questions. Now at the end I consider it appropriate, in order to complete this reply, that I further explain the passage of *Hifz al-Iman* that was the basis of this accusation, though it is completely clear. Firstly, I made the claim that the kind of Unseen knowledge that is intrinsic and independent (*bi-laa wasita*) is exclusively for Allah Most High. As for that Unseen knowledge that is dependent<sup>151</sup> (*bil-wasita*) it is possible for the creation, but it is not permitted to call the creation Knower of the Unseen (*`Alim al-Ghayb*) thereby. For this claim I presented two proofs. That passage comes from the second proof which begins with the words: *Then if it is true as held by Zayd that the ruling of knowledge of the Unseen is established for the pure person of the Messenger ﷺ*. It means that the application of the ruling of knowledge of the Unseen to the sacred person of the Messenger ﷺ, is merely due to his ﷺ possessing Unseen knowledge by dependency (*bil-wasita*) and this is sound according to you. Then by *`Alim al-Ghayb* (Knower of the Unseen) if you mean that he possesses all limitless knowledge, then that is impossible by the demand of scripture and reason. If, however, you mean only some branches of Unseen knowledge, even if it were just one thing, no matter how insignificant that one thing was, what is the specification of the Messenger ﷺ in that. For the likeness (*ayya*) of that knowledge is possessed by Zayd, Amar etc.

The word *ayya* here does not mean they possess Unseen knowledge *just as the knowledge of the Unseen possessed in reality by the Messenger ﷺ*, (We seek refuge of God from that). Rather the meaning of *ayya* here is exactly what we mentioned above, that is (all possess) *some* of the Unseen Knowledge (be it even a small amount, and no matter how insignificant). The reason for this is that *some*, as stated above, is general in its application. The very following words in the passage are also the proof for this; namely: *The reason for this is that every person will have knowledge of something or other that is hidden from another person....* Consequently, if Zayd considers it reason enough to apply *knowledge of the Unseen* to all cases of possessing any piece of Unseen knowledge, no matter how insignificant, then Zayd will have to call all these beings Knowers of the Unseen. Is it not so that they too know some Unseen things? A superficial reading of this very passage is clearly saying this....

This long reply of Mawlana Thanavi was published in a treatise called *Bast al-Banaan* in the month of July 1910. It is appended to the later editions of *Hifz al-Iman*. After its publication Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan lived another eleven years approximately (he passed away in 1921). Despite Mawlana Ashraf Ali's clarification, Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan did not give up his *takfiri* stance. It was, however, incumbent for him, by Islamic Law and basic ethics, that he retract his mistaken *fatwa*. This never happened. There was no other reason for this except that his only objective was to brand Mawlana Ashraf Ali Thanavi and the other reputable deobandi scholars disbelievers. The original passage of Mawlana Thanavi itself was utterly faultless, and the clarification just added shine to its clarity. The only thing left to be asked is, does the passage of Mawlana Thanavi, that is the manner in which he explained the issue, and the particular language he adopted, have

<sup>151</sup> That is it is dependent upon Allah Almighty bestowing it.

precedence in the works of the classical Muslim scholars or is this Mawlana Thanavi's own invention? From a scholastic and academic perspective this is something that could be demanded of Mawlana Thanvi and those close to him. This indeed is the right of every intelligent person. The reply to this has been given with reference by Mawlana Thanavi himself.

### *The Classical Sunni Imams*

The Philosophers, in accord with their view, have posited three unique qualities (*khasusiyat*) for a prophet. The first is that without acquisition or learning, but through his inner purity, it is necessary for him to be aware of the things of the Unseen in relation to the past, present and future. Their claim is recorded in these words by the classical theologians:

From the qualities specific to a prophet, one is that he should have knowledge of the Unseen in relation to the present, the past and future.<sup>152</sup>

[1] In order to repudiate this false doctrine the defender of Sunni Islam, the leader of the theologians, Qazi `Adad al-Din al-Iyji in his famous theological work *al-Mawaaqif*, and its commentator – the Imam of Arabic language and the leader of the expert scholars – Sayyid Sharif Ali al-Jurjani wrote,<sup>153</sup>

*We state that which you have said is rejected for several reasons; as it is not necessary (laa yajibu) for a prophet to know all the matters of the Unseen.*

By our and your consensus. It was for this reason the leader of the Prophets ﷺ said: "Say, 'I have no power to bring a benefit or a harm to myself, except that which Allah wills. If I had the knowledge of the Unseen, I would have accumulated a lot of good things, and no evil would have ever touched me. I am but a warner, and a herald of good news for a people who believe.'" (7:188)

*And some knowledge of the Unseen is not specific to him (laa yakhtassu bihi).*

Meaning having some knowledge of the Unseen is not specific to him, that is the Prophet ﷺ, as you yourselves have accepted. For you have permitted it for those involved in spiritual exercises, the sick and those in sleep. Thus a prophet cannot be distinguished from others in this respect.

(قلنا ما ذكرتم مردود بوجوه إذ الاطلاع على جميع المغيبات لا يجب للنبي) اتفاقا منا ومنكم ولهذا قال سيد الانبياء:  
وَلَوْ كُنْتُ أَعْلَمُ الْعَيْبَ لَأَسْتَكْبَرْتُ مِنَ الْخَيْرِ وَمَا مَسَّنِيَ السُّوءُ (والبعض) أي الاطلاع على البعض لا يختص به أي بالنبي كما اقررت به حيث جوزتموه  
للمرتاضين و المرضى و النائمين فلا يتميز به النبي عن غيره اه  
[شرح المواقف، المرصد الاول. المقصد الاول؛ في طبعة نولكشور بلكنو بالهند ص ٦٦٣ وفي طبعة مصر ج ٣ ص ١٧٥  
وفي طبعة دار الكتب العلمية بيروت ج ٤ ص ٢٤٣]

Some falsifiers have desperately attempted to evade this powerful and unequivocal passage by saying that this does not tell of the belief of Qazi `Adad al-Din al-Iyji or Imam Sayyid Sharif al-Jurjani. Rather, they argue, these scholars are putting these points to the Philosophers only in order to show the falseness of their beliefs. This can be gathered by the use of phrases that indicate this such as, ...*you have stated*... (*aqrartum*) and, ...*you have permitted*... (*jawwaztumuhu*). But this is all untrue and repudiated. Firstly, the text starts: *We state that which you have said is rejected for several reasons*..., this clearly indicates the reply being given by these two masters is simultaneously a refutation of the Philosophers as well as a creedal statement. It was for this reason that Imam al-Jurjani cited the verse from the Holy Qur'an as evidence, otherwise what would be the use of employing Qur'anic verses before philosophers? This is a clear proof that these elders were stating the orthodox Sunni Creed and the purpose was not merely to prove the falsity of their view by picking out an inconsistency in their principles. Secondly, if this is just an attempt to hypothetically raise questions around their belief, then any intelligent person can see, it this will result in the claim of the Philosophers becoming established as the author's refutation becomes redundant. Thirdly, that non-prophets possess some knowledge of the Unseen is obvious. Let alone Qazi `Adud al-Din al-Iyji and Imam Sayyid al-Jurjani, no intelligent being would deny it. Hence to say these two masters deny it or that they merely said it to show an inconsistency is without doubt false. The point is that everything they were saying was as mouthpieces of orthodox Sunni Islam.

<sup>152</sup> *Sharh al-Mawaaqif*, p. 663, Nawal kishor, Lucknow.

<sup>153</sup> Qazi `Adad al-Din's words are in italics and the commentator's words in normal script.

[2] The Imam Mahmud al-Isfahani in his commentary of the major creedal work, *Tawaali` al-Anwaar*, by the great scholar and exegete Imam Nasir al-Din al-Baydawi, repudiates this same belief of the Philosophers in these words,

This (belief) has been objected to, namely, if the Philosophers mean by this that a prophet should have knowledge of all the Unseen, then by consensus this is not a condition for a prophet. And if they mean that it is necessary for him to have some knowledge of the Unseen then this is not specific to a prophet. The reason is that there is not a person but that it is permitted for him to know some of the Unseen without previous learning. Furthermore, all souls are united by species, thus their essence does not differ in terms of their purity and lack of it. Thus what is possible for some of them will be possible for others. This being the case no longer is knowledge of the Unseen specific to a prophet.<sup>154</sup>

و قد اورد على هذا بانهم ان ارادوا بالاطلاع على جميع الغائبات فهو ليس بشرط في كون الشخص نبيا بالاتفاق و ان ارادوا الاطلاع على بعضها فلا يكون ذلك خاصة للنبي اذ ما من احد الا يجوز ان يطلع على بعض الغائبات من دون سابقة تعلم و تعليم و أيضا النفوس البشرية كلها متحدة بالنوع فلا يختلف حقيقتها بالصفاء و الكدر فما جاز لبعض جاز ان يكون لبعض آخر فلا يكون الاطلاع خاصة للنبي اه  
[مطلع الانظار شرح طواع الانوار الكتاب الثالث، في النبوات؛ في طبعة تركية ص ٤٠٨، و في طبعة مصرية ص ١٩، و يمكن قراءة مخطوطته  
في موقع جامعة الملك سعود {٢٢٢} : http://makhtota.ksu.edu.sa/makhtota/5062/200]

[3] The famous exegete of the Holy Qur'an Imam Fakhr al-Din al-Razi writes the following in his magnum opus *Al-Tafsir al-Kabir*:

It is permitted for a non-prophet to be above the prophet in relation to that knowledge upon which his prophethood is not dependent.

يجوز ان يكون غير النبي فوق النبي في علوم لا تتوقف نبوته عليه  
[التفسير الكبير، ج ٥ ص ٤٩٥، في طبعة دار الكتب العلمية ج ١١ ص ١٢٧ أثناء تفسير قصة موسى و الخضر عليهما السلام في سورة الكهف]

These quotations from major Muslim scholars, in terms of their meaning, are also completely clear. Note that the same manner of expression employed by Mawlana Thanavi is also being employed by these leading classical authorities. If (Allah Almighty forbid) all these scholars are disbelievers due to using such expressions, then likewise you may conceive Mawlana Thanavi a disbeliever. If on the other hand, this manner of expression does not make them disbelievers, and certainly they are not, then it is the demand of fairness and justice that Mawlana Thanavi also not be declared a disbeliever per the dictates of the Sharia. It is another thing though that Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan will not be prepared to accept his Islam, for he clearly had another objective in mind from the outset.

One cannot say much more after Mawlana Thanavi's own clarification; nevertheless in order to further add to this subject, it seems appropriate to mention another point. On the 28<sup>th</sup> of September 1923 (1342 Hijri), a friend of Mawlana Thanavi from Hyderabad Dakkan wrote to to him with reference to the *Bast al-Banaan* treatise:

After your clarification there is no room left for any doubt. There is neither the slightest hint of a contrary meaning being intended nor bad etiquette. Hence truly there is no absolutely no necessity to amend the passage for this reason. However, the Muslim world is filled with all kinds of people with different understandings and there are those who will deliberately cause confusion for their interests. They will of course claim it is for the sake of religion they do what they do, but in reality it is for worldly interest. Due to this situation, in consideration of those with less understanding, who may themselves fall into error or be confused by others, if this passage was modified in a way such that though the words would be altered, the substance would remain the same. It is hoped that this would be rewarded. This modification though would not be at the level of necessity, only desirable. The end decision is whatever you believe is correct.

This is how Mawlana Thanavi replied to this letter:

May God reward you. It is a very good idea. Because before this no one showed any real basis for modifying the passage, and so I thought making a modification would be necessarily admitting that the passage had a contrary meaning. It is a principle to make an admission of disbelief is disbelief (*iqrar bil-kufr*). Thus I considered a modification, not only not necessary, it was actually

<sup>154</sup> *Mataali` al-Anzaar Sharh Tawaali` al-Anwaar*, p. 408, Istanbul Print, and p. 19, Egyptian Edition.

forbidden. Now your letter has shown me a genuine justification and in line with your advice, I change the words from:

*If it some of the knowledge of the Unseen that is meant, then what is the specification of the Messenger ﷺ in this? The like of this knowledge of the Unseen (aysa `ilm-e-ghayb) is also found with Zayd, Umar, moreover every child, insane person and even all animals and beasts. The reason for this is that every person will have knowledge of something or other that is hidden from another person, this will then require one to call everyone Knower of the Unseen (`Alim al-Ghayb)... to this:*

*If it is some of the knowledge of the Unseen that is meant, then what is the specification of the Messenger ﷺ in this? Some knowledge of the Unseen in general terms (mutlaq `ulum-e-ghaybiyya) is also found with other than the prophets, may God's blessing be upon them. Thus it will require one to call every one Knower of the Unseen (`Alim al-Ghayb)....*

This reply was then published under the title *Tagheer al- 'Unwaan* (Modification of the Address) in the same year. This letter was also published as an appendix to future editions of *Hifz al-Iman*. Though Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan was not present at that time, it is still injustice upon injustice that his followers and friends continue to call Mawlana Thanavi a disbeliever and conduct debates concerning whether he is inside or outside the fold of Islam. Some till today are going about adamantly doing this, which tells us this is not really a serious legal disagreement, but is linked with their hate of the individuals themselves. It does not matter to them how great their services have been to the Deen, they are (We seek Allah's protection) according to them disbelievers, because after all making them disbelievers was their sole objective. The respected readers can only marvel at the level of dishonesty; the way Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan invents a dispute from thin air. He writes:

O Muslim! O Muslim! O follower of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. Do you have any attachment to your religion and faith? Is there any doubt that this dirty accursed insult is a clear insult? We seek God's protection; the respect of the Messenger ﷺ has so completely left your heart that you do not consider this severe insult his ﷺ blasphemy. If still you do not take counsel then go and ask those foul-mouthed people if we can address your teachers and your honoured saints with words such as: 'O such and such, you have as much knowledge as a pig'; and 'your teacher had only as much knowledge as a dog'; and 'such and such saint that you believe in only had as much knowledge a donkey....'<sup>155</sup>

Note how he is instilling the idea of blasphemy in the mind of the readers. Yet not only was this not the meaning of the author, it did not even cross his mind. Then see how he stirs a fight by saying *O Muslim! O Muslim!* It is as though, without any reason, he is playing with the religious feelings of the Muslims. When the turn of the later Breilvi debater, Mawlana Muhammad Umar Icharvi, presented this same issue in his work *Miqyas-e-Hanafīyyat*, he chose to close his eyes to all the facts. He hardly mentioned the passage of *Hifz al-Iman* in question, nor did he pay any attention to the two clarifying works *Bast al-Banan* and *Tagheer al- 'Unwan*. After presenting the bare minimum, he wrote:

God stated in the Qur'an, *This Noble Qur'an that We reveal to you*. It means, O Messenger of God ﷺ these are all the things of the Unseen (*tamaam ghaybi khabrein*). But the author of *Hifz al-Iman* said: The like of this Unseen knowledge is possessed by a child, an insane person, a dog, cat and pig (sic). The result is that some Unseen knowledge, which is called the Holy Qur'an, was also revealed to every single being, whether an animal or a child or an insane person. In my view what need is there for the aforementioned author to follow the Qur'an revealed to the Prophet ﷺ. He may as well put his faith in the Qur'an revealed to some boy or insane person or dog etc., and then go about barking so that the slaves of Mustafa ﷺ do not have cause to object and he become safe from imminent divine punishment for his blasphemy of Mustafa ﷺ. Anyone who holds this belief, because of the blasphemy of Mustafa ﷺ, has no share in true faith whatsoever. It is not only ourselves who have declared the author of this passage a disbeliever; some Deobandi scholars have done so also. See *Al-Muhannad*, p. 30. It is an established rule with us that whoever believes or says that the knowledge of the Prophet ﷺ is of the same level as Zayd, Bakr, wild beasts and madmen, is definitively a disbeliever. Some of the major Deobandi scholars have also issued many strong *fatwas* of disbelief against Mawlana Ashraf Ali Thanavi. The "Physician of the Umma" (*Hakim al-ummat*) however is unmoved; as stated by Allah Almighty: "*When it is said to him, 'Fear Allah', he is*

<sup>155</sup> *Husam al-Haramayn*, pp. 11-12.

*tempted by arrogance to (commit) sin. Hell is then enough for him, and it is indeed an evil bed to rest.” (2:206). When this is the condition of the Physician of this deobandi nation, you can imagine the state of its patients.<sup>156</sup>*

We have elaborated in detail the meaning Mawlana Thanavi wrote in his *Hifz al-Iman*. One may look at those pages again. One can only be astonished by the level of bigotry in Mawlana Umar’s explanation. How his deep hatred has caused him to misinterpret the words of a true saint and friend of God. He did not even feel it distasteful to write the words: *He may as well put his faith in the Qur’an revealed to some boy or insane person or dog etc, and then go about barking....* Those acquainted with the Urdu language can also see that the very words of Mawlana Umar are, according to their own standards, loaded with blasphemous content. You witnessed how the Breilvi scholars take the passages of Deobandi scholars and, completely contrary to their meaning and intent, carve out other meanings from themselves. Having done this, they rain down *fatwas* of blasphemy upon anyone Deobandi. Mawlana Umar before even presenting the heavily-edited passage of *Hifz al-Iman*, and outlining his objection, introduced the debate with the following title-heading: *According to the beliefs of Deobandis, the same kind of knowledge possessed by the Prophet ﷺ is also possessed by dogs, cats and pigs.*<sup>157</sup>

We see Almighty Allah’s refuge, the enmity for Deobandis has brought these Breilvis, whether knowingly or unknowingly, to degrade the Messenger ﷺ. They have been so consumed by their hate of Deobandis, that it never occurs to them that it was they who articulated that there is (Allah forbid) a parity in knowledge with dogs, cats and pigs. Could a person descend any lower? It should be also noted that no Deobandi scholar has ever declared Mawlana Thanavi a disbeliever, nor indeed has any other respectable scholar. It is only Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan and the Breilvi group who have insisted on this. The reality is that Mawlana Thanavi was by Almighty Allah’s grace the Physician of the Umma in his age. It is an honour for us that we gain improvement to our condition by taking benefit from his religious prescriptions and profound points of wisdom. Moreover, we are grateful to Allah Most High for connecting us to such brilliant scholars.

Mawlana Umar purports to cite *Al-Muhannad*, giving the impression that this work declares Mawlana Thanavi a disbeliever. It is pure deception. *Al-Muhannad* is only a creedal statement representing the sound beliefs of the author and his seniors who include Mawlana Thanavi. The book itself states, *We categorically consider any person who holds the belief that accepts the superiority in knowledge of another over the Messenger ﷺ to be a disbeliever.* So how then can this belief be ascribed to us? You can read the whole of *Al-Muhannad* for yourselves; is it aiming to establish that Mawlana Thanavi committed blasphemy or is it trying to prove him innocent? Is it a book that repudiates the beliefs of Mawlana Thanavi or is it a validation of them?

<sup>156</sup> *Miqyas-e-Hanafiyyat* p. 211.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*, p.210.

## The Second Objection: A Dream in Which Someone Said “Ashraf Ali is The Messenger of Allah”

Along with the aforementioned accusation against Mawlana Ashraf Ali Thanavi, there is another oft-repeated accusation some Breilvis cite for declaring this Muslim scholar a disbeliever. One of Mawlana’s spiritual disciples saw a dream in which he saw himself reading the testimony of faith as: *There is no god except God and Ashraf Ali is the Messenger of Allah*. Then when he awoke, he attempted to invoke blessings (*salat*) upon the Messenger ﷺ thus: *O God send your blessings upon our leader, our prophet and master Ashraf Ali*. As far as the dream is concerned, Mawlana Thanavi interpreted it as being a sign telling the seer that the person you have turned to in order to learn your religion is, by Allah’s help, someone who truly adheres to the Sunna. The objection that followed upon this can be broken in to three parts:

- (A) That Mawlana Thanavi (We seek Allah’s protection) made a claim to prophethood.  
 (B) Mawlana Thanavi failed to reprimand the person involved even though he was deserving of this. Nor did he advise him to repent, renew his faith and marriage even though this person had become a disbeliever. Rather, Mawlana Thanavi remained happy and content with his disbelief. As such, because of the rule: *Contentment with disbelief is disbelief*, he too is a disbeliever.  
 (C) Why did Mawlana Thanvi interpret such satanic whispers in the favourable terms he did? Mawlana Umar introduced this topic in his book with the heading: *The Testimony of Faith of the Deobandis is also different to the Muslims*.<sup>158</sup>

### Response

It is appropriate that we first present the actual words of the disciple, then we will be in a better position to say something. This was the passage from the actual letter the disciple sent to Mawlana Thanavi:

I went to sleep and after a while I had a dream in which I saw myself reading the testification: *There is no god but Allah and Muhammad ﷺ is the Messenger of Allah*, but instead of Muhammad ﷺ is the Messenger of God, your respected name comes from my mouth. It occurs to me in the dream that I have made a mistake in reciting the testification, and I need to correct it. So I read the testification again, aiming to read it properly, but without my choosing instead of the name of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ the name Ashraf Ali comes out again. Though I know as I am saying it that this is wrong. I am not in control and several times it is this testification that comes out. Then I see that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ is in front of me and there are a few other people around him. Very quickly my state changes and I collapse on the floor weeping. I let out a loud cry and feel as though I have no strength left in me. It was then that I woke up though my body remained lifeless and I continued to feel powerless. In both my dream and when awake I continued to think about the Messenger ﷺ. However, when I remembered that I uttered the testification incorrectly, I became determined to remove this thought from my heart so that such a mistake does not happen again. I sat up in bed a while and then lying on my other side I began, in order to atone for my mistake, to invoke blessings upon the Messenger ﷺ. But even as I do this the words: *O God send blessings upon our leader, our prophet and our master Ashraf Ali* come out. This is during the wakeful state not sleep. I feel compelled in this, my tongue is not in my control. This day was spent thinking upon these matters. The following day I wept most the time. I cried much. I have many reasons that have increased my love for our respected sir which I cannot begin to mention.<sup>159</sup>

This passage clearly states that the mistake that occurred in the testification of Faith was in a dream. The person concerned was very upset by it, to the point he felt it wrong during the dream itself. These words were however coming out of his mouth unintentionally. Then when he was awake and he recites the invocation incorrectly, he adds explicitly that it was done involuntarily (*bey-ikhtiyar*). This means that he was compelled, and that his tongue was not in his control. Further, he says he cried greatly because of this. Let us reflect on a few points seriously.

### *An Apparently Negative Dream Can Have A Positive Meaning*

A dream comes in a particular form, but it will conceal a hidden meaning that is termed *ta’beer*. It sometimes happens that the dream seems very pleasant and full of glad-tidings, but its reality or interpretation is the exact opposite. Sometimes, it seems the dream is extremely foreboding and scary, but its reality is one of good news and positivity. When the interpretation is then mentioned

<sup>158</sup> *Miqyas-e-Hanafiyyat*, p.196.

<sup>159</sup> Printed in the Journal *Al-Imdad*, p. 35, Safr, 1336 Hijri.

to the one who sees the dream, there is no end to his happiness. A few examples will further clarify this second category of dreams. The auntie of the Messenger ﷺ, Umm al-Fadl bint al-Harith ﷺ, once saw a dream and asked the Messenger ﷺ to explain it for her. She said: “O Messenger ﷺ last night I saw a bad dream (*Hulaman Munkara*). He ﷺ asked her to narrate her dream. She said: “It is very serious (*shadeed*).” He ﷺ insisted that she narrate it. She said: “I saw that it was as though a part of your body was severed and placed in my lap.” The Messenger ﷺ said: “You have seen a very good dream. It means that my beloved daughter Fatima ﷺ will have a baby son who will one day play in your lap.” As the Messenger ﷺ interpreted, his ﷺ grandson Husayn ﷺ was born and would play in the lap of Umm al-Fadl ﷺ.<sup>160</sup> See how awful the dream seemed, even Umm al-Fadl ﷺ became scared to the point she could not bring herself to mention it. Only due to the Messenger’s ﷺ insistence did she finally mention it with the Messenger’s ﷺ interpretation being exceedingly good. Another example is that if a person sees in a dream that there are shackles on his feet, he will undoubtedly become frightened. However the narration of Abu Huraira ﷺ tells us differently, he explained: “Seeing shackles is preferable to me than seeing a metal collar. Shackles stand for steadfastness in religion.”<sup>161</sup> Again, the dream suggested something but its reality was something else.

Once Imam Abu Hanifa saw a dream in which he was at the sacred grave of the Messenger ﷺ. Whilst there he sees that he is digging up the grave (We seek Almighty Allah’s refuge). He narrated this horrifying dream to his teacher. It was the time when Imam Abu Hanifa was still in his primary studies at a maktab. His teacher said: “If this truly is the dream you saw then it means you will be a true follower of the Hadith of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and you will extract rulings from them correctly.” History testifies that, as his teacher said, the interpretation came to fruition.<sup>162</sup>

It is mentioned in some of the History books that the wife of Haroon al-Rashid, Zubayda, saw a dream in which a huge number of people had gathered to have sexual intercourse with her. When she awoke she was greatly alarmed. When the meaning of this dream was told it became clear it meant that she would undertake such a work that would benefit many people. Consequently, that was what happened. She ordered the building of the River Zubayda due to which a great portion of land in Iraq is irrigated and during the days of the Pilgrimage, Hajjis have their water supplies replenished by it. This thus was the realisation of that dream.

Imam al-Husayn bin Boojar al-Baawari narrates: “I was in the town of Al-Haan when a man came and asked that he saw a dream in which the Messenger of Allah ﷺ dies. I replied that, if your dream is true, then it means that a great scholar who has no equal in this age is about to die.” Similar dreams are recorded to have been seen by people before the deaths of Imams Shafi’, Thawri, Ahmad. As it was interpreted, before the sunset of that day, news arrived that the Shaykh al-Islam al-Hafiz Abu Musa al-Madini had passed away.<sup>163</sup>

We have related these examples so that it becomes absolutely clear that the outer form of the dream can be different to the inner meaning. This can only really be appreciated by those people blessed by God in unravelling the finer points of the science of interpretation. The opinions any individual is not accepted in this field.

#### *Takfir Cannot Be undertaken For Words Uttered By Mistake*

Dreams are seen during sleep. The words a person utters during his sleep have no ruling in the Shariah. Thus if a person uttered words of blasphemy during his sleep, a *fatwa* of disbelief cannot be issued against him. The reason is that this person is not categorised as responsible in the sight of the Shariah. So any such statements made during sleep will not make him culpable. In a hadith the

<sup>160</sup> *Mishkat al-Masabih*, p. 572.

<sup>161</sup> *Bukhari & Muslim*.

<sup>162</sup> *Tabeer al-Ru`yah Kashoori*, p. 37.

<sup>163</sup> *Tadhkira al-Huffaz*, vol. 4, pp.125-126.

Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: “The pen has been lifted from there people. The person asleep until he wakes up; the person afflicted by insanity until he is cured; and the child until reaches puberty.”<sup>164</sup> In the narration of Abu Qatada ؓ, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: “Transgressions are not counted during sleep, transgression are during wakefulness.” The Islamic Jurists derived the following rule from these hadiths: *Nothing is established during sleep. Whether one proclaims Islam, apostates (we seek Allah’s refuge), marries or divorces. Nothing is considered.* Some have expressed this point by saying, utterances during sleep are not more significant than the chirping of birds. The great jurist Ibn `Abideen writes:

For this reason the speech of the sleeper cannot be described as truthful or false, or likewise giving benefit of information or establishing an order. It is stated in the book *Tahrir al-Usul* that the sleeper’s speech, in terms of professing Islam, apostating, issuing Talaq is all void. It will not be considered as establishing information or producing contracts, described as truthful or false just like the chirping of birds.... The same has been stated in the text of *Talwih*. This passage explicitly tells us that speech during sleep is neither termed speech linguistically or legally (*shar`an*). It is void.<sup>165</sup>

ولذا لا يتصف بصدق ولا كذب ولا خير ولا انشاء و في التحرير و تبطل عباراته من الاسلام و الردة و الطلاق و لم توصف بخير و لا انشاء و صدق و كذب كالخان الطيور.... و مثله في التلويح فهذا صريح في أن كلام النائم لا يسمى كلاما لغة ولا شرعا بمنزلة المهمل [رد المختار. في مطلب طلاق المدهوش. ج ٢ ص ٥٨٨ في طبعة مصرية. ج ٤ ص ٤٥٢ في طبعة دار الكتب العلمية]

These unequivocal passages from the Hadith and the works of Islamic jurisprudence tell us that no judgement can be passed on something during sleep or in a dream-state. This then being the reality of the issue, how could Mawlana Thanavi issue a fatwa against the individual concerned of disbelief or apostasy? Another point to consider is that according to the Shariah in the state of wakefulness any speech, even if it be disbelief, that is spoken involuntarily also cannot be given a judgement of disbelief, apostasy etc. The Holy Qur’an has taught believers to say the following prayer: “Our Lord, do not hold us accountable, if we forget or make a mistake,” (2:286). The Hadith explain that this Qur’anic supplication was accepted by Almighty Allah. Ibn Kathir has explains this in his commentary.

An example of how people can err in their speech is found in the hadith of Sahih Muslim about the traveller who loses his ride and faced with certain death, he awake to find his ride in front of him. In joy he cries out, *O Allah you are my slave and I am your Lord* (Ma`adhallah). This man was neither insane, or unconscious or intoxicated or sleeping when he uttered the opposite of this. He was fully awake, but because these words came out involuntarily, against his wishes, it did not result in his disbelief.

The companion Abdullah bin Abbas ؓ says the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: “Verily God has determined to not take my Umma to account for actions committed by mistake, forgetfulness and under duress.”<sup>166</sup>

إن الله تجاوز عن امتي الخطأ و النسيان و ما استكروها عليه  
[ص ١٤٨ سنن ابن ماجه، ج ٢ ص ٥٦ شرح معاني الآثار، ج ٢ ص ١٩٨ المستدرک]

We learn from the above that someone who spoke words of disbelief by mistake will not be accountable for them. The Hanafi jurists in particular have spoken at length in elaborating this ruling. Imam Hasan bin Mansur, also known as Qazikhan, wrote: “A person who makes a mistake is one who brings on to his tongue a word in place of another word without intending it.” He also writes:

If the erred utters words of disbelief on his tongue by mistake, that is he intended to say words that were not disbelief but instead, by mistake, spoke ones of disbelief, then that according to all the

<sup>164</sup> *Jami al-Trimidhi*.

<sup>165</sup> *Rad al-Muhtar*, vol. 4, p. 452.

<sup>166</sup> Recorded with a sound chain in *Sunan Ibn Majah* p. 148; *Sharh Ma`aani al-Athar* vol. 2 p. 56 and *Al-Mutadrak*, vol.2, p.198.

jurists does not constitute disbelief. This is in contradistinction to the one who speaks such words in jest, because he says them intending them only he does not desire the ruling they establish.

الخاطي اذا جرى على لسانه كلمة الكفر خطأ بان كان اراد ان يتكلم بما ليس بكفر فجرى على لسانه كلمة الكفر خطأ لم يكن ذلك كفراً عند الكل بخلاف الهازل لان الهازل يقول قصدا الا انه لا يريد حكمه  
[فتاوى قاضيخان، ج ٤ ص ٨٨٣ في طبعة نولكشوريلكنو بالهند]

In this passage we find both the definition of a mistake and the ruling that accompanies it stated in explicit terms. It is stated in *Kashf al-Asrar* by the Hanafi jurist Imam `Abd al-`Aziz al-Bukhari: ...this proves that to utter words of disbelief whilst intoxicated does not establish the ruling of apostasy, just as this ruling is not established in the circumstances of a mistake and insanity. Thus his wife will not become divorced from him.

فدل ان بالتكلم بكلمة الكفر في حالة السكر لا يحكم بالردة كما لا يحكم بها في حالة الخطأ و الجنون فلا تبين منه امرأته  
[كشف الاسرار شرح اصول فخر الاسلام البزدوي، ج ٤ ص ٣٥٥ في طبعة مصرية]

The jurist Imam Ibn Abideen writes: “And whoever utters words of disbelief by mistake or by compulsion is not declared a disbeliever according to all the scholars.”

و من تكلم بما مخطأ أو مكرها لا يكفر عند الكل  
[رد المختار كتاب الجهاد، ج ٦ ص ٣٥٨ في طبعة دار الكتب العلمية]

The Imam Mulla Ali al-Qari similarly writes in his commentary of Imam Abu Hanifa’s creedal work *Fiqh al-Akbar*: “If the words of disbelief come upon the tongue by mistake, that will not constitute disbelief according to all the scholars.”<sup>167</sup>

بان الخاطيء إذا جرى على لسانه كلمة الكفر خطأ لم يكن ذلك كفراً عند الكل  
[شرح فقه الاكبر، ص 198، في طبعة كانبور بالهند]

The reason for this is that intent and will are necessary for disbelief or apostasy to be established, and in the case of a mistake and duress these components are missing. So when disbelief and apostasy are things that require intent and will, it follows that, unlike the case of the issuance of divorce, emancipation etc., mere utterance will not suffice. This is different to when words of disbelief are spoken in jest and sarcasm, because here the speaker’s intent and will are present. As such even if he then shows his disagreement at the ruling of the Shariah, the declaration of his disbelief will not change merely because he is not happy with it. It is stated in *Fataawa Qazikhan*:

When a person jokingly or mockingly utters the words of disbelief, it will be counted as disbelief according to all the scholars even if the speaker’s belief was contrary to what he said.<sup>168</sup>

و اما الهازل و المستهزئ اذا تكلم بالكفر استخفافا و مزاحا و استهزاء يكون كفرا عندالكل و ان كان اعتقادا خلاف ذلك  
[فتاوى قاضيخان، ج ٤ ص ٨٨٣، في طبعة نولكشوريلكنو بالهند]

The jurist Imam Ibn al-Humam similarly states: “The word Ridda (lit. rejection, but translated as Apostasy) itself informs of a change in a person’s belief.”<sup>169</sup>

الردة تنبئ عن تبدل الاعتقاد

[فتح القدير، ج ٤ ص ٤٠٧، في طبعة مصرية]

Imam Muhammad bin Mahmud al-Babarti also writes: “The foundation in Apostasy is a person’s conviction.”<sup>170</sup>

ان الركن في الردة الاعتقاد

[العناية، على هامش فتح القدير، ج ٣ ص ٤٠]

In other words, in the case of apostasy a change in one’s inner belief has a critical role. From juristic perspective, without the realisation of an inner change apostasy cannot be said to be found. In conclusion, in the case of a mistake, a person is under a kind of compulsion. Therefore, such person cannot have a judgement passed against him. Indeed Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan has himself acknowledged this understanding when he says: “In the Shariah the laws that pertain to compulsion are different to when there is choice.”<sup>171</sup>

<sup>167</sup> *Sharh Fiqh al-Akbar*, p. 198.

<sup>168</sup> *Fatawa Qazikhan*, vol. 4, p. 883.

<sup>169</sup> *Fath al-Qadir*, vol. 4, p. 407.

<sup>170</sup> *Al-‘Inayah*, Marginalia of *Fath al-Qadir*, vol. 3, p. 40.

<sup>171</sup> *Malfuzaat*, part 1 p. 60.

شریعت میں احکام اضطرار احکام اختیار سے جدا ہیں  
(ملفوظات حصہ ۱ ص ۶۰ طبع آفٹ پریس کراچی)

Keeping these preliminary discussions in view one can assess this issue with fairness. If a person who cries that he had no choice, that he is compelled, that his tongue is not in his control and that he also weeps because of this incident afterwards, then on what basis should Mawlana Thanavi have declared him a disbeliever? Moreover, if he is not to be considered a disbeliever, how can it be said that *contentment with disbelief is disbelief*? Is it at all justifiable to declare Mawlana Ashraf Ali Thanavi a disbeliever, especially when according to Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan himself, the laws of compulsion are as outlined by the jurists mentioned above? What further increases one's incredulity is that Mawlana Thanavi never insists on his interpretation of the dream. He put forward a positive interpretation of the dream according to his refined sense, but then added that it may not mean this. He wrote at the end of the letter:

Finally, I do not insist on this meaning. For it is possible what you saw was influenced by Satan or caused by a mental ailment, in which case this is not its meaning. Thus in the circumstance the interpretation is wrong it will be a mere error of personal judgment and there is no blame in that.<sup>172</sup>

Just as it is possible to err in grading a hadith narration or in a scholar deducting a *fiqhi* ruling, so too is it possible that a mistake occur in interpreting a dream. So it has to be said that when a person is not blamed in the first two cases, and is actually still rewarded<sup>173</sup>, then similarly there should be no blame in this third case. Another point to be remembered is that there is actually not the hint of a claim being made to prophethood in the words of Mawlana Thanavi. What he wrote was merely to console the individual that what he saw was a message of encouragement. Namely, it meant that the person you are seeking knowledge from (by Allah's help) is an adherent of the Messenger's ﷺ example (*sunna*). His explicitly using the words a true *adherent to the Sunna* (*muttabi` al-sunna*) was merely indicating that his relationship to the Messenger ﷺ is of a slave to a master and that he views following his ﷺ Sunna the means to his salvation. There simply is no question of a claim being made to prophethood. If the Breilvis insist on embarking on declaring people disbelievers by using this methodology, then we would be appreciative if they follow through with it and pass the same judgement of disbelief on the examples recorded below. And then having done this, broadcast their *fatwas* in the ghastly manner they did against Mawlana Ashraf Ali Thanavi and the other scholars of Dar ul-'Ulum Deoband. And if they will not do so then explain clearly what is the difference between them?

*Example 1*

The master of the gnostics and lamp of the saints Imam Nizam al-Din Chisti (1238-1325) has narrated that a man once came to the famous saint Shaykh Shibli in order to take the spiritual path. Shaykh Shibli said to him: "I will only take you as a novice on one condition." The man asked him to inform him of the condition. Shaykh Shibli replied: "First tell me how you profess the testification of faith?" The man said: "I say: 'There is no god except God and Muhammad ﷺ is the Messenger of Allah.'" Shaykh Shibli then said: "Then you must profess the testification using these words instead: 'There is no god except God and Shibli is the Messenger of Allah.'" Because the man was firm in his belief in his Shaykh he pronounced it immediately. Shaykh Shibli began crying and said: "Alas, who am I? I would consider myself uncouth even to say that I am a slave of the Messenger ﷺ; how then could I ever claim to be of equal status to him. I only asked you to discover your sincerity in taking the path."<sup>174</sup>

Now the question is, are Shaykh Shibli, the novice, Imam Nizam al-Din Chisti and Imam Amir Hasan `Ala Sanjari (the compiler of the story) all to be considered disbelievers because there was no admonition or repudiation from them in relation to the words being uttered? (We seek refuge with Allah Almighty). If they are all disbelievers, when did the Breilvis ever publicise this information to the masses? In which book did they make mention of this? If actually they did not do

<sup>172</sup> *Al-Imdad*, Jumadi al-Thani Issue, 1336 Hijri, p. 20.

<sup>173</sup> As a hadith states that a qualified person who exerts his maximum effort in discovering a ruling will receive two rewards if he is right and one if he is wrong.

<sup>174</sup> *Fawaaid al-Fawaaid*, p. 251.

this, please explain why not? If they view them as Muslims, then tell us the interpretation you employ to absolve them? Were not the aforementioned words a statement of disbelief?

#### *Example 2*

It is mentioned in *Anwar-e-Khwaja*, the biography of the great saint Imam Mu`een al-Din Chisti (1142-1236), that a man came to the Imam and requested him to accept his Pledge (*baya`*). Like in the above incident the Imam stipulated a similar kind of condition to the one made by Shaykh Shibli. He said: "Say: 'There is no god but God and Mu`een al-Din is the Messenger of Allah.'" The novice initially refused, but when he realised his pledge would not be accepted without this profession, feeling compelled, he said the words. Upon this, Imam Mu`een al-Din said: "This was merely to test the truth of your commitment. Your belief should be as it is. I am but an insignificant slave of the Messenger ﷺ."

Again the Breilvis are asked, was Imam Mu`een al-Din Chisti a disbeliever according to them (We seek Allah's refuge)? If not, then why not? For the words are apparently those of disbelief, so what reasoning was used after these blasphemous words were spoken to say he is not a disbeliever? The astonishing thing is that these pious men spoke all these things on purpose, whilst being fully awake merely to test novices. Along with this, they were not only considered Muslims, they were believed by their generation and every generation after them to be from the greatest of saints. We pray that Allah Almighty bestow upon our brothers and sisters sound understanding and instil love for the people of Tawhid and Sunna. And may He make us always the friends of those upon the truth. Ameen.

## Chapter 5

### Mawlana Muhammad Isma‘il Dehlavi (1779-1831)

#### *Brief Biography*

Mawlana Muhammad Isma‘il Dehlavi was born in Delhi on the 12<sup>th</sup> Rabi II, 1193 Hijra (Thursday 29 April 1779). He was named Muhammad Isma‘il and was the son of Shaykh Shah Abd al-Ghani and grandson of Shaykh Shah Waliullah Dehlavi. His mother’s name was Bibi Fatimah. By the age of eight years, he had memorized the Holy Qur’an. He initially studied the primary Arabic grammar texts with his father, who also later taught him primers in logic and philosophy. Having completed this stage of study, he studied the blessed books of Hadith under Shaykh Shah Abd al-Aziz Dehlavi.

Allah Almighty had bestowed extraordinary intelligence upon Mawlana Isma‘il. During his student days, he paid little attention to his studies and revision, and his days and nights were almost entirely spent in archery, shooting, horse-riding, training and physical exercising. However, despite this, when his teachers tested him with questions on previous lessons, Mawlana Isma‘il always surpassed his classmates in his answers and never floundered, even in explaining the most obscure passages. His fellow students envied his God-gifted intelligence and were often dumbfounded by it.

Mawlana had completed his studies by the age of sixteen. Though he was of slim build and an average height, he was nevertheless extremely brave, fearless and bold. Mawlana had mastered the skill of horse-riding at the hands of Miah Rahim Bakhsh, who was an acclaimed horse rider. Miah used to hold some heretical beliefs, but through the companionship of Mawlana Isma‘il, he was turned into a perfect Unitarian [*muwahhid*]. Later, he even accompanied Mawlana Isma‘il in battle against the Sikhs in Peshawar and was martyred. He had reached the age of one hundred years at the time of his martyrdom. He possessed the fervour of a young man despite his age.

When Mawlana Isma‘il had completed his physical training, he set about mastering the art of swimming in the river. For the next three to four years, he would spend much of his time in the river. During this period, he would often teach his students on the riverbank.

After this phase, he engaged himself in building his capacity to walk and run long distances. He would walk slowly barefoot for hours on end on the red-stoned courtyard of Jami Masjid in Delhi in the scorching mid-summer heat. Initially, this caused severe boils on his feet. Onlookers thought that he was a madman; others gossiped that he had been prescribed a special recitation in this manner as a remedy for something. However, the truth was completely different; it was only in order to prepare for a life of struggle in the way of the religion. When winter came, he trained himself to pass it in thin garments, when others who were wrapped up in thick garments would be complaining of the extreme cold. He mastered how to minimise his sleep. He could go without sleep for up to ten days with ease.

Whilst he was undergoing this arduous regime of self-discipline, he began addressing the masses, exhorting them to forsake their erroneous practices and rectify their behaviour. Rioting often interrupted in his speeches. Some of his enemies even devised plots to have Mawlana Isma‘il assassinated, but whomever Allah wishes to preserve, none can harm. Not only was Mawlana Isma‘il an advocate of unadulterated Sufism, he extolled the virtues of many great Sufis and authored a large volume in praise of pure Sufism and true Sufis, titled *Haqeeqat-e-Tasawwuf* [The Reality of Sufism].<sup>175</sup> Personally, he had taken the pledge upon the hands of Sayyid Ahmad Shahid which is important in that it is a clear proof of his endorsement of Sufism.

<sup>175</sup> Mirza Hairat Dehlavi, a biographer of Mawlana Isma‘il, mentions this in his book *Hayat-e-Tayyibah*, p.116, Idara-e-Tarjumanus-Sunnat Edition.

*Taqlid and Mawlana Isma‘il Dehlavi*

Mawlana Isma‘il Dehlavi was a man of very deep, broad and profound learning. He was unparalleled in his intelligence amongst his contemporaries. When he found a clear and non-ambiguous Hadith in any matter, he would not give any consideration to anyone’s opinion that went contrary to it. In the absence of textual evidence, he adhered to the *fiqh* of the great Imam Abu Hanifa. Therefore, the claim that he was staunchly anti-madhhab is baseless. Yes, he was fiercely opposed to anything that was even remotely close to polytheism (*shirk*) and innovation in religion as he was fiercely opposed to the extremely biased and unrelenting adherence to individual Pirs and scholars, even when they taught clearly against the Qur’an and Sunnah – a common feature of the way people followed religion at that time. He was not alone in this though; all astute and upright scholars of the four schools, especially those with the Hanafi affiliation, were and continue to remain proponents of the same attitude. Further discussion of this can be found in *al-Kalam al-Mufid* by this author. It seems appropriate that we produce a couple of accounts here to prove our claim that Mawlana Isma‘il was indeed an adherent of the Hanafi school.

Once, some advocates of innovative practices (*bidaat*) sent a group of their students to debate with Mawlana Isma‘il in Delhi. The details of this debate are recorded in *Siyar-e-Delhi*.<sup>176</sup> We have produced below excerpts of this exchange in the words of the renowned anti-madhhab scholar, Mirza Hairat Dehlavi:

**Students:** We seek to enquire from you what is your view of Imam Abu Hanifa.

**Mawlana Isma‘il:** I see him as a great scholar of *fiqh* and a source of pride for all Muslims.

**Students:** Do you accept and adhere to his rulings in *fiqh*?

**Mawlana Isma‘il:** I accept most of them, except in a few matters that are clearly mentioned in Hadith.

**Students:** Have you developed such maturity of understanding that you are able to disagree with some of his rulings whilst accepting most of them?

**Mawlana Isma‘il:** Of course not. I have never made such a claim. All I say is that, it is well possible that a Hadith has not reached the great Imam and, in the absence of which, he formulated an opinion based on his understanding, and if there does exist a Hadith contrary to that opinion, it is our obligation to accept the Hadith and disregard the opinion of the great Imam.

**Students:** And what do you say about those who do not agree with your thesis?

**Mawlana Isma‘il:** I have not yet given much thought to it. However, regardless of whether my opinion is valid or invalid, I will say that such a person does not do something virtuous, as the great Imam himself has required us to discard his opinion if it contradicts an authentic Hadith.

**Students:** Do you assert that Imam Abu Hanifa did not know Hadith?

**Mawlana Isma‘il:** Of course the Imam knew Hadith. But, because the business of forging Hadith was very widespread in his times, he was reluctant to accept every Hadith that was reported to him immediately. This is the reason why he relied on his personal judgements in many matters of *fiqh*.

From this exchange, it is clear that Mawlana Isma‘il accepted the authority of Imam Abu Hanifa in most matters of *fiqh*, but he gave preference, and quite rightly so, to authentic Hadith in a few issues. Similarly, when the great Imam Mawlana Rashid Ahmad Gangohi was once asked in a letter, “Some people claim that Mawlana Isma‘il was an anti-Madhhab scholar and did not approve of adherence to the great Imams in *fiqh*. Is this statement correct in your opinion?”, he replied:

From whatever I have heard of Mawlana’s affairs, it seems that he would prefer to act in accordance with authentic non-abrogated Hadith in whatever matter it was available, in the absence of which, he adhered to the *fiqh* of Imam Abu Hanifa. And Allah knows best. I have not had the good fortune of meeting him personally, which would have enabled me to give a personal account. However, I am certain that his writings will also convey the same.<sup>177</sup>

<sup>176</sup> pp. 355-401

<sup>177</sup> *Fatawa Rashidiyyah*, v. 1, p. 124, Barqi Press, Lahore ed.

Elsewhere, he wrote:

And Mawlana Isma‘il would say that so long as an authentic non-abrogated hadith is available, I follow it, and in its absence, I adhere to the *fiqh* of Imam Abu Hanifa. And this was also the position of Shaykh Sayyid Ahmad.<sup>178</sup>

In the letter that Shaykh Sayyid Ahmad wrote to the scholars of Peshawar, he had also mentioned that his and his ancestors' preference in *fiqh* is the Hanafi school and that all his current statements and practices are in line with the fundamentals of this same school and not a single statement or practice of his contravenes any of the Hanafi principles.<sup>179</sup> Above, we have already established Mawlana's position in his own words, as quoted in *Hayat-e-Tayyiba*, that, except for the few matters in which clear guidance was available from Hadith, he accepted and adhered to Imam Abu Hanifa's judgments in most issues of *fiqh*. And Hanafism is nothing more or less than this!

#### *The Label of 'Wahhabism'*

It was the British who first denigrated this blessed group by labelling them as Wahhabis. The austerity and insularity of Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab al-Hanbali (1703-1792) led to some very unhelpful conditions and extreme praxes in Arabia, which sparked controversy and revolts in Egypt and other parts of the Arabian Peninsula. As a result, the Wahhabi movement immediately came to be seen disparagingly by the general masses. The mission and movement of Shaykh Sayyid Ahmad and Mawlana Isma‘il had no link whatsoever with the Wahhabi movement of Arabia. They were engaged in the promulgation of Tawheed and Sunnah and refutation of *Shirk* (polytheism) and *Bidah* (innovation in religion) of their own accord and independent of any other movement. Their primary aim was the establishment of an Islamic system of governance. Initially, they had challenged the Sikhs, but the colonialists were their real targets, confronting whom was the next phase of their mission.

Sensing this, the colonial powers of the time very cunningly managed to affiliate their work and mission with that of the hard-line Wahhabis, thereby undermining their credibility severely amongst the masses. Several thousand Muslims who had hitherto considered participating in their mission a great honour instantly turned against them. Dr. Hunter, the most prejudiced historian one could find, admitted this. He writes, 'what our weaponry couldn't achieve, our diplomacy achieved.'<sup>180</sup> Elsewhere, he wrote, 'Indefatigable as missionaries, careless of themselves, blameless in their lives, supremely devoted to the overthrow of the English Infidels, admirably skilful in organizing a permanent system of supplying money and recruits... Much of their teaching was faultless, and it has been given to them to stir up thousands of their countrymen to a purer life and a truer conception of the Almighty.'<sup>181</sup>

Dr. Lothrop Stoddard writes,

For example, in northern India a Wahhabi fanatic, Seyid Ahmed, so roused the Punjabi Mohammedans that he actually built up a theocratic state, and only his chance death prevented a possible Wahabi conquest of northern India. This state was shattered by the Sikhs, about 1830, but when the English conquered the country they had infinite trouble with the smouldering embers of Wahabi feeling, which, in fact, lived on, contributed to the Indian mutiny, and permanently fanaticized Afghanistan and the wild tribes of the Indian North-West Frontier.<sup>182</sup>

The opponents of the scholars of Deoband were gifted this derogatory label of Wahhabism by the British. They were so successful in popularising this falsehood that it continues to thrive even in this so-called age of enlightenment. May Allah grant protection from such evil diplomacy. Ameen.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid

<sup>179</sup> *Seerat Sayyid Ahmad Shaheed* by Mawlana Abul Hasan an-Nadwi

<sup>180</sup> *Indian Musalmans*.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid., p. 68

<sup>182</sup> Stoddard, Lothrop, *The New World of Islam*, pp. 29-30, New York, 1931.

*A Strange Revelation*

In addition to such irrefutable historical records, which even the Colonialists would not attempt to deny, there is the well-known fact that Mawlana Isma‘il was martyred by the Sikhs at Balakot. His well-known and much visited grave is a testimony to this. Despite all this, the following absurd claim of a renowned scholar of the Bareilvi sect, Mufti Ahmad Yar Khan, is indicative of the malaise we are dealing with. He writes:

Wahhabis refer to him [Mawlana Isma‘il] as a martyr because he was killed on account of authoring his book, *Taqwiyat al-Iman*, at the hands of the Pathans of the frontier provinces. This truth was covered up by claiming that he was martyred at the hands of the Sikh. Had he been slain at the hands of the Sikh, his grave would have been in Amritsar or in any other area of East Punjab as that was the stronghold of the Sikhs. The frontier provinces are reined over by Pathans. Hence, he was killed at the hands of Muslims and, out of utter hatred towards him, his corpse was also made to disappear as a result of which, his grave is untraceable.<sup>183</sup>

This unique revelation and fantastic theory provides an insight into the bias and obstinacy that characterises the leaders and followers of this group, and which ensures that they can always find an interpretation of the truth, regardless of its accuracy, that serves to further their evil propaganda.

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<sup>183</sup> Foreword to *Jaa'a-al-Haqq*, p. 5, 7<sup>th</sup> ed.

## The First Objection: Saying The Messenger ﷺ Is Like A Brother

An allegation made against Mawlana Isma‘il Dehlawi is that he says one should not respect and honour the noble Messenger ﷺ any more than one respects and honours an elder brother. (We seek Allah’s refuge from this.) It is clear that such a belief is in stark contrast to Islamic Creed and what is commonly believed by Muslims and is clearly an affront to the noble Messenger ﷺ; even a fraction of such *kufir* would take a person out of the fold of Islam immediately.

In fact, if an innovator rejects any of the primary requisites and fundamentals of faith he is an absolute heretic, even if he recites the Testimony of Faith a million times.<sup>184</sup>

Further on, after recording the beliefs of some sects, he states,

...or the filthiness of the heart has motivated him to vilify the lofty and most noble status of the best of all of Creation ﷺ by referring to him as an elder brother or by stating that they [the Prophets of Allah] have perished into dust....All these sects and groups are absolutely out of the fold of Islam.<sup>185</sup>

Another later Breilvi scholar, Mawlana Muhammad Umar, regurgitates the same propaganda in these words:

It is mentioned in *Taqwiyat al-Iman*, p. 68, that, ‘All prophets, saints, Imams, spiritual leaders and guides and martyrs, in essence all those who are close to Allah, they are all still human, needy bondsmen of Allah and our brethren. However, since Allah has granted them a lofty status, they are like older brothers to us’ ...Imam Abu Dawud has recorded a Hadith in his *Sunan* (vol. 1, p. 3) on the authority of Abu Huraira that the noble Messenger ﷺ said: ‘Indeed, I am to you as a father; I teach you.’ When the noble Prophet ﷺ himself proclaims that he is like a father to us, which is further corroborated by the Divine Dictum, ‘And his wives are your mothers’<sup>186</sup>, and then he [Mawlana Isma‘il] has the audacity to call him an elder brother and reject all his supreme virtues!<sup>187</sup>

### Response

Before going into detail, it is appropriate that we present to the reader the actual and complete paragraph written by Mawlana Isma‘il so that the truth can be laid bare. The passage is actually a part of Mawlana Isma‘il’s commentary on a hadith from *Mishkat al-Masabih*:

It is reported by Imam Ahmad in the Chapter on Cohabitation with One’s Wives in *Mishkat al-Masabih* on the authority of Aisha that once, while the noble Messenger ﷺ was seated amongst the Emigrants and the Helpers, a camel came and prostrated in front of the noble Messenger ﷺ. At this, the companions at once exclaimed, ‘O Messenger of Allah ﷺ! When even animals and trees bow down to you, we are certainly more worthy of prostrating to you.’ The noble Messenger ﷺ replied to them: “You must worship none other than your Lord and show respect towards your brother [i.e. himself].”<sup>188</sup>

Commentary: All humans are equal as brothers; whoever is higher in rank is a senior brother and deserves respect that is appropriate to his rank. Everyone’s Lord is Allah only and, as such, worship [and prostration] must be reserved for him. From this Hadith we learn that all prophets, saints, Imams, spiritual leaders and guides and martyrs, in essence all those who are close to Allah, they are all still human, needy bondsmen of Allah and our brethren. However, since Allah has granted them a lofty status, they are like older brothers to us and we are required to respect and honour them because we are lower than them. In summary, honour should be accorded to them as humans, and never as God.<sup>189</sup>

<sup>184</sup> *I‘laam al-A‘alam bi anna Hindastan Dar al-Islam*, pg. 15, Bareli ed.

<sup>185</sup> *Ibid*, p. 20

<sup>186</sup> al-Qur’an

<sup>187</sup> *Miqyas-e-Hanafiyat*, p. 202

<sup>188</sup> The actual words of Hadith are: *U‘budoo rabbakum wakarimoo akhaakum*.

<sup>189</sup> *Taqwiyat al-Iman*, pp. 101-102.

In this passage, Mawlana Isma‘il Dehlavi has merely translated a portion of a hadith in which it is said, ‘Respect your brother’, in which ‘brother’ refers to the noble Messenger ﷺ himself. Furthermore, rather than leaving the meaning of ‘brother’ vague and open to incorrect interpretations, he has added a comment to signify the element of respect and honour in this term, as he deemed appropriate, and has explained that the noble Messenger ﷺ is like an elder brother and we are much lower in rank, and hence, his respect, love and honour is compulsory upon us as is our obedience to him. However, he emphasized that transgression in his veneration either by worshipping him or by showing respect and honour to him in a manner that is the sole preserve of the Almighty is not permissible and incorrect.

It is unclear which aspect of Mawlana Isma‘il’s translation or explanation contains disrespect of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ. If anything, he has only sought to embed the element of respect and reverence in the term ‘brother’, when it refers to the noble Messenger ﷺ according to the Hadith. As far as Shariah is concerned, there is nothing in the above translation and its commentary that implies dishonour to the noble Messenger ﷺ, especially as the noble Messenger ﷺ has himself instructed his companions in the said Hadith to respect their brother, referring to his own self. Furthermore, the same idea is conveyed in the verse:

إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ إِخْوَةٌ

“All believers are but brothers.”<sup>190</sup>

Similarly, when the noble Messenger ﷺ had sought the hand of Aisha in marriage from her father, Abu Bakr, the latter had sought assurance that such a relationship was acceptable exclaiming, ‘But I am your brother!’ To this, the noble Messenger ﷺ had replied:

أَنْتَ أَخِي فِي دِينِ اللَّهِ وَكِتَابِهِ

“You are my brother in the religion of Allah and His Book.”<sup>191</sup>

In other words, brotherhood in religion does not affect marital eligibility. Upon this assurance, the marriage was conducted. On yet another occasion, the noble Messenger ﷺ had said, “I wish that we could have seen our brothers [i.e. members of the noble Messenger’s ﷺ Umma until the Last Hour].” The Companions enquired, “O Messenger of Allah ﷺ! are we not your brethren?” The noble Messenger ﷺ replied, “You are my companions; my brothers are those who have not yet been born.”<sup>192</sup> Commenting on this hadith, Imam an-Nawawi writes,

Imam Abu al-Waleed Sulaiman ibn Khalaf al-Baji has commented that this Hadith does not imply the negation of brotherhood from the noble Companions – that is established for them as it is for the entire Umma, but it certainly highlights a greater and loftier virtue and honour than brotherhood that they exceptionally enjoy: that of Companionship. The meaning of the Hadith then is that the noble Companions and those who will come after them are all equal in the brotherhood of the noble Messenger ﷺ, as the Qur’an proclaims all believers to be brothers, but the noble Companions also share the additional exceptional merit of Companionship, and are, hence, much greater in rank.<sup>193</sup>

In addition, the noble Messenger ﷺ has referred to all the Prophets of Allah ﷺ as consanguine siblings.<sup>194</sup> Similarly, he has referred to Zaid ibn Harithah ﷺ as “Our brother and a dear friend.”<sup>195</sup> Once, when Umar ﷺ was departing to perform ‘Umrah, the noble Messenger ﷺ said to him:

أَشْرِكْنَا يَا أَخِي فِي دَعَائِكَ وَلَا تَنْسَنَا

“Keep a share for us in your prayers and do not forget us, o younger brother!”<sup>196</sup>

<sup>190</sup> al-Qur’an, 49:10

<sup>191</sup> *Sahih al-Bukhari*, v. 2, p. 760.

<sup>192</sup> *Muslim*, v. 1, pg. 127; *Musnad Ahmad*, v. 3, p. 155.

<sup>193</sup> *Sharh Saheeh Muslim*, v. 1, p. 127.

<sup>194</sup> *Sahih al-Bukhari*, v. 1, p. 490.

<sup>195</sup> *Sahih al-Bukhari*, v. 1, p. 372; *Mustadrak Hakim*, v. 3, p. 120.

<sup>196</sup> *Abu Dawud*, v. 1, p. 210; *Tirmidhi*, v. 2, p. 195; *Musnad at-Tayalisi*, p. 4, *Sunan Ibn as-Sunni*, p. 124.

These are all examples of Islamic brotherhood established through Qur'anic texts and Prophetic traditions. In addition to this, Allah Almighty has referred to various prophets and messengers ﷺ as brothers of their peoples and nations, despite the majority of these nations and people remaining persistently adamant upon their disbelief, polytheism and malpractice. Thus, this brotherhood was of a national and ethnic kind. For example, Prophet Hud ؑ is called the brother of the people of 'Aad, Prophet Salih ؑ the brother of Thamud and the Prophet Shu'aib ؑ the brother of Madyan in the Holy Qur'an. Who can reject the concept of Prophetic brotherhood in the presence of such clear and unambiguous evidence from the Holy Qur'an?

In summary, the Brotherhood of the noble Messenger ﷺ is firmly established through Qur'anic verses as well as through Prophetic Ahadith, and its denial amounts to denial of the Qur'an and Hadith. As for the objection raised by Mawlana Muhammad Umar that the noble Messenger's ﷺ rank is that of a benevolent father due to the hadith cited from Abu Dawud and due to the Qur'anic teaching that "the noble Messenger's ﷺ wives are you mothers", it is entirely true that the noble Messenger ﷺ is the spiritual father of the entire Umma, rectifying their souls and remedying their ills. In fact, the material benefits received from one's biological father cannot equate to even a millionth of the spiritual benefits received by every believer from the noble Messenger ﷺ. And it is only due to this spiritual fatherhood of the noble Messenger ﷺ that his noble wives are the mothers of all believers.

But, to reject the brotherhood of the noble Messenger ﷺ due to this fatherly rank is entirely unwarranted in Shari'ah. While the noble Messenger ﷺ is like a father figure to all Muslims spiritually, he is also a brother of all believers in faith and religion. For example, the noble Messenger ﷺ proclaimed Abu Bakr ؓ to be his brother in faith and yet married his daughter, Aisha. If he was his real brother or father, then this relationship could not have been established. Similarly, it is common knowledge that Uthman Ghani, Sayyiduna Ali and Abu al-As ibn ar-Rabi ؓ were sons-in-laws of the noble Messenger ﷺ. Despite the noble wives of the noble Messenger ﷺ being considered their mothers, this did not lead to conflicting with the Shariah, hence why they were duly married to the Messenger's ﷺ daughters. The irony is that the Breilvis customarily focus exclusively on one aspect of the matter, which appears to conform to their self-designed views, and turn a blind eye towards the multiple problems their bias creates according to the dictates of Shariah.

Similarly, in a hadith, the noble Messenger ﷺ is reported to have said: "The right of an older brother upon the younger ones is like the right of a father over his son."<sup>197</sup> According to this hadith, the rights granted to the older brother over younger ones in their development, education, concern, sympathy, love and care are the same as those a father has over his sons. Such deputation of the father's rights does not contradict with the duty he has as a brother; they both are equally valid and relevant.

To claim that Mawlana Isma'il only considers the noble Messenger ﷺ worthy of the respect due to an elder brother can only be seen as the product of the hate of the innovators. It does not need pointing out that no one from the entire Muslim Umma subscribes to such an erroneous belief. As a matter of creed, every true believer affirms and knows that the rank and status of the noble Messenger ﷺ is such that no man or angel, nor the Blessed Ka'bah, the Preserved Tablet, the Pen, and not even the Throne and Footstool of Allah ﷻ can come close to it. After Allah Almighty, no one in the entire universe and the created realm is loftier and greater than the noble Messenger ﷺ.

To expose the absurdity of the allegation made against Mawlana Isma'il Dehlavi in this regard, it is only appropriate that some excerpts from his other works are produced here. They will perfectly highlight the real esteem he holds the noble Messenger ﷺ in. And it is not merely that which is

<sup>197</sup> Al-Bayhaqi in *Shu'ab al-Iman* as recorded in *Mishkat*, v. 2, p. 421.

owed to an older brother. As the book *Sirat-e-Mustaqim* is also a work of Mawlana Isma‘il, and by the adversary’s admission, I will quote a few excerpts from it.

[1] ...and the majestic eminence of the Holy Qur’an will instantly dawn upon him. If such thoughts appear in his mind of their own accord, then that is a great blessing and the very objective. Otherwise, one should actively engage one’s mind in it. Similarly, one should [try to] ponder upon the eminence of each individual Surah and envisage that they will intercede on his behalf in the Court of the Almighty. One should also ponder upon the eminence and greatness of Salah, Zakah, fasting, pilgrimage, Jihad and other hallmarks and practices of faith in a similar manner. The reverence and esteem of the entire Shari’ah, the Ka’bah and the Prophets and Messengers of Allah ﷺ is also from the same category.<sup>198</sup>

[2] The noble Messenger ﷺ is the greatest and loftiest of them all [prophets] ﷺ. One should continually try to engage one’s mind in thinking about the immense favours and blessings that were and are continually being showered from the shoreless ocean of Allah’s benevolence upon the noble Messenger ﷺ since his birth – nay, since his inception. At the instance of his noble birth, several thousand blessings of Allah became inseparably attached to the being of the noble Messenger ﷺ.<sup>199</sup>

[3] The summary of this discussion is that one should hold the noble Messenger ﷺ to be loftier and higher in rank than the entire creation and, subsequently, must cultivate the deepest love and admiration for him and should forsake all customs and traditions, regardless of their origin, that contradict his teachings or entail additions upon and amendments to the way of the Companions.<sup>200</sup>

On one occasion, while emphasizing the boundless grandeur of Allah, he writes:

[4] All praise is for Allah! Look at the condition of the best of Almighty Allah’s entire Creation, Muhammad ﷺ in the court of Allah Almighty. As soon as he ﷺ hears the harsh words of the Bedouin, which express his lack of appreciation of the Greatness of Allah Almighty due to the Bedouin’s intellectual weakness, the Messenger ﷺ is entirely overwhelmed by the awe of Allah Almighty. He ﷺ promptly counsels him regarding the infinite grandeur of Allah Almighty in the Heavens and the Earth.<sup>201</sup>

After a detailed analysis of what the word ‘leader’ (*sayyid*) means in reference to the noble Messenger ﷺ he writes:

[5] Similarly, our noble Prophet ﷺ is the leader of the entire universe, because his rank is the loftiest in the eyes of Allah, he is the most steadfast upon the dictates of Allah Almighty and all are in need of him ﷺ to seek the Path to God. In this context, it is not improper to call the noble Messenger ﷺ the leader of the universe; in fact, this is precisely how he ﷺ should be perceived and believed.<sup>202</sup>

In the presence of such detailed comments by Mawlana Isma‘il Dehlavi, on the nobility and the lofty rank of the noble Messenger ﷺ, if someone, out of nothing more than animosity alleges that he does not give any more respect to the noble Messenger ﷺ than what one displays towards an elder brother, or claims that he denies the special merits of the noble Messenger ﷺ, it should be dismissed as slander.

<sup>198</sup> p. 158, Urdu edition.

<sup>199</sup> Ibid, p. 60.

<sup>200</sup> Ibid, p. 74

<sup>201</sup> Ibid, p. 94-95.

<sup>202</sup> Ibid, p. 109.

## The Second Objection: Saying The Noble Messenger ﷺ Has Turned To Dust In His Grave<sup>203</sup>

A second objection made against Mawlana Isma‘il Dehlavi is that he has written that the noble Messenger ﷺ has turned to dust – may Allah forbid! – in his noble Grave after his demise, when, it is argued, it is established through authentic Hadith that Allah has forbidden the earth to consume the flesh of the Prophets ﷺ. Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan states:

In *Taqwiyat-ul-Iman*, p. 60, [Mawlana Isma‘il Dhelavi] cited the hadith of the noble Messenger ﷺ, “Do you think that when you pass by my grave that you will prostrate before it?”<sup>204</sup> He however could not resist the urge to blaspheme. He provides his commentary upon this thus, *Meaning: I too will be joined/meet with the earth after death*. Can anyone who associates with or follows him [i.e. Mawlana Isma‘il Dehlavi] dare to point out where in the hadith does it say he ﷺ will be *joined/meet with the earth in the grave after death*? Not only is this a great defamation of the noble Messenger ﷺ, but also makes the claimant subject to this Prophetic hadith, ‘Whoever lies in my name deliberately, then he should prepare for an abode in the Fire.’ O Wahhabis! Would you care to explain the abode of your Imam [i.e. Mawlana Isma‘il Dehlavi] in light of this Hadith? The noble Messenger ﷺ has clearly stated, ‘Indeed Allah Almighty has forbidden upon the earth from consuming the bodies of Prophets ﷺ.’<sup>205</sup>

### Response

It is only proper that we produce the full discussion from *Taqwiyat al-Iman*. Mawlana Isma‘il Dehlavi cites a Hadith and translates it. The translation reads:

It is recorded in *Mishkat al-Masabih, Chapter on Cohabitation with One’s Wives*, on the authority of Imam Abu Dawud, that Qays ibn Sa’d once travelled to the city of Hira (which is located south of Kufa in Iraq). He witnessed its inhabitants prostrating to their governor. Awed by this ceremony, he thought that the noble Messenger ﷺ was more worthy of such prostration. When he returned to the noble Messenger ﷺ, he said, ‘I had travelled to Hira and witnessed its inhabitants bowing down to their governor and you are most deserving that we prostrate to you.’ Upon this, the noble Messenger ﷺ explained, ‘If you passed by my grave, would you prostrate to it?’ Qays replied in the negative, upon which the noble Messenger ﷺ instructed, ‘Then do not do it [i.e. prostrate to him].’

Then commenting on this narration, Mawlana Isma‘il Dehlavi writes:

The noble Messenger ﷺ meant that *I too will be joined/meet with the earth after my death*, and as such, he ﷺ cannot be worthy of prostration. To be prostrated to is the sole preserve of the Being who will never die. This hadith informs us that prostration should never be made to anyone, whether alive or dead, and neither to anyone’s grave. Whoever is alive will be dead one day, and whoever is dead was alive once and bound by human needs, and hence, could not have turned divine upon death. He is no other than a created bondsman of God.

What Mawlana Isma‘il has done in this passage is merely rendered an explanation of the above hadith, which has a very meaningful and complete relevance to it. He has highlighted the fundamental reason why prostrating to other than Allah Almighty is prohibited. Whoever is to be buried in the earth upon death cannot be deemed worthy of prostration; prostration is only fit for the being who is eternally alive and will never die and then buried in the earth. And that Being can only be Allah Almighty, because He is the only Being who is eternally Alive and death can never apply to Him. Apart from him, ‘every soul must taste death’.

For a true understanding of the contentious phrase, “I too will be joined with the earth after my death”, one needs the context. If he meant – may Allah forbid! – that the noble body of the Messenger ﷺ will also be converted into dust, as we know – through scripture as well as empirical evidence – happens to most corpses after burial, then this meaning is indeed objectionable as it

<sup>203</sup> Lit. “I too will one day be joined with the earth.” In Urdu, میں بھی ایک دن مٹی میں ملنے والا ہوں. It is a figurative expression that merely means that one is a helpless creation of the Creator.

<sup>204</sup> This is a part of a hadith recorded by Imam Abu Dawud from Sayyiduna Qays ibn Sa’d, who had expressed a desire to prostrate to the Noble Messenger ﷺ after witnessing the Persians doing the same to their chieftains. The Noble Messenger ﷺ forbade it for him and asked the above rhetorical question to explain why it was impermissible.

<sup>205</sup> *Al-Kawkabah al-Shihabiyyah*, p. 27.

clearly contradicts authentic and unambiguous Hadith that establish that Allah Almighty has forbidden the earth to consume the flesh of Prophets ﷺ. But this was not the meaning that was intended and neither can it ever be implied by any true Muslim. In fact, he was merely highlighting that, as the noble Messenger ﷺ will be buried in the earth after his demise, his noble body will be touched with earth in his grave, and never implied that the noble body was to turn into dust – may Allah forbid!

Once, a person wrote to Imam Rashid Ahmad Gangohi, enquiring about this statement from *Taqwiyat al-Iman*. He asked, “It is unclear what is meant by being *joined with the earth* here as the adversaries, led by Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan, allege that, according to Mawlana Isma‘il Dehlavi, the noble bodies of Prophets ﷺ can be consumed by the earth. What is the answer [to this objection]? Please explain in detail.” Imam Gangohi replied:

*Being joined with the earth* can have two meanings: a) to be consumed by the earth and turn to dust as most things that fall on earth become part of it, and b) to be in contact with the earth or connected to it. In Mawlana’s statement, the second meaning is the one intended, as Mawlana Isma‘il is also of the opinion that the bodies of Prophets ﷺ do not convert into dust. As their bodies are touched by earth from all sides, he has used the term *joined with the earth*. Hence, there is no objection. And Allah Almighty knows best. [Signed by:] Rashid Ahmad.<sup>206</sup>

Had Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan and his associates bothered to consult a dictionary, the problem could have easily been solved. However, their hearts are marred with such rancour and distrust for their adversaries that it compels them to seek a distorted meaning in what is actually an innocent expression. The word join/meet (*milna*) has various meanings in the Urdu language, and the meaning implied in usage is determined by the context and purpose of the speaker. In Urdu dictionaries such as *Nur-ul-Lughat*, *Jami’-ul-Lughaat*, *Munir-ul-Lughaat*, *Sa’eed-ul-Lughaat* etc., the meanings given for this word, *milna*, include ‘to join, connect with, to fuse, to combine, to unite with and to be buried and touched by earth’. Similarly, the word ‘in’ (*mei*) in Urdu can have the meaning of ‘to’.

In summary, this statement of Mawlana Isma‘il Dehlavi is completely unblameworthy and, as such, it should not have invited any objection. However, if someone deliberately seeks to twist such clear words, then we must only remind ourselves that even the words of the Holy Qur’an have not been spared from being manipulated by individuals to suggest abominable things.

<sup>206</sup> *Fatawa Rashidiyyah*, v. 1, p. 9.

### The Third Objection: Referring To The Prophets ﷺ As Sweepers And Cobblers

Another objection is that Mawlana Isma‘il refers to the Prophets and Messengers ﷺ with derogatory words such as sweepers and cobblers, which is a clear affront to them. Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan writes:

Look at the proof given for his assertion that ‘Calling upon Prophets and Saints is polytheism (*shirk*) in the first chapter of *Taqwiyat al-Iman*. It is written: *When our Creator is Allah – the Being who has originated us from nothing – it is our duty to only call upon Him for all our needs. Why do we need to call upon anyone else? When a person accepts the servitude of a king, he rests all his affairs with that king only, and not with any other king, let alone with any sweeper or cobbler. O Muslims! Be just and decide whether such derogatory and heinous words can ever appear on the tongue of a Muslim in whose heart there is even an iota of faith?*<sup>207</sup>

#### Response

In answering the objection, let us read the actual statement written by Mawlana Isma‘il Dehlavi. He has quoted and translated a hadith recorded in Bukhari and Muslim on the authority of Abdullah ibn Mas‘ud ؓ, that a man asked the noble Messenger ﷺ, “What is the greatest sin in the eyes of Allah?” The noble Messenger ﷺ replied: “That you should call upon anyone other than Allah, when it is only Allah who has created you.” Commenting on this Hadith, Mawlana Isma‘il Dehlavi writes:

Because we believe that Allah is Omnipresent and Omniscient and He has full authority over all affairs of the entire created realm, and it is only due to this belief that we call upon Him in every need. Hence, we must not hold such a belief for anyone else and neither call upon them, as that is the gravest of sins. Firstly, it is absolutely impossible that anyone other than Allah has the ability to be totally omnipresent and omniscient or possess the power to fulfil all the needs [of creation]. Secondly, when Allah is our Creator and has originated us, then it is our duty to call upon Him only for all our needs. What need do we have to call upon anyone else? When a person accepts the servitude of one king, he rests all his affairs with that king only, and not with any other king, let alone with any sweeper or cobbler.<sup>208</sup>

In this entire section, neither has Mawlana Isma‘il Dehlavi spoken of any prophets or saints, nor has he made an implicit reference to them. On the contrary, he has made a broad and general statement. Ignoring this fact and allowing his bias to overcome his judgement, Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan specifically and deliberately misinterprets these general and unspecific words to imply Prophets and Saints, and, having clothed the innocent words with a very evil meaning, he then incites the believers to decide whether such derogatory and heinous words can ever appear from the tongue of a Muslim, in whose heart there is even an iota of faith? This is the state of his honesty and piety that he unilaterally applies his self-determined meanings to the statements of others and then projects them as theirs’, in order to achieve his objectives.

In truth, Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan is either unaware of or deliberately chooses to ignore a well-known and acknowledged maxim in the Science of Creed, which lands him in such grave errors. The scholars of Creed have stipulated that, sometimes, the ruling of a general statement is different to that of a detailed statement. Though the general meaning is perfectly valid, the specification of it can be invalid and unlawful. Shaykh Kamal-ud-Din Muhammad ibn Muhammad, better known as Ibn Abi ash-Sharif al-Maqdisi, writes:

In the aforementioned matters, the scholars have stated that only generalisation is permitted in such statements, and not its specification and detail. It is acceptable, by consensus and on the authority of scripture, to state, for example, that Allah is the Creator of all things, while it is improper to specifically state that Allah is the Creator of filth and the creator of monkeys and swine (when used in a derogatory sense), despite everything being created by Him unquestionably. Similarly, it is permissible to state that everything in the heavens and the earth belongs to Him, in the sense that He is the Ultimate Possessor of everything, but it is improper to state that wives and children belong to Him, as this statement carries an implication that this belonging may be by way of other than

<sup>207</sup> *Al-Kawkabah al-Shihabiyyah*, p. 29.

<sup>208</sup> *Taqwiyat al-Iman*, p. 34.

Lordship [ie. it may be implied by this statement that Allah has wives and children, which is categorically untrue].<sup>209</sup>

قالوا ما ذكرناه من صحة الإطلاق اجمالاً لا تفصيلاً كما يصح بالاجماع والنص ان يقال الله خالق كل شيء و لا يصح ان يقال خالق القاذورات و خالق القردة و الخنازير مع كونها مخلوقة له اتفاقاً و كما يقال له ما في السماوت و الارض اي مالكتها و لا يقال له الزوجات و الاولاد لايهامه اضافة غير الملك اليه

اد

[المسامرة طبعة مصرية ج ٢ ص ٣]

This principle has also been referred to by Imam Ahmad Sirhindi, the *Mujaddid*<sup>210</sup> of the second millennium in his work *Ma'arif Ludniyyah*<sup>211</sup>, as well as by Mulla 'Ali al-Qari in his commentary on *al-Fiqh al-Akbar*.<sup>212</sup> Imam Ahmad ibn Musa al-Khayali al-Hanafi also wrote:

And there is no doubt that it is permissible to state that Allah is the Sole Creator of everything, despite the fact that it necessarily implies the creation of unpleasant things and creatures, but it is impermissible to specify this (derogatory) implication in a similar statement.<sup>213</sup>

و لا شك في صحة اطلاق مثل خالق كل شيء و يلزمه خالق القردة و الخنازير مع عدم جواز اطلاق اللازم

[الخيالي ص ٧٢ نقل من طبعة مجتباتي بدلهي]

We learn from the above that sometimes the ruling that applies to a general statement is not the same as the ruling given to an explicit statement. Therefore, to vilify someone as guilty of the blasphemy of the noble Prophets and Saints by applying the rule that relates to explicit statements to a general statement is extremely immoral and dishonest.

#### Another Similar Objection

Mawlana Muhammad Umar writes:

It is stated in *Taqwiyat al-Iman*<sup>214</sup>: *It must be understood without a doubt that everything created, whether small or big, is more worthless/more insignificant than a cobbler before Divine Majesty. The Qur'an, on the other hand, states that the (ultimate) honour and glory is for Allah, His Messenger ﷺ and the believers, but the hypocrites know not.* As per the above principle, according to the Deobandi Wahhabis, everyone in the realm of creation, whether small or big in rank, is **more insignificant than a cobbler**. The elaboration of small and big, as found on page 68 of *Taqwiyat al-Iman*, necessarily includes Prophets ﷺ and Saints. Before, the noble Prophet ﷺ had been given the rank of an elder brother; here, all Prophets ﷺ and Saints have been called more worthless than a cobbler in rank. May Allah protect [from such treachery]!<sup>215</sup>

In response, as before, it is proper to first present the entire paragraph from *Taqwiyat al-Iman*:

Allah Almighty states in the Noble Qur'an, "When Luqman advised his son saying, 'O dear son! Do not associate anyone with Allah, for verily polytheism is indeed a grave transgression.'" <sup>216</sup> Because Allah Almighty had blessed Luqman ﷺ with immense wisdom, he understood that it is nothing less than a grave transgression to confer one's due right upon someone else. And whoever confers a right of Allah upon anyone from His creation, then he has committed the greatest transgression possible in that he has taken away the right of the Greatest Being and given it to the lowliest, such as if someone snatches the crown from the king's head and places it upon the head of a cobbler. And we should know without a doubt that everything created, whether small or big, is more insignificant than a cobbler before Divine Majesty.<sup>217</sup>

In this explanation of the quoted verse, the author has merely tried to highlight that Unity (*Tawhid*) and worship is the sole right of the Almighty, and to confer it upon anyone else is akin to placing a king's crown on the head of a cobbler. Who will not agree that this is indeed a great transgression? Similarly, to associate partners with Allah Almighty is the greatest form of transgression possible,

<sup>209</sup> *Al-Musamarah*: v. 2, p. 3.

<sup>210</sup> The Reviver of the faith.

<sup>211</sup> P. 57.

<sup>212</sup> P. 62.

<sup>213</sup> *Al-Khayali*, p. 72.

<sup>214</sup> P. 16.

<sup>215</sup> *Miqyas-e-Hanafiyyat*, p. 205.

<sup>216</sup> Al-Qur'an, 31:13.

<sup>217</sup> *Taqwiyat al-Iman*, p. 26.

as the Qur'anic verse clearly explains. The true import of Mawlana Isma'il Dehlavi's statement is only to establish the wrongness and iniquity of polytheism, and not to disparage Prophets ﷺ and Saints. As a cobbler is utterly helpless, meek and utterly weak in the presence of a king, the entire creation is far feebler, weaker and infinitely more insignificant before Allah Almighty. Mawlana Umar has, however, of his own accord, taken the word 'insignificant' in the pejorative sense of 'degraded' and 'despicable'. And, reaching another low in morality, has even cited a Qur'anic verse to somehow back up his claim. He says: The Holy Qur'an says, 'Man has been created weak'<sup>218</sup>. And, enumerating His favours and blessings during the mention of Badr, where the noble Messenger ﷺ was commanding the illustrious army of the noble Companions, Allah Almighty states:

و لقد نصركم الله بيدر و أنتم أذلة

“Allah certainly supported you at Badr, when you were humbled...”<sup>219</sup>

In actual fact, this proves that the word 'insignificant' (*dhaleel* in Arabic) does not always imply degradation or that something is despicable, as perceived by these people of falsehood, rather it can also imply humbleness in the sense of having no power or strength. And this is the meaning being implied Mawlana Isma'il Dehlavi. We have quoted previously, verbatim and in quite some detail, statements by Mawlana Isma'il Dehlavi that sufficiently demonstrate the high esteem in which he holds the noble Messenger ﷺ. He calls him the leader of all universes and exhorts all believers to become firm in their belief that the noble Messenger ﷺ is better than and the leader of the entire created realm and its utmost beloved. Furthermore, it is to be noted that he has only mentioned cobblers and sweepers, who are still human, and hence, enjoy the lofty status of humanity. Several great masters of Tasawwuf have said what was far more than this, we wonder why they did not receive mention in any *fatwa*? Below are two such examples:

[1] The eminent Shaykh Shihab-ud-Din 'Umar ibn Muhammad as-Suhrawardi (d. 632 AH) writes referring to a hadith, 'It has reached us that the noble Messenger ﷺ has said, 'The faith of a person cannot be complete until all humans become equal to goat-droppings in his eyes.'<sup>220</sup> This great saint, none other than the originator of an entire order in Tasawwuf, has made a much bolder statement than Mawlana Isma'il Dehlavi that perfection in faith can never be achieved until a person fully subscribes to the belief, with total conviction, that all humans, in their ability to bring about a benefit or cause harm, are as utterly powerless *as goat-droppings*, in front of the will and command of Allah Almighty.

[2] It is recorded in the discourses of Shaykh Nizam-ud-Din Awliya [ra] (d. 725 AH) that he once proclaimed, 'No person's faith can be perfect until he does not see the entire creation equal in value to camel-dung.'<sup>221</sup>

After all, as we mentioned above, a cobbler and a sweeper is still a human. Here, the requirement to perfect one's faith is much bolder: faith cannot be perfected until the entire created realm does not become equal in value to camel-dung in the believer's eyes. What would the judgement of these Breilvis be about these extraordinary statements by such eminent masters? We can only pray that the Almighty grants all Muslims the noble qualities of justice, fairness, knowledge, wisdom and God-fearingness, so that these futile debates, which are a produce of nothing other than bias and egotism can be buried once and for all. There are some more instances in *Taqwiyat al-Iman* where these opponents of the true scholars of Islam have taken passages out of context and spread confusion. We, however, will suffice by highlighting one more example.

<sup>218</sup> Al-Qur'an, 4:28.

<sup>219</sup> Al-Qur'an, 3:123.

<sup>220</sup> 'Awarif al-Ma'arif

<sup>221</sup> Fawa'id al-Fu'ad. P. 61

## The Fourth Objection: Saying The Thought Of The Noble Messenger ﷺ In Salah Is Worse Than Thinking Of Cattle And Donkeys

Recounting the alleged blasphemies of Mawlana Isma‘il Dehlavi, Mawlana Ahmad Raza writes under *Blasphemy no. 28*:

This is the worst of his blasphemies, as found in *Sirat-e-Mustaqim*, p. 29:

[Mawlana Isma‘il Dehlavi has written]

However, as per the Divine Words, ...*they are but multiple layers of darkness, one above another*’, it is better to think about sexual intercourse with one’s wife rather than imagining oneself committing adultery with someone; [similarly] to expend one’s determination/focus one’s mind (*sarf-e-himmat*) upon one’s spiritual guide or anyone similar, even if it may be the noble Messenger ﷺ is much worse than focusing one’s concentration [during Salah] upon cattle and donkeys, because the former concentration will inspire awe and veneration in the depth of one’s heart as opposed to the thought of cattle and donkeys, which will neither yield such an inspiration, nor feelings of awe, but rather the opposite. And this awe and veneration of other than the Divine, if observed and aspired to during ritual prayer, will drag one towards polytheism (*shirk*).

[Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan continues] O Muslims! O Muslims! Hark! Ponder on these filthy devil-inspired words that to draw one’s attention towards the noble Messenger ﷺ during Salah [ritual prayer] is like drawing another layer upon layers of darkness, more evil than the thought of a debauched prostitute and that of committing adultery with her and much more evil than to engage in thoughts about one’s cattle and donkeys. Of course, the prostitute has caused no grief, the donkey has not inflicted any inner pain, but the noble Messenger ﷺ has indeed caused immense hurt by declaring himself the Seal of Prophets in the Qur’an, which shattered all new dreams of prophethood. Why would his thought then not be so calamitous and why would the heart not be so vicious towards him ﷺ? Muslims! Justice for the sake of Allah! Can such piffle ever be pronounced by a Muslim tongue or pen? Of course, not, never.<sup>222</sup> [Further on, he writes]...With what heart did he ever pen these insults shamelessly against the noble Messenger ﷺ, when even the thought of his ﷺ insult is nothing less than disbelief? Did these insults not reach the noble Messenger ﷺ and would they not have hurt him ﷺ? By Allah! He has been informed of them. By Allah! They have caused him ﷺ immense hurt. By Allah! May the curse of Allah, the all-Powerful, the Almighty, be upon whoever causes any grief to the heart of the noble Messenger ﷺ? There is no room for any explanation or interpretation of these clear insults.<sup>223</sup>

It appears from the words of Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan that – may Allah forbid! – Mawlana Isma‘il Dehlavi has openly insulted the noble Messenger ﷺ and that there is no room for an alternative interpretation for his words. And that, on oath, he states that the noble Messenger ﷺ was informed of this blasphemy and it hurt him. Mawlana Muhammad Umar has also regurgitated this same objection in his *Miqyas-e-Hanafiyat*.<sup>224</sup>

### Response

But before answering the objection, we will present the translation of the relevant section from *Sirat-e-Mustaqim*. It reads:

*The Second Advice: In the Detailed Analysis of Things that Disrupt Worship and Their Remedies. It Contains Three Statements.*

*First statement:* The lower self and the devil both cause disruption in Salah. The lower self does this by being lazy in fulfilling its obligations and by its endless pursuit of comfort, due to which, one offers Salah hastily, so that the soul can engage again with its comfort and laziness or with things that feed its desire at the earliest opportunity. Such a person does not care to observe the Sunnah in standing, bowing, prostration and sitting postures during Salah, rather he allows the limbs to become languid and sluggish – in the manner of a fragile and paralysed person – due to his lack in interest in Salah and pursuit of comfort, even when observing its integrals. Similarly, the chaos within one’s internal senses and soul coupled with one’s disturbed and agitated emotional state interferes with the mental and devotional focus required, internally as well as externally, in prayer. However, the

<sup>222</sup> *Al-Kawkabah ash-Shihabiyah*, pp. 29-30.

<sup>223</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 31-32

<sup>224</sup> p. 214

distraction caused by the Satan is through prompting thoughts to arise in one's soul. These tell a person that Salah can be neglected and that there is no benefit in it. Such promptings and thoughts, because they constitute disregard for and belittling of Salah, can easily and swiftly take the person out of the fold of Islam.

A minor form of Satanic prompting in Salah is that he diverts one's focus from the consciousness of being in the presence of Allah Almighty and from the bliss of conversing with Him in prayer, by engaging one's thought, instead, in counting the number of rak'ahs and litanies – under the pretence lest one should make an error regarding them – and, in the case of a Hafiz of the Qur'an, by engaging in reflecting on verses of similar structure, lest he should make a mistake. In reality, the required consciousness of being in Allah's presence does not, in the least, affect the count of raka'hs and litanies nor does it cause any confusion in the verses being recited; it is only a trick employed by Satan. Of course, Satan has no interest in reminding a person engaged in prayer of the number of raka'hs, litanies or the verses to be recited, rather his only objective is to sully the quality of prayer, thereby, easing the way for him to achieve his ultimate aim of making this person commit heresy. If Divine Protection prevents Satan from achieving this objective in someone, then, in his despondency and bitterness, he tries to gradually divert the attention in Salah from Allah to other subjects that may interest a person, such as his cattle, donkeys etc. Cattle and donkeys are only examples; everything besides the Almighty, regardless of whether it is a cow, donkey, elephant or camel, all are the same in this regard.

Students of knowledge should not think that their thinking of their lessons and studies during Salah are not from this category. On the contrary, such thoughts are more disruptive to the essence of prayer than thinking about cattle and sheep. Similarly, people of learning must not think that their pondering over the verses of the Qur'an to extract their deeper points during Salah complements the spirit of Salah in any way; it only serves to diminish it. Similarly, the people with spiritual visions must not think that focusing one's attention towards one's Shaykh or towards other spirits and angels in Salah is part of the objective of Salah, which, as the Prophet ﷺ described it, is the *Ascension of the Believers*<sup>225</sup>. So such meditation in Salah is one of the branches of polytheism, though very hidden by its nature. However, it must not be understood from the above that to receive inspiration of some fine points of Qur'anic verses or to have a vision of spirits and angels during Salah, without deliberate focus on them, is itself a flaw; rather, such inspirations and visions are from the great Divine Favours that are bestowed by the Almighty upon those who achieve high levels of sincerity and devotion in prayers. These favours are nothing but early rewards for their efforts. It is only the deliberate focusing of one's attention in prayer on these matters and adding these objectives to the intention of prayer that is against the desired spirit of Salah.

Similarly, those supplications during Salah from a sincere and devoted worshipper that stem from the conviction that only the Almighty has total power and control over all one's affairs only serve to enhance the spirit of prayer, even if these supplications relate to mundane affairs. However, ruminating upon one's needs during Salah is from the evil thoughts and diminishes the quality of Salah. And one ought not desecrate one's prayer in this manner under the delusion that Umar is known to have deliberated upon his battle-plans and logistics of the Muslim army during Salah. For, as we know, it was hugely rewarding for Khider ؑ to damage the boat and to kill an innocent child, whereas both of these acts remain to be grave sins for others. Similarly, Umar's perfection and utmost devotion in prayer had reached a level where such external deliberations did not diminish the quality of his prayer, rather they enhanced it further, as the decisions he thus made in matters concerning the Muslims were divinely inspired. This is diametrically opposed to a person who is deliberately engaged in contemplating upon one's personal affairs, whether mundane or religious. And only the person upon whom the deeper truth of this matter is revealed can appreciate what I mean.

However, as per the Divine Words, *...they are but multiple layers of darkness, one above another...*, it is better to think about sexual intercourse with one's wife rather than imagining oneself committing adultery with someone; to expend one's determination/focus one's mind (*Sarf-e-himmat*) upon one's spiritual guide or anyone similar, even if it may be the noble Messenger ﷺ, is

<sup>225</sup> Salah was likened to the Prophet's ﷺ Ascension to the Heavens. It was on this occasion that he ﷺ was blessed with attending the court of the Almighty and speaking with Him, amongst the many other divine favours. Similarly, Salah also provides an opportunity for believers to intimately converse with the Almighty Allah as well as to receive many of His favours.

much worse than focusing one's concentration upon one's cattle and donkeys, because the former concentration will inspire awe and veneration in the depth of one's heart as opposed to the thought of cattle and donkeys, which will neither yield such an inspiration nor such feelings of awe, but rather its opposite. And this awe and veneration of anyone other than the Divine, if observed and aspired to during ritual prayer, will drag one towards polytheism (*shirk*). In summary, it is our intention to present here the varying categories of thoughts and contemplations [that occur to a person during Salah]. Every person must, having acquired knowledge of these matters, seek to avoid all barriers in the path to the Divine and should not falter in His pursuit. In this discussion, it was hoped to highlight the remedy of such distractions [in prayer] in a manner that everyone can easily understand.<sup>226</sup>

Having read and reflected upon the above passage, one should also bear the following points in mind.

1. The book *Sirat-e-Mustaqim*, is not actually authored or composed by Mawlana Isma'il Dehlavi. It is merely a collection of Shaykh Sayyid Ahmad's discourses compiled by Mawlana Isma'il. His role vis-à-vis this book is that of a compiler, not that of an author or composer. This is clearly evident from the title page of the book itself.

2. All discourses of Shaykh Sayyid Ahmad recorded in this book have not been compiled by Mawlana Isma'il Dehlavi, but only a portion of them. Many were compiled by the great scholar, Mawlana Abd al-Hayy, the son-in-law of Shah Abd al-Aziz Dehlavi. This fact is acknowledged in the book itself,

Whilst compiling this book, I came across some pages written by the most honourable, the foremost scholar of our time, Mawlana Abd al-Hayy – may Allah preserve his benedictions – one of the attendants at the exalted lodge of Hazrat Shaykh Sayyid Ahmad, in which he had written down a few of the Shaykh's luminous discourses. In light of their immense value and benefit, I have included them verbatim in the second and third chapters of this book.<sup>227</sup>

3. The controversial passage used by Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan is found in the second chapter of the book.<sup>228</sup> Therefore, it is quite possible that these pages of the book were compiled by Mawlana Abd al-Hayy. As such, to ascribe them to Mawlana Isma'il Dehlavi with such certainty and insistence, and to subsequently mount scathing, highly-subjective attacks aimed at establishing that Mawlana Isma'il had become a disbeliever by blasphemy is nothing but gross oppression.

If these words are indeed blasphemous, then the first person guilty of blasphemy must be Shaykh Sayyid Ahmad (may Allah forbid!), as they are ultimately his discourses. And if the basis of blasphemy is the offence of compiling these discourses, then this charge must also be extended to Mawlana Abd al-Hayy, as it is quite possible that he may have compiled these discourses. However, Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan and his cohorts reserve their cursing and labelling *kafir* for Mawlana Isma'il Dehlavi, which flies in the face of academic integrity and objectivity. But, if the ultimate objective of the entire exercise was to incite hatred against the People of Truth amongst the masses, then all these grave failings will hardly be concerning.

4. It should also be remembered that it is not necessary that the mention of cattle and donkeys be literal. In fact, it is a figurative expression and encompasses everything other than the Almighty, in the earth and skies, heavens and hell, Houries and angels, humans or jinn, good or evil. This clarification is made in the paragraph itself, 'Cattle and donkeys are only examples; everything besides the Almighty, regardless of whether it is a cow, donkey, elephant or camel, all are the same in this regard.'

Contrary to this intention of the speaker, Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan and his followers insist on the literal meaning of cattle and donkeys. The idea is to incite the masses through the constant

<sup>226</sup> *Sirat-e-Mustaqim*, Urdu, pp. 95-97.

<sup>227</sup> *Ibid*, p. 3.

<sup>228</sup> Beginning from page 42 and runs until page 102 in the Persian edition.

regurgitation of cattle and donkeys in the emotive context of defaming the noble Messenger ﷺ. It can only be seen as a shameful of example of propaganda.

5. It is also clearly mentioned in the same discourse that an involuntary vision of angels and spirits or the inspiration of a deeper meaning of a verse during Salah is not against its spirit and does not affect its quality. If the thought of the blessed Messenger ﷺ or that of any other prophet or a saint or even a vision of angels and spirits occurs involuntarily during Salah, not only will it not be contrary to its spirit, but rather it is from the Divine favours bestowed upon those who are on the path of perfection in their worship. This is clearly spelled out in the same discourse, “It must not be understood from the above that to receive inspiration of some fine points of Qur’anic verses or to have a vision of spirits and angels during Salah, without deliberate focus on them, is itself a flaw; rather, such inspirations and visions are from the great Divine Favours that are bestowed by the Almighty upon those who achieve high levels of sincerity and devotion in prayers. These favours are nothing but early rewards for their efforts.”

After this clear and unambiguous statement, for Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan and his followers, to contend that this passage of *Sirat-e-Mustaqim* implies that any thought of the noble Messenger ﷺ during Salah is contrary to its spirit and virtue, is absolutely incorrect and diametrically opposed to the author’s intent, as there is a clear difference between an involuntary occurrence of thought and when a thought that is actively entertained on purpose.

6. The primary objective of this entire discourse is an exhortation to observe the spirit of Salah through concentration, and total devotion towards the Almighty, keeping only His absolute grandeur and veneration in mind, and by having made redundant all distractions and diversions proffered by the Soul and the Devil through an abject refusal of the eyes of the heart to see anything other than the Divine during prayer.

Contained within this Sufi-themed exhortation is actually the essence of that famous authentic hadith, when the Angel Gibril questioned the noble Messenger ﷺ in the guise of a traveller and the noble Messenger ﷺ answered his questions. One of the questions asked in this exchange was, “Tell me what is *Ihsan*?” The noble Messenger ﷺ replied, “That you should worship Allah as though you are seeing Him. If you do not see Him [if you have not yet reached this level of God-consciousness], then [know that] He is most certainly watching you.”

In other words, it is a worshipper’s obligation and duty to make all his worship –Salah being its epitome – so intensely devotional and inspirational as though he is personally engaged in a conversation with the Almighty and is observing His Grace and Splendour with his own eyes. One ought to be so engrossed in the consciousness of the Divine that the entire world falls into total oblivion in the worshipper’s eyes and the only bond that remains in the heart is between him and his Almighty Lord, the Absolute Sovereign and the Most Beloved. If a worshipper must see anything, it is only the Magnificence of the Divine Grace; if he must speak, it must only be of His Praises. One should be completely overwhelmed in the admiration of the Divine and no portion of his heart should harbour any thought of or inclination towards anything else.

However, if one has not yet achieved this station, then a lesser form of engagement with the Divine is to be conscious of the fact that the Lord is always observing the worshipper and that he has presented himself in the Lord’s Presence for servitude to Him only. The subject of this entire discourse from *Sirat-e-Mustaqim* is nothing but this consciousness of the heart, which is obvious to any sensible person.

7. It has been clearly discussed in this discourse that the involuntary vision of angels and spirits and similar inspiration of Qur’anic meanings is not harmful to Salah, as it does not stem from a person’s deliberate and intentional engagement with them. This means that only deliberate and intentional focus of attention on anything other than Allah Almighty in Salah is contrary to its spirit. This is because when a person has his attention diverted towards any being other than Allah

Almighty during Salah, he can only do so by shifting his focus away from and ignoring the Being for whom he was supposed to perform this act of worship. And the value of a prayer in which one's intention and attention is directed towards any other than the Almighty, even if subconsciously, does not need stating. What benefit can such worship yield?

This can be understood further by an example. Imagine a person standing in a courtroom giving his defence statement in front of a magistrate, and, instead of facing the bench whilst speaking, he directs his speech and attention to a stranger in the gallery. This is only going to see him being charged for contempt of court and penalised. If these are the customs of worldly judges and courts, then what are they in comparison to the Ultimate Judge and His Court? For his misdemeanour in Salah by offering it without the presence of mind or regard for its spirit, it was deserving for such a worshipper that an instant retribution from the heavens have consumed him, but the Lord is all-Merciful and despite all contempt for Him by this worshipper, He continues to overlook his flaws. If this person has the good fortune to repent, then this sin too will be forgiven along with other sins, otherwise the chastisement for impertinence is indeed severe.

The key phrase in this discourse from *Sirat-e-Mustaqim* which Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan and his cohorts have found objectionable is 'Expending of Determination' (*sarf-e-himmat*). But, contrary to what the adversaries would have us believe, this precludes the mere occurrence of an involuntary thought. For, by definition, 'Expending of Determination' refers to when a person actively and deliberately focuses his complete imagination and concentration. *Shaghal-e-Barzakh* (Exercise of the Isthmus), *Shaghal-e-Rabitah* (Exercise of Correlation) and *Sarf-e-Himmat* (Expending of Determination) are highly-technical terms employed by the Sufi masters. They are essentially means by which to rid one's mind and spirit of all distractions, thoughts and impulses for the purpose of focusing one's entire consciousness towards one's spiritual guide, to the extent that the latter's image and presence totally envelopes the meditator's mind and spirit so much so that no other thought interrupts one's mind.

The legal doctors of Islam hold divergent views as to the permissibility or otherwise of such meditation upon one's spiritual guide. Some have placed strict conditions upon its permissibility, others have differentiated between individuals who may or may not be eligible for this exercise, and yet others with a deeper insight and more vigilant temperament have discouraged it, stating that the risk in this practice is more severe than the potential benefit, and therefore, it is better to forsake it for more established and conventional exercises. The description of *Shaghal-e-Barzakh* is provided in *Sirat-e-Mustaqim* itself:

Amongst the innovated exercises is the *Shaghal-e-Barzakh* (Exercise of the Isthmus), which has gained great prominence amongst the later Sufis and can be gleaned from the statements of some early masters also. Its method is to consciously project one's particular and specific spiritual guide's image in one's mind with the purpose of removing confusion and disarray of the mind and spirit. During this exercise, the meditator imagines himself sitting humbly in his guide's presence with great awe and respect, with his heart, body and soul all focused on him.<sup>229</sup>

Similarly, *Shaghal-e-Nafi* (Exercise of Denial) and *Shaghal-e-Yaddaasht* (Exercise of Perpetual Consciousness) are also names of distinct Sufic exercises that have been described in *Sirat-e-Mustaqim*. In summary, the objective of 'Expending of Determination' (*Sarf-e-himmat*) and Exercise of the Isthmus (*Shaghal-e-Barzakh*) is to actively and deliberately engage in the process of projecting the image of one's spiritual guide into one's mind and then restricting the focus of the heart and mind to that image only. It is obvious that if one engages in this kind of concentration upon an entity other than Allah, then the heart, mind and soul will be thoroughly engaged with someone other than Allah. As such, if this occurs in Salah, which is the highest form of worship reserved exclusively for Allah, then that too will become totally devoted – in mind and spirit – to entities and beings other than Allah. How can such concentration upon an entity or being other than the Almighty be valid and acceptable in Salah? And how could such concentration not corrupt and damage the virtue and spirit of Salah? The excellence and true depth of this expression in *Sirat-e-*

<sup>229</sup> *Sirat-e-Mustaqim*, pp. 194-195, Urdu ed.

*Mustaqim* in helping to promote the required degree of *Ihsan* and sincerity in worship, and particularly *Salah*, can only be commendable, but, unfortunately, these fine points of authentic Sufism have fallen into the hands of unqualified people, who, instead of commending them, are fixated with finding faults with them.

8. Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan and his affiliates wrongly allege that this expression constitutes blasphemy against the most noble, leader of the Worlds, the noble Messenger ﷺ and that he has been informed of these blasphemies and they have caused his noble soul great hurt and pain. But, all these claims are nothing more than baseless fantasies.

Quite to the contrary, these statements clearly demonstrate nothing except veneration and high praises of the noble Messenger ﷺ. It is clearly implied in them that since the love, veneration and admiration of the noble Messenger ﷺ is deeply rooted in the hearts of true believers and no true Muslim would ever be willing to part with the thought of the noble Messenger ﷺ. So if he were to engage with this thought in his mind and heart, the inevitable outcome of such engagement will be that, totally immersed in his ﷺ love, he will be overjoyed and overwhelmed at the arrival of this thought. The worshipper's joy and ecstasy will, however, end up diverting his full attention towards the noble Messenger ﷺ. Though, in and of itself, this is a great virtue and a strong sign of faith, but is highly detrimental to the spirit of *Salah*, as the focus and attention towards the Almighty, which is the requirement of *Salah*, will have become either non-existent or very weak, whereas the essence and spirit of *Salah* and other forms of divine worship is, as described in the hadith, 'to worship Allah as though you are seeing Him.'

Let us try to understand this through an example. A person embarks on a journey towards Mecca with the intention of discharging the obligation of Hajj, but decides to go to Madinah first. Having reached Madinah and having witnessed the serenity and peace of the Prophet's ﷺ Masjid and his ﷺ grave<sup>230</sup>, he becomes utterly engrossed in the beauty and grandeur of the scene. Overwhelmed by his love and veneration of the Prophet ﷺ he totally forgets the obligation of performing the duty (*fard*) of Hajj. Neither does he present himself on the plain of 'Arafah, nor does he carry out the rites of Hajj in Mina, Muzdalifah and the obligatory *Tawaf* of Hajj, until the days of Hajj are over. Will such a person be discharged from his obligation? Will his Hajj be considered complete? Of course not. For such a person, having begun the journey of Hajj, it would be better to be enthralled with a marketplace or something similar, rather than to be totally imbued with the admiration of the Prophet ﷺ he experiences at his noble resting place in Madina. This is because the attachment that one would have towards a marketplace and such like will necessarily be devoid of such emotions of love and veneration as one feels in the presence of his Beloved ﷺ, and hence, one would, no matter how fascinating the marketplace is, eventually, come to realise the purpose of his journey and will continue towards performing Hajj.

However, once the obligation of Hajj is discharged, it is nothing but total bliss for this traveller to be able to remain in the proximity of the grave of the Prophet ﷺ for as long as possible and to offer his salutations and greetings to the noble Messenger ﷺ in as much abundance as possible and as much as his good fortune allows him. This will not only be a source of him drawing closer to Allah Almighty and receiving immense rewards for honouring the noble Messenger ﷺ, but his prolonged presence in proximity of the noble Messenger ﷺ will also draw one to closer to him and strengthen the bond that every believer has with him ﷺ.

9. These paragraphs in *Sirat-e-Mustaqim* describe the various levels of promptings [of the lower self or Satan] according to the varying degrees of risk they carry. As such, the thought of sexual intercourse with one's spouse is better than the thought of adultery, as the former is permissible, in and of itself, and the latter is entirely forbidden. Hence, the promptings that are of a permissible nature are better than those that are not permissible at all. Similarly, engaging and becoming

<sup>230</sup> The Prophet Muhammad's ﷺ grave is within the perimeter of the Masjid.

engrossed in the thought of cattle and donkeys and other similar worldly possessions in Salah carries lesser risk because these things are valueless and insignificant in the eyes of a true believer and he does not derive any pleasure from their thought, but rather, is averse to it. As such, even if the thought did engage his mind in prayer, he will soon realise the inappropriateness of his action, and will instantly remove the thought from his mind and will never allow it to fester. However, if the above-described engagement of the mind pertains to saints and other venerable personalities, it will be much more detrimental to Salah because a believer usually has a great degree of reverence and love for such personalities. Especially, if such ‘Expending of determination’ (*Sarf-e-himmat*) is related to the noble Messenger ﷺ during Salah, it is much more harmful for one’s objective in prayer, as due to the intense love and tremendous veneration that a believer has for the noble Messenger ﷺ, it is very much more likely that the person will become totally oblivious to the very purpose of Salah, which is the ‘Expending of determination’ towards Allah Almighty. Hence, the difference between thinking about other worldly things and the noble Messenger ﷺ is solely due to the utter insignificance of worldly things compared to the immense respect and reverence of the Noble Messenger ﷺ in a believer’s heart and mind. The very opposite of what Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan was alleging. He was alleging that the passage is an example of disrespect to the noble Messenger ﷺ, whereas it is actually an expression of the great respect Muslims have for the noble Messenger ﷺ.

10. If, indeed, the words written in *Sirat-e-Mustaqim* do constitute blasphemy against the noble Messenger ﷺ, and there is no scope for explanation and interpretation, and the matter was so egregious that it hurt the Messenger ﷺ, then there could never be any room for hesitating in doing *takfir* of such an open blasphemer. It is our firm belief and conviction, as we have documented earlier, that even a fraction of disrespect towards the noble Messenger ﷺ amounts to blasphemy and heresy, and to harbour any reservations regarding this tenet of belief is also heresy. So if indeed, the spiritual guide of Mawlana Isma‘il Dehlavi, that is Shaykh Sayyid Ahmad, did commit blasphemy in this passage, then they are clearly heretics and out of the fold of Islam. And anyone who refuses to say likewise is also a *kafir*. However, we do not believe that these pious souls committed, or even intended, what they were accused of. Therefore, they are only true believers in Allah Almighty and loving devotees of the noble Messenger ﷺ. Not only that, we consider them the most genuine upholders of the truth.

#### *The Confusion Of Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan*

But the above raises a serious problem for Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan. Despite him also saying that even the slightest disrespect towards the Messenger ﷺ is *kufr*, we find that he is actually recorded to have held two contradictory views regarding the *kufr* of Mawlana Isma‘il Dehlavi. One standpoint is from his younger days and the other is from his old age. In other words, he has issued two divergent edicts (*fatwas*) on the same matter less than fifteen years apart from each other. It is an Islamic jurisprudential principle that, in such circumstances, the later edict reflects his final and actual opinion. The first edict dates back to 1881, and is in reply to three questions asked by one Mirza Ali Beg, a resident of Badayun. The third question asked in this letter was,

Are Innovators in religion, such as Shi’as and such like, heretics or not? Please provide a detailed answer along with textual and rational evidences. Explain, be rewarded!<sup>231</sup>

This was his reply:

In reality, any Innovator [in religion] who rejects a necessarily established matter of faith is absolutely and certainly a heretic according to the consensus of all Muslims, even if he recites the Testimony of Faith a million times.<sup>232</sup>

He then elaborates further by mentioning some deviant sects – according to his own definition – as well as commenting on their founders and a somewhat detailed exposé of their beliefs. He writes, commenting on the alleged beliefs of Mawlana Isma‘il Dehlavi:

<sup>231</sup> *I’laam al-A‘alam bi anna Hindastan Dar al-Islam*, p. 2.

<sup>232</sup> *Ibid*, p. 15.

...or after mentioning the names of some animals (such as cattle and donkeys), he states that to draw one's focus upon the noble Messenger ﷺ during Salah is worse than engaging in the thought of such and such a being or thing – may the curse of Allah be on such a vile statement! ...or he claims that seeking assistance from the Helper of the deprived, the Fulfiller of the needs of both Worlds, the noble Messenger ﷺ is fallacious, citing an abhorrent and irrelevant example of how a servant of one king need not and cannot serve another and then adds to the insult by equating the noble Messenger ﷺ to people of lowly professions ... or the wickedness in his heart provokes him to blaspheme against the most lofty rank of the noble Messenger ﷺ by referring to him as 'an elder brother' ...or he resorts to making such statements as 'He [the Prophet ﷺ] has died and perished in the earth...' <sup>233</sup>

Similarly, he recounts many such self-proclaimed blasphemies and finally issues the verdict:  
All such groups are absolutely and doubtlessly abject heretics and outside of Islam. <sup>234</sup>

Therefore, according to Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan, Mawlana Isma'il Dehlavi is absolutely and doubtlessly a *kafir*. However, when he authored *al-Kawkab al-Shihabiyyah* in 1894 and again recorded in there details of these same so-called blasphemies, he wrote:

His blasphemies exceed seventy in number, and in actual fact, are countless because each word of just the five blasphemies [from Blasphemy no. 7 to 11, as classified by Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan] is a concoction of several tens of thousands of blasphemies. Similarly, the blasphemies recorded under number 23 and 29 are also a combination of a multitude of blasphemies. Hence, though the number of blasphemies we have counted is seventy, we can demonstrate each one of them to carry seventy blasphemies. Therefore, it is the same if one takes the number [Mawlana Isma'il's blasphemies] to be seventy or seventy thousand. <sup>235</sup>

Naturally, if someone is guilty of such a huge number of blasphemies, he must be unequivocally characterised as a heretic (*kafir*). Contrary to that, Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan records his preferred position vis-à-vis such an important matter,

...Despite this, our commitment to exercise caution in applying the charge of heresy necessitates that it is better, prudent and more appropriate to refrain from applying it [to Mawlana Isma'il Dehlavi]. <sup>236</sup>

It is indeed strange and ironic that he, who had initially charged Mawlana Isma'il Dehlavi with outright and absolute *kufur* on the basis of merely three to four purported blasphemies, fifteen years later finds him guilty of approximately five hundred and sixty five thousand blasphemies and yet, considers it wise and more appropriate to refrain from applying the charge of heresy! On another occasion, he writes:

And neither [do I] apply the charge of heresy (*kufur*) upon the leader of this group, Isma'il Dehlavi, because our Messenger ﷺ has instructed us to refrain from calling anyone who recites the Testimony of Faith a heretic, until his blasphemy does not become as apparent as the morning sun and there remains not even the smallest excuse to keep him within the fold of Islam. [The rationale for this is that] Islam always reigns supreme, and can never be subjugated. <sup>237</sup>

Not only does he, in a noticeably changed tone, refrain from applying the charge of *kufur* himself, but he also exhorts others to be cautious and to refrain from it. Subsequently, he wrote in *Husam al-Haramayn*, which he authored around 1906,

The cautious scholars should not brand them [Mawlana Isma'il Dehlavi and his followers] as heretics [*kafir*], and that is the better position and that is the *fatwa* and the school, and upon that we depend. In this is self-preservation and correctness. <sup>238</sup>

<sup>233</sup> *I'laam al-A'alam bi anna Hindastan Dar al-Islam*, p. 15-16.

<sup>234</sup> *Ibid*, p. 20

<sup>235</sup> *Al-Kawkab al-Shihabiyyah*, p. 58.

<sup>236</sup> *Ibid*, p. 62.

<sup>237</sup> *Husam al-Haramayn*, p. 43.

<sup>238</sup> *Ibid*, p. 43.

It is utterly bewildering that a person who, according to his own claim, is guilty of such glaring blasphemies against the honour and lofty position of the noble Messenger ﷺ that leave no room for alternative explanations or interpretations, and the same person has been constantly abusing and insulting the noble Messenger ﷺ, still does not fulfil the criteria of heresy. Moreover, not only is this his personal edict, but he also exhorts all cautious scholars to agree upon it. To complicate matters further, he writes on one occasion:

An abominable statement that contains the denial of Allah or diminishes the rank of the noblest of all Messengers ﷺ, and which also cannot be interpreted or explained alternatively. To not declare it *kufr* would mean calling *kufr* faith, and a person who equates *kufr* with faith is himself a *kafir*. You have just read the evidences presented from *Al-Shifa'*, *Fatawa Bazzaziyah*, *Durr al-Mukhtar*, *Bahr ar-Ra'iq*, *Nahr al-Fa'iq*, *Fatawa Khairiyah*, *Majma' al-Anhur*, and other similar authoritative books, that whosoever belittles the rank of the noble Messenger ﷺ instantly becomes a *kafir*, and who has any doubt (*shakk*) in categorising him as such is himself a *kafir*.<sup>239</sup>

Explaining the scope of his words, “and is such that cannot be interpreted or explained alternatively”, he writes: “Only such interpretation and explanation is valid [in this regard], which is relevant and viable. There is no scope for interpretation and explanation when there are clear, unambiguous and unequivocal words, otherwise, no statement will remain heretical.”<sup>240</sup> Further on, he notes: “It is recorded in *Al-Shifa'* that the claim of an [alternative] explanation and interpretation in an unequivocal statement is not acceptable. And Mulla 'Ali Qari has explained this further in his commentary on the *Al-Shifa'*, stating, ‘[such an interpretation and explanation] is rejected in line with the established principles of Shari’ah.’”

As such, the decision now squarely rests with Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan. He must declare Mawlana Isma‘il Dehlavi *kafir* – may Allah forbid! – due to the innumerable accounts of blasphemy against the noble Messenger ﷺ that he has ascribed to him. These are statements that, according to him, are not open to interpretation. And, if Mawlana Isma‘il is not a *kafir*, and he indeed is not as per Mawlana Ahmad Raza’s own *fatwa* and exhortation cited above, then he has dropped himself into the pit of heresy by his own principles and references.

In summary, Mawlana Isma‘il Dehlavi is certainly not guilty of heresy in our opinion because he has not even come close to committing a crime that could be declared *kufr*. Everything that he has been accused of in this regard is nothing but slander and false allegation. Moreover, according to Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan himself, he is not a *kafir*, because the noble Messenger ﷺ has prohibited calling someone *kafir* who utters the Testimony of Faith until the heresy does not become more apparent than the morning sun. And Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan has stated unequivocally that there is no such issue that legitimises declaring Mawlana Isma‘il Dehlavi a *kafir*. This, however, does bring into sharp relief the important question of the validity of the previous pronouncement of heresy undertaken by Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan. In his reply to the Badayuni letter, he explicitly included Mawlana Isma‘il Dehlavi amongst the groups and sects that are *absolutely and most certainly out of the fold of Islam*. In light of his later edict, what needs an answer is, during those early years, when he was openly declaring Mawlana Isma‘il Dehlavi a *kafir*, what was the state of his own faith?

#### *The Consequences of Takfir*

In Shari’ah, the severity of the crime of branding a Muslim as a *kafir* is the same as calling a non-Muslim a Muslim. In authentic Hadith, the noble Messenger ﷺ said, “Whichever person brands his brother a disbeliever, then at least one of them turns to that state.”<sup>241</sup> In another narration in Sahih Muslim, there is an addition: “If [the matter of charging another with disbelief is as he has stated, [then that is valid], otherwise it [the allegation of disbelief] returns back to the accuser.”<sup>242</sup> According to this hadith, if Mawlana Isma‘il Dehlavi was indeed a firm believer, then Mawlana

<sup>239</sup> Ibid, p. 35; *Fatawa Africa*, p. 114.

<sup>240</sup> Ibid, p. 37.

<sup>241</sup> *Sahih Muslim*, v. 1, p. 57.

<sup>242</sup> Ibid.

Ahmad Raza Khan must be considered to have been guilty of *kufir* by his accusing him of it in his earlier days. And if indeed Mawlana Isma‘il was a disbeliever – may Allah forbid! – then Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan is still guilty of disbelief in his latter days due to refraining from pronouncing disbelief upon him, but rather exhorting scholars to exercise caution in this regard.

In summary, according to his own principles and precepts, Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan has imposed *kufir* upon himself in either circumstance. And this can be seen as nothing but the curse of harbouring enmity and hatred against such *awliya* (friends of Allah Almighty). May Allah preserve us from such evil promptings of Satan. May He also protect us from all forms of bias and enmity against the people of Truth. Aameen.

## APPENDIX I

*More Accusations Regarding Tahzir al-Nas*

Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan seizes upon the following text of *Tahzir al-Nas* in his book *Al-Mawt al-Ahmar* (The Red Death):

Thus, in the view of the general masses, the Messenger of Allah being the Final prophet means that his ﷺ time is after the time of the previous prophets and that he is the very final of the Prophets. However the people of understanding know....

[Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan then comments]: Understanding Final in relation to time (*Khatam Zamani*) from the title *Khatam al-nabiyyin*, is said to be the thought of the masses, whereas this meaning of *Khatam* is also narrated from the Messenger ﷺ himself and the companions. Thus according to the author of *Tahzir al-Nas* the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and all the companions come under the masses – May Allah Forbid!

This is rank dishonesty from Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan because Mawlana Qasim himself explains what is meant by “masses.” He writes “Apart from the noble Prophets ﷺ or the scholars well-grounded in knowledge, all others are to be considered from the masses.”<sup>243</sup>

We learn from this that Mawlana Qasim Nanotwi does not count the noble Prophets ﷺ and those well-grounded in knowledge, which would apply first and foremost to the companions, as being from the masses. To take the meaning Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan has, in spite of Mawlana Qasim’s own explicit statement, otherwise, is the highest level of academic deception and dishonesty. May Allah Almighty protect us. Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan himself writes, having cited a Prophetic narration from the companion Abu Darda:

A common person cannot be a complete scholar (*faqih*) until he cannot, in elaborating the Holy Qur’an, bring out several different non-conflicting explanations (*Itqan*).<sup>244</sup>

Thus the people Mawlana Qasim is accused of counting amongst “the masses,” are so according to Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan himself. However, sadly, he failed to see that he was contradicting his own self and went through life on a mission to find the faults of others.

*Intrinsic Prophethood*

Mawlana Qasim Nanotwi uses a term of logic in his discussion that has led some learned people to entertain doubts on the issue and thus requires elaboration. Mawlana Nanotwi writes:

It means the Messenger ﷺ has the attribute of prophethood intrinsically (*bil-dhat*). Thus apart from him, any other prophet has the attribute of Prophethood non-intrinsically (*bil-‘ard*), as it is based upon and borrowed from the Messenger’s ﷺ Prophethood. The prophethood of others is the spiritual effluence (*fa’id*) of the Messenger ﷺ, but his own Prophethood is not due to the spiritual effluence of anyone. In other words the links of the chain of Prophethood come to an end with the Messenger ﷺ. Thus, just as he is the Prophet ﷺ of the Umma, so too is he the Prophet of the Prophets ﷺ.<sup>245</sup>

In this text Mawlana Qasim Nanotwi describes the Messenger ﷺ as being a Prophet intrinsically (*bil-dhat*), whereas other prophets are said to be prophets non-intrinsically. Here intrinsic does not mean he is independent and not in need of anyone as is the case with all of Allah’s divine attributes (*Sifaat-e-dhati*) in relation to His essence. Rather, what Mawlana Qasim means is that Allah Almighty bestowed all the amazing perfections (*kamaalat*) of Prophethood upon the Messenger ﷺ directly without any means, whereas in the case of other prophets, they received these same *kamaalat* of prophethood by means of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ.

In the above text of *Tahzir al-Nas* he explicitly states the prophethood of others is from the spiritual effluence of the Messenger ﷺ and the Messenger’s ﷺ own Prophethood is not by the spiritual effluence of anyone. To understand this, take the example that Mawlana Qasim himself provides in his works, namely that he calls the light of the sun as intrinsic (*bil-dhat*) and the light of the moon

<sup>243</sup> *Qasim al-Ulum*, No.1, 2nd letter, p.4.

<sup>244</sup> *Al-Dawla al-Malakiyyah*, p.43.

<sup>245</sup> *Tahzir al-Nas*, p. 4.

as being non-intrinsic or borrowed. What he means is that Allah Almighty directly bestowed light upon the sun, whereas the light of the moon is gained from the sun. This is not taken to mean that the light of the sun is its very own such that it is not in need even of Allah Almighty (may Allah forbid). It is interesting to note that Mawlana Ahmad Raza Khan has himself written the following:

It is proven through mass-transmitted texts, the sayings of the Friends of Allah, the great Imams and the honoured Scholars that all the worldly, heavenly, bodily and spiritual blessings received or are to be received by humans, Jinn and the angels, in fact the whole of creation are all by means of and due to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ.<sup>246</sup>

*The Author of Miqyas-e-Hanafiyyat*

Commenting on Mawlana Qasim's explanation of *Khatam*, the author of *Miqyas-e-hanafiyyat*, a Mawlana Muhammad Umar, states:

It was the Deobandis who first started the idea of the continuation of prophethood. . . The founder of Qadianism is from the Deobandis. They try to prove that a prophet can come after the Prophet ﷺ. It is, however, the belief of the Hanafis that after it is accepted that the Prophet ﷺ is the *Khatam al-nabiyyin*, to even imagine that a prophet will come after him is disbelief. It is left to you to do justice.<sup>247</sup>

Another Breilvi author, Mufti Ahmad Yar Khan, writes:

At the current time however, in relation to the Non-Madhabists, the Deobandis are far more of a danger, because the average Muslim cannot distinguish them. These people have committed such blasphemies against the Messenger of Allah ﷺ in their books that even a hardcore idol-worshipper would not do the same. Despite this, they are still held to be the leaders of the Muslims and the sole authorities of the faith. It was Mawlana Ashraf Ali Thanvi who, in his book *Hifz al-Iman*, compared the knowledge of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ to that of animals. Mawlana Khalil Ahmad Saharanpuri stated in his book *Barahin-e-Qati'ah* that the knowledge of Satan and the Angel of Death is greater than the knowledge of the Messenger ﷺ. Mawlana Isma'il Dhelavi wrote that the thought of the Messenger ﷺ in one's prayer is worse than the thought of a donkey or a bullock. Mawlana Qasim Nanotwi denied the Messenger's ﷺ being the *Khatam al-nabiyyin* in the sense of being the last prophet in his book *Tahzir al-Nas*. He said that even if a prophet were to come after him ﷺ, it would not take away from the Finality (*Khatamiyyah*). *Khatam*, he says, means the real (*asli*) prophet, whereas other prophets are reflections (*'ardi*). This is exactly what Mirza Ghulam Ahmad Qadiani<sup>248</sup> would say, *that I am a prophet by reflection (Buroozi)*, thus this makes Mirza his student in this issue!<sup>249</sup>

*Response*

After the detailed texts we presented earlier, if these Breilvi scholars still wish to accuse Mawlana Qasim of denying the Messenger's ﷺ being the final prophet, then that is their open oppression. It is an out and out lie and pure falsehood which in the world of justice has absolutely no weight. Certainly, if someone holds on to bigotry and insists on quarrelling, and is totally deprived of the ability to tolerate the truth, as is the case of these critics then they are not the first people in history who have exhibited such bigotry and blindness.

<sup>246</sup> *Jazaa Allah 'adoahu*, p. 23.

<sup>247</sup> *Miqyas Hanafiyyah*, pp. 190-197.

<sup>248</sup> A false claimant to Prophethood.

<sup>249</sup> *Jaa al-Haq*, p.6.

## APPENDIX II

*Texts Regarding Imkan al-Kadhib*

[1] It says in *Sharh al-Mawaqif*:

“All the Mu’tazilites and Kharijites make punishing the one who incurs a major sin necessary when he dies without repentance and they do not allow Allah to pardon him for two reasons:

“First, He (Exalted is He) made it a promise to punish major sins and informed [us] of this i.e. punishment because of it, so if He does not punish for a major sin and pardons, it would entail renegeing on His threat and falsehood in His speech, which are impossible. The answer is, the conclusion of this [argument] is that punishment will [actually] occur, so where is the [intrinsic] necessity of punishment, on which is our discussion, since there is no doubt that non-necessity [of punishment] along with [its] occurrence does not entail renegeing and falsehood? It cannot be said that it entails their possibility which is also impossible, because we say: its impossibility is prohibited. How so, when they are from the possibilities included in His (Exalted is He) Power?”

[2] In *Sharh al-Maqasid* by Imam al-Taftazani, at the end of the discussion on Power, [he says]:

“The deniers of the inclusiveness of His Power are many groups; of them are Al-Nazzam and his [Mu’tazilite] followers who say that He does not have power over ignorance, falsehood and oppression and all ugly acts (*qaba’ih*), for if their creation were in His capacity, their issuance (*sudur*) from Him would be possible, and this concomitant (*lazim*) is false because it results in impudence (*safah*) if He knows the ugliness of this and its dispensability, and in ignorance if He is not knowing. The response is: we do not concede the ugliness of a thing in relation to Him, how [can we accept this] when He is in complete control of His kingdom? And if it [i.e. ugliness in relation to Him] is conceded, Power over it does not negate the impossibility of its issuance from Him, by consideration of the presence of disposal and the absence of need, even if it is possible (*mumkinan*).”

[3] It says in *al-Musayarah* and its commentary *Al-Musamarah* by Imam Kamal ibn al-Humam al-Hanafi and his student Ibn Abi l-Sharif al-Maqdisi al-Shafi’:

“Then he i.e. the author of *Al-Umdah* said, ‘Allah (Exalted is He) is not described with Power over oppression, impudence and falsehood because the impossible is not included in [His] Power, i.e. it is improper for it to pertain to them. According to the Mu’tazilah, He (Exalted is He) is Able over all that but does not do [them].’ End quote from *Al-Umda*.

“It appears as though he altered that which he transmitted from the Mu’tazilah, since there is no doubt that the absence of power over what was mentioned, is the *madhhab* of the Mu’tazilah. As for its presence, i.e. power over what was mentioned, and then abstention from pertaining to them by choice, to the *madhhab*, i.e. it is to the *madhhab* of the Ash’aris, more fitting than it is to the *madhhab* of the Mu’tazilah. It is obvious that this more fitting [position] is also included in transcendence, since there is no doubt that abstention therefrom i.e. from those things mentioned of oppression, impudence and falsehood, is from the matter of transcendence, from that which does not befit the majesty of His Holiness (Exalted is He).

“Hence, it should be understood by the foregone premise, i.e. the intellect understands, which of the two views are more excessive in transcendence from indecencies: is it power over it, i.e. what was mentioned from the three matters, along with impossibility, i.e. His abstention from it by choosing that abstention; or its impossibility from Him because of the absence of power over it? It is incumbent to rely on the more inclusive of the two statements in transcendence, which is the statement more fitting to the *madhhab* of the Ash’aris.”

[4] In *Hawashi al-Kalnbawi ‘ala Sharh al-’Aqa’id al-Adudiyah* by Imam al-Dawwani it is mentioned:

“In sum, lying being ugly in the uttered-speech (*al-kalam al-lafzi*), in the sense that it is an attribute of deficiency, is prohibited according to the Ash’aris. That is why Al-Sharif al-Muhaqqiq (al-Jurjani) said it is from the totality of the possibilities (*mumkinat*), and acquiring decisive knowledge of its non-occurrence in His speech by consensus of the scholars and the Prophets (upon them be peace) does not negate its intrinsic possibility like all decisive knowledge of normal occurrences (*al-ulum al-’adiya*) and it does not negate what Imam al-Razi said.”

[5] In *Tahrir al-Usul* by the author of *Fath al-Qadir*, Imam ibn al-Humam, and its commentary by Ibn Amir al-Hajj, it is written:

“Therefore – i.e. since whatever is conceived as a deficiency is impossible for Him – the decisiveness of the impossibility of attributing Him – i.e. Allah (Exalted is He) – with lying and the like of it (Transcendent is He beyond that) becomes apparent. Also, if His act being attributed with ugliness was possible, confidence in the integrity of His promise, the integrity of His speech besides it – i.e. [besides] His (Exalted is He) promise – and the integrity of His Prophets would disappear – i.e. in principle, His integrity would be uncertain.

“According to the Ash’aris, He (Exalted is He) is certainly not attributed with ugly acts, but they are not rationally impossible, like all of creation. [This is] just like all the sciences in which one of two opposites being the reality is certain, but the other is not impossible, if it were assumed that it is the reality; just like the certainty of Mecca and Baghdad – i.e. their existence – since their non-existence is not rationally impossible. Therefore – i.e. when the matter is such – confidence [in the integrity of His word] disappearing is not necessitated because the possibility of something rationally does not necessitate not having firm resolve of its non-existence.

“The running dispute regarding the rational impossibility and possibility of this applies to all deficiencies – is Allah’s power over it absent or is it, i.e. the deficiency, contained in it, i.e. His Power? He will certainly not do it, i.e. the absolutely decisive condition is the deficiency will not be performed.”

و هاكم بعض النصوص عليه من الكتب المعتبرة في المذهب

(1) قال في شرح المواقف : أوجب جميع المعتزلة و الخوارج عقاب صاحب الكبيرة إذا مات بلا توبة و لم يجوزوا أن يعفو الله عنه بوجهين ، الأول : أنه تعالى أوعد بالعقاب على الكبائر و أخبر به أي بالعقاب عليها فلو لم يعاقب على الكبيرة و عفا لزم الخلف في وعيده و الكذب في خبره و إنه محال ، و الجواب : غايته وقوع العقاب فأين وجوب العقاب الذي كلامنا فيه ؟ إذ لا شبهة في أن عدم الوجوب مع الوقوع لا يستلزم خلفاً و لا كذباً ، لا يقال: إنه يستلزم جوازهما و هو أيضا محال ، لأننا نقول : استحالته ممنوعة ، كيف و هما من الممكنات التي تشملهما قدرته تعالى اه.

(2) و في شرح المقاصد للعلامة التافنازاني رحمه الله تعالى في خاتمة بحث القدرة : المنكرون لشمول قدرته طوائف ، منهم النظام و أتباعه القائلون بأنه لا يقدر على الجهل و الكذب و الظلم و سائر القبائح إذ لو كان خلفها مقدوراً له لجاز صدوره عنه و اللازم باطل لإفضائه إلى السفه إن كان عالماً بقبح ذلك ، و باستغنائه عنه و إلى الجهل إن لم يكن عالماً ، و الجواب : لا نسلم قبح الشيء بالنسبة إليه ، كيف و هو تصرف في ملكه ، و لو سلم فالقدرة لا تنافي امتناع صدوره نظراً إلى وجود الصارف و عدم الداعي و إن كان ممكناً اه. ملخصاً

(3) قال في المسامرة و شرحه المسامرة للعلامة المحقق كمال ابن الهمام الحنفي وتلميذه ابن أبي الشريف المقدسي الشافعي رحمه الله تعالى ما نصه : ثم قال أي صاحب العمدة : و لا يوصف الله تعالى بالقدرة على الظلم و السفه و الكذب لأن المحال لا يدخل تحت القدرة أي لا يصلح متعلقاً لها و عند المعتزلة يقدر تعالى على كل ذلك و لا يفعل انتهى كلام صاحب العمدة ، و كأنه انقلب عليه ما نقله عن المعتزلة ، إذ لا شك أن سلب القدرة عما ذكر هو مذهب المعتزلة ، و أما ثبوتها أي القدرة على ما ذكر ثم الامتناع عن متعلقها اختياراً فبمذهب أي فهو بمذهب الأشاعرة أليق منه بمذهب المعتزلة ، و لا يخفى أن هذا الأليق أدخل في التنزيه أيضا ، إذ لا شك في أن الامتناع عنها أي عن المذكورات من الظلم و السفه و الكذب من باب التنزيهات عما لا يليق بجناب قدسه تعالى ، فيسير بالبناء للمفعول أي يختبر العقل في أن أي الفصلين أبلغ في التنزيه عن الفحشاء ، أ هو القدرة عليه أي على ما ذكر من الأمور الثلاثة مع الامتناع أي امتناعه تعالى عنه مختاراً لذلك الامتناع أو امتناعه عنه لعدم القدرة عليه فيجب العول بأدخل القولين في التنزيه و هو القول الأليق بمذهب الأشاعرة اه.

(4) و في حواشي الكليني على شرح العقائد العضدية للمحقق الدواني رحمه الله تعالى ما نصه : و بالجملة كون الكذب في الكلام اللفظي قبيحاً بمعنى صفة نقص ممنوع عند الأشاعرة ، و لذا قال الشريف المحقق إنه من جملة الممكنات ، و حصول العلم القطعي لعدم وقوعه في كلامه تعالى بإجماع العلماء و الأنبياء عليهم السلام لا يناهز إمكانه في ذاته ، كسائر العلوم العادية القطعية ، و هو لا يناهز ما ذكره الإمام الرازي إلخ.

(5) و في تحرير الأصول لصاحب فتح القدير الإمام ابن الهمام و شرحه لابن أمير الحاج رحمهما الله تعالى ما نصه : و حينئذ - أي و حين كان مستحيلاً عليه ما أدرك فيه نقص - ظهر القطع باستحالة اتصافه - أي الله تعالى - بالكذب و نحوه تعالى عن ذلك ، و أيضاً لو لم يمتنع اتصاف فعله بالقبح يرتفع الأمان عن صدق وعده و صدق خير غيره - أي الوعد منه تعالى - و صدق النبوة - أي لم يجزم بصدقه أصلاً - و عند الشعرة كسائر الخلق القطع بعدم اتصافه تعالى بشيء من القبائح دون الاستحالة العقلية ، كسائر العلوم التي يقطع فيها بأن الواقع أحد النقيضين مع عدم استحالة الآخر لو قدر أنه الواقع ، كالقطع بمكة و بغداد - أي بوجودهما - فإنه لا يحيل بعدمهما عقلاً ، و حينئذ - أي و حين كان الأمر على هذا - لا يلزم ارتفاع الأمان ، لأنه لا يلزم من جواز الشيء عقلاً عدم الجزم بعدم ، و الخلاف الجاري في الاستحالة و الإمكان العقلي لهذا جارٍ في كل نقيصة ، أ قدرته تعالى عليه مسلوياً أم هي - أي النقيصة - بما - أي بقدرته - مشمولة ، و القطع بأنه لا يفعل - أي و الحال القطع بعدم فعل تلك النقيصة إلخ.

و مثل ما ذكرناه عن مذهب الأشاعرة ذكره القاضي العضد في شرح مختصر الأصول و أصحاب الحواشي عليه

و مثله في شرح المقاصد و حواشي المواقف للحايي و غيره و كذلك صرح به العلامة القوشجي في شرح التحريد و القونوي و غيرهم أعرضنا عن ذكر نصوصهم مخافة الإطناب

*Wa maa alayna illal-balaagh*

THE END